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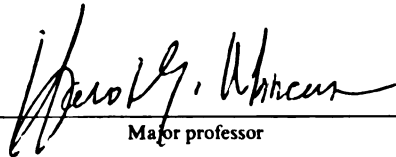
The Military and Social Change
in Colonial Tanganyika: 1919-1964

presented by

Kevin K. Brown

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**The Military and Social Change in Colonial Tanganyika:
1919-1964.**

VOLUME I

By

Kevin K. Brown

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Abstract

The Military and Social Change in Colonial Tanganyika: 1919-1964

By

Kevin K. Brown

This study explores the impact of military service and socialization on African soldiers and communities in colonial Tanganyika. The project attempts to build on previous works dealing with African soldiery and examines the social and economic position of Tanganyikan soldiers and military laborers, both within the context of the colonial power structure and their own communities. The present work joins a growing body of literature that challenges traditional interpretations about how and why Africans became soldiers and reveals that colonial militaries were extremely complex institutions that remain poorly understood.

The project is based on a combination of archival research and oral interviews conducted with some 40 former African soldiers and civilians. Colonial records in the United Kingdom and Tanzania provided valuable information on imperial and local policies that profoundly influenced the structure, size and mission of the Tanganyikan component of the KAR. Combining information from official papers with the memoirs of British officers and oral interviews with ex-soldiers allowed for the construction of a more comprehensive picture of what life was like for Tanganyikan askari than had formerly been available.

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**For my loving wife Romy
who was with me when this project started,
and to the amazement of friends, family members,
and myself is with me still.**

Acknowledgements

Many people helped make this study possible. Yet in the end this work is about the lives and experiences of Tanzanian ex-askaris and I am exceedingly grateful for the support and participation of each and every one of them. I also wish to extend my thanks to the leaders and membership of the Tanzania Legion and Club for providing space for interviews, allowing me to look through their records and giving their whole-hearted support to the project. I was aided considerably in my work by two research assistants, Tumaini Lyatuu and Eliakim Mtawa, both of whom proved invaluable. Dr. Nestor Luanda at the University of Dar es Salaam provided much needed advice and local expertise. My archival work at the Tanzanian National Archives was aided by the expertise and hard work of Ally Athumani and Mwanahamisi Mtengula and I am extremely grateful to both of them. I would also like to thank James Brennan for his brief, but invaluable, tour of the Tanzanian National Archive.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	1
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
<u>AFRICAN SOLDIERS AND SOCIAL HISTORY</u>	2
<u>DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT</u>	8
<u>HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE ROLE OF NON-CITIZEN SOLDIERS IN IMPERIAL EXPANSION</u>	10
<u>AFRICAN COLONIAL SOLDIERS</u>	16
<u>MILITARY SERVICE IN COLONIAL TANGANYIKA</u>	24
<u>HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHODOLOGY</u>	35
CHAPTER 2	44
<u>THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ROLE OF MILITARY FORCES IN THE COLONIZATION OF BRITISH AND GERMAN EAST AFRICA</u>	44
<u>SETTING THE STAGE: TANGANYIKA'S PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</u>	44
<u>THE ESTABLISHMENT AND PACIFICATION OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA</u>	49
<u>BRITISH COLONIZATION IN EAST AFRICA AND THE FORMATION OF THE KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES</u>	60
CHAPTER 3	68
<u>THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN EAST AFRICA</u>	68
<u>THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR AND THE START OF MILITARY OPERATIONS: AUGUST 1914-MARCH 1916</u>	71
<u>THE INVASION OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA: MARCH 1916-JANUARY 1917</u>	84
<u>REORGANIZATION, AFRICANIZATION AND THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUTH OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA: JANUARY 1917-NOVEMBER 1917</u>	90

<u>GUERRILLA WARFARE AND THE LONG PURSUIT: NOVEMBER 1917-NOVEMBER 1918</u>	94
<u>THE BUTCHER'S BILL</u>	95
<u>THE IMPACT OF THE EAST AFRICAN CAMPAIGN</u>	96
CHAPTER 4	105
<hr/>	
<u>MILITARY POLICY IN THE INTER-WAR YEARS FROM GERMAN COLONY TO BRITISH</u>	
<u>MANDATE</u>	105
<u>MILITARY POLICY IN TANGANYIKA: 1920-1935</u>	117
<u>EXTERNAL THREATS AND THE MODERNIZATION OF THE K.A.R.: 1935-1939</u>	124
<u>POLITICAL AND MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD</u>	128
<u>THE MILITARY HIERARCHY: 1920-1939</u>	132
<u>BRITISH OFFICERS</u>	133
<u>BRITISH NCO'S</u>	142
<u>AFRICAN NCO'S</u>	143
<u>THE RANK AND FILE</u>	146
CHAPTER 5	157
<hr/>	
<u>MILITARY LIFE IN THE INTERWAR YEARS</u>	157
<u>BRITISH RECRUITING POLICIES IN TANGANYIKA AND THE CONCEPT OF MARTIAL</u>	
<u>RACES</u>	162
<u>TRAINING</u>	179
<u>BATTALION AND BRIGADE ORGANIZATION AND DAILY AND SEASONAL ROUTINE</u>	181
<u>HEALTH</u>	186
<u>MILITARY DISCIPLINE</u>	190
<u>RECREATION AND RELIGION</u>	202
<u>LENGTH OF SERVICE, PAY, EXEMPTIONS FROM TAX</u>	207

<u>AND THE QUESTION OF PENSIONS AND GRATUITIES</u>	207
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	220
<u>CHAPTER 6</u>	222
<u>THE SECOND WORLD WAR</u>	222
<u>THE START OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN EAST AFRICA</u>	222
<u>THE ETHIOPIAN CAMPAIGN</u>	232
<u>THE FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN AUXILIARY PIONEER CORPS</u>	239
<u>OPERATIONS IN MADAGASCAR</u>	241
<u>OPERATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA</u>	246
<u>THE EAST AFRICAN MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD WAR TWO</u>	251
<u>CHAPTER 7</u>	259
<u>MILITARY SERVICE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR</u>	259
<u>BRITISH OFFICERS AND NCO'S</u>	260
<u>AFRICAN NCO'S AND ASKARIS</u>	267
<u>HEALTH</u>	276
<u>DISCIPLINE</u>	286
<u>PAY, RATIONS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE</u>	294
<u>AMENITIES AND LEISURE</u>	304
<u>COMBAT</u>	311
<u>RESISTANCE</u>	316
<u>COMMUNICATION WITH HOME</u>	326
<u>CIVIL AND MILITARY RELATIONS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR</u>	331
<u>MILITARY SERVICE AND ASKARIS' EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE</u>	339

<u>CHAPTER 8</u>	348
<u>THE IMPACT OF THE WAR AT HOME: 1939-1945</u>	348
<u>CHAPTER 9</u>	383
<u>DEMOBILIZATION</u>	383
<u>FROM SOLDIERS TO CIVILIANS: THE PROCESS OF DEMOBILIZATION</u>	383
<u>OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY RETURNING SERVICEMEN</u>	390
<u>TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS</u>	401
<u>RELATIONS BETWEEN ASKARIS AND NATIVE AUTHORITIES</u>	405
<u>PROVISIONS FOR WOUNDED AND DISABLED SOLDIERS</u>	408
<u>THE INVOLVEMENT OF EX-SOLDIERS IN POLITICS</u>	415
<u>CHAPTER 10</u>	420
<u>THE WINDS OF CHANGE</u>	420
<u>TANGANYIKAN MILITARY POLICY IN THE YEARS LEADING UP TO INDEPENDENCE: 1945-</u>	
<u>1961</u>	420
<u>TANGANYIKA'S MILITARY POLICY IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE: 1961-</u>	
<u>1964</u>	429
<u>THE 1964 REVOLT AND THE END OF THE LAST VESTIGES OF THE KAR.</u>	437
<u>EPILOGUE</u>	453
<u>TANGANYIKAN AFRICAN VETERANS TODAY: THE CONTINUING FIGHT FOR</u>	
<u>RESOURCES AND RECOGNITION</u>	453
<u>APPENDICES</u>	467

<u>APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EX-ASKARIS</u>	468
<u>APPENDIX B: ASKARI INTERVIEWS</u>	470
<u>APPENDIX C: CIVILIAN INTERVIEWS</u>	471
<u>APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS</u>	472
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	473

Chapter I

Introduction

This study examines the impact of military service and socialization on African soldiers and communities in colonial Tanganyika.¹ Although historians have devoted considerable attention to analyzing the economic and political impact of both World Wars on Africa, until recently, very little research has concentrated on how African soldiers and veterans lived and how they and their families viewed what Myron Echenberg has called "...their ambiguous and often contradictory position within the colonial social formation."² Scant attention has been paid to the economic and social impact soldiers and ex-soldiers had on their home communities as well as areas where they were stationed. This problem is particularly true when it comes to analyzing the long-term effects of recruitment, migration and the return of ex-soldiers to specific regions. Studying the lives of African soldiers and their families in Tanganyika will also increase understanding of the diffusion of ideas and traditions in the colonial period, and determine if military service contributed to the creation of identity among certain ethnic groups. Concentrating not only on soldiers and ex-soldiers, but also on the lives of family members and others in the community who did not participate

¹Throughout this study, the term Tanganyika is used to describe the mainland portions of modern Tanzania. The name is geographically rather than politically descriptive, and was adopted for the purposes of continuity and clarity. Under German rule, the territory was known as German East Africa. In addition to mainland modern Tanzania, the German colony included Rwanda, Burundi and a small piece of territory known as the Kionga Triangle. Rwanda and Burundi, administered by the Belgians and the Kionga Triangle following the First World War, ceded to the Portuguese. The remaining area became a British controlled mandate, the Tanganyika Territory. Following independence in 1961 the Tanganyika Territory became the independent nation of Tanzania.
²Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1870-1960*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991), pp. 1-2.

in military service, allows for the construction of a more nearly complete picture of African military service than is currently available either in colonial records or recent scholarship.

African Soldiers and Social History

Throughout Africa, colonial administrations relied on African soldiers first to extend the territory under their control, and later to ensure internal stability and security. Despite the important role African soldiers played in colonial society, until recently, the historiography on the military in Africa has failed adequately to explore the social, economic and political consequences of colonial military service for Africans. Military historians and political scientists have concentrated their efforts on either the history of specific campaigns and regiments or the upper echelons of the military, ignoring the effects of military service on the rank and file. This emphasis began during the colonial period, when most European officers concentrated on recruiting and training Africans to be competent and reliable soldiers, but seldom concerned themselves with how their troops fit into colonial society or what long-term effect military service had on African communities. Officers and colonial officials frequently described African soldiers as loyal servants of the state, who, once trained and inculcated with the correct social and political values, firmly believed in the officers who led them and the governments they served. The image of the "steadfast and loyal" African soldier permeated official unit or campaign histories, often written or commissioned by

ex-officers or Regimental associations.³

Very little can be discovered from most European accounts, both official and unofficial, about the aspirations or motivations of African soldiers and how they viewed their position within the colonial social structure. Official records contain limited information on how African soldiers lived while in service and retirement. Colonial records can, however, often provide detailed information on recruiting, the ethnic affiliation of soldiers, the skill level of recruits and statistics on disease and death within units. Internal documents also contain insights into how soldiers were trained, disciplined, fed, paid, and sent on leave. In addition, administrative and public records such as newspaper articles, wills, court records and police reports can provide valuable evidence on how African soldiers interacted with the civilian population and the role the military played in daily life.

The post-independence literature on the military in colonial Africa has also produced few detailed studies on military service. African soldiers and police are frequently portrayed either as ex-slaves, criminals or mercenaries, who for social or economic reasons could not live in their communities, or as professional soldiers who unquestioningly enforced the orders of the state. In resistance studies, African soldiers are often consigned to the ranks of traitors and collaborators. Calling them mercenaries and quislings is simplistic, dismissive and ignores the wide-ranging effects military service had on both communities and individuals. In many cases such definitions are also a-historical, fitting anti-

³A few examples of this genera include William Lloyd-Jones, *K.A.R.: Being an Unofficial Account of the Origin and Activities of the King's African Rifles*, (London: Arrowsmith, 1926) and A. Haywood & F.A.S. Clarke, *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force*, (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1969).

colonial conflicts into a "good versus evil" and "European versus African" context that bears little reality to actual circumstances.

Colonial militaries were extremely complex institutions that remain poorly studied and understood. They recruited from selected classes or ethnic groups, who wished to gain access to wealth, education and status not because they agreed with, or even understood, the policies of the governments they served. The need to maintain inexpensive and yet reliable military forces left governments little choice but to recruit and train African soldiers. At the same time the army presented Africans with one of the few available opportunities for social and economic advancement in colonial society.

Scholarship recently has debunked the idea that many African soldiers either were social outcasts or wanted to escape rural life. Far from trying to dissolve the bonds between themselves and their communities, many soldiers saw the army simply as a way to improve their lot in life. If young men were attracted by military pomp and ceremony, the promise of smart new uniforms, good pay and abundant rations, most intended to return home on completion of their military service. Many soldiers anticipated using the wealth and skills they acquired in the army to improve their standing in their home community, go into business, or start a family.

Many aspects of African military service need to be examined in terms of the existing historical literature. Very little has been written about the demographic repercussions associated with the recruitment and conscription of young men for the armed forces. In times of peace, with the notable exception of French West Africa, relatively few Africans served in the colonial military, but during the two world wars their numbers swelled to hundreds of thousands. Recruiting, conscription and demobilization led to the out-migration and return of large numbers of young men from their home communities, thus altering

numerous economic, political and social relationships.⁴

What factors influenced young men to sign up for an extended period of service far from home? Was military service viewed as some historians have recently argued another form of labor migration, or were there more complex issues involved? How did conditions of service in the army compare with labor conditions in other sectors of the economy such as mining or export agriculture? Military recruitment records can provide valuable insights into many of these questions. Potential recruits went through careful medical screenings, and colonial authorities often kept detailed records on how many recruits were examined and accepted or rejected for military service. In the case of Tanganyika, since recruiting and conscription drives were often conducted at the district level, both military and civilian officials used such records. Many of the administrative reports concerning issues relating to the health of the African population draw their conclusions from statistics compiled from district level progress reports dealing with recruiting and conscription. Annual military records also detail the various diseases soldiers suffered from, in what numbers and available treatment options.

Very little research has been done on the economic impact soldiers had on both their home communities and on regions where they were stationed. Soldiers were well paid, housed and fed, raising a series of questions about the consumption and savings habits of soldiers and their families. Where and on what did soldiers spend their money? What social mechanisms existed either in

⁴For a discussion of the importance of studying soldiers' migration, see Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, pp. 75-86.

the army or in local communities, to encourage soldiers to spend, save or invest their money? Did the return of ex-soldiers with gratuities and pensions cause widespread economic and social disruption or were they quickly re-integrated into their communities?

Did military service and the return of ex-soldiers encourage the diffusion of new ideas, changing views of the world, and expectations of government in African communities? How did military service and wartime experiences influence the growth of political awareness and the rise of nationalism? Historians have often credited returning soldiers with being at the forefront of the rise of anti-colonial movements. World War Two has often been called a watershed that exposed many Africans to new ideas, clearly demonstrated inconsistencies in government rhetoric, and put an end to many of the myths of European unity and superiority. In British Africa, while veterans organizations played a significant role in the nationalist movement in Ghana and some former askari⁵ joined the ranks of the Mau Mau insurgents in Kenya, there are also numerous examples of veterans returning quietly to civilian life, or remaining convinced that their interests could be better met by retaining ties to colonial governments.

Evidence from Francophone Africa demonstrates similar trends. Like their British counterparts, French West African veterans formed ex-soldiers

organizations, some of which were officially sanctioned by the colonial administration. Veterans became a special interest group and used their political influence to try to obtain access to education and other benefits, and often sought a higher standard of living. During the postwar years veterans became increasingly militant, joined political parties and, by 1950, managed to realize some modest economic and political gains.⁶

Throughout the 1950s, as the French government began to pay pensions and worked to regain the support of veterans, pro-independence factions increasingly came to view ex-soldiers as conservative followers of the colonial regime. Although French African veterans on the whole formed a larger and more cohesive group than their brethren throughout British Africa, who were organized along territorial lines, their support, either for or against the colonial government was hardly monolithic. Although more research needs to be done, evidence exists that soldiers from North and West Africa who fought in Indochina against the Viet Minh in the late 1940's and early 1950's returned to their homes questioning both the legitimacy of the colonial state and the ability of France to maintain control over its African empire. Nowhere was this as problematic as in Algeria, where veterans returned home to find themselves forced to choose between supporting a government that increasingly denied them rights they had

⁵In Swahili the term askari simply means soldier. During the colonial period the Belgians, Italians, British, Portuguese and Germans all used African soldiers in their colonial forces and in the literature these troops are all frequently described as askaris. France also relied heavily on its African colonies to furnish military manpower for both the *Armée d'Afrique* and the *Troupes de Marine*. A distinction should be made however between askaris or members of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* who were professional soldiers, armed, trained and paid by colonial governments, and irregular forces. Units composed of *Ruga Ruga*, *Bande* or Ethiopian Patriots do not fall into this category and are not called askaris.

come to expect and joining the rank of the insurgents. Many Algerian veterans, their memories of French defeat in Indochina still fresh, alienated by the actions of the *colons* and security forces, joined the pro-independence movement, thus using their training and experience to help bring about the end of French rule in Algeria.⁷

Description of the Project

This study attempts to build on previous works dealing with African soldiery and examines the position of Tanganyikan soldiers and military laborers, both within the colonial power structure and their home communities. Chapter one sets out the questions and problems with which this work is concerned, examines the historiography on colonial soldiers in general and African soldiers in particular and includes a discussion of the methodology used in the project. Chapter two briefly discusses the formation and composition of the *Schutztruppe* in German East Africa and the KAR in the neighboring British colonies. Chapter three discusses the expansion of British and German forces during the First World War and the impact of the conflict on the territory. The fourth chapter concentrates on the aftermath of the war on the territory: the formation of the mandate and Tanganyika's position in East African defense policy. Chapter five examines military service in the inter-war years, concentrating on the social and

⁶Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, pp. 146-163; Nancy Ellen Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune: Ivoirien Tirailleurs of World War II*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992) pp. 203-228.

economic factors that encouraged Africans to enlist in the colonial army and the importance military authorities placed on recruiting members of the so called "martial races." This chapter also looks at many aspects of daily military life, including relations between soldiers and other sectors of colonial society, military families, discipline and methods of resistance and protest askari used to negotiate conditions of service. Chapter six discusses the Tanganyikan contribution to Imperial forces during the Second World War. The seventh chapter examines askaris' reactions to their wartime experiences and shows how wartime service changed many soldiers' perceptions of British power. Chapter eight concentrates on the social and economic impact of the war on African communities in Tanganyika. Chapter nine looks at the process of demobilization and the political, social and economic repercussions connected with the return and re-absorption of large numbers of ex-soldiers to their communities. Chapter ten examines military service in Tanganyika through independence and concludes with the disbanding of the remnants of the colonial military following the 1964 Tanganyika Rifles' mutiny.⁸ The final chapter explores the current position of Tanzanian veterans and their continuing battle for pensions and other

⁷References to Algerian soldiers who returned from Indochina and fought against the French can be found throughout Alistair Home's, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. (New York: Macmillan, 1987). Further examples, as well as a discussion of Viet-Minh propaganda and "brainwashing" techniques used on French soldiers from North and Tropical Africa captured during the battle of Dien Bien Phu, can be found in: Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*. (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company 1966), pp. 438-442. In the postface, Fall mentions one master sergeant who served in Indochina and returned to Algeria, where he fought against the French. Following independence, he became a member of the Algerian Parliament.

⁸The 1964 Tanganyika Rifles' mutiny remains a politically sensitive topic in Tanzania. To avoid any difficulties in getting local support and government approval to conduct research, the portion of this project based on Tanzanian sources ends with the coming of independence in 1961. No research on the Tanganyikan Rifles after 1961, either archival or fieldwork, was conducted during either of my two trips to Tanzania.

forms of recognition and support from both the British Commonwealth and the Tanzanian government.

Historiography on the Role of Non-Citizen Soldiers in Imperial Expansion

The European nations engaged in the partition and occupation of Africa relied on national armies to protect the metropole and advance their interests in Europe, but often turned to subject peoples to expand and protect their colonial empires. The use of politically marginal foreign troops to pacify and garrison newly occupied territories was a well-established practice long before European powers began to colonize Africa at the end of the 19th century.

Throughout history the ability of empires to occupy and effectively control conquered territory was based on their capacity to form alliances, exploit economic, social and political cleavages and conscript soldiers from recently subjugated populations. Recruits and conscripts were drawn from a wide range of social strata but in general the rank and file came from politically or economically marginal classes or ethnic groups and, in some cases, even slaves. Officers and elite corps were frequently raised from either the citizens of the imperial power itself or from elements of conquered societies who, for reasons of class or ethnicity, were viewed as reliable. Frequently, empires resorted to repressive measures to meet their military manpower requirements. In some cases however, colonized peoples were persuaded to join the armed forces through promises of social advancement, economic benefits, or, in the case of slave armies, the possibility of eventual emancipation.

The Roman Empire provides an excellent example of how marginal peoples were used to further the expansion and later guarantee control over an empire. At the core of Roman military power were the legions consisting of well-trained infantry units recruited from the Roman citizenry. In battle, Roman legionaries, well armored and heavily armed, served as close combat troops.

Legions were supported in the field by units of auxiliaries composed of men drawn from the provinces. Although the composition and quality of these forces varied considerably, auxiliary units frequently were lightly armed and often poorly trained. In many campaigns auxiliaries were used to bolster the numbers of Roman forces, soak up casualties, and act in a support role guarding lines of communication. Roman auxiliaries often served as archers or slingers, or as cavalry providing the long ranged firepower and mobility that the legions lacked. In exchange for long military service, auxiliaries became eligible for Roman citizenship.⁹

Throughout the Muslim world extensive use was made of slave soldiers. Following the conquest of the Middle East and parts of North Africa, Muslims became more interested in administering newly acquired territories than serving in the armed forces. Rulers in both Egypt and the Ottoman Empire turned increasingly to African slaves to fill the ranks of their armies and ensure their power base. To guarantee both the political loyalty and military efficiency of these slave armies, rulers purchased or captured children and inculcated them with martial ideals and a sense of loyalty. In Egypt, slave soldiers were known as Mamluks, while in the Ottoman Empire the term Janissarie was used.

In both regions, over time, slave soldiers evolved their own identity that was heavily dependent on their military training and position. In Egypt, the Mamluks became so powerful they eventually overthrew their former masters

⁹Roy W. Davies, *Service in the Roman Army*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), pp. 3-30; G. L. Gheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1914), pp. 21-101 and Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), pp. 56-77.

and established their own government, remaining in power until they were defeated by Napoleon. The institution of military slavery continued in Egypt during the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Egyptian ruler invaded the Sudan in part to capture slave soldiers for the Egyptian army. Egyptian slave soldiers remained in the Sudan until rebellious Mahdist forces overwhelmed and scattered the garrisons. Some Egyptian slave-soldiers, cut off in the province of Equatoria by Mahdist forces, were eventually recruited by the British and formed the core of KAR battalions in Uganda.¹⁰

Few empires relied so heavily on subject peoples to defend and control their colonies as the British. Although Britain always emphasized the importance of the Royal Navy, and viewed the primary mission of the army as home defense, the growth of Britain's overseas empire forced both home governments and colonial administrations to seek recruits from among the ranks of the newly conquered. This trend began during the period of old imperial expansion in the 1700's, when the British made inroads in the Indian sub-continent and established colonies in North America and the Caribbean. In Asia, the East India Company recruited and trained large numbers of Sepoys (Indian soldiers) to serve in its Indian armies. Led by British officers, Indian troops won a series of important victories against both Indian rulers resisting British encroachment and interference in local affairs, and the French who were trying to expand their

¹⁰For a detailed discussion of military slavery in the Islamic world see Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Mention is made of how the British recruited Sudanese troops in Uganda in Lloyd-Jones, *K.A.R.*, pp. 31-40.

influence in the region.¹¹

In North America during the Seven Years war and the American Revolution, British forces in the area included large numbers of Irish and Scottish soldiers, Hessian mercenaries, and Native American and Tory allies. Throughout the nineteenth century, Scotland and Ireland continued to serve as important recruiting grounds for the British military, especially the army.¹² During the Napoleonic wars, British officers stationed in the Caribbean purchased slaves and trained them as soldiers for the West Indian Regiments. In exchange for a long period of military service, soldiers from the West Indian Regiments were emancipated.¹³

In the early years of the twentieth century the use of regular British army units as garrison forces throughout the empire declined. During the early 1880's the Stanhope Memorandum defined the primary function of the British army as the home defense of the United Kingdom and the garrisoning of India and other British colonies. Much lower priority was given to creating a two-corps force that could be deployed overseas. The Boer war revealed numerous weaknesses within the British army and, starting in 1906, a series of army reforms was carried

¹¹T. A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia, 1600-1947*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 21-67; Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers and Men*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 17-26.

¹²On the recruiting of Scottish soldiers into the British Army see Diana M. Henderson, *Highland Soldier: A Social Study of the Highland Regiments, 1820-1920*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers LTD, 1989), pp. 1-52 and Michael Brander, *The Scottish Highlanders and their Regiments*, (London: Seely, Service & Co. LTD., 1971), pp. 37-48, 161-172. Ireland's contribution of soldiers to the British military is dealt with by Keith Jeffery, "The Irish Military Tradition and the British Empire," in *An Irish Empire?* Keith Jeffery Ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). pp. 94-122.

out that eventually resulted in the creation of a expeditionary force composed of six divisions and four cavalry brigades. To meet the requirements for the expeditionary force, and for a smaller contingent intended for imperial policing, reductions had to be made in British garrisons overseas. At the time British regiments were deployed mainly in highly strategic areas such as South Africa, Egypt, Gibraltar, India and Singapore. Following the Haldane reforms some British planners envisioned expeditionary forces acting in a role similar to the modern rapid reaction forces maintained by the United States and France. Expeditionary forces could be deployed around the globe, but when the fighting ended, the responsibility for ensuring continued security would revert to local units supported by small contingents of either the Regular or Indian army.¹⁴

In Asia, British military power was concentrated in India, garrisoned since the days of the East India Company by units of both the Indian and British armies. The Indian force was a separate entity from the British regulars with its own organization, pay scales and officer corps. Throughout the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, India provided much of the military manpower British civilian and military policy makers relied on to defend and expand the empire. Confidence in the Indian army allowed policy makers in London to keep the British regular army small, while at the same time ensuring that Britain had access to a vast pool of proven soldiers. Although Indian troops

¹³For a history of the West Indian Regiments, see Roger Norman Buckley, *Soldiers in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) and Roger Norman Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies: Society and the Military in the Revolutionary Age*. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998).

¹⁴F. W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organization in Two World Wars*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 4-16.

were more expensive to field than other non-European colonial units, they were considerably cheaper to train and deploy than British regular army units of comparable size.

Britain's long history with the Indian army played an important role in influencing the formation of military traditions in Britain's colonial forces, including the KAR. Officers seconded from the Indian army for duty with the KAR brought with them fixed ideas of what qualities were needed to make a good "native soldier", including methods of training and discipline and the notion that their role was to serve as a just and all-knowing father figure to their troops. One of the most important contributions Indian army officers brought to the KAR was the practice of recruiting "martial races" for army service. British officers serving in the Indian army became convinced that certain ethnic groups made the best soldiers, and it is not surprising that these ideas and traditions, modified to meet local circumstances, were transferred to British colonial forces throughout Africa.¹⁵

The extent and composition of colonial military forces depended on the local population, economy and regional security concerns. In the crown colonies of Australia and Canada, military forces were recruited from among the European settler populations. The defense of Burma, originally the responsibility of the Indian army, was later entrusted to the Burmese Rifles led by British or Indian army officers. The British also recruited large numbers of Nepalese for Gurka Regiments, even though Nepal was not under direct British control. Due to

¹⁵H. Moyse -Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1956), pp. 17-20, 134-136; Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, pp. 21-23.

their limited economic and strategic value the security of British colonies in Africa fell to locally recruited units led by British officers. In West Africa, local units included the Royal West African Frontier Force in Nigeria and the Gold Coast Regiment. In Central Africa the Northern Rhodesia Regiment provided regional security, while the KAR provided the military force for Nyasaland, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika. In British Somaliland, the local military presence consisted, depending on the time-period, of units of either the KAR or of the Somaliland Scouts. The Egyptian army, commanded by British officers, garrisoned the Anglo-Egyptian condominium in the Sudan.¹⁶

African Colonial Soldiers

Africa's colonial powers relied to varying degrees on locally recruited soldiers and police to defend their territories and maintain internal security. They recruited local forces led by a cadre of European officers. During the scramble for Africa, European powers occupied territory on the ground by signing treaties with local rulers, forging alliances and convincing marginal groups to support their diplomatic and military efforts. Across the continent army officers and the administrators of European trading companies often recruited slaves or freed slaves. The abolition of slavery throughout Africa at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, far from ending the practice of turning former slaves into soldiers, may actually have resulted in increasing numbers of ex-slaves enlisting in the armed forces. Recently freed slaves had few economic options open to them, since they often lacked family and community ties. In Kamerun, the Germans recruited heavily among the

¹⁶Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies*, pp. 199-210.

emancipated slave community, while the Belgians likewise enlisted large numbers of former slaves to serve in the *Force Publique*.

In the late 1880's, the German East Africa Company recruited a defense force of six hundred askari from the Sudan. Although the men enjoyed the reputation of being among the best soldiers in Africa, German officers soon realized that it would make more strategic and economic sense to recruit from within the colony, where recruits knew the local ethnic groups, landscape and terrain. Recently freed slaves were among the first groups to be recruited in large numbers, but German officers soon turned to the interior to meet their troop requirements. By the start of the First World War, with the exception of a handful of Sudanese NCO's, the rank and file of the German force came from tribes within the colony.¹⁷

While the Germans had turned to the Sudanese to provide the first soldiers for their fledgling colony, the British in the early period of their administration in East Africa also relied on soldiers recruited from external sources. In Uganda, the British East African Company mustered a small body of Sudanese troops to promote and protect their interests. Over time, this small force was expanded by the inclusion of Sudanese soldiers who had been part of Emin Pasha's garrison in Equatoria and owed allegiance to the Khedive of Egypt. In addition to the Sudanese, the British also relied heavily on local allies and levies. The Sudanese troops and their African allies proved effective in

securing British interests in Uganda, but in 1897 most of the Sudanese soldiers mutinied. British administrators in the region were forced to send in the East African Rifles, a contingent of armed Swahilis and Indian troops, to end the mutiny.¹⁸

To the south in the East Africa Protectorate (modern Kenya), the situation was much the same with local administrators relying on a combination of local units as well as forces recruited from abroad. To extend their power along the coast and protect the surveyors and work crews building the Kenya-Uganda railway, the British recruited a mixed bag of foreigners and Africans from outside the region, including Sudanese, Zanzibaris, ex-slaves and out of work caravan porters and ivory hunters from as far afield as the Belgian Congo and the German controlled mainland to the south, as well as a force of Punjabi and Baluchi soldiers from India. As the British moved into the interior, crushed resistance and consolidated their power, they began to recruit soldiers from among ethnic groups that had allied with them during the conquest period.¹⁹ Like the Germans to the south, the British discovered that many of the ethnic groups in the interior furnished excellent recruits. Local Africans could be trained and fielded at a fraction of the cost and also proved more mobile and well acquainted with local terrain, languages and customs than Sudanese, Indians or Swahili

¹⁷Erick J. Mann, "The Schutztruppe and the Nature of Colonial Warfare During the Conquest of Tanganyika, 1889-1900," Dissertation University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998, pp. 309-315. In 1911, one of the Nyasaland KAR battalions was disbanded, many of the veteran askaris declined to join the reserve, and instead crossed the border into German East Africa and enlisted in the Schutztruppe. Moyse -Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, p. 153.

¹⁸Moyse -Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, pp. 69-86.

¹⁹Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa*, Vol. 1 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), pp. 16-19

soldiers from the coast. Over time the Indian military presence throughout East Africa declined, and African troops replaced the last of the Indian contingents stationed in Uganda and Nyasaland shortly before the outbreak of World War One.²⁰

While the Belgians, Germans and British recruited comparatively small numbers of Africans and used them to expand, consolidate and garrison their African colonies, the Italian and French governments recruited much larger numbers of African soldiers and used them in a far wider role. Italy recruited, trained and deployed a disproportionately large number of Africans, especially considering the size of its colonial holdings. In the 1880's, the Italian government founded the colony of Eritrea on the Red Sea. Italy used the small colony as a staging point for both the 1889 and 1935 invasions of Ethiopia, but Eritrea also served as a recruiting and training ground for African soldiers. The numbers of Eritreans serving in the Italian colonial armed forces steadily increased, and by 1934 the Eritrean army contained just over 60,000 soldiers divided into two divisions, each with 14 battalions. Approximately forty percent of the Eritrean labor force served in the colonial army. In addition to fighting in neighboring Ethiopia and Somalia, the Italian government also used Eritrean troops farther afield, in the pacification campaigns mounted in Libya in the 1920's. The scale of recruiting was unprecedented, and prior to the First World War only France recruited and used African soldiers in such large numbers. Although Eritreans made up the majority of Italy's African soldiers, small numbers of Somalis and

²⁰Moyse -Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, pp. 158-159.

Ethiopians also served in the Italian colonial army.²¹

No other European power relied on African troops over such a long period of time or to such a great extent as France. In the seventeenth century, French officials in Senegambia recruited small numbers of Africans to support local detachments of European troops. Starting in the 1820's, the numbers of Africans under arms gradually increased, and in 1857 Governor Louis Faidherbe of Senegal created the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, France's first permanent body of West African soldiers. Like other imperial powers France used the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* and other African units to complete the conquest and pacification of its substantial holdings in West and North Africa. What sets France's use of African soldiers apart from that of other colonial powers is that gradually the French government came to see the opportunity in West Africa to recruit tens of thousands of soldiers. These soldiers could be mobilized not only to increase and garrison French holdings in Africa, but could also be used, in Europe, to support the French army during future wars. The *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, along with regiments raised in the French colonies in North Africa, were used to expand and garrison French colonies outside of Africa as well as to participate in the defense of the metropole during both world wars.²²

Misconceptions about race played an important role in the formation and expansion of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* in French West Africa. The leading

²¹Tekeste Negash. *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941*. (Stockholm: Amqvist & Wiksell International, 1987). To give some idea of comparison, during the same time period throughout the British controlled territories in East Africa, there were only six battalions of the KAR and most of these were severely under strength and remained poorly equipped until the eve of the Second World War.

²²Anthony Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa*, (London: Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1988)

proponent of the formation of a Black African army was Charles Mangin, a French army officer who spent part of his career serving in West Africa. In his influential book *La Force Noire*, published in 1910, Mangin argued that France's African colonies could provide the empire with an unending supply of suitable recruits, who, for racial and cultural reasons, could be turned into perfect soldiers. Voicing the same argument Roman officers used centuries before to justify recruiting auxiliaries from the provinces, Mangin asserted that rural African communities would provide better soldiers than Europe, where large segments of the population had been ruined by urban life and factory work. Mangin also used "scientific evidence" to support his vision, arguing that Africans had less developed nervous systems than Europeans and thus were less sensitive to pain. It is not known to what extent the French government's decision to expand the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* was influenced by the vision of commanding unstoppable hordes of bloodthirsty African warriors capable of fighting even when mortally wounded. Certainly the idea must have had some appeal, especially considering other relevant factors, including the humiliating defeat France suffered in the Franco-Prussian war, the country's declining birthrate in the early decades of century, and the increasing need for ever greater numbers of troops to garrison recently pacified territories in West and North Africa.²³

French use of African troops outside the continent predates the period of the rapid expansion of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* in the decade before the First World War. In the 1860's, a battalion of Egyptian Sudanese soldiers served

²³Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, pp. 28-30; On French theories of scientific racism, see William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter With Africans: White Responses to Blacks, 1530-1880*,

alongside the French forces sent to Mexico to try to keep Napoleon III's puppet, the Austrian archduke Maximilian, on his Mexican throne.²⁴ France continued to rely on its African territories as a source of military manpower and, on the eve of the First World War, the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* contained some 18,000 soldiers organized in six regiments. Originally, Mangin and his supporters envisioned a French African army composed entirely of volunteer professional soldiers drawn from West Africa's martial races; particularly the Bambara. Mangin's rosy assessments of West Africa's potential as a military recruiting ground proved ill-informed and over-optimistic. Throughout French West Africa, the Army had difficulty competing with civilian employers and it became necessary to institute partial conscription to fill the ranks of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*. Following the outbreak of the First World War, the French Government, desperate for ever increasing numbers of troops, once again turned to West Africa. During the war, West African soldiers participated in the protracted campaign against the Germans in Kamerun, served with distinction at the Dardanelles, and participated in the terrible fighting on the Western Front.

The rank and file of the early *Tirailleurs Senegalais* units comprised numerous ex-slaves. After serving between twelve and fifteen years in the army, former slaves would be awarded their freedom. The system of procuring slaves as recruits was officially abolished in the 1880's, and military planners who dreamed of forging an African army consisting entirely of professional career soldiers found their hopes dashed by the growing civilian labor requirements of

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 215-262.

both the private and public sectors. Stiff competition for labor from both government and civilian employers left the military little option but to turn increasingly to conscription to fill the ranks. Partial conscription began in 1912, but two years later, following the outbreak of the First World War, colonial officials were ordered to provide tens of thousands of West Africans for the army. During the war over 170,000 West African soldiers served in the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*. Even after hostilities ended conscription continued, and in 1919 the government introduced universal peacetime conscription throughout French West Africa, which remained in place until the end of the Second World War.²⁵

France attempted to make universal conscription more palatable to Africans by combining military service with the doctrine of assimilation. While the British stressed the importance of martial races and regimental traditions in their Indian and African regiments, the French colonial army attempted to form a cohesive military by emphasizing the importance of French values and culture and requiring recruits to learn French. Many government officials viewed military service as an important tool helping to turn Africans into Frenchmen. As a result of such policies, French African soldiers enjoyed advantages and opportunities not available to Africans serving in the armed forces of other European powers. Significantly, members of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* could advance through the ranks and become officers. Although only a handful accomplished this goal prior to the Second World War, it must be considered an improvement on the British system where, after the First World War, the highest rank an African could hold

²⁴For a history of this unit, see Richard Hill and Peter Hogg, *A Black Corps d'Elite*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

was Regimental Sergeant Major.²⁶ Another advantage French African soldiers enjoyed was the possibility of receiving a pension after completing a long period of service. Admittedly in the early decades of the twentieth century, a soldier had to serve for 25 years before he became eligible for a pension, but over time the requirements gradually relaxed, and increasing numbers of ex-soldiers, at least in theory, were entitled to some support in return for their sacrifices. In French West Africa, the option also existed for soldiers to become French citizens and military service was an important component in this process. Finally, soldiers and their families enjoyed access to educational opportunities and government employment not available to other civilians.

Military Service in Colonial Tanganyika

Military service in Tanganyika can be roughly divided into five distinct time-periods, each of which witnessed changes in the composition, deployment and ideology of the local forces in the territory. It is important to remember that from 1919 until 1961, the Tanganyikan component of the KAR was part of an inter-territorial force stationed throughout British East Africa. Thus it is impossible to isolate Tanganyikan security concerns, or conditions of military service, from broader regional military policies and trends. Similarly, in order to understand how Tanganyikans viewed the military from the onset of colonial rule, and the legacy of German military traditions in the Tanganyikan battalions of the KAR, it

²⁵Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, pp. 47-64.

²⁶During the conquest of East Africa at the beginning of the 20th century and during the First World War a handful of Africans serving in the KAR were granted the temporary rank of "native officer", roughly equivalent to a junior British officer. In most cases however, the granting of rank to Africans was the product of local necessity instead of a calculated policy. In the 1920's the last KAR battalion to have African officers abandoned the practice and until the Second World War Africans' advancement was limited to the positions of Company and Regimental Sergeant Major.

is necessary first to examine the *Schutztruppe* (German Colonial Defense Force) and the impact of the First World War on the territory.

During the first phase, lasting from the 1890's until the start of the First World War, the German East Africa Company and later the German Colonial Government used local forces to pacify and control the inhabitants of what was to become German East Africa. Widespread resistance necessitating almost continuous campaigning to put down armed revolts characterized the early years of German rule. Following the suppression of the last wide scale African insurrection, Maji Maji, the German colonial regime enjoyed only a few brief years of relative quiet before the onset of the First World War.

The second significant change involving military forces in the region started in 1914 and lasted until the end of the East African campaign late in 1918. Unlike the earlier campaigns of pacification the entire region was drawn into a total war. The recruiting and conscription of hundreds of thousands of African soldiers and military laborers, the duration and scope of operations and the inability of colonial governments to protect civilians, all left a lasting impact on African populations. While Africans long remembered the miseries that accompanied the campaign, colonial policy makers and officers gained a new appreciation for the military capabilities of East African soldiers and would remember and capitalize on this potential during the Second World War.

After the end of German rule and the formation of the British mandate British forces in Tanganyika gradually changed from a garrison of occupation to a military force native to the territory. It was during this period that the Tanganyikan component of the KAR was formed, and British officers, colonial administrators and African soldiers began constructing traditions that would influence military service in the territory for the remainder of British colonial rule. A succession of Tanganyikan governors and Colonial Office officials also had the

difficult job of determining how Tanganyika could most effectively participate in regional defense arrangements without violating the provisions of the mandate.

The fourth period encompasses the years surrounding the Second World War. The 1939-1945, conflict also resulted in heavy demands for African soldiers and military laborers. Hundreds of thousands of East African volunteers and conscripts, including many Tanganyikans, served in the British armed forces many fighting in theaters as far afield as Ethiopia, the Middle East, and Burma. What had been a handful of small, well-trained battalions, composed entirely of volunteers led by professional soldiers, grew into a much larger force drawn from every component of society. The need for African support for the war effort forced British officers and administrators to rely on propaganda and to make promises that raised soldiers' expectations. At the same time, wartime experiences allowed African service men to view British colonial policies in different locations, and to compare their military performance and benefits with those of their Indian, British and American counterparts. Many askaris came away from their military service questioning many of the underlying principles of colonial rule. Soldiers' discontent was increased by the few opportunities open to veterans in postwar Tanganyika.

The final years of the British military presence in Tanganyika lasted from the end of the Second World War through the coming of independence in 1961. Following the war some KAR officers and colonial officials hoped to turn back the clock and return East African military forces to the easy days of the early 1930's, when the forces in the region were responsible for little more than maintaining internal security. Instead, the Tanganyikan component of the KAR found itself having to deal with a variety of new challenges including the growing nationalist movement, participation in counter-insurgency campaigns in Kenya and Malaya and the increasing need to recruit and integrate more educated askaris into the

force.

In the final years leading up to independence, the Tanganyikan military found itself attempting to carry out two contradictory missions, the first being to maintain British rule, while the second was to prepare the army for eventual independence. The arrival of *Uhuru* in 1961, found the new nation with a woefully underdeveloped military, incapable of defending the country from a serious external threat. As a stopgap measure the British government continued to supply technical personnel, weaponry and equipment as well as the majority of the officers, including the commander. It was not until 1964 that the last vestiges of the colonial military were finally swept away in a series of reforms following the mutiny of the Tanganyika Rifles.

In comparing Tanganyika with neighboring British colonies, it could be argued that it is perhaps the least desirable territory in which to look at African reactions to military service. Kenya and Nyasaland both recruited and maintained larger forces, while in Uganda the Rifles functioned to provide frontier defense as well as internal security. In all three territories, the KAR had been present since the creation of the regiment in 1902. In contrast, the first Tanganyikans were recruited into the KAR in the middle of the First World War and during the inter-war years, Tanganyika mustered only a single KAR battalion.

There are a number of reasons why this study concentrates primarily on African military service in Tanganyika, instead of looking at the KAR as an institution, the region as a whole or military service in one of the other British colonies. Several studies of the KAR, including an excellent institutional history, already exist. The aim of this work is not to write another military history of the regiment, but to create a social history centered on the lives and aspirations of soldiers and members of their communities. To attempt such a study involving

the whole of the KAR would require looking at government policies, conditions of service and interactions between soldiers and civilians across all of East Africa. At best, such a project would create a series of scattered microcosms roughly fitted into a broad framework and local and even regional variations and complexities would be lost. Concentrating on colonial Tanganyika limited the project both chronologically and geographically, yet at the same time provided a unique setting in which to examine the formation of local KAR battalions used to maintain but not create colonial rule.

Unlike Kenya, Uganda and Nyasaland, Tanganyika was not occupied and colonized by the British in the 1880s, but only came under British control as a League of Nations mandate territory following Germany's defeat in the First World War. Historians are still questioning the importance of the Mandate in forming British administrative policies in Tanganyika, and although most of these arguments fall outside the scope of this work, the territory's status as a Mandate Territory certainly had an impact on both local and regional defense policy. As will be seen in chapter four, colonial records reveal that until the start of the Second World War, British administrators in Tanganyika, as well as their superiors in London, remained acutely aware that the territory was not a British colony. They felt that every effort had to be taken to comply with the rules of the mandate, at least in word, if not in deed. Historians have just started to look at how Tanganyika's position as a mandate altered the administration of the territory. Certainly the terms of the mandate, combined with fears of political repercussions, forced the administration carefully to consider many issues

connected to the establishment and administration of military forces in the territory.²⁷

Tanganyika's late inclusion into the British Empire provides an excellent environment in which to look at British perceptions of ethnicity and the role these ideas played in both civil and military administration. Unlike Nigeria and Kenya, where military forces were raised to help complete the pacification of the region before the establishment of a civilian administration, in Tanganyika, the government and the army were created at almost the same time. From the mid-1920's through the start of the Second World War, many of the changes in the colonial military mirrored similar trends occurring in the civil administration, as Tanganyika was gradually transformed from a recently liberated ex-German colony to a new mandate territory. Starting in the late 1920's, the Tanganyikan government, wanting to correct the damage done to "traditional" African societies by German excesses, began to establish a system of indirect rule based on the notion that all Africans belonged to tribes. According to the doctrine of indirect rule, African ethnic groups possessed well-established political, social and legal systems as well as a distinct language. Therefore the most enlightened and cost-effective means to administer the territory was to create native authorities responsible for the administration of their own ethnic groups.

The implementation of indirect rule mirrored similar trends in military recruitment and the transition from a garrison of occupation to locally recruited

²⁷For a discussion of the mandate system and Tanganyika, see Michael D. Callahan "Mandates and Empire in Africa: Britain, France, and the League of Nations Mandates System, 1914-1931," Dissertation Michigan State University, 1995 and Peter A. Dumbuya, *Tanganyika Under International Mandate, 1919-1946*, (New York: University Press of America, 1995); Recruitment of

troops. Like their civilian counterparts, British officers, many of whom had served in India, quickly developed fixed ideas about which African ethnic groups possessed the necessary inherent qualities to make good soldiers. Since the KAR only recruited in certain districts and maintained strict ethnic quotas, tribal affiliation quickly became the first criterion for determining if an African could join the army. In a very short time the system became self-perpetuating and officers who had never served in East Africa but had been told by friends or superiors about the KAR, arrived in country believing that only certain ethnic groups could become reliable soldiers.

The creation of "martial traditions," perhaps better labeled martial stereotypes, was perpetuated by African societies as well as European officers. Africans had to be willing to serve in the army in large numbers and prove themselves reliable in order to sustain their reputation as good soldiers. Some ethnic groups emphasized their military traditions and attempted to maintain close ties with the KAR because they realized that military service was one way to gain material benefits and status from the government. By emphasizing military traditions and segregating askaris from the rest of the civilian population through regulations, discipline and the use of uniforms, KAR officers stressed not only the elite status of soldiers but also intensified the ethnic differences between Africans who were fit to be soldiers and the majority who were not. These policies were effective, and most askaris thought they were superior to other Africans, despite the fact that other ethnic groups were often better educated, came from wealthier districts and held higher positions of power in the

Africans in Tanganyika 1940, PRO, CO 820/16.

government. Over time this sense of elitism and the creation of new military identities among groups of soldiers centered on their service in the KAR, instead of traditional martial qualities, led many to question the legitimacy of "traditional" authority within their own ethnic groups. This unintended, although not entirely unforeseen, consequence of the policy of ethnic recruiting combined with military service became most noticeable during and immediately after the Second World War. Attempting to limit friction between soldiers returning from the war and older established "traditional authorities", colonial officials tried to re-integrate soldiers back into their communities as quickly as possible, stressing askaris' obligations to their families and native authorities as well as to the government.

The use of indirect rule as a means of administration was by no means confined to Tanganyika, but it did mark a radical departure in the territory from the German and post-war British administrations that preceded it. As will be seen in chapter five, Tanganyika's status as a former German colony raises a series of questions about whether military service was any different for Tanganyikans than for Africans serving in Kenyan, Ugandan and Nyasaland KAR battalions. Certainly in parts of Tanganyika, Africans identified the *Schutztruppe* as the force responsible for the same kinds of brutal pacification campaigns that the KAR perpetrated against the Nandi and Turkana in Kenya. In the southern portion of the territory, the scorched earth campaign mounted by German forces during the suppression of the Maji Maji rebellion was vividly remembered. In other areas German rule, while seldom recalled with fondness, was considered economically and educationally more beneficial to certain ethnic groups than the British administration that followed. Another important point is that, although every territory in the region participated in the East African campaign, the majority of the war was fought in German East Africa. Thus the inhabitants of Tanganyika had very different wartime experiences from the vast majority of Africans in the

British colonies to the north and south. While large numbers of Africans from Nyasaland, Kenya and Uganda were conscripted to serve in the KAR and the Carrier Corps, the civilian populations of these territories, unlike the inhabitants of German East Africa, seldom had to endure the direct results of the campaign. Even after the war ended, a comparatively large German settler population remained in the mandate, thus making Tanganyika the only British territory in East Africa where KAR units routinely held flag marches and other military demonstrations to remind German settlers, as well as Africans, of the coercive power controlled by the government.

A final area that needs to be examined concerns the continuation of German military traditions in the Tanganyikan component of the KAR. Many of the Africans who enlisted in the KAR during and immediately after World War I had fought in the German *Schutztruppe*. More than one British officer who served in Tanganyika in the 1920's remarked on how the askari under their command compared the two military systems, and in some cases even continued to wear medals awarded by the German colonial government.²⁸ Although much of the evidence concerning the lasting impact of the period of German rule is sketchy and anecdotal, it should not be dismissed as unimportant. One example of why these differences need to be carefully examined can be demonstrated by looking at the reactions of East African communities to the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1939, when British

²⁸One officer who served in Kenya during the 1940's mentions that one of his corporals complained that he was not allowed to wear the medals he had been awarded when fighting in the *Schutztruppe*, while his comrades who had fought in the KAR were allowed to wear theirs. Biggs, M. W. IWM, Sound Archive, 4419.

authorities in Nyasaland and Kenya announced that Britain was at war with Germany, many Africans fled into the bush fearing the British would once again draft large numbers of porters for the Carrier Corps. In parts of Tanganyika the reaction was similar, but in some communities, district reports clearly state that Africans were motivated far more by fear that the Germans would return and exact reprisals on communities for collaborating with the British than that they would be forced to serve in the military. In other districts, the opposite occurred and young men went to the boma to volunteer to serve in the KAR so that the Germans would be quickly defeated and could not return to Tanganyika. In these cases, the African response to the outbreak of the war was similar but the motivation was entirely different.

One of the reasons it is difficult to determine the significance of the period of German administration for Tanganyika, is that all four British East African territories had very different economies, political and social structures, and defense requirements. This makes it almost impossible to make comparisons, or claim that African experiences in the military in one district was representative of even the territory as a whole, let alone throughout all of British East Africa. Nyasaland, while militarily involved in East Africa before the First World War, economically had much closer ties with southern Africa. The economic pull from South African mines forced civilian and military labor recruiters to compete for young men, and this certainly had an impact on military recruiting. It is not surprising that many askari from Nyasaland viewed service in the KAR as an alternative to migrating to the South African mines. In terms of military policy, Nyasaland and Tanganyika had a great deal in common, since portions of two of the KAR battalions raised in Nyasaland were stationed in southern Tanganyika during much of the inter-war period. In the 1930's, the restructuring of the KAR further unified the military apparatus of the two territories, forming a southern

brigade made up of the Tanganyikan and Nyasaland battalions of the regiment.

Attempting to compare military service in Tanganyika with Kenya is fraught with even greater difficulties. Of the four East African territories, Kenya had the largest and most vocal settler population, which wielded considerable power in local government affairs. The influence of settlers and the repeated efforts by the Kenyan government to ensure European access to land and available sources of African labor, resulted in social and economic conditions considerably at variance with those found in Tanganyika. Although Tanganyika had a larger settler community than either Nyasaland or Uganda, it was significantly smaller than the settler population in Kenya. The Tanganyikan government also took considerable pains to limit European settlement in the territory following the First World War, and ensured that both settlers and government officials clearly understood that Tanganyika was not Kenya, and that the labor practices and working conditions prevalent in Kenya would not be tolerated.

In the military sphere, the presence of large numbers of settlers gave the Kenyan government a possible military alternative to the KAR other than police forces. During the First World War, a combination of local Kenyan settlers and foreign adventurers formed themselves into the East African Mounted Rifles and participated in the early stages of the East African campaign. In 1937, the Kenya regiment was formed from the ranks of settlers and remained a distinct unit not

affiliated with the KAR until it was disbanded in 1963.²⁹ Kenya was also considered of much greater economic and strategic importance than any other territory in the region. Nairobi was the center of the British administration in East Africa and the headquarters for the East African Command. In addition, many of the technical and support services were located in Nairobi.

Differences also existed in the defense requirements of the four East African territories. In all four territories, the primary function of the KAR was to ensure internal security, but both Kenya and Uganda also relied heavily on the KAR to guard against external incursions. In Kenya, KAR detachments manned garrisons along the Northwest Frontier District, attempting to limit the activities of raiders and smugglers operating from Ethiopia and Somalia, while in Uganda KAR forces played a similar role in the Nile District bordering the Sudan.

Historiography and Methodology

Recently, historians working on Francophone Africa have started to combine archival sources with oral testimony gathered from African veterans and have constructed a more complex picture of the considerable effect military socialization and experiences had on African soldiers and communities. Most of these studies have concentrated on French West Africa, including Myron Echenberg's detailed study of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*: Using a combination of official documents and oral sources, Echenberg examines the results of recruitment, conscription, combat and military ideology on soldiers and veterans

²⁹The formation and performance of the East African Mounted Rifles is described in: Charles Miller, *Battle For The Bundu*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 51-53. For a brief history of the Kenya Regiment, see: Len Weaver Esq. "The Kenya Regiment" in Malcom Page A *History of the King's African Rifles and the East African Forces*. (London: Leo Cooper, 1998), pp. 239-252.

from French West Africa. By viewing military service as a component of topics such as migration, colonial labor policy, demography and political mobilization, Echenberg incorporates military service into larger social processes, and demonstrates that military service had wide ranging effects on both African and European communities. Another recent study by Nancy Lawler, concentrating on soldiers from the Ivory Coast, examines the repercussions of military service at the regional and local level. Both Echenberg and Lawler illustrate that service in the colonial military forever changed the lives of many soldiers, but that further research is needed to form a more complete picture of African military life.

Few comparable studies exist which examine social aspects of military service in British East and West Africa. David Killingray's and Anthony Clayton's *Khaki and Blue*, relying primarily on the memories of British officers and officials, is one of the few works that attempts to construct a social history concentrating on the military and police forces in both East and West Africa.³⁰ A great deal has been written about the East African Campaign, but with the exception of Geoffrey Hodges *The Carrier Corps*, and articles written by Melvin Page and a handful of others, most of this literature provides very few insights into how Africans viewed the war and their role in the conflict.³¹ The one area where a considerable amount of research has been done is on the role of the military in colonial Kenya. Timothy Parsons recently finished a social history of the KAR,

³⁰Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa*, (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989)

³¹On the role of African soldiers and laborers in the East African, see Geoffrey Hodges, *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914-1918*, (Greenwood Press: Westport CT, 1986) and the articles in Melvin E. Page Ed. *Africa and the First World War*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987)

and although he looks at the regiment throughout East Africa, the majority of his research is concentrated on Kenya and Nyasaland.³² A great deal can also be learned about army life and African views of the military by reading the extensive literature on the origins of the nationalist movement in Kenya and the causes and consequences of the Mau Mau uprising.

Compared to Kenya, the body of literature on the history of the KAR in Tanganyika is sparse indeed. John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika* provides an excellent starting point, particularly when looking at the impact of the First World War on the region, and how the British administration implemented the system of indirect rule.³³ Although Iliffe's book contains some information on Tanganyikan involvement in the Second World War, far more detail can be found in Nicholas Westcott's articles and unpublished dissertation.³⁴ Nestor Luanda's recently published account of the Tanganyika Rifles' mutiny of 1964 provides information on the tensions that existed in the force following independence, and a number of other political scientists and historians have also weighed in on this important event.³⁵

This study examines the experiences and aspirations of Tanganyikan soldiers and military laborers, and is based on a combination of archival sources

³²Timothy H. Parsons, *The African Rank-And-File*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

³³John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 240-261, 318-341.

³⁴Nicholas Westcott, "The Impact of the Second World War on Tanganyika, 1939-49," in *Africa and the Second World War*, David Killingray and Richard Rathbone Eds. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1986), pp. 143-159.

³⁵Tanzania People's Defense Forces, *Tanganyika Rifles Mutiny: January 1964*, (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1993); see also Ali A. Mari, "Anti-Militarism and Political Militancy in Tanzania," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* IX, 9, (1964) and Elise Forbes Pachter, "Contra-Coup: Civilian Control of the Military in Guinea, Tanzania, and Mozambique" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 20, 4 (1982).

and oral interviews. Over 40 ex-service men, family members and civilians were interviewed during the course of the project. Only by combining their experiences and memories with official sources is it possible to begin to attempt to understand how Africans lived and viewed life in the colonial military. The veterans and civilians interviewed came from diverse areas, backgrounds, social and economic groups. During interviews veterans were questioned about when and how they were recruited or conscripted into the army, their military experiences, what they did when they were discharged and what feelings or ideas they formed about their military service. Family members and civilians were asked different questions concerning what conditions were like during the Second World War, how askaris interacted with civilians, the impact of recruiting on communities and what relations were like between soldiers and civilians following demobilization. Most ex-askaris could recall their own service careers with great clarity, but when asked questions about broader issues relating either to the army as an institution or general conditions of service, they often could not answer or spoke in extremely general terms.

One of the greatest challenges involved in this project was locating surviving veterans and interviewing them. In 1999, I spent four months in Tanzania conducting research at the Tanzanian National archives and interviewing ex-askaris. I returned to Tanzania in 2000 for a month to carry out some additional interviews, and finish working with documents I had not completed during my first trip. Although I had access to district reports and some recruiting records, service records remain closed to the public. Even if the records were available, the information would, in most cases, be more than four decades out of date, thus providing little help in determining the optimal places to locate veterans. For these reasons, I originally intended to spend two months in Dar es Salaam doing archival work, obtaining the necessary permits, and making

local contacts before going to the districts of Iringa and Songea to conduct interviews. Since many former askari live in rural areas scattered throughout Tanzania, and the KAR recruited heavily in Iringa and Songea throughout the colonial period, I thought these districts would contain the largest numbers of surviving veterans. Shortly after my arrival logistical and bureaucratic obstacles, combined with the limited time I had available, forced me to revise my research agenda and concentrate on locating and interviewing veterans living in or near Dar es Salaam.

I was considerably aided in my efforts by the recommendations of several of the faculty members of the departments of history and geography at the University of Dar es Salaam, and by two research assistants who did the majority of work tracking down veterans and persuading them to be interviewed. Approximately one third of the veterans and civilians interviewed were located by talking with people at neighborhood gathering places, tracking down leads, and through the assistance of local government officials. While these methods proved extremely time consuming, they did yield results and had the added benefit of enabling us to conduct group interviews where both veterans and civilians presented their memories and views on life during the Second World War. Although all the people we located through these methods lived in Dar es Salaam, many of them had been recruited in rural areas and only moved to the city after completing their military service.

The remaining ex-soldiers were interviewed at the Tanzanian Legion and Club, the successor organization to the former Tanganyikan chapter of the British Legion. The officers of the Legion not only helped us locate many former askari, but graciously allocated a room for our use and allowed us to interview soldiers during a four-day legion meeting. This opportunity was invaluable, because veterans, both individuals and delegations representing larger groups of

ex-soldiers, came from urban and rural areas throughout Tanzania, thus providing details on recruiting and military life in many districts.

Initially I was hesitant to interview large numbers of veterans connected with the former British Legion, because the majority of ex-askari did not join the organization, and those who did were considered loyal to the colonial government. When I began interviewing members of the Legion, I discovered that many veterans had only recently joined the organization following a series of newspaper articles about the possibility of the Commonwealth granting small pensions to ex-soldiers and their dependents. Only a few of the veterans I spoke to had joined the Legion following the Second World War, and most admitted that their primary reason for joining at such a late date was so that they would not be overlooked and miss out on any payments or benefits that might become available.

A variety of techniques were used to conduct interviews, depending on the physical setting, the comfort level of the person being interviewed, and the objective behind the interview. In every case, the purpose of the project was explained to participants in detail before the interview began, and it was also stressed that at any time the person could stop the interview or ask that the tape be turned off so that anything said would remain off the record. Most ex-soldiers and military laborers were interviewed individually, and almost all of them permitted the proceedings to be taped. All but four of the interviews were conducted in Swahili, with the remainder being carried out in English. During most interviews my assistants posed the majority of the questions and taped the proceedings, while I took notes and occasionally asked for clarification on specific subjects or events. To ensure that we asked similar questions of each veteran, we occasionally referred to a guide of prepared questions (see appendix A) but this was never used as a questionnaire. A few veterans

questioned why they were being asked about their ethnic and religious affiliations and wanted to know how this was important to learning about their military service. Once we explained how these questions fit into the project almost every veteran agreed to answer. In the few cases where veterans did not wish to respond to specific questions or voiced disquiet about certain lines of inquiry we proceeded with the interview and did not press the point.

The extent to which standard questions were used depended largely on the personality and comfort level of the person being interviewed. Some interviews were extremely formal, with the interviewee answering each question and then stopping and waiting for the next query. Other ex-askari sat down, made certain that the tape recorder was on, and proceeded to tell us their life stories in great detail. In the latter case, we found that it was preferable to let people talk and then touch on any subjects that needed clarification when they finished, rather than interrupt and break their train of thought. In the few cases where individuals agreed to talk to us but did not want to be recorded, the interview was conducted in the normal manner except that notes had to be taken by hand and therefore are much less detailed. Interviews with civilians were carried out in a similar fashion with the significant exception that we were much more interested in their general impressions of the military and its local role than with specific details. In addition to individual interviews, we also conducted a number of group interviews, most of which were not taped. As with the civilian interviews, the main objective of these group sessions was to gain background information, or note perceptions about certain aspects of military life.

With the exception of two individuals who joined the KAR in the mid 1930's, all of the ex-askaris I spoke with served in the military during or shortly after the Second World War. Despite the fact that most veterans had to recall events that they witnessed or experienced over fifty years ago, all but a few of

them had little trouble remembering specific details about army life. As a group, the veterans were diverse, having been involved in a wide range of activities in both combat and support roles. Although I was able to interview ex-askari from all the major theaters of the war, I did not enjoy the same level of success in trying to speak to at least one person from each district. Despite numerous efforts, I was also unable to interview a single army wife or widow, although I did talk to a number of children of askaris. Failure to speak with any of the women connected with military service was disappointing, because they are in a unique position to comment on gender roles and the various ways in which military life had an impact on families.

Difficulty in deciding how to portray African or European accounts or perceptions of events is complicated by the changing conditions of service in the KAR over time, and the important differences that existed between European officers and administrators and African rank and file. In any army, officers and enlisted personnel inhabit very different worlds, but in the KAR this divide was exacerbated by educational, cultural and racial differences. While interviews, censored letters, court martial proceedings, and soldiers' petitions provide important insights into the careers of African soldiers, to place this evidence into the proper historical context, it is necessary to combine these experiences with official documents and the recollections of former British officers and colonial officials. District and provincial reports, as well as Secretariat files housed at the Tanzanian National archives, included a great deal of information on local recruiting practices, labor policy, demobilization, and numerous other issues pertaining to military service in Tanganyika. Since the KAR was stationed in all four East African territories, there is also a considerable correspondence concerning military affairs between the government of Tanganyika and the governments of Nyasaland, Uganda and Kenya. Information on British military

policy in East Africa can be found in the Colonial Office and War Office records, both housed at the Public Record Office. Insights into the lives and motivations of British officers who served in the KAR can be found in their memoirs, letters, and other published and unpublished accounts many of which can be found in the Oxford Development Records Project located at Oxford University's Rhodes House Library. Other memoirs written by officers who served with the KAR, as well as related documents and photographs can be found in the archives of the Imperial War Museum in London. Only by combining the wealth of official evidence available from government documents with African and European recollections of military service, is it possible to construct a social history centered on military service in colonial Tanganyika.

Chapter 2

The Establishment and Role of Military Forces in the Colonization of British and German East Africa

Setting the Stage: Tanganyika's Physical Environment

In Tanganyika, as in many other parts of colonial Africa, physical geography and climate played an important role in shaping the military history of the territory. At times, for example during the East African campaign, the influence of terrain, climate and the presence of disease on military operations is impossible to miss. In other periods, especially in times of peace, when military establishments remained small, it is easy to overlook how local and regional conditions determined military policy and daily and seasonal routine. Technological and medical advances, combined with improvements to the territory's infrastructure, overcame or alleviated some, but not all, obstacles to the rapid deployment of troops and the negative influence of disease on the force. Throughout the colonial period questions concerning when and where to recruit, train, deploy and discharge African soldiers continued to be influenced, at least in part, by limitations imposed by Tanganyika's physical environment.

The territory as claimed, pacified and colonized by the Germans, and later occupied by the British, contained a variety of physical and climatic features. To the east, Tanganyika was bordered by the Indian Ocean; the 470-mile coastline alternated between sandy beaches, stands of coconut palms and inaccessible fetid mangrove swamps. Coral reefs protected large stretches of the coast, but suitable anchorages and harbors did exist at Kilwa, Lindi, Bagamoyo, Dar es Salaam and Tanga. Immediately behind the coast, a maritime plain stretched from the sea to an inland plateau that constituted much of the territory's hinterland. This vast plateau, rising as high as 4,000 ft. above sea level, was not level but traversed by the thickly forested Usambara, Pare, Ulugure and Ngure

mountain ranges. In the north, the snow capped nineteen thousand-foot summit of Mount Kilimanjaro rising out of the Serengetti plains dominated the northern portion of the territory. The protectorate's northwestern and western boundaries rested on East Africa's great lakes of Victoria, Tanganyika and Nyasa. In addition to mountain ranges and a number of smaller lakes in the southern and northwestern regions, the country was divided by river systems running into the Indian Ocean or draining into the great lakes.³⁶

The climate of the territory was as varied as its topography. Temperature and rainfall are largely determined by a given area's altitude and distance from the Indian Ocean. Much of the region, including coastal areas and large portions of the interior, had one period of significant rainfall with the heaviest rains coming from December to February and then continuing with less intensity until April. A drop in temperature and a decrease in humidity accompanied the dry season, which lasted from June to August. The hottest part of the year lasted from November until the start of the rainy season.

The northeastern part of the territory had two rainy seasons, with some mountain areas experiencing a third short period of rainfall. This region encompassed most of the territory stretching from the Rufiji River delta to Tanganyika's northern border. Large parts of the Central Province, the area surrounding Tabora and portions of Unyamwezi, while they fall within this general area, had only a single period of rainfall, and weather patterns resembled those prevailing along the coast. In the remainder of the region from

³⁶Geographical Section Of Naval Intelligence, *A Handbook Of German East Africa*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921), pp. 7-8.

June to September, the weather was cool and dry, constituting a southern winter. The short rains began between late October and the beginning of November and ended in December. These rains were followed by the hottest and driest part of the year, lasting from December to February. Between March and May the monsoons return, and the region experiences extremely heavy rainfall. In the northwestern portions of the territory, including most of Usukuma, Uha, Unyamwezi and stretching as far south as Ujiji, the annual weather cycle was broken into two warm and two slightly cooler seasons, with the rains falling from October to May and a short dry spell usually occurring in January.

Differences in elevation and rainfall patterns corresponded to similar variations in temperature throughout the territory. Along the coast the trade winds and proximity to the Indian Ocean led to average temperatures in the upper 70s Fahrenheit. Although rainfall along the coast is moderate, many coastal regions suffer from high humidity. On the slopes of the central plateau the average temperature decreases slightly, but there is much greater variation, and heavier average rainfall results in high humidity. On the plateau itself, often 4,000 ft. or more above sea level, both humidity and rainfall decrease and extremes in temperature became more pronounced, depending on the season. In many areas rainfall was sporadic, and the prolonged failure of rains in a locality could lead to the failure of food crops and famine. In elevated areas such as the Usambara, and Uluguru mountain ranges and the southern highlands rainfall was both more frequent and reliable and led to high humidity, increased range of temperatures and the presence, especially in the morning, of thick mists, which covered the thickly wooded slopes. A cold dry alpine zone existed high up the slopes of both mount Kilimanjaro and Meru. Variations in temperature, rainfall and soil fertility affect vegetation patterns, and Tanganyika's ecosystems cover the spectrum from open grasslands to savanna to tropical rain

forests.

The final factor that needs to be considered when looking at the foundations of European civilian and military settlement is the prevalence of human and animal diseases in the territory. Malaria was present throughout the entire region, with the exception of such elevated locales as the Usambara, Pare and Kilimanjaro mountains. While malaria was the most common health hazard, a number of other serious diseases including relapsing fever, sleeping sickness, smallpox, cholera, outbreaks of the plague, dysentery and other intestinal and parasite-borne ailments affected both Africans and Europeans. Advances in tropical medicine and improvements in methods of treatment and standards of care throughout the twentieth century blunted but never entirely eliminated the impact of disease. During the inter-war and post Second World War periods, the disruption of disease on Tanganyika's small garrison was insignificant. A high standard of health care for both European officers and the African rank and file, ensured that even the outbreak of a serious infectious disease such as influenza could be quickly contained before seriously impairing the effectiveness of the force.

The halcyon days of the 1930's however, can hardly be considered the norm. In 1916, at the mid-point in the East African campaign, for every allied soldier killed or wounded in battle more than thirty were struck down by disease.³⁷ The contrast between the period of the First World War and the 1930's had less to do with new medical advances than the significant differences between peacetime garrison duty and arduous campaigning. Although African

soldiers fared better than their European and Indian counterparts, they were by no means immune to the effects of tropical diseases. When forced to operate for protracted periods in unhealthy regions without adequate rations, medical care and rest, African troops like their European comrades succumbed to disease in high numbers. Health statistics gathered on African recruits serving in the Second World War likewise show that disease continued to be a major problem for the increased military presence in the region.

Seasonal and local variations affecting climate and the spread of disease could be much more pronounced than the brief descriptions given above imply. During the dry season, areas like Ugogo often appeared to be parched wastelands covered with burned grass and withered scrub. Following the rains, such regions would undergo a remarkable transformation and emerge covered with a lush carpet of green grass and flowering plants. Rainfall, especially the heavy deluges of the monsoons, could be a curse as well as a blessing. In dry areas, heavy rains quickly saturated the soil and then either accumulated into lakes of standing water or drained down-slope into water courses which quickly became roaring torrents, washing out roads, bridges and fords. Throughout much of the colonial period, the start of the rainy season brought an immediate halt to all but the most pressing military operations. Heavy rains often restricted travel to the few main roads and railway lines, which were located predominantly in the central and northern part of the territory. As the British Admiralty's Geographical Section of Naval Intelligence noted during the First World War:

³⁷Byron Farwell, *The Great War In Africa: 1914-1918*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), pp. 293.

German East Africa is a country where in regard to communications much may change in a short while otherwise than through the bridge-building and road-making activity of the civil or military authorities. Rivers alter their course, permanent swamps are formed and dry up, native tracks appear, are enlarged, and disappear, native villages change their position, and the rainy and dry seasons may cause a region to wear quite different aspects at different times of the year. Diseases of men or animals spread to one area and are stamped out or die out in another.³⁸

Such conditions persisted during the years of British rule despite improvement in the territory's transportation network and the increased availability of modern vehicles.

Both climate and disease played a significant role in shaping colonial Tanganyika's human landscape. The physical environment, including rainfall, soil fertility, vegetation, average temperature, and the presence of natural resources or diseases affecting humans and animals, all contributed to making certain areas more desirable for African and European settlement. British settlers and administrators, like their German predecessors, concentrated their efforts on the northern half of the territory. With the exception of small enclaves in Iringa and Tabora, most Europeans lived around Arusha, Moshi, in the Usambara mountains or in the port cities of Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Lindi. Not surprisingly, military forces were garrisoned in roughly the same areas, in large part because they could quickly deploy using the more developed road and rail network in the northern part of the territory.

The Establishment and Pacification of German East Africa

Under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck, Germany was a latecomer to the scramble for Africa. Originally Bismarck had been content to let other

³⁸*Handbook*, p. 306. For a discussion of the impact of climate and disease on African populations

European powers, particularly the British and the French, extend their claims over African territory or vie for supremacy in Egypt. Until the 1880's, German interest in the continent had been limited to expeditions by a handful of explorers and a number of trading concerns that had successfully entered regional markets. The situation changed in 1882 with the formation of the Society for German Colonization headed by Dr. Carl Peters. The society promoted a plan calling for the immediate acquisition of colonial territories, and in 1884 financed an expedition to East Africa. In just three months, using a combination of diplomacy and threats, Peters obtained twelve treaties signed with the marks of local African rulers, ceding 140,000 square kilometers to the Society for German Colonization. Much of the territory Peters laid claim to was nominally under the control of the Sultan of Zanzibar. Bismarck, under increasing pressure from German trading interests and other pro-colonial factions, saw in Peters' efforts a chance to challenge British dominance in East Africa and encouraged the Society for German Colonization to set up a chartered company. On February 27, 1885, Kaiser Wilhelm I, on Bismarck's advice, granted the German East African Company an imperial charter giving official sanction to Peter's efforts.³⁹

The following year, a joint British and German commission accelerated the process of laying claim to and dividing up the holdings of the Sultan of Zanzibar. The commission declared that the Sultan's mainland territories extended only 10 miles from the coast, despite the presence of the sultan's red flag flying over trading settlements far in the interior such Ujiji and Tabora. Four

in the pre-colonial period, see: Juhani Koponen, *People and Production in Late Precolonial Tanzania*, (Jyvaskyla: Finnish Society for Development Studies, 1988), pp. 150-170.

years later, the Sultan bowed to the inevitable and acquiesced when the British declared a protectorate over the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Even before these decisions had been reached, British and German trading concerns had already started carving up the Sultan's mainland territories with the German East Africa Company concentrating on what is today modern Tanzania while the Imperial British East Africa Company established its sphere of influence in Kenya and Uganda.

Traders and officials of the German East African Company ran the protectorate from 1885 until 1891, establishing trading posts and mounting military expeditions to expand the territory under their control. In 1886, an agreement between Germany and the United Kingdom established the northern border of the protectorate from the Indian Ocean to Lake Victoria, and a second agreement with the Portuguese set the southern boundary at the Rovuma River. Germany's recognition of the Congo Free State established the western border of the protectorate. By 1888, the protectorate encompassed an area twice as large as the German empire, although practically nothing was known about the vast majority of the interior.⁴⁰

Despite Peters's grand expectations, the German East African Company proved unable to develop its new possession. The cost of building infrastructure and paying for the administration necessary successfully to exploit the resources of the territory proved beyond the ability of the company's investors. With the exception of a handful of trading posts, a few sisal plantations and some docks

³⁹Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 88-90.

and warehouses located at coastal ports, development in East Africa was practically nonexistent. The company also lacked the administrative and military apparatus necessary to control the territories seven million African inhabitants. Erick Mann, in a recent dissertation, has described the period of company rule as primarily one of military expansion where no serious attempt was made to establish a civilian economic bureaucracy that would help stimulate economic growth.⁴¹

Early years of company rule began with the establishment of 13 small trading stations scattered throughout the region and staffed by a handful of agents. Trading posts were located primarily along the caravan routes, while the Company's local headquarters was at Dar es Salaam. When trade failed to yield the hoped for dividends, company officials attempted to increase revenues by levying taxes on Africans living in company territory, and pressuring the Sultan of Zanzibar to allow company agents to control customs revenues throughout the coastal region. Company policies restructured trade and systems of land tenure and, combined with the often highhanded methods employed by officials, resulted in rising tensions between the Germans and established Swahili, Arab and African interests along the coast. In August 1888, acting on a new agreement with the Sultan, company officials quickly began to establish their control over key coastal towns. Arab and Swahili traders, angered at the German administration's renewed attempts to control trade, revolted, quickly overrunning

⁴⁰Mary Evelyn Townsend, *The Rise And Fall Of Germany's Colonial Empire 1884-1918*, (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), pp. 135-140.

⁴¹Mann, "The Schutztruppe and the Nature of Colonial Warfare During the Conquest of Tanganyika, 1889-1900," Dissertation University of Wisconsin-Madison 1998, pp. 25-28.

and capturing German stations along the coast. Only at Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo, where local forces were assisted by landing parties of German marines and supported by naval gunfire, were the Germans able to hold out. Lacking military forces capable of dealing with the uprising, company officials had no option but to beg Berlin for military assistance. Bismarck agreed and, after consultation with Chief of the General Staff, it was decided to form an African colonial force led by German officers.

Command of the venture was given to Captain Hermann von Wissmann, a former Prussian army officer. Additionally, Wissmann had firsthand knowledge of East Africa, having led two expeditions into the interior. Wissmann was given wide discretionary powers in raising a force and quickly formed a cadre of officers and NCO's, the majority of whom came from the ranks of the military or had served as company agents. The question of recruiting rank and file was much more problematic. Before the revolt, the company had maintained roughly one hundred poorly trained askari to protect its vast holdings, but their ranks had been thinned by desertion and fighting. The ongoing revolt made any plan to recruit and train East Africans untenable, even if there had been sufficient time. Wissmann solved this manpower shortage by traveling to Cairo and recruiting 600 Sudanese soldiers and a number of Egyptian officers who had formerly served in the Egyptian army. Following the loss of the Sudan and facing budget cuts, the Egyptian government had dismissed over 900 Sudanese soldiers. Fearing that they would become a disruptive urban element, the Egyptian Government was more than happy to allow recently discharged soldiers to enlist with the Germans. The Germans benefited greatly from Egypt's fiscal and military collapse because, although the Sudanese demanded higher wages, they were already fully trained. Following a brief period of reorganization in Aden, the Sudanese, under the command of their new German officers, were ready to take

to the field. To increase the numbers of his paltry force, Wissmann also recruited 80 Somalis, 22 former Turkish police, and 100 Shangaan from Portuguese East Africa. In April 1889, Wissmann's newly formed *Schutztruppe* landed in East Africa. By May of the following year, after a series of hard fought battles, the *Schutztruppe* successfully ended the Arab revolt and began to move inland to reassert German authority in the interior.⁴²

The success of Wissmann's coastal campaigns came too late to save the failing German East Africa Company, and on January 1, 1891, the company transferred the administration of the protectorate to the empire. The transition from protectorate to colony ushered in a new period of military expansion followed gradually by the establishment of a civil administration. After successfully pacifying the coastal regions, the *Schutztruppe* mounted a series of expeditions in the southern part of the territory, up the Pangani valley to the north and along the central caravan route. In all three regions, African societies responded to German incursions with a variety of strategies, including military resistance, negotiation, collaboration, or in many cases, complex combinations of all three. By the end of 1891, *Schutztruppe* columns had reached the borders of the colony, and Wissmann incorrectly concluded that the territory had been reconquered and African resistance to German rule was at an end.

In fact exactly the opposite was true and many African leaders who had fled from, allied with, or been defeated by German expeditionary forces in no way acknowledged or acquiesced to German rule. With the exception of the coastal towns, German presence on the ground remained tenuous at best and

⁴²Mann, pp. 35-57, and Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 92-98.

nonexistent in most areas. In many regions, German administration consisted of little more than a strongly fortified military post from which the garrison attempted to control the surrounding countryside. German lines of communication remained tenuous, and little effort was made to develop the territory or expedite the transfer from military to civilian rule. Consequently, between 1889 and 1904, *Schutztruppe* commanders had to organize over seventy-five punitive expeditions against the colony's supposedly pacified African tribes.⁴³ Most confrontations between the *Schutztruppe* and their African adversaries were extremely closely fought affairs. The most serious defeat German forces suffered occurred in the summer of 1891, when 360 askari and several German officers took part in a punitive expedition against the Wahehe leader Mkwawa. The *Schutztruppe* commander, Captain Emil von Zelewsky, was so sure of victory that he did not order his troops to assemble their machine gun or open boxes holding spare ammunition. A small scale German Isandlwana resulted, and for the next seven years, the *Schutztruppe* fought a war of attrition against the Wahehe before killing Mkwawa and ending the lengthy conflict.

The coastal revolt and numerous uprisings in the interior foreshadowed the greatest challenge to German rule in East Africa. In 1905, the majority of the south of the colony rose up against German rule in the Maji Maji rebellion. The Germans put down the insurrection with incredible brutality, mounting a scorched earth campaign, burning villages and fields. When, in 1907 the Germans captured and executed the last of the Maji Maji leaders, much of southern Tanganyika was a wasteland. Perhaps as many as 300,000 Africans died during

⁴³I. N. Kimambo and A. J. Temu, *A History Of Tanzania*, pp. 112-116.

the fighting and thousands more continued to die of disease and famine long after the fighting stopped.⁴⁴

The increasing effectiveness of the *Schutztruppe* resulted in the end of large-scale revolts in German East Africa. Long before Zelewsky's defeat at the hands of the Hehe, the Germans had begun to realize what well developed fighting skills their African opponents possessed. German officers found themselves having to face myriad tactical situations, including storming stone and wood fortresses, open field battles, small skirmishes and patrol actions, as well as protracted guerrilla campaigns and punitive expeditions. In some cases, especially during the coastal revolt, the Germans did not possess the overwhelming technological superiority colonial forces are often assumed to have enjoyed, since many of the coastal rebels possessed modern rifles and stores of ammunition. During the campaigns in the interior, German officers faced different problems, many connected with the ability of Africans to use their superior mobility to evade German columns. By Maji Maji, however, *Schutztruppe* commanders had learned to counter some of the advantages enjoyed by their African adversaries by adopting similar tactics and methods of organization. The following excerpt from a field manual given to *Schutztruppe* officers clearly demonstrates, if not admiration for African fighters, then at least recognition that they were worthy adversaries:

His mobility and incredible marching powers, coupled with accurate knowledge of the country, make him able to carry out apparently impossible detours. He has no fixed line of retreat, and after a defeat, his forces break up into small parties, which retire in all directions, and concentrate again at points previously agreed upon, often in the rear of victorious troops...After discharging their fire-arms, the

⁴⁴John Iliffe, *Tanganyika Under German Rule*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 9-29 and Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 199-202.

natives retire hastily...to get ahead of the column so that they may repeat their attack...By constantly harassing their enemy in this way, they hope, while avoiding serious losses on their own side, to tire him out, compel him to expend his ammunition and gradually reduce his power of resistance till he can be finally overwhelmed by an energetic spear attack. The natives think themselves beaten in a fight only when they have suffered great losses; flight and escape with small losses they regard as a success.⁴⁵

Although Sudanese askari had served first the German East African Company and later the nascent Colonial administration well, German officers soon felt that it would make more sense to recruit soldiers from communities within the colony. Part of this change of policy was inevitable due to restrictions the Egyptian government placed on recruiting further soldiers, but officers also recognized the value of having recruits who knew both the local physical and political terrain. The *Schutztruppe's* fighting ability, its privileges and good pay, gradually transformed enemies into recruits. Many Wahehe joined the *Schutztruppe* after the defeat of Mkwawa, while other recruits came from the Wagogo, Angoni, Wanyamwezi and Wasukuma. By the start of the First World War, *Schutztruppe* officers discovered that the children of askari, who had grown up with the force and served as askari boys, provided a valuable source of military personnel.⁴⁶

African recruits from diverse locations and ethnic groups had to be turned into a coherent organized fighting force. Officers solved this problem with rigid discipline and drill, on the model of German infantry units. Non-commissioned-officers altered standard drill only when necessary and issued commands to their troops in German, using Swahili only for detailed orders. After learning discipline,

⁴⁵Cited in Miller, *Battle for the Bundu*, p. 15.

⁴⁶*Handbook*, pp. 202-203.

drill and military decorum, the recruits began the second phase of training. This consisted of lectures on the maintenance and care of weapons and hours of target practice. Recruits received instruction in the use of the model 1871 Mauser rifle, bayonet, machine guns and light artillery pieces. After a great deal of practice, the askari turned into excellent soldiers.⁴⁷

German officers went to great pains not to crush the spirit of their recruits. Askari never had to perform menial labor, and each one had his own personal servant, called an askari boy. Publication of a Swahili language army newspaper established a sense of unity and martial élan. Officers did not interfere in the personal lives of their askari and gave advice only when asked for it. Officers also respected the religious practices and customs of their troops. Finally, the Germans provided financial incentives for loyal service and paid the askari well: a private earned thirty rupees per month and a NCO 150 rupees. Africans serving in the KAR in bordering British colonies received half that amount.⁴⁸

The German officers who came to East Africa also were of the highest quality. Officers were required to have had three years of active duty and a perfect service record. Once approved by a selection board, the nominee received a medical exam considered the most severe in the German army. Since a two and one-half year stint of service in Africa counted double towards pensions, and relatively few slots in the *Schutztruppe* opened each year, the

⁴⁷*Handbook*, pp. 202-203.

⁴⁸Miller, *Battle for the Bundu*, pp. 16-17. Also in *Handbook*, p.202.

board had its choice of numerous excellent candidates.⁴⁹ This process produced an officer class unsurpassed by any other colonial power.⁵⁰

Until 1907, frequent African revolts gave *Schutztruppe* officers in German East Africa plenty of practical experience with African methods of warfare. Although well-versed in the maneuvers and tactics associated with European battlefields, German officers found themselves unprepared for war in East Africa. Africans taught German officers the advantage terrain could present to a mobile defender. Since the *Schutztruppe* had to counter African mobility, European style regiments and battalions were found impractical, and the Germans established a unique, independent command known as a *Feldkompagnies*. (field company). Each field company contained between 150 and 200 askari, seven to ten officers and NCO's, a surgeon and at least one cobbler, two machine guns and several hundred porters. Besides food and ammunition, the porters also carried two collapsible boats for crossing rivers. The field company was thus extremely flexible and able to go for long periods without re-supply.⁵¹

Widespread African resistance to the imposition of colonial rule in German East Africa resulted in the formation of a colonial force uniquely trained, organized and equipped to conduct operations under a variety of tactical and climatic conditions. On the outbreak of the First World War, the intelligence

⁴⁹Arthur J. Knoll and Lewis H. Gann, Eds. *Germans In The Tropics*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 11-13. In 'Marginal Colonialism: The German Case,' Lewis H. Gann argues that, although the *Schutztruppe* never lacked officer candidates, colonial service did not have the glamour of established infantry and cavalry regiments. Despite this drawback a high proportion of the *Schutztruppe*'s officers came from "military families." The *Schutztruppe* also was not the end of the line for a career, and several of its officers went on to command divisions.

⁵⁰Miller, *Battle for the Bundu*, pp. 18-19.

⁵¹*Handbook*, pp. 226-228.

officer for the British forces in East Africa, Richard Meinertzhagan, commented in his diary on the capabilities of the German force:

His colonial troops are second to none, they are well led by the best officers in the world, he knows the country and understands bush warfare and his men are not so prone to malaria as ours are. And finally he will be operating in his own country and can choose the time and the place for attacking our converging forces, which will arrive in battle sadly depleted by disease and detachments.⁵²

Finally Meinertzhagan also concluded that the German troops were "better trained, disciplined and led than our own Kings African Rifles." Meinertzhagan, basing his comments on observations made when he visited German East Africa in 1906, predicted many of the problems that would haunt British commanders between 1914-1918.⁵³

British Colonization in East Africa and the Formation of the King's African Rifles

As in German East Africa, the formation of the first colonial forces in British Central and East Africa took place in the 1880's, as military officers and administrators began to realize that it would be impossible to assert their authority over African populations without resorting to the use of force. The three British Protectorates in the region, British Central Africa, Uganda, and British East Africa were initially administered by the Foreign Office, which granted local administrators wide discretionary powers in recruiting, paying, and training soldiers, as well as deciding when and how to conduct military operations. Consequently, early military forces in the region were recruited to meet local

⁵²Meinertzhagan, *Army Diary*, p. 84.

⁵³Meinertzhagan, *Army Diary*, p.105.

contingencies and divided along territorial lines, with scant thought being given to wider security concerns. Despite local differences in rates of pay and organization, British territorial forces did share a number of significant commonalities, especially when it came to recruiting and the composition of units. With the exception of a few locally recruited askaris in the Central African Rifles, the first wave of colonial soldiers was composed primarily of coastal Muslims who had few, if any, ties with local African populations. British officers and administrators initially consciously chose to recruit soldiers not native to newly conquered areas, because of local ethnic groups' presumed inferior military effectiveness and lack of political reliability. It should be noted however, that in all three protectorates, in addition to raising territorial forces, British officers also formed alliances with African rulers and relied on local levies to increase the numbers of armed men at their disposal.

In the East Africa Protectorate (modern Kenya), the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) recruited a mixed bag of former slaves, Swahilis from the coast and Sudanese, with the core of the force consisting of Indian soldiers. In 1895, the unit was reorganized and named the East African Rifles. By 1900, the force had over 1,000 askaris on its rolls with the majority of the rank and file being recruited from the coastal regions of the protectorate, bolstered by 350 Sudanese recruited from the Egyptian Army, following the loss of the Sudan to Mahdist forces.

The first colonial troops in Uganda likewise came from outside the protectorate. In 1890, Frederick Lugard was sent by Sir William MacKinnon to advance the interests of the IBEAC in the Kingdom of Buganda. Lugard relied on a military force composed entirely of Sudanese askaris who had formerly served in the Egyptian Army and had either been recruited in Cairo or had made their way to Uganda after having been cut off in Equatoria by Mahdist forces, following

the fall of Khartoum. In 1894, Britain declared a protectorate over Uganda, and the following year Lugard's force was renamed the Uganda Rifles. Two years later, following a series of lengthy campaigns and disputes over rates of pay, many of the askaris in the Ugandan rifles mutinied, forcing British officials throughout the region to question their assumption that soldiers not native to a region would be politically more reliable. The British continued to use Sudanese askaris in the Ugandan Rifles following the suppression of the mutiny, but 400 Indian Army soldiers remained to provide the British administration with a reserve force should the Sudanese again prove unreliable.

In British Central Africa (Nyasaland), it was once again Lugard who formed the first colonial military units in the territory. In 1884, the African Lakes Company constructed a trading outpost on the shore of Lake Nyasa, establishing a British presence in the area. Rising tensions between the inhabitants of this tiny enclave and several local rulers escalated into outright warfare in 1887. Lugard, then a captain, arrived in the territory in 1888 and offered to lead an expedition to safeguard British interests in the area around Lake Nyasa. Lugard's early force consisted of little more than two-dozen English and South African volunteers supported by a few hundred locally recruited Africans, the majority coming from the Atonga tribe. Although Lugard's small force successfully maintained a British presence in the region, the so-called "slavers' war" between the British forces and local rulers continued.

In May 1891, the British declared a protectorate over Nyasaland, and one of the new Commissioner's first actions after establishing a headquarters at Zomba was to increase the size of the local military force. The units raised by Lugard were first augmented by 70 Sikhs and Muslims recruited from the Indian Army, but later the number of Sikhs was increased to 200. By 1896, relying on a combination of Indian soldiers and local levies, the British administration was

able to bring an end to the "slavers' war" and the protectorates military force was reorganized and named the Central Africa Rifles (CAR). The new force consisted of six locally recruited companies, each containing 120 askaris, bolstered by a Sikh Contingent.⁵⁴ Two years later, in response to requests from the War Office, a second battalion was added to the strength of the CAR. The second battalion remained under War Office control, and in the following years was used extensively outside Nyasaland serving in campaigns in Mauritius, Somaliland, West Africa.⁵⁵

A number of interesting parallels can be drawn between the establishment of early British and German rule in East Africa. In both cases, the task of expanding and pacifying territory under the control of colonial powers quickly passed out of the hands of traders and administrators and into the firm grip of military officers. Often, as in British Central or German East Africa, civil and military authority resided in the same individual, with the result being that the sword was considered mightier than the pen and far more frequently used. The start of gradual transition away from military to civilian control differed in each protectorate, but in most cases it only began once a sizable portion of territory was considered pacified, and after early trading interests such as the DOAG or IBEAC had turned control of their territory over to their respective governments. Unlike the trading concerns, the German and British governments possessed adequate resources not only to complete the conquest of African territories but also to establish civil administrations. Furthermore, the Foreign Office began to

⁵⁴Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 12-27.

⁵⁵Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, pp. 14-17.

view British protectorates in East and Central Africa as a group instead of as autonomous territories. In the 1880's and 1890's, each territory provided for its own security needs without considering wider regional or imperial concerns. The weakness of this system became apparent in 1897, when the majority of the Sudanese in the Uganda Rifles revolted and neither neighboring British protectorate possessed adequate reserve forces to send to the aid of the Ugandan administration. An Indian Army battalion dispatched to East Africa eventually put down the mutiny, but the considerable expense involved encouraged the colonial office to consider a system of regional defense.

In 1901, following a model that was proving successful in West Africa, the War Office sent Colonel W. H. Manning to the region to reorganize all three units into one infantry regiment. The King's African Rifles was officially formed on 1st January 1902 and charged with the defense and internal security of Nyasaland, East Africa, Uganda, and Somaliland.⁵⁶ Throughout British East Africa, the newly formed KAR served a common purpose acting as the military force, ensuring stability and colonial control within the territories and providing security against external threats.

Between 1902 and 1914, East African governments relied on the KAR to expand and enforce the Pax Britannia over African populations. Colonial rule restructured or destroyed existing political, economic and social institutions, often at terrible cost to African societies. Throughout the colonial period, Africans

⁵⁶Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 123-131. Although the regiment was named the King's African Rifles, this was because historically all three of the original units that now comprised the regiment had been called rifles, not because the KAR was designated as a rifle regiment. The soldiers in the KAR were trained as infantry and the Regiment was an infantry not a rifle regiment.

responded to the widespread changes and hardships resulting from the implementation of colonial policies with widespread violent and non-violent acts of resistance. Although colonial governments often tried to limit opposition to government policies by forming alliances with Africans and setting up systems of indirect rule, when necessary they could, and often did, rely on the threat or use of military force to ensure African populations implemented the colonial agenda.

As British administrative control increased, armed resistance to colonial rule became increasingly bloody and futile, due to a combination of British technological superiority, tactics and military organization. Africans who attempted to maintain their independence through military means found themselves isolated politically and targeted for repeated punitive expeditions. KAR units, often working with local allies, arrested or killed leaders, razed villages, burned fields and scattered or seized herds. Some idea of the brutal nature of pacification can be seen in the following excerpt from the diary of a KAR officer serving in Kenya who led a number of punitive expeditions in the early 1900's.

To my mind the people of Embo have not been sufficiently hammered, and I should like to go back at once and have another go at them. During the first phase of the expedition against the Irryeni we killed about 796 niggers, and during the second phase against the Embo we killed about 250.

We took from the Irryeni 782 cattle and 2150 sheep and goats, and from the Waembo 498 cattle and 1500 sheep and goats.⁵⁷

Following the end of widespread armed resistance, British administrations

continued to rely on the KAR to cow opponents and limit opposition to government policies. Although the KAR maintained garrisons in strategic cities and towns, regular military exercises and "flag marches" served to remind rural populations of the power of the government. The final responsibility of the KAR was to protect British territories from external local threats posed by raiders from Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan.⁵⁸

The end of the conquest period gave rise to a series of heated debates over the future of military forces in East Africa. Colonial military authorities envisioned modernizing and reorganizing the regiment so it could not only continue to defend British interests in the region but also be used further afield. African troops from Nyasaland had already demonstrated their value in Imperial service serving in the Asante and Gambia campaigns. Civil authorities opposed any plan to expand or modernize the KAR, primarily on economic grounds. When the Colonial Office took control of the KAR in 1905, each territorial government continued to be responsible for financing and administering its own battalions. Thus the regiment remained a Colonial Office concern with the War Office providing guidelines on training and administration.

While it was in the interest of both the War Office and KAR officers to expand the regiment and maintain it as a force capable of serving as an Imperial reserve, civil officials viewed the KAR as a drain on already limited budgets. In

⁵⁷Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary: 1902-1906*, (London: Eland Books, 1983), p. 152. Meinertzhagen's diary describes several KAR punitive expeditions including a protracted campaign against the Nandi people in Kenya. For a detailed account of Nandi resistance to British control, see: A. T. Matson, *Nandi Resistance to British Rule*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1993).

⁵⁸Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 136-148.

the decade before the start of the First World War, civil administrators increasingly began to question the need for an East African military force, arguing that with the exception of Somaliland and the Northern Frontier District, East Africa had been pacified and British rule could be maintained by civil authority. East African governors proposed disbanding the KAR and replacing it with an armed police force under the control of the civil government. War Office officials refused to sanction dissolving the regiment, but were unable to prevent East African governments from significantly reducing the size of their battalions. The result of these reductions was that shortly before the First World War, the Inspector General of the KAR warned the Colonial Office that Britain's East African territories lacked the military forces to deal with either widespread internal unrest or external threats.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, pp. 16-17.

Chapter 3

The First World War in East Africa

It is difficult to overstate the havoc the First World wrought on East Africa in general, and Tanganyika in particular. Fighting also took place between German and Allied forces in German Southwest Africa, Togo and Cameroon. However, during the war no other region on the continent had to endure such a wide ranging or protracted campaign as that which took place in East Africa.⁶⁰ Hostilities commenced in mid-August 1914, and continued until the last remaining members of the *Schutztruppe* finally surrendered at Abercorn, Northern Rhodesia, on November 25, 1918, where last German force in the world laid down its arms. Although the majority of the fighting took place within the boundaries of German East Africa, the Germans had advanced into British East Africa at the start of the war, and had mounted numerous raids on all the surrounding territories. During the final phase of the campaign, German forces invaded Portuguese East Africa, returned briefly to German territory, and at last capitulated shortly after entering Northern Rhodesia. Nor was the conflict confined to the land. British and German naval forces fought a number of engagements along the coast, and on the lakes of Victoria, Tanganyika and Nyasa.

In addition to involving local forces from German East Africa, and the

⁶⁰It should be noted that these remarks refer only to the impact of campaigning and combat on African populations, and not to the myriad other disruptions that accompanied the war across the length and breadth of the continent. No attempt is being made, for example, to compare the disruption East African communities suffered with those of their counterparts in French West Africa, where military conscription, forced labor and increased production campaigns had a huge impact on the social, political and economic landscape.

surrounding British colonies of Nyasaland, British East Africa and Uganda, soldiers from the Belgian Congo's *Force Publique*, and units stationed in Portuguese East Africa, also participated in the fighting. Local Allied forces however, proved unequal to the task of containing the *Schutztruppe*. To complete the occupation of German East Africa, and run to ground the remnants of the *Schutztruppe*, the British were eventually forced to dispatch units from India as well as South and West Africa. In addition to the tens of thousands of African soldiers who served in the British, Belgian, Portuguese and German forces, both armies impressed hundreds of thousands of Africans to serve as military laborers, most as carriers.

The East African campaign and its aftermath had long ranging effects on both the African population and the infrastructure of German East Africa. The *Schutztruppe's* tenacious defense of territory, brutal scorched earth policies and eventual adoption of guerrilla warfare all served to extend the duration of the campaign. These policies also greatly increased the suffering of civilians. The demands for carriers and food supplies made on towns and villages by German, British and Belgian armies exacerbated the plight of African populations. The guerrilla tactics employed so successfully by *Schutztruppe* detachments in the campaign's later stages in no way altered the fact that in East Africa, as in other theaters, total war was being waged by both sides. Every suitable resource available was used to continue the fighting. East Africans, both combatants and civilians, almost never experienced the war the way populations serving or living near the European Western or Eastern fronts did. However, guerrilla warfare as practiced by the *Schutztruppe* brought with it its own distinct hardships and widespread suffering accompanied it. The passage of marauding armies, with their insatiable demands for food and carriers, left swaths of destruction in their wake. In many areas, the other three horsemen of the apocalypse, famine,

pestilence and death closely followed the war. The nature of warfare in East Africa exacerbated the disruption of communities and the movement of large populations, either serving with the various military forces or attempting to avoid such a fate. As there were no secure rear areas, there were no back lines behind which either soldiers or civilian refugees could flee seeking safety. German detachments operating in the vastness of East Africa often easily avoided pursuing columns. They doubled back and returned to territory recently liberated by Allied forces to take reprisals on the civilian population. Even African communities far removed from the fighting were called upon to provide carriers to keep supplies moving to the front lines, along the ever-lengthening lines of communication.

Extensive damage to German East Africa's none too extensive infrastructure accompanied the disruption of communities. By the end of the war, mission stations had closed or been abandoned, schools shut down, sick and wounded soldiers and prisoners overwhelmed hospitals and many of the buildings in Dar es Salaam, Lindi, Tanga and dozens of other towns bore the scars of shellfire and fighting. The limited road and rail network in the colony, vital to the communications and supply network of both sides, lay either in ruins, under repair or overwhelmed by a unending stream of animal, carrier and motor transport.

A detailed description of the East African campaign is beyond the scope of this study, and is also unnecessary since a number of excellent works on the subject already exist. However, as many aspects of military and civil policy in the inter-war period, and thereafter, were influenced by the conduct of the war, it is necessary to present a summary of the campaign highlighting the major phases of the struggle, stressing the nature of the conflict and the impact the war had on communities. The general movement of the campaign can be roughly divided

into several distinct phases. The first phase lasted from the outbreak of the war in August 1914 until March 1916. The Allied invasion of German East Africa in March 1916 ushered in the second part of the war. British forces pursued the main detachment of the *Schutztruppe* down the colony's northern railway line, eventually forcing the Germans into the territory below the central railway. This second phase lasted until the beginning of 1917. British and Belgian forces pursuing the Germans, forced by exhaustion, disease and the need to reorganize their ever lengthening supply lines, had to halt and regroup. The next part of the war lasted from the start of 1917 until the remainder of the *Schutztruppe* crossed the southern border of German East Africa in November 1917. During this period, both armies used the enforced break caused by the rainy season to rest, reorganize and re-supply their forces. The British replaced many of their severely depleted European and Indian battalions with units comprised of West and East African askaris. The final phase of the war began with the German invasion of Portuguese territory and lasted until the surrender of the *Schutztruppe* at Abercon on November 25, 1918. For the remaining eleven months of the war, the tiny remnant of the German force fought a masterful guerrilla campaign, successfully remaining in the field and evading the superior Allied forces constantly pursuing it.

The Outbreak of the War and the Start of Military Operations:

August 1914-March 1916

In August 1914, the inhabitants of both German and British East Africa found themselves poorly prepared for war. The Governor of German East Africa, Dr. Heinrich Schnee, had promoted economic and educational reforms in the colony and regarded the war as a potential disaster. Schnee considered the policy most likely to guarantee the future of the colony would be to adhere to the neutrality clause contained in the Berlin Act of 1885: in the event of a war in

Europe, the colonies would remain neutral territories. Schnee believed that nothing the *Schutztruppe* could do in East Africa would alter the outcome of the war. The conflict would be decided on the battlefields of Europe while German colonists, cut off from the Fatherland by the Royal Navy, would sit out the war.⁶¹

The senior military officer in the colony, Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow Vorbeck, strongly disagreed with this assessment. Like Schnee, Vorbeck knew that the war would be won or lost in Europe, but unlike the governor, Vorbeck maintained that the scant forces available in the colony could help the German war effort by taking an active part in the conflict. Vorbeck realized that if German East Africa remained neutral, the British would be able to recruit large numbers of East Africans to serve as soldiers and laborers in other theaters.⁶² To prevent this, he argued that the forces at his disposal should be used to invade British territory. Facing a German invasion of their East African territories, the British would have no choice but to use all available local troops, and perhaps forces from outside the region, to resist the German offensive. Vorbeck harbored no illusion that his scant force could defend all of German East Africa. Instead he

⁶¹Heinrich Schnee, *German Colonization Past And Future*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926), pp. 33-35.

⁶²In August 1914, when the Kaiser was telling his troops they would be home before the leaves fell, Vorbeck's concerns about the British using East Africa as a recruiting ground seemed far fetched. At the start of the war, the British had no intention of recruiting large numbers of military laborers or soldiers for use in East Africa, let alone other theaters. As the war dragged on however, the increasing need for manpower combined with the proven effectiveness of East and West African soldiers forced officials at the War Office to reconsider. In July 1916, the G.O.C. East Africa received a telegram from the War Office inquiring as to the possibility that large numbers (50,000 or 100,000) of East African askari could be raised for service elsewhere; possibly Mesopotamia, the Balkans or even France. Vorbeck's stubborn guerrilla campaign put an end to such speculation and the majority of Britain's East and West African soldiers spent the remainder of the war fighting in East Africa. There is little doubt that if the East African campaign had not lasted for the duration of the war, large numbers of African troops would have been available for service elsewhere. Telegram from War Office to General Smuts July 31, 1916. PRO, WO 106/278.

sought to goad the British and their allies into dispatching as many troops to East Africa as possible, and then keep them there fighting in a strategically insignificant backwater until the war was won. For Vorbeck, German East Africa's military value overshadowed all other considerations, including defending the colony and sparing both its African and European inhabitants the horrors of a drawn out campaign.

When Vorbeck took command, the *Schutztruppe* included 216 German officers and noncommissioned officers and 2,154 askari, divided into 14 *Feldkompagnies*. The colony's settler community had also formed volunteer *Schutztruppekompagnien* (defense companies) comprised entirely of Europeans. Until the start of the First World War, the *Schutztruppe's* primary mission had been to provide internal security and suppress African revolts. Since the force had to counter the mobility of African insurgents, previous commanders had found European-style battalions unwieldy and cumbersome. German officers gradually established small, independent and highly mobile field companies capable of acting as a self-contained force or joining with other field companies to form a larger unit. By the start of the First World War, each field company contained between 150 and 200 African askari, seven to ten German officers and NCO's, a surgeon and several hundred porters. Two or more machine guns augmented the firepower of the askaris' bolt-action rifles. In addition to food, ammunition and medical supplies, the porters also carried two collapsible boats for crossing rivers. Many of the porters attached to field companies had received rudimentary military training. If necessary, the Germans could quickly expand

their force, provided they had the necessary arms, equipment and officers and NCO's. These characteristics made the field companies extremely mobile, flexible and able to go for long periods without re-supply.⁶³

Fortunately for the Germans, the surrounding colonies were ill prepared to wage a war against soldiers of another European power. Only small numbers of British troops garrisoned Nyasaland, Uganda and British East Africa. The Belgian *Force Publique* and other units in the Congo contained some 15,000 askaris, but many of these troops were stationed far in the interior and posed little immediate danger. Approximately 4,000 Portuguese troops were present in Mozambique when the war broke out, but Portugal did not officially enter the war until March 1916. The most serious threat came from the British East African territories where the KAR maintained internal security along with local police forces. Although organized into battalions, the KAR usually operated at company, or even half-company, strength. Unlike the *Schutztruppe*, the KAR suffered from a command structure divided among the three British territories. Furthermore, no plan existed to reorganize or expand the KAR in the event of the outbreak of a widespread conflict, and the British also had a much smaller pool of experienced officers to draw on when they eventually decided to reorganize and raise new KAR battalions. In 1911 the Colonial office had disbanded 2 KAR, which served as a reserve battalion for the entire force, and

⁶³Paul von Lettow Vorbeck. *My Reminiscences Of East Africa*, (Nashville: Battery Press, 1990), pp. 32-34. This book was published first in Germany as *Meine Erinnerungen aus Ostafrika*, (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1920); *Handbook*, pp. 200-204, 227-228; see also J. H. V. Crowe, *General Smuts' Campaign In East Africa*, (London: John Murray, 1918)

downsized the remaining three battalions.⁶⁴ At the start of the war, KAR total strength consisted of only 73 officers and 2,325 African soldiers. Instead of forming a professional cadre of trained carriers attached to each unit, local civil authorities provided KAR companies with carriers on a local *ad hoc* basis thus making KAR companies much less mobile than their German counterparts.

Following the announcement of the outbreak of the war, the civilian leaders of both German and British East Africa proved reluctant to engage in hostilities. Governor Schnee forbade Vorbeck from mounting any cross border attacks or from fortifying the ports of Dar es Salaam or Tanga. The Governor of British East Africa, Sir Henry Conway Belfield, also seemed disinclined to rapidly mobilize his forces, despite the arrival of a telegram from the Colonial Office on July 29th urging precautionary measures be taken in case hostilities broke out. When news of the war's onset reached East Africa, many of the British and German settlers did not share the view of their civilian leaders about the benefits of neutrality. Hundreds of settlers in British East Africa descended on Nairobi to join up to fight the Germans. Across the border, many German settlers behaved in a similar fashion, enthusiastically joining the *Schutztruppe* or organizing themselves into reserve units.

On August 8, 1914, the war in East Africa began in earnest when the British light cruiser *Astraea* bombarded Dar es Salaam, destroying its radio tower and transmitter. Governor Schnee, desperately trying to keep the colony neutral

⁶⁴Following the reductions KAR, Inspector General G. H. Thesiger considered the KAR so under-strength that 3 KAR, stationed in British East Africa, would be incapable of dealing simultaneously with a revolt in the colony and incursions along the Northern Frontier district; always a distinct possibility. The British decision to disband 2 KAR ended up benefiting the Germans, because

and not wanting to provoke the British, had already ordered all military forces out of the capital. The *Astraea's* captain sent a boat of armed sailors into the port where they landed unopposed. With Schnee's blessing, local authorities agreed to British demands not to rebuild the tower and to clear the harbor of all guns and munitions for the duration of the war. In exchange, the captain of the *Astraea* gave his word that the Royal Navy would not attack the town. Under similar circumstances, the authorities in Tanga, German East Africa's other major port, agreed to almost identical truce terms.

Neither the British naval officers nor the German officials had the authority to make such promises. The captain of the *Astraea* received a stern reprimand from the British Admiralty, and a furious Vorbeck declared Schnee's actions treasonous. He immediately disobeyed Schnee's commands to do nothing and ordered units of the *Schutztruppe* stationed along the northern border to mobilize. A largely volunteer settler force, led by Captain Tom von Prince, crossed the border near Kilimanjaro and occupied the British town of Taveta on August 15, 1914. Vorbeck planned a major attack on the British port of Mombasa, but stiffening British resistance halted the German advance. Faced with a shortage of troops and equipment, the British were unable to retake Taveta. KAR askari assisted by British settlers did however manage to limit German incursions into British East Africa to small raiding parties. Fighting, consisting mainly of small raids and border incursions, also occurred along the border between German East Africa and Nyasaland, as well as in the lake

many former KAR askaris crossed the border and enlisted in the *Schutztruppe*.

region.⁶⁵

With the KAR unable to halt German incursions, Governor Belfield realized that attempts to keep East Africa out of the war had failed, and asked the Colonial Office for reinforcements. The Committee of Imperial Defense, working from pre-war plans that linked the defense of East Africa with keeping the sea lanes to India open, agreed that the Indian Army should dispatch two expeditionary forces, labeled C and B, to East Africa. Units from expeditionary Force C began to arrive in Mombasa at the end of September, and they were sent to the Kilimanjaro area to reinforce the KAR and provide security for the Kenya-Uganda railway. The second and larger group of reinforcements, Force B, consisted of 8,000 men organized in two brigades. Force B's objective was to land and seize Tanga. Once the port had been occupied, Force B, working in concert with Force C and units of the KAR moving into German East Africa down the northern railway, would defeat the *Schutztruppe* and quickly occupy the remainder of the colony.⁶⁶

In November of 1914, after a miserable voyage, expeditionary Force B arrived in Mombasa. The units in Force B came from all over India and many of its soldiers and officers were of questionable quality. Most of the troops lacked adequate training and, prior to embarking from Bombay on October 16th, there had been no time to stage exercises. To add to the turmoil, the soldiers, recently rearmed with Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifles, had little time to train with their

⁶⁵Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, pp. 27-34; for details of the war along the frontier between German East Africa and Nyasaland see Melvin Page. "The War Of Thangata: Nyasaland And The East African Campaign, 1914-1918," *The Journal Of African History*, 19, 1 (1978), pp. 87-100.

new weapons.⁶⁷ Despite these problems Force B's commander, General Arthur E. Aitken, and the majority of his staff confidently predicted that they would be able to effect a landing at the port of Tanga. Aitken refused to listen to British intelligence officer Captain Richard Meinertzhagen's concerns about the quality of many of the Indian troops and their poor chance of defeating the Germans. Meinertzhagen, who had extensive knowledge of East Africa, pointed out that although the majority of the *Schutztruppe* was concentrated in the north, Vorbeck could rapidly reinforce Tanga using the northern railway running from the port to the town of Moshi. Aitken's staff casually dismissed this warning and remained convinced that the German askari would either surrender or fight poorly and be rapidly defeated. Aitken considered the outcome a foregone conclusion remarking, "The Indian Army will make short work of a lot of niggers." He turned down an offer to have KAR askari experienced in moving through heavy bush and acclimated to the climate take part in the attack. Disgusted, Meinertzhagen wrote in his diary:

I am the only officer with the force who knows the interior of German East and I have placed my views before Aitken. His answer is that the German is worse than we are, his troops are ill trained, ours are magnificent and bush or no bush he means to thrash the Germans before Christmas. Fine words, but I know the German. His colonial troops are second to none, they are well led by the best officers in the world, he knows the country and understands bush warfare and his men are not so prone to malaria as ours are. And finally he will be operating in his own country and can choose the time and the place for attacking our converging forces which will arrive in battle sadly depleted by disease and detachments.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Telegram from the Governor of East Africa to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1st November 1914. WO 106/573.

⁶⁷S. D. Pradhan *Indian Army in East Africa*, (New Delhi: National Book Organization, 1991), pp. 22-29.

⁶⁸Richard Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary, 1899-1926*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 84.

Meinertzhagen based his comments on observations he made while visiting German East Africa in 1906 where he observed *Schutztruppe* field companies being trained.⁶⁹ His analysis concerning the quality of the *Schutztruppe* and his predictions about both the performance of expeditionary Force B and the nature of the war in East Africa turned out to be prophetic.

The British landing at Tanga was delayed, first by the insistence of naval officers that they inform local German authorities that the truce both sides had agreed to was off and later by the navy's insistence that mine sweeping operations be carried out before attempting the assault. The British sense of fair play combined with the subsequent mine sweeping operations gave the Germans enough time to shift troops from the Kilimanjaro region to Tanga and prepare defensive positions around the town.

The soldiers of Force B encountered only slight resistance while landing and established a beachhead but attempts to occupy the town of Tanga ended in disaster. Moving through dense plantations of rubber and sisal in ferocious heat, the British and Indian battalions staggered into carefully cleared killing zones. When the German machine guns opened fire, many of the nervous Indian soldiers dropped their weapons and fled. Snipers, concealed in trees, picked off British officers attempting to rally their fleeing troops. Two battalions finally managed to fight their way into Tanga but were forced back and had to retreat to the beach following a series of German counterattacks. Vorbeck was eager to deliver the *coup de grace* and drive the remnants of Force B into the sea but the

German forces, exhausted from their rapid deployment and the day-long battle, had to regroup and rest.

Although the British outnumbered the German-led troops, the morale of Force B had collapsed.⁷⁰ On November 5, Aitken hastily re-embarked his demoralized and shattered units ordering all weapons and stores brought ashore be abandoned to allow his troops to board the transports as quickly as possible. The British suffered over 800 casualties, while the Germans lost only 16 officers and 55 askari.

For the *Schutztruppe*, their overwhelming victory at Tanga constituted the most important battle of the war. It united the settler community in the colony and persuaded many heretofore anti-war colonists to throw their support behind Vorbeck's force. More importantly, the spoils of victory abandoned at Tanga re-equipped three field companies with modern rifles and provided the Germans with sixteen additional machine guns, 600,000 rounds of ammunition, telephone equipment, medical supplies and uniforms. The British further provoked the belligerent spirit of the German colonists by subjecting the inhabitants of Dar es Salaam to a prolonged naval bombardment.⁷¹

The disaster at Tanga shocked British authorities. The War Office took control of operations and reorganized British forces in the region. General Aitken, blamed for the defeat, returned home in disgrace. Command in East Africa passed to Major-General Richard Wapshare, who was ordered by Lord Horatio

⁶⁹Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, pp. 306-313.

⁷⁰Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary*, p. 94; see also A. Russell, "The Landing At Tanga, 1914," *Tanganyika Notes And Records*, 58-59, (1962).

⁷¹Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, pp. 44-47.

Herbert Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, to restrict himself to defensive operations and raids. The War Office made it clear that due to events in more important theaters, no further reinforcements would be available for East Africa. In January General Warpshare, chafing at the command to remain on the defensive, proposed to raise and train two more KAR battalions which he felt could be ready to take the field after a period of eight months. Warpshare's suggestion was first derailed by comments made by the Governor that no more than 600 new men could be procured and that these could be used to bolster the numbers of the existing battalions. Later the proposal was tabled following the visit of Colonel H. E. C. Kitchener to East Africa and his subsequent report to the War Office in which he concluded that the performance of African troops would not justify the added expense involved in raising new formations.⁷²

Following the victory at Tanga Vorbeck reorganized the *Schutztruppe* and went on the offensive. In January 1915, elements of the *Schutztruppe* surrounded and defeated a large British force on the northern border at Jasin. It proved a pyrrhic victory, since Vorbeck's aide, five other officers and many askari died in the fighting. During the two-day battle, the German forces also expended two hundred thousand rounds of ammunition, foreshadowing what would become one of the *Schutztruppe's* major problems: maintaining an adequate supply of munitions. Vorbeck calculated that without re-supply, the *Schutztruppe* could fight only three more large engagements before running out of ammunition.⁷³

⁷²Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 290-291.

⁷³Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, pp. 56-63.

To conserve both the human and material elements of his force, Vorbeck decided to concentrate on raiding the one hundred mile-stretch of the Ugandan railway coterminous with the border of German East Africa. Attacks on both the railway line and small British posts in the area kept enemy forces on the defensive and further damaged their morale. The raids gave many members of the *Schutztruppe* invaluable training in carrying out guerrilla operations and helped build a strong feeling of *esprit de corps* within the force.⁷⁴

For the KAR, British and Indian troops responsible for the difficult task of guarding the railway and keeping German raiding parties out of British territory the latter months of 1915 was perhaps the low point of the entire campaign. While German settlers emboldened by the victory at Tanga eagerly supported the *Schutztruppe* many of their British counterparts, who had initially enthusiastically supported the war, became disillusioned with the dreary defensive pace of the conflict and returned to their civilian jobs and farms. British and Indian units stationed along the railway found themselves languishing in defensive positions, carrying out patrol actions and occasionally engaging enemy raiding parties. When Major-General M. J. Tighe took over command from Warpshare in April 1915 he requested permission to engage in limited offensive operation but was refused. At the end of 1915 British forces in East Africa were demoralized, and had accomplished little in setting the stage for a future invasion of German territory. Although the vital railway line remained open British and Indian units had suffered incredibly heavy losses from disease and Tighe reported that only 4,000 of his infantry remained fit for duty. KAR units, as well as

⁷⁴Leonard Mosley, *Duel for Kilimanjaro*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), pp. 96-98.

their European officers already acclimated to local conditions, were in much better shape but still no plan existed to expand the force. The only bright spot in the British litany of woes was the steady progress being made on the construction of a light railway and accompanying water pipeline designed to move supplies between Voi to the British front lines near Kilimanjaro.

The German navy's single ocean-going warship in the region, the light cruiser *Konigsberg*, commanded by Captain Max Loof, matched the success enjoyed by German land forces in the early stages of the war. On September 20, 1914, the cruiser steamed into Zanzibar harbor and sank H.M.S. *Pegasus*, at the time the only British warship in the area capable of engaging the German cruiser. Pursued by British naval units called in from South Africa and running low on coal, the *Konigsberg* sought refuge in waterways of the maze-like Rufiji delta. On March 1st, 1915 the British Navy established a blockade along the coast to serve the dual functions of keeping the *Konigsberg* from slipping out and menacing Allied shipping in the Indian Ocean and to attempt to stop the *Schutztruppe* from being re-supplied.⁷⁵ British military intelligence located the German ship on October 30, 1914, but it was not until July 1915, after a great deal of effort and several unsuccessful attempts that they eventually managed to sink the *Konigsberg*. The destruction of the German cruiser freed many of the Royal Navy ships to operate elsewhere but the blockade along the coast was maintained. Despite the blockade both supply ships dispatched by the German Government reached East Africa and their cargoes of munitions, medicines and

arms contributed to the ability of the *Schutztruppe* to remain in the field. The German sailors who survived the destruction of the *Konigsberg* enlisted in the *Schutztruppe* and all ten of the cruisers' 105 mm guns as well as numerous other stores were salvaged and put to good use during the land war.⁷⁶

The Invasion of German East Africa: March 1916-January 1917

At the end of 1915, the British began to assemble forces to launch another major offensive in East Africa. The South African government, after occupying German South West Africa, sent large numbers of soldiers and supplies to East Africa to help their British allies. Originally the new Commander responsible for invading German East Africa was supposed to be Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien but on the voyage from London to East Africa he fell ill with pneumonia and shortly after arriving in South Africa was forced to resign due to ill health. The Committee of Imperial Defense decided to approach the South African Government about the possibility of having South African General Jan C. Smuts, who had recently acquitted himself well during the fighting in German Southwest Africa, serve as the new Commander in Chief. Smuts accepted the appointment on February 6th, and on February 19th landed in Mombasa and took command of British forces in East Africa.⁷⁷

Smuts's arrival and the steady influx of fresh troops and arms raised the

⁷⁵Telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of East Africa February 16th, 1915 in Operations in East Africa Decisions of Sub Committee of Committee of Imperial Defense. PRO, WO 106/573.

⁷⁶For detailed accounts of the role of the *Koenigsberg* see Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Germans Who Never Lost*. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968) and Max Loof, *Kreuzerfahrt and Buschkampf*, (Berlin: Neu-deutsche Verlags-und Treuhand, 1927).

flagging spirits of the rank and file in the region. Smuts had commanded forces fighting against the British during the Boer War and many soldiers thought that with his knowledge of guerrilla tactics and African terrain he would be able to devise a plan to quickly defeat the Germans. Some British officers however, remained pessimistic, pointing out Smuts had never been formally trained as a soldier and lacked experience dealing with the logistical challenges involved in commanding such a large and complex army. Certainly the arrival of Smuts and increasing numbers of reinforcements changed the conduct of the war. For the first time since Tanga, British forces resumed the offensive. One soldier wrote, "The real history of the war begins with Smuts; for, prior to his coming, we were merely at war; but when he came we began to fight."⁷⁸

By March 1916, Smuts could count on 73,300 soldiers either under his direct command or in the armies of his allies. This total included 27,575 South Africans, Rhodesians, and British troops, 14,300 Indians, 6,875 K.A.R askaris and several hundred volunteers raised from the local settler population. Smuts's army was well supplied with artillery, armored cars, BE2C biplanes, trucks and machine guns. To face this formidable force, Vorbeck increased the *Schutztruppe* to 3,000 European officers and troops and approximately 12,100 askari.⁷⁹

In addition to the units under his command, Smuts could also count on support from 10,000 Belgian askari in the *Force Publique*, as well as Portuguese

⁷⁷Telegram from Governor General of South Africa to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5th February, 1916. PRO WO 106/573. Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 294-295.

⁷⁸Robert V. Dolbey, *Sketches of the East Africa Campaign*, (London: John Murray, 1918), p. 25.

⁷⁹Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, pp. 71-72.

troops stationed in northern Mozambique.⁸⁰ Initially local Belgian authorities remained hesitant on collaborating with the British, fearing English colonists would try to gain control of the mineral rich province of Katanga. By late 1916 *Schutztruppe* raids and the desire to exact vengeance for German atrocities in Belgium won out over distrust of the British. The Belgian commander, General Charles Henri Marie Ernest Tombeur, began to work with Smuts to coordinate operations against the Germans. In return for military support the British dispatched a liaison officer to work with Tombeur and also provided the *Force Publique* with much needed logistical assistance including carriers recruited from Uganda.

Unlike Aitken, Smuts did not delude himself that either overwhelming numbers or the "racial" superiority of the Indian, South Africa and English troops under his command would guarantee a quick victory. The scorn many of the South African officers and enlisted men felt for their "kaffir" enemies in the *Schutztruppe* and their KAR allies quickly disappeared when battle was joined. In early April 1916, Smuts, realizing the value of the KAR, sent a telegram to the War Office proposing doubling the regiment from three to six battalions. The War Office, after some delay, agreed to the plan, in part because Smuts convincingly argued that the campaign would certainly be followed by a period of unrest during which the former German colony would require a KAR garrison, since the Indian and European troops would be needed elsewhere.⁸¹ One result of this expansion was the establishment, for the first time, of a unified command

⁸⁰Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 243.

structure based in Nairobi, responsible for overseeing the administration of the KAR and setting up guidelines for service. Splitting existing battalions and then adding recruits to the ranks of the new units formed new KAR battalions. Smuts had hoped that the additional battalions would be ready to take the field in six to nine months, in case elements of the *Schutztruppe* managed to escape intact to the area south of the central railway line. To his regret the recruitment and training of the new battalions took much longer than anticipated and he was forced to continue pursuit of the Germans without additional units of KAR.⁸²

Smuts intended to use his numerically superior forces to surround the northern contingents of the *Schutztruppe* and began the invasion of German East Africa with a major offensive around Mount Kilimanjaro. On March 8, 1916, fifteen thousand troops under the command of General Tighe attacked German positions on the Taveta gap, while four thousand mounted troops tried to get behind the northern contingents of the *Schutztruppe* by marching on the town of Moshi. Smuts, confident Vorbeck would rush all his troops north to try to defend Taveta, predicted his force would destroy the northern contingents of the *Schutztruppe* in six months, leaving only a few small detachments to be mopped up along the coast and in the western and southern parts of the colony. Vorbeck, however, refused to fall into the trap, and when the Allied pincers closed around the town of Moshi, they found the Germans had already withdrawn.

The opening engagements in the Kilimanjaro region established a pattern that would be repeated again and again in the next seven months. Smuts and

⁸¹Telegram from General Smuts to C.I.G.S., 3rd April 1916. PRO, WO 106/278, see also Scheme for the reorganization of the KAR. PRO, WO 106/277.

his South African and British commanders continued trying to envelop the *Schutztruppe*. They hoped to trap and destroy the German units in the north before they crossed the central railway line and linked up with other detachments retreating in the face of Belgian pressure from the West and from General Northey's forces attacking from Nyasaland in the South. The Germans, well aware of the British numerical superiority, avoided positional warfare and fought a constant delaying action down the northern railway, drawing their supplies along the line of march from carefully prepared stockpiles. Vorbeck ordered all his subordinates to mount a scorched earth campaign as they retreated:

Nothing may be left in the enemy hands that can be used by us in the prosecution of the war. Everything that cannot be moved to a place of safety, must without exception be destroyed. The troops must not only live on the country, but also send as much food as possible for the other troops in the rear.⁸³

The Allied soldiers that followed were forced to pass through territory denuded of supplies, and as they moved deeper into German territory, their exposed supply lines stretched for hundreds of miles. Due to the sabotage of the railway and the results of heavy traffic on the poor roads, it became increasingly difficult to get adequate food and medical supplies to the front line units.⁸⁴

Outnumbered and out-gunned, the *Schutztruppe* could not prevent Allied forces from gradually taking control of German East Africa's cities and towns.

⁸²Telegram from General Smuts to C.I.G.S., 18th July 1916. PRO, WO 106/278.

⁸³GHQ Dodoma to Hauptmann Braunschweig, June 25, 1916. Translation of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck's War Diary, Vol. III, IWM.

⁸⁴For an excellent discussion of the problems the British faced with the administration, organization and maintenance of the lines of communication, particularly issues relating to roads and motor transport, see, *History of the British East African Expeditionary Force 1915-1919*, PRO, WO 106/1490.

While Smuts' troops pursued the main body of the *Schutztruppe* south, the Royal Navy occupied Sadani and Bagamoyo in early August 1916. Heavily outnumbered and facing converging columns, in addition to the threat of an amphibious landing, on September 3, 1916, the Germans abandoned Dar es Salaam. Before they left they wrecked everything of military value that could not be removed. Retreating to the town of Kisaki, Vorbeck reorganized the *Schutztruppe* and abandoned his sick and wounded to be cared for by the British. The remaining German force consisted of 1,100 German officers and soldiers and 7,300 askaris.

After the exhausted British and South African forces arrived at Kisaki in mid-September, their pursuit ground to a halt. Smuts' troops had followed the *Schutztruppe* for seven months and, although the Germans had avoided pitched battles, they had subjected their pursuers to constant delaying actions. As engineers worked to rebuild destroyed bridges and roads, and get the northern and central railways working again, Smuts reorganized his army. South African units, decimated by months of hard fighting, short rations and disease, returned home, being replaced by African soldiers of the Nigerian Brigade, the Gold Coast Regiment and the KAR.

By the end of 1916 the allied armies had made considerable progress. Smuts's forces had advanced from the northern border all the way across the central railway line, driving the main body of the *Schutztruppe* before them. Belgian troops occupied Ruanda and Urundi and a joint Belgian-British force, attacking from the west, took Mwanza. Belgian units finally marched into Tabora on September 19th. General Northey's Nyasaland-Rhodesia Field Force, consisting of 3,000 troops, moved into German territory from the south, occupied Iringa in August 1916, and marched on Mahenge, hoping to head off German detachments retreating from the west and north. The Royal Navy, in addition to

seizing Bagamoyo Sadani and Dar es Salaam, also landed at the southern ports of Kilwa and Kilwa Kisiwani, thus ending any possibility of the Germans being re-supplied by sea.

The arrival of heavy rains at the end of September halted offensive operations in the central part of the colony. Smuts moved his headquarters from Morogoro to Dar es Salaam, and for the remainder of the year concentrated on reorganizing his army, repairing the damage done to the rail and road network, stockpiling supplies and improving the lines of communication. Although Smuts was anxious to resume offensive operations, it quickly became apparent that this was impossible, due to the poor physical condition of the majority of his troops. Thousands of South African, Indian and British soldiers were barely alive; medically unfit after months of constant fighting, inadequate rest, medical care and rations. Over the next five months, over ten thousand European troops, most from South Africa, as well as many Indians, left East Africa. They were replaced by West Africans in the Gold Coast Regiment and Nigerian brigade and by newly formed battalions of the KAR. On January 20, 1917, Smuts turned command of Allied forces in East Africa over to Major General Reginald Hoskins and sailed from Dar es Salaam to represent South Africa at the Imperial Conference in London. Upon arrival, Smuts declared the war in East Africa all but over, claiming the *Schutztruppe* was "merely the remnant of an army...and not a formidable fighting force."⁸⁵

Reorganization, Africanization and the Battle for the South of German East

Africa: January 1917-November 1917

General Hoskins and the forces under his command would have disagreed with Smuts's confident appraisal of the military situation in East Africa. The combined British and Belgian advances had forced the Germans out of every major town in German East Africa, and the size of the *Schutztruppe* had dwindled due to casualties, sickness and desertion. Nonetheless, Vorbeck's command was far from finished. By December 1916, 98,800 allied soldiers were pursuing the remaining members of the *Schutztruppe*, operating in the Rufiji delta. Hoskins, under increasing pressure to end the campaign, asked the War Office for more troops and equipment. He continued to try to encircle the *Schutztruppe* by mounting advances from the towns of Lindi and Kilwa, starting in July 1917. Once again the British moved too slowly, and the German forces, rested and supplied with the Rufiji's maize crop, escaped before their opponents could close off avenues of escape. Unable to deliver the *coup de grace*, Hoskins was relieved in May, turning over command to South African General Jacobus Van Deventer.

During his four months in command, Hoskins continued Smuts's efforts to replace the remaining European and Indian troops with Africans. He authorized a rapid increase in the strength of the KAR, and attempted to improve both the mobility and health of his force by demanding more carriers. In Uganda, Nyasaland and British East Africa, district officers either recruited or seized tens of thousands of Africans, sending them to German East Africa to serve in the Carrier Corps. Large numbers of captured *Schutztruppe* carriers, as well as

⁸⁵Farwell, *The Great War*, pp. 310-319.

civilians living along the line of march, were also pressed into service. The increased availability of carriers and an improved transport system gradually allowed more supplies to make their way to the front-line troops. Additional rations improved the health of the soldiers, and malaria had a much less significant impact on the large numbers of new askari than it had on Smuts's earlier forces, which were composed mainly of Europeans and Indians.⁸⁶

On October 15, 1917, Van Deventer once again tried to destroy the remnants of the *Schutztruppe*. Converging British units attacked Vorbeck's main force at Mahiwa on the southwestern side of the Mwera plateau. Instead of slipping away, the *Schutztruppe* dug in and fought a pitched battle that produced slaughter resembling that occurring on the Western Front. Led by Brigadier Percival S. Beves, the British furiously attacked Vorbeck's entrenched askari with terrible consequences. By the evening of October 18th, both sides had been bled dry by four days of sustained combat. Of the 4,900 British troops engaged at Mahiwa, 2,700 had been killed or wounded.⁸⁷ Although Vorbeck claimed Mahiwa was a German victory, the *Schutztruppe* had lost 519 officers and soldiers killed, wounded or missing. Lacking reserves to make up the casualties and dangerously low on ammunition, Vorbeck had little choice but to withdraw rapidly to the south.⁸⁸ By the end of 1917, Van Deventer had managed to force the *Schutztruppe* into the south of the colony and inflict considerable losses on

⁸⁶Hodges, *The Carrier Corps*, pp. 119-162. See also G. W. T. Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918," *Journal Of African History*, 19 (1978), pp. 101-116; Melvin, Page. "The War Of Thangata" pp. 87-100.

⁸⁷W. D. Downes, *With the Nigerians in German East Africa*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1919), pp. 196-228.

⁸⁸Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, pp. 210-213.

German columns, but he still could not force Vorbeck to surrender.

During this period, few episodes highlight the fluid nature of the campaign and the dangers African communities courted when they declared openly for either the British or the Germans as the operations undertaken by the Wintgens-Nauman force. In February 1917, while German units in the west under Vorbeck's second in command Major Georg Kraut were retreating under steady pressure from the Belgians, a *Schutztruppe* detachment led by Captain Max Wintgens broke away from the main column. Instead of heading south to join Vorbeck's main force Wintgens, commanding 700 askaris armed with three field guns and thirteen machine-guns, headed towards Rhodesia, but then turned north and doubled back through territory the British and Belgians considered safely under their control. Operating in the allied rear, Wintgens's command requisitioned its supplies from local communities and mauled several small allied contingents along its line of march. Wintgens force posed such a threat, that both the British and Belgians established independent commands to track down and destroy the Germans. In May 1917, Wintgens along with a few of his command surrendered to Belgian forces, but the bulk of his askaris remained in the field, led by his second in command, Lieutenant Heinrich Naumann. By this time, the Belgian and British commands both had approximately brigade strength forces in the field in pursuit of Naumann and his few hundred askaris.

Naumann's force, pursued by Allied units, crossed the central railway line in May, entering a region where the British had been so confident of their continued control that they had replaced military administration with a civil administration run by the Colonial Office. Naumann's askaris cut telegraph lines, ambushed supply units and, at the end of August, attacked a British depot at Kahe, seizing stores and wrecking the station. To maintain his mobility and ensure that his askaris would have adequate supplies, Naumann often split his

force into small raiding parties that foraged off local villages. Naumann's strategy proved effective, and it was not until October 2 that British units were able to encircle Naumann and his remaining askari. The final German force consisting of 14 Europeans, 165 askaris and 250 porters surrendered north of Same, very near the border with British East Africa.⁸⁹

Guerrilla Warfare and the Long Pursuit: November 1917-November 1918

The last stage of the war lasted from the battle of Mahiwa until the *Schutztruppe* surrendered on November 25, 1918. After the British pushed Vorbeck into the south of German East Africa, many South African and British officers believed the Germans would capitulate. Vorbeck, however, again reduced his force, left his sick and wounded behind to be cared for by the British, and crossed the Rovuma river into Portuguese East Africa. Catching Portuguese forces in the region by surprise, the *Schutztruppe* quickly captured enough arms, clothing and food from Portuguese garrisons to re-supply. German forces remained in Portuguese territory, constantly pursued by units of the KAR, until September 28, 1918, when they doubled back and returned to German East Africa.⁹⁰

The last stage of the East Africa campaign proved an arduous chase involving persistent and savage fighting. The terrain and climate inflicted suffering as brutal as before, but both forces now operated in territory containing very few inhabitants and a dearth of roads and communications. This deprived

⁸⁹Farwell, *The Great War*, pp. 324-327 and Miller, *Battle for the Bundu*, pp. 268-272.

⁹⁰Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, p. 224.

the German forces of opportunities to recruit porters locally or to receive reinforcements from the few scattered remnants of the *Schutztruppe* still at large. The British faced the additional problem that no definite military objectives like towns or ports remained to be taken. By 1918, the war was being fought between two armies with European officers, but with the majority of the rank and file composed of Africans. During the final year of the war, the task of pursuing and fighting the *Schutztruppe* fell almost entirely on the KAR, which by the end of the war had expanded to a force of over 35,000 soldiers. Vorbeck's force continued to play the fox to the British hounds, and invaded Northern Rhodesia before news of the end of the war reached him on November 13, 1918. At the formal surrender at Abercorn on November 25, 1918, Vorbeck's command numbered 155 Europeans, 1,168 askari, 1,522 porters and over 1,700 other noncombatants.⁹¹

The Butcher's Bill

During the war, the *Schutztruppe* suffered approximately 2,000 killed, 9,000 wounded and 7,000 either taken prisoner or missing in action. The carriers who kept the force supplied also suffered 7,000 casualties, mainly from disease. The German force tied down between 210,000 and 240,000 Allied soldiers in East Africa. While trying to destroy the *Schutztruppe*, British forces lost approximately 10,000 killed, 7,800 wounded and 1,000 captured or missing, including over 6,000 KAR askari who died in British service.⁹² The Germans also

⁹¹H. Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 389-412.

⁹²Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics" p. 105-116.

inflicted 4,700 casualties on Belgian and Portuguese forces in the region.⁹³ Members of the Carrier Corps, who suffered an estimated 94,725 casualties, however, sustained by far the greatest losses. The British also lost an estimated 140,000 transport animals during the course of the campaign. The cost of maintaining British forces in East Africa throughout the war amounted to some 72 million pounds.⁹⁴

The Impact of the East African Campaign

For the Germans, the cost of waging the war in East Africa was negligible. With the exception of two blockade-runners the German government sent to re-supply the *Schutztruppe*, all the forces used during the campaign were already in the colony at the start of the war. The campaign waged by Vorbeck and his *Schutztruppe* provides an extraordinary model of the military principle of economy of force. Even if the German General Staff had devised a detailed pre-war plan to utilize their assets in East Africa in the most effective fashion, it is highly unlikely that it could have developed a better method for tying up enemy manpower and resources than Vorbeck's masterful campaign.

In 1919, at the treaty of Versailles, Germany gave up rights to all its overseas colonies, and German East Africa was divided among the victors. The Belgians retained control of the territory that currently comprises Burundi and Rwanda, and Portugal received a 400-square mile piece of land called the Kionga Triangle, which became part of Portuguese East Africa. The remainder of the former German East Africa became a British Mandate to be administered

⁹³Illiffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 246.

⁹⁴Mosley, *Duel for Kilimanjaro*, p. 235.

under the supervision of the recently formed League of Nations.⁹⁵

For Tanganyika's African population, the causes of the war remained a mystery but its consequences were unavoidable. The campaign resulted in the disruption of numerous political, economic and social structures and left widespread suffering in its wake. Most Africans found themselves at the mercy of marauding armies and had no choice but to endure the misery of the protracted campaign. No one has as accurately characterized the war in East Africa as historian John Iliffe, who wrote, "Lettow-Vorbeck's brilliant Campaign was the climax of Africa's exploitation: its use as a mere battlefield."⁹⁶

During the war, both the Germans and the Allies recruited or coerced hundreds of thousands of Africans to serve as carriers and askari. As the campaign progressed and British forces penetrated further into German territory, the numbers of civilians forced to serve as porters steadily increased. German askari who surrendered and remained in good health frequently were used as porters or convinced to change sides and fight with the KAR. By October 10, 1916, 300 German askaris had been formed into a scouting corps and Smuts was planning on expanding this force, when the War Office suggested that these soldiers be used as the nucleus of a new KAR battalion.⁹⁷ One battalion, 6 KAR, was formed almost entirely from ex-German askaris, many of whom had formerly served in 2 KAR before the battalion was disbanded prior to the start of the First World War. The British also recruited carriers from German East Africa, and by March of 1917, the British Commander estimated that, out of a total of 125,000

⁹⁵Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 246-247.

⁹⁶Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 241.

carriers, 44,000 of them came from Kenya, while the remaining 81,000 were inhabitants of German East Africa.⁹⁸ Few carriers died in combat, but tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands perished from disease, malnutrition, inadequate medical care and neglect. Both sides kept records of the number of European and askari casualties, but porters often did not rate the same level of record-keeping as soldiers. In the case of the British forces, as long as carriers continued to be conscripted in Uganda, Nyasaland and British East Africa, district officers made some effort to record the numbers taken from each district. Most Carrier Corps porters were entered on the rolls and fingerprinted at their time of enlistment, so that they could be allocated rations and paid. Once British forces moved into German territory, the system of conscription became much more ad-hoc, and it is highly likely that large numbers of porters were never officially recorded when they were impressed into service, let alone when they collapsed from exhaustion along the line of march or were shot attempting to desert. Neither marauding army hesitated to requisition what it required from the towns and villages along the line of march. In several areas of East Africa, famine, as well as the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, followed the passage of the two armies. Poor transport, inadequate supplies, limited numbers of medical personnel, and the general disruption caused by the war increased the suffering of both civilians and combatants throughout the region

The absence of both European and African civilians on the home front led to a neglect of agriculture, stock raising, education and other essential

⁹⁷Smuts to C.I.G.S., and reply WO to G.O.C. in East Africa, October 10, 1916 PRO, WO 106/278.

⁹⁸liffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 249.

infrastructure projects. In German East Africa as well as in the neighboring British colonies, the war led to skeleton administrative staffs with many members of both the colonial government and the local settler population joining the armed forces. Officials who remained at their posts found themselves overwhelmed by a host of new war related duties, with the inevitable result being that infrastructure, education and welfare projects unrelated to the war effort had to be postponed or abandoned. Missions and their African and European staffs and followers also suffered during the conflict. When the fighting began, the German administration ordered the arrest and internment of British C.M.S. missionaries, and put many of their African followers to work as porters or laborers. The British were equally harsh with German missionaries, and by the end of the war almost all of the German missionaries in the region had been arrested and deported, leaving mission stations deserted or run by skeleton staffs composed mainly of African lay personnel. Even after the war ended, few German missionaries were allowed to return to the territory, and throughout the mid-1920's Swiss missionaries continued to run most former German missions.

While the war certainly had a negative impact on the surrounding Allied territories, particularly Portuguese East Africa and Northern Rhodesia, where the final stages of the conflict took place, the majority of the campaign was fought in German East Africa. African leaders and civilians frequently found themselves in the unenviable position of being forced to take sides in the conflict. When Allied forces occupied German territory, they attempted to gain support from the African population, and often replaced German appointed *akidas*, chiefs and headmen with new pro-British leaders. The fluid nature of the fighting, combined with the limited numbers of Allied troops available, meant that few soldiers could be spared to guard vital supply lines and communication networks, let alone protect the African population from German columns remaining in the field.

African leaders and civilians who openly declared their support for the British ran the very real risk of German forces returning to their areas and carrying out reprisals.⁹⁹

Most African populations relied on diplomacy and attempted, whenever possible, to stay out of the way of all military forces, but others saw the war as an opportunity to bring an end to German rule. In the northern part of the colony, during the early stages of the war, the Masai provided military intelligence to both the British and German forces. As German military fortunes declined, the Masai allied themselves with the British and took advantage of the vacuum created by the destruction of the German administration to leave their reserve and reoccupy pasturelands along the northern border. The Masai provided British forces with information on German troop movements, and used the German preoccupation with the allied advance to mount raids on neighboring communities.¹⁰⁰ In the southern part of the colony, memories of German depredations during the Maji Maji rebellion remained fresh and many groups worked against the Germans, betraying their positions, preying on their lines of communication and ambushing stragglers and small patrols.¹⁰¹ In the region around Newala, large numbers of

⁹⁹While serving in Bukoba in the 1940's one British officer discovered a portrait of the former German Kaiser Wilhelm II hidden in the personal effects of a local chief and wondered, "Had he kept this portrait as a memento, or as insurance against their possible return." E. K. Lumley, *Forgotten Mandate*, (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1976), p. 155.

¹⁰⁰Telegram from Mpapua, 9th July 1916, Translation of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck's War Diary, Vol. III, IWM.

¹⁰¹While there is no doubt that anti-German sentiment was more widespread in the southern portions of German East Africa, another reason that African groups in the south may have been more active in aiding the British has to do with the declining strength of the German forces. From the very start of the war, the majority of the *Schutztruppe* operated in the north, opposing the British advance. By the time the main body of the German force was retreating through the south, the numbers of the German force had decreased and most Africans were fully aware that the Germans were badly outnumbered and overmatched by Allied forces.

Makonde crossed the border into Portuguese territory, and German forces responded by mounting several punitive expeditions against Makonde villages.¹⁰² The Hehe turned on the Germans during the summer of 1916 and following the war, in 1919, the British acknowledged their support by making Sapi bin Mkwawa, a descendant of chief Mkwawa who resisted the Germans in the 1890's, the chief of the Hehe.¹⁰³ In most instances however, the change from German to British control brought few immediate benefits to African populations, and British requirements for taxes, provisions and carriers often exceeded German demands.

The war also changed how Africans viewed European colonizers. For the first time, many Africans saw Europeans fighting each other and the war destroyed the myth of European superiority and unity, as well as the idea that colonial governments could protect African civilian populations from violence. Most East Africans also realized that, without their efforts, neither the British

¹⁰²Telegram from Makungu-Newala, 2nd December 1916, Translation of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck's War Diary, Vol. III, IWM.

¹⁰³As mentioned in chapter two, the Hehe, under the leadership of Mkwawa, fought a long guerrilla war against the Germans that did not end until Mkwawa was tracked down in 1898. Mkwawa committed suicide to avoid capture and, after his body was discovered by a German patrol, his head was removed and his skull was eventually sent to Germany and put in a museum. Even after Mkwawa's death, the Germans remained distrustful of the Hehe, and in 1914 Iringa was one of only two out of a total of 22 administrative districts in the colony that remained under military, instead of civilian control. In restoring a descendant of Mkwawa to the position of chief, the British achieved the dual aim of rewarding a group of Hehe who had been staunchly anti-German during the war and of restoring the traditional rightful ruler of the Hehe to power. Furthermore, the case provided the British with an opportunity to play on African and European public opinion and remind the world that the Germans had consistently proved themselves brutal colonists, incapable of running an overseas empire. British negotiators demanded that German authorities surrender Mkwawa's skull, and it was returned to the Hehe shortly after World War One. For an account of the return of Mkwawa's skull, see Cameron, *My Tanganyika Service*, pp. 49-50.

victory, nor the protracted German resistance, would have been possible.¹⁰⁴

After the war, British Captain Robert V. Dolbey noted:

Here, indeed, in this campaign the black man had kept up the spirit of the white. Nor does this leave the future unclouded with potential trouble, for, in this war, the black man has seen the white, on both sides, run from him. The black man is armed and trained in the use of the rifle and machine-gun, and his intelligence and capacity have been attested to by the degree of fire control that he has mastered.¹⁰⁵

For African civilians, the memories of the horrors of the campaign remained vivid for decades, kept alive through stories and dance.¹⁰⁶

The East African Campaign demonstrated to both civilian and military officials that East African soldiers could hold their own in combat against a well trained and determined enemy equipped with modern weapons. Furthermore, the ability of German and British askaris to continue fighting despite harsh conditions, poor rations and inadequate medical care impressed many British officers. During the campaign, askaris proved hardier, much less expensive to field and, perhaps most important, less susceptible to disease than British, South African and Indian troops. The performance of both the *Schutztruppe* and the KAR during the campaign, at least temporarily, put to rest the widespread belief that African soldiers were too panicky and unreliable to make good combat troops.

The campaign had another result, which would alter African perception of

¹⁰⁴Melvin Page, "The Myth Of The Brass-Serpent: Europeans And The Protection Of African Civilians During The East African Campaign." *17th International Congress of Historical Sciences Proc. Madrid: Comité International des Sciences Historiques* (1991) Vol. II, pp. 1044-1050.

¹⁰⁵Dolbey, *Sketches*, pp. 22-23.

military service in the years to come. The KAR battalions raised during the second half of the war were larger and better equipped than their pre-war predecessors. Before the war, most KAR askari served as riflemen with only a handful being selected and trained to use heavy and light machine guns. During the war, large numbers of askari served as signalers, machine gun and mortar crewmembers, medical orderlies, stretcher-bearers, drivers and craftsmen. The need to train Africans to operate and maintain weapons, communications equipment and vehicles, meant that colonial authorities, for the first time, had to recruit Africans who had some formal education or skills before being recruited into the KAR or were considered "intelligent" enough to be trained quickly. Despite British commanders' efforts to ensure that KAR units had adequate numbers of European NCO's, it was not always possible. Increasing numbers of Africans became NCO's. During the latter stage of the war, many African NCO's, serving in both the German and British forces, were given increased responsibilities. It was not uncommon for African NCO's to lead patrols or detachments without a European NCO or officer present; something both armies had tried to avoid in the early years of the war. The result of these changes was that following the war, for the first time, small numbers of Africans left military service having gained skills that they could use outside the armed forces. For most askari and the great majority of the carriers however, the benefits of military service remained minimal at best, and many of those who returned to their homes counted themselves lucky to have survived.

¹⁰⁶Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 248-250. ¹⁰⁷Gilchrist Alexander, *Tanganyika Memories: A Judge in the Red Kanza*. (London: Blackie & Son Limited, 1936), p. 123.

The surrender of the *Schutztruppe*, the repatriation of German officers and NCO's and the decision that the former German colony would become a British mandate brought to an end the terrible war years and German rule. The *Schutztruppe* was replaced with battalions of the KAR, which continued to garrison the territory long after hostilities ceased. Added to the myriad other problems that faced Tanganyika's new administration, would be the question of what role the new territory would play in regional defense arrangements and how the inclusion of the new mandate would influence military policy throughout region.

Chapter 4

Military Policy in the Inter-War Years From German Colony to British Mandate

The end of German rule and the transition of the colony to a League of Nations mandate under British control ushered in a series of significant political, economic and social changes in the territory that would continue throughout the inter-war years. The change from German to British administration altered the political landscape. In many districts, chiefs and headmen who had worked with the Germans were deposed and replaced with new leaders considered pro-British. The early 1920's also marked the gradual transition from military to civil administration and a shift away from reliance on KAR garrisons to local police forces to ensure internal security. Added to these administrative changes were the lingering social and economic effects of the war. The suffering, famine and destruction of infrastructure that resulted from the East African campaign were unequally distributed across the territory, but prevalent none the less. Refugees and demobilized soldiers returned home or had to start new lives elsewhere. In some districts, famine and disease continued long after the war ended, and the new administration found itself responsible for repairing and rebuilding ports, roads, schools, hospitals and railways yet lacking the fiscal resources needed to do so. The new British administration faced the additional burden that, over all these efforts, loomed the necessity of appearing more enlightened, more worthy of governing the African population than the previous German rulers. Tanganyika's colonial officials, at least in theory if not in practice, could be forced to justify their policies not just to their superiors in London, but also before the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.

During the war British military authorities wanted to transfer administrative control of recently occupied areas to civilian authorities as quickly as possible.

As early as November 1, 1914, General Aitken asked the Government of East Africa to submit to the Secretary of State for the Colonies a proposal he had drawn up for the future administration of conquered territory. Aitken suggested that each district, as soon as it was occupied, would be administered by the government of the nearest British protectorate. The Colonial Office quickly responded that they would not approve Aitken's plans, that he was putting the cart before the horse, and should not worry about administering the territory until after the conquest of German East Africa was completed. The subsequent disaster at Tanga put an end for the time being to the discussion, but the issue remained, and when Smuts took command he proved no more eager to be burdened with administering conquered territory than Aitken. In no small measure this reluctance was motivated by the unwillingness of the military authorities to take on any additional responsibilities other than the pursuit of the *Schutztruppe* and the conquest of the colony.

In 1917, the colonial office sent Sir Horace Byatt to administer the portions of the territory liberated by imperial forces. Following the war, Byatt became the first Governor of Tanganyika and remained at this post until 1924. Byatt faced a formidable task. The Germans' scorched earth strategy had crippled much of the colony's infrastructure, most commercial agriculture, mining operations remained at a standstill, and both secular and missionary medical and education efforts had all but ceased to exist. To this catalogue of difficulties must be added the ongoing operations in several parts of the territory, the continued demands of the military for supplies and porters, and finally the desperate shortage of qualified staff needed to fill positions in the new administration. Byatt himself was hardly the dynamic and visionary leader needed to take charge of rebuilding the shattered former German colony. One observer commenting on Byatt's tenure as governor and the erratic way he made decisions noted, "Ordinances were

promulgated with all the force of law, not only without previous consideration by the parties most affected or interested by the provisions which they contained, but even without explanation".¹⁰⁷

Until the end of the war, when the labor pool improved, Byatt found himself forced to improvise. Staff for the new administration came primarily from the ranks of the armed forces and from recruits drawn from settlers in the surrounding British colonies. Later large numbers of Indians immigrated to Tanganyika where they formed the foundations of the civil service, serving as clerks and artisans, while other members of the Indian community worked as doctors, dentists, lawyers, shopkeepers, and merchants.¹⁰⁸ The government, lacking adequate numbers of skilled administrators and the funds necessary to implement any major changes, continued to use the existing German administrative machinery until the mid 1920's. Pro-German chiefs and rulers were removed, but the British retained the services of many Jumbes and Akidas. Although greater numbers of experienced staff became available following the end of the war, conditions in Tanganyika did not markedly improve during the period of Byatt's tenure as governor. The grave postwar situation in parts of the territory mirrored the postwar depression that affected much of the rest of the world. The British government had few funds available to invest in rebuilding infrastructure, improving the administration or restoring social services, and Tanganyika remained far down on the list of imperial priorities.

For much of the African population, the years surrounding the end of the war were a time of disease and famine. Ongoing hostilities, the requisitioning of

food and transport by the military, the lack of imported goods due to the disruption of trade and the blockade of the coast, all made populations more at risk from famine. As early as 1915, the seizure of crops combined with drought led to famine in areas along the Portuguese border, in the central part of the colony in Ugogo and in the northeast. Conditions rapidly deteriorated as the war progressed. The British invasion in 1916, and the resulting German retreat and scorched earth techniques, had a devastating impact on regions already threatened by food shortages and drought. Both armies' demands for carriers made matters worse by removing large numbers of men from communities who should have been helping with cultivation. The efforts civilian populations made to avoid conscription also included flight from farms and villages, and this further disrupted planting and harvesting cycles. Herders, although arguably more mobile than populations that relied on agriculture, faced similar problems. Both armies seized cattle when the opportunity arose. In exchange for confiscated herds and grain supplies, German and British forces occasionally paid cash, but far more often gave out promissory notes guaranteeing reimbursement after the war. Although cash was considered far more desirable than military IOU's, high prices and in some areas the inability to buy food at any price, meant that money was no substitute for cattle or grain. By 1917, in some areas food reserves had long since disappeared.

The spread of food shortages and famine followed the armies' line of march down from the north across the central region, through the Rufiji valley and into the southern parts of the colony. Although famine had broken out in

¹⁰⁸Robert G. Gregory, *South Asians in East Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 12-25.

some areas as early as 1915, and spread steadily during the next two years, by 1918, following the failure of the rains, it reached the proportions of a full-scale disaster. The central region of the colony was worst affected with tens of thousands dying and equal numbers attempting to flee the drought-stricken area. A district officer summarizing the causes of famine in Konda-Irangi in 1920 wrote:

At the commencement of hostilities, enormous quantities of food were requisitioned by the Germans and sent by carrier safaris, and by the transport wagons of the Arusha Dutch, to the front in the neighborhood of Moshi. In spite of this, the arrival of the English found the tribesmen in possession of large reserves, upon which heavy requisitions were at once made, and promptly met. There are (incomplete) records here, which show that long after the tide of war had passed, this drain continued, and that large quantities of food were sent from Kondoa proper, and from Mkalama, to the central railway. Then came a bad season. The rains failed and the people were caught without any reserves of food at all. Their current crop, moreover, was small for large numbers of their able bodied cultivators were employed by the military, and the war had otherwise greatly disturbed the normal current of native life. As a result the harvest reaped was quite insufficient and in 1918 my predecessor found himself faced with the famine, which has lasted until the present day.¹⁰⁹

The British administration, only recently deployed, was slow to appreciate the danger and respond to food shortages. Throughout 1919, despite efforts to distribute food to the starving, famine continued in Kondoa-Irangi, Singida, Mpapua and Dodoma. People attempted to barter their few remaining possessions and, in extreme cases, even their wives and children for food. The situation was so severe that even the district staff and their servants were subsisting on half rations.¹¹⁰ The famine affected every aspect of life as is demonstrated by the following excerpt from the Dodoma annual report.

¹⁰⁹Kondoa-Irangi DAR, 1919-1920. TNA, AB 4, p. 14.

Everything in connection with District administration has been governed by abnormal conditions arising out of the famine. Trade-all export of foodstuffs from the District was forbidden, Markets-cattle could only be sold on the market and no local produce was forthcoming, Labour-very heavy calls for labour had to be made to transport famine food about the District, Poll-Tax collection-natives exhausted their slender resources buying food, Police-largely employed guarding food depots and escorting food safaris, Native administration- large numbers of natives left the District and permission had to be given others to leave their Jumbes and temporarily seek more favored parts within the District, all were affected.¹¹¹

The administration established a food dump at Dodoma on the central railway line. From there columns of porters, escorted by police, carried grain to the additional dispersal points located at Singida, Mpapua, and Kilimatinde. An additional dump at Saranda dealt with supplying food for Kondoa-Irangi and Mkalama. By March and April 1920 the crisis was waning, although some distribution of food continued. Compiling their annual reports for 1919-1920, several district officers noted that, although the central part of the territory was a drought prone region, the roots of the famine rested in the conduct of both the British and the Germans during the war. As the district officer in Kondoa-Irangi wrote:

Had there been no war the people would have grown more. Had even one of the belligerents refrained from requisitioning, the reserves would have been sufficient. Had there been food in the houses in 1919 the people would have been able to grow enough to tide them over.¹¹²

While the effects of food shortages and famine remained confined mainly

¹¹⁰Kondoa-Irangi DAR, pp. 13-17, Dodoma DAR, pp. 2-5, Kilimatinde Sub-District DAR, pp. 1-3, Mpapua Sub-District DAR, 1919-1920, pp. 7-8. TNA, AB 4.

¹¹¹Dodoma DAR, 1919-1920, TNA AB 4, pp. 2-3.

¹¹²Kondoa-Irangi DAR, TNA AB 4, p. 15.

to districts in central Tanganyika, the spread of disease recognized no such restrictions. Smallpox spread during the war and a British intelligence report mentions that the Germans had a smallpox outbreak in their ranks in December 1915.¹¹³ At the end of February 1918, despite attempts to inoculate members of the force with smallpox vaccine, the *Schutztruppe* suffered another outbreak although few askari and camp followers died from the disease.¹¹⁴ Far more serious was the outbreak Spanish influenza that occurred at the end of the war and swept the country from 1918-1920. In 1920, as the epidemic was waning, the medical department estimated that as many as 50,000 to 80,000 people may have died.¹¹⁵ Some district officers also credited the movement of large numbers of troops with increasing the spread of venereal diseases including syphilis.

One of the first tasks Byatt's new administration faced was re-establishing law and order in the districts. From 1917 until the end of the war, this was almost impossible due to the continued movement of *Schutztruppe* and KAR detachments through parts of the territory. The end of the war and the surrender and disbanding of the *Schutztruppe* brought some improvement in security, but large KAR garrisons continued to be maintained to prevent local unrest and monitor the activities of the remaining German settlers. Byatt's decision to continue to utilize the German administration did not extend to either the police force or the judiciary, both of which, during the German period, had gained well-deserved reputations for ruthlessness and brutality. The famine conditions that existed in some districts following the war were accompanied by high crime

¹¹³Naicker to Consul General Errol Macdonell, December 3, 1915. PRO, WO 106/580.

¹¹⁴August 8, 1918. Translation of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck's War Diary, Vol. III, IWM.

rates, and in the southern part of the colony and in northern Mozambique, several ex-askaris put their wartime arms and experience to use setting themselves up as robber barons.¹¹⁶ There also existed an urgent need to begin searching for and confiscating caches of weapons that had been hidden by the Germans, abandoned along the line of march or taken by deserters from both armies. At first the KAR was given the task of collecting illegal arms but later this responsibility was shifted to the police force.

In addition to lawlessness present in famine-stricken areas, the major security concern for the new British regime was posed by the demobilized former *Schutztruppe* askaris. During the campaign, both askaris in German detachments that surrendered and deserters rounded up by British patrols were often given the option of joining the KAR instead of going into captivity. Some historians have pointed to their willingness to serve the King as loyally as they had served the Kaiser as proof that the askaris were mercenaries merely fighting for the highest bidder. Such an assertion however, is too simple, because in many instances captured askaris were given the choice between joining the KAR or serving as porters in the carrier corps. Considering askaris thought of themselves as soldiers and despised carrier work, and also must have been well aware of the frightful conditions under which porters labored, it is not surprising that many of them saw enlisting in the KAR as the best of the meager options available. Furthermore, the *Schutztruppe's* askaris were no more homogeneous than their counterparts in the KAR. Differences may have existed between

¹¹⁵Annual Report for the Medical Department 1920, TNA, p. 80.

¹¹⁶Iiffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 248.

askaris who had served in the pre-war *Schutztruppe* and more recently recruited soldiers. A British situation report on January 15, 1917 points out:

It is of interest to note that although desertions from the newly-raised German Native troops are frequent, there have been no cases of desertion from their original ("regular") force, which, moreover, has yielded but very few prisoners. The total enemy forces remaining in the field are about 500-600 Europeans and perhaps 5,000-7,000 natives.¹¹⁷

As the hardships of the campaign increased, the question of convincing captured German askaris to switch sides often became moot, due to their poor physical condition. At several points in the campaign, the Germans abandoned the sick, wounded and exhausted elements of their forces to surrender and be cared for by the British. These askari and their followers were taken to transit camps where they were searched, housed, given a set of clothes to replace their worn garments and fed. Prisoners remained under guard until they had either recovered their strength or died. Those who survived were sent in groups of about 100, accompanied by a small guard detail via train to the railway station nearest their home district and from there walked to the district office. Having arrived at the local boma, they met the district commissioner "and received a lecture on the new severe big bwana and they must not join any more armies." Following the warning, the DC would provide them with enough food to return to their villages.¹¹⁸

Although the British administration had little to fear from the great majority of demobilized German askari, the members of Vorbeck's final force provided

¹¹⁷Situation Report for War Committee, January 15, 1917. PRO, WO 106/581.

cause for concern. Vorbeck claimed that, after news of the armistice reached his force, some of his officers and askaris tried to persuade him to continue the campaign, pointing out that they had not yet been defeated and the supply situation was actually better than it had been for quite some time. Before the formal surrender of the *Schutztruppe* on November 25, 1918, Vorbeck was worried that some of his askari would refuse to allow themselves to be disarmed. No trouble occurred until after the surrender, when the German askari were herded into a small thorn enclosure guarded by KAR soldiers. The askari, unhappy with their situation protested to their officers and taunted the KAR guards, telling them that they had never been beaten and should not be treated like prisoners. All the Germans were soon moved under heavy guard to more suitable locations; the askaris going to the internment and transit camp at Tabora, and the German officers going to a prisoner of war camp outside of Dar es Salaam. Both camps suffered outbreaks of influenza and 10 German officers and 162 askari died.¹¹⁹

Undoubtedly one cause of tension in the days immediately preceding and following the surrender concerned the question of when the askaris and porters would be paid the more than two years of back wages owed them by the German Government. The unwillingness of individual askari to hand in their weapons may have been due to the realization that, by allowing themselves to be disarmed and interned, they were giving up their only two remaining bargaining chips: their guns and freedom of movement. In regard to the arms,

¹¹⁸Wiffen, Arthur Edward, IWM, Department of Sound Records ACC# 3959, Reel 2.

¹¹⁹Vorbeck, *Reminiscences* pp. 318-324 Iliffe, *Modern History* p. 270.

Vorbeck noted, "The English were mighty quick at getting away the surrendered material." Despite his efforts to convince the British military to pay the askari and then seek reimbursement from the German Government, nothing came of these requests. The German askari and porters, released from the internment camp, returned to their homes with nothing to show for the long years of war, other than paper chits issued by the German officers promising payment.¹²⁰

Few other Africans in Tanganyika experienced as sharp a decline in their wealth and status as the former German askaris. Before the war they had been hated and feared; able to use their authority to extort goods and services from local populations. During the war, German scorched earth policies allowed troops to requisition anything they required, giving them *carte blanche* to loot areas the *Schutztruppe* moved through. Many askaris were accompanied by their wives and families, and this alleviated some, although by no means all, of the miseries of the campaign. When the war began, German askaris were the most highly paid African soldiers in the region, well cared for by the Colonial Government. At the end of the war, they found themselves transformed into destitute refugees, dressed in used clothes given to them at transit camps and without their back pay.¹²¹ Some former German askaris sought employment with the police, while others returned to the life they knew and joined the KAR

The demobilization and withdrawal of military units in the territory proved a

¹²⁰Vorbeck, *Reminiscences*, p. 320-321.

mixed blessing. One positive result was the ability of the administration to recruit discharged British and South Africans soldiers into government service. The staff lists from district reports from the early 1920's contain numerous examples of ex-military personnel working in the civil service. British askari and carriers returned home with their discharge pay, thus providing districts with an infusion of much needed cash. Back wages of ex-soldiers however, did not last long and had little long-term impact on local economies. The presence and later withdrawal and disbanding of battalions and outstation posts, however, did have a noticeable impact on the local economy. Garrisons helped support local economies by buying all of their food and many supplies within the district and hiring local labor to build or improve their lines. Askari, often a significant block of a community's wage earners, spent their money on goods purchased from local merchants, traders and brewers. On the downside, some district officers accused discharged askaris with bringing contagious diseases back to their communities, thus leading to increased incidence of smallpox, syphilis and gonorrhea. Local officials also worried that the presence of serving soldiers and the return of discharged men would lead to an increase in violent crime, but with a very few exceptions these fears proved to be groundless.

It is hard to generalize from the scant evidence found mainly in District reports, but it does seem that greater numbers of long-service ex-KAR askaris

¹²¹Wiffen, who served as a sergeant in the KAR at the Tabora transit camp, mentions that when searching the German askari, he and other soldiers would confiscate any money they found. Worthless German notes were burned along with the old clothing, but the British soldiers kept the rupees and spent them. If this was normal procedure, it would mean that not only did former German askari leave the camp without the back pay owed them by the Germans, but that they did not have any money at all. Wiffen, Arthur Edward ACC# 3959, Reel 2, IMW Department of Sound Records.

were present in the southern portion of the territory and that some of these veterans joined the Tanganyika police following the war. Undoubtedly many of these ex-soldiers were originally from Nyasaland, but it is unlikely that police or administrative officers would have viewed this as a liability, considering the porous nature of the border and the presence of KAR garrisons, all of whose soldiers were recruited in Nyasaland.

Military Policy in Tanganyika: 1920-1935

Following the First World War, three KAR battalions remained in Tanganyika to guard against a resurgence of hostilities or local unrest. Originally it was thought that six battalions would be needed to garrison the former German colony, but postwar demands for economy forced an almost immediate reduction in this estimate. Two Nyasaland battalions, 2/1 and 2 KAR, maintained garrisons throughout the interior of Tanganyika. Askari from the 2/1 KAR were stationed at Iringa, Songea, Mahenge and Masoko. 2 KAR was concentrated at Tabora, but also maintained posts at Dodoma and Kondoa-Irangi until the worst of the famine ended in the central region. Steps were also taken 1919 to establish a KAR Reserve and a KAR Reserve of Officers in the occupied territory that could be called up in the event of an emergency.¹²²

After the transfer from Belgian to British control in 1921, the battalion also kept a detachment at Kigoma. The coastal region as well as the northeast was the responsibility of 6 KAR, which would eventually, in the inter-war years, become the only battalion composed entirely of recruits from the territory.

¹²²Correspondence concerning the formation of a KAR Reserve-Conquered Territory, May 10, 1919 and KAR Reserve of Officers March 23, 1920. TNA, AB 188.

Headquartered in Dar es Salaam, 6 KAR garrisoned stations along the coast at Lindi and Masasi and in the north at Arusha.

Fears of an African revolt or further belligerence on the part of the territory's German population quickly subsided, and administrators and settlers soon began to question the need to maintain a large military presence in East Africa. The KAR reverted from Imperial to local control in 1920. The command structure put in place during the war was abolished and replaced with an Inspector General who once again assumed responsibility for the regiment. In 1921, Tanganyika's garrison underwent further reductions when one company from 2 KAR and two from 2/1 KAR were disbanded. In 1922, the total military garrison of the territory consisted of three battalions of the KAR, an establishment of 1,199 African rank and file and 72 European officers and NCO's.¹²³

In 1922, again responding to fiscal demands, the KAR Inspector General reluctantly agreed that it would be possible to enact a further reduction, and he recommended that 2/1 KAR be disbanded. In September 1923, 2/1 KAR was disbanded and responsibility for garrisoning its outstations was shifted to the two remaining battalions, 2 KAR and 6 KAR. In 1922, the garrison of Zanzibar also came from 6 KAR, and the following year 2 KAR took over this responsibility. This commitment however, did not last long, and in July 1923 the Zanzibar police took over responsibility for internal security on the island. Originally many of the askari of 6 KAR came from a Ugandan KAR battalion disbanded after the First World War, but over time they were gradually replaced with Tanganyikan

recruits.¹²⁴

The start of the worldwide depression in 1929 forced colonial administrators to be even more fiscally stringent. In response to further demands for economy, and facing inevitable further reductions, it was decided to reorganize the KAR. Following the approval of the Committee of Imperial Defense, KAR Inspector-General, Brigadier H. A. Walker organized the regiment into two brigades, each containing three battalions. Both brigades would maintain two battalions on garrison duties and the third battalion would remain on reserve and could be sent to any neighboring East African territory should reinforcements be required. The northern brigade, headquartered at Nairobi, contained the Kenyan 3 KAR and 5 KAR and Ugandan 4 KAR Headquartered at Dar es Salaam, the southern brigade contained 1 KAR and 2 KAR, both Nyasaland battalions, and 6 KAR, raised from Tanganyikan recruits. Both brigades were commanded by a colonel who also acted as a military advisor to the governor of the territory in which the brigade headquarters was stationed. All battalions were reduced to a mere two companies, each containing four platoons and a two-platoon machine gun company. Under the command of a major, each battalion contained 16 officers, a single warrant officer and 442 African soldiers.¹²⁵

In 1931, following reorganization, the total strength of the KAR in Tanganyika consisted of 35 officers and 1,084 other ranks. The reduction of the Tanganyikan component of the KAR mirrored equally drastic downsizing in the

¹²³*Report on Tanganyika Territory for the Year 1922*. TNA, AB 6. p. 14.

¹²⁴Moyse- Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 457-458.

other East African territories. By 1933, the strength of the entire regiment had shrunk from the 1920 total of 152 officers and 5,740 other ranks to a mere 86 officers and 2,380 askaris. Even the upper ranks of the KAR were not exempt from reorganization, and in 1931 the posts of KAR and RWAFF Inspector-Generals were combined. Subsequently, Inspector-Generals, charged with the command and oversight of military forces in both West and East Africa, found they now had to split their attentions between two regions with different security requirements and concerns.¹²⁶

While Brigadier Walker and his successors during the inter-war years had severe reservations about the ability of the regiment to guarantee the continued security of Britain's East African territories East African governments also disliked aspects of the reorganization. One important component of the reductions had been Walker's plan to equip both Brigades with a signals section and a mechanized Supply and Transport Corps. These additions would allow improved communications between Brigade Headquarters and garrisons. With the added mobility provided by motorized transport, KAR detachments would be able to rapidly deploy to remote areas thus cutting down on the total number of askaris needed to garrison each territory. Trucks and armored cars would replace carriers and animal transport, allowing for a smaller and more mobile force.

While the East African governments remained enthusiastic at the financial savings that could be realized by reducing the size of the KAR, they quickly

¹²⁵Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 462-464.

¹²⁶Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, p. 465.

balked at the cost involved in forming the Supply and Transport Corps. Sir Donald Cameron, who favored disbanding the Regiment entirely, led the objections to the plan, arguing that the Government of Tanganyika simply did not have the resources to allocate 40,000 English pounds to set up the corps or pay 19,000 English pounds a year in operating expenses. Cameron argued that Tanganyika, surrounded by peaceful neighbors and possessing a civil transport system that could be used by the military in the event of an emergency, had more pressing use for the limited funds available than spending them on a military force, the need for which was being increasingly questioned. After a long and acrimonious debate, both sides eventually agreed to a compromise that provided for the Southern Brigade to use Tanganyika Government civil transport as a replacement for a Supply and Transport Corps.

Of all the East African governors, Cameron was the most outspoken in his opposition to continuing to pay for the KAR, but he was hardly alone in his views.¹²⁷ Throughout the late 1920's and mid 1930's, many colonial officials and settlers began to question the need for maintaining the KAR. With the exception of Kenya's Northern Frontier District, no serious external threats existed, and the rise of widespread nationalist movements was still in the future. The peaceful implementation of systems of indirect rule throughout much of British East Africa made colonial officials confident that they could dispense entirely with the KAR.

The regiment, long viewed by some officials and many in the settler community as expensive and unneeded, would be replaced with armed police forces under the control of civil instead of military authority. Such proposals were not new, but the fiscal limitations imposed on colonial governments during the lean years of the depression made the suggestion much more attractive. Although Tanganyika's settlers never acquired the same power as their Kenyan counterparts, many in the community supported the idea that the territory's military force should be disbanded and replaced with police.¹²⁸

The fate of the KAR however, rested neither in the hands of colonial officials like Cameron nor with the vocal settler community, but with the military staff at the Overseas Defense Committee of the Imperial Defense Committee. Colonial military officials convincingly argued that the police and military served very different functions and that both were needed to ensure peace and security in East Africa. Military and police officials viewed the primary role of the police as the preservation of law and order, while the military served as a deterrent, thus preventing widespread unrest and rebellion. The clear distinction between the

¹²⁷In his memoirs, Cameron rarely refers to the military and never talks about his poor relations with the upper echelons of the KAR, and his support for plans to replace Tanganyika's KAR Battalions with police units. The only time he mentions reductions in the force is when he discusses how much it pained him to have to disband the 6 KAR band for fiscal reasons. One possible explanation for the lack of material on military affairs may have been that the book was published on the eve of the Second World War and it would have been highly undesirable to paint a picture of the poor state of military affairs in East Africa at such an inopportune time. Cameron, *Tanganyika Service*, pp. 162-163.

¹²⁸Colonial officials and settlers used the examples of Northern Rhodesia and Zanzibar to support their argument in favor of abolishing local military forces pointing out that both territories relied solely on armed police to ensure internal stability. In the case of Northern Rhodesia however, the lines between the police force and the KAR were almost nonexistent since the police had six platoons trained to a similar standard and one section armed with Vickers Machine Guns the heaviest armament available to KAR battalions until the mid 1930's. Notes on the police force in Northern Rhodesia are included in Memorandum on Defense in East Africa by the Inspector General KAR, September 17, 1927. PRO, CO 820 2/23

two forces, however, was often obscured by similarities in their outward appearance. Gilchrist Alexander, who served as a Judge of Tanganyika's High Court in the 1920's, commented:

It always seemed to me that the police authorities of Tanganyika could never quite make up their minds as to the role which they had to fill. Sometimes they seemed to regard themselves as a military body. Parades, inspection of rifles, buttons, equipment and clothing always figured largely in their programmes, and in spite of the fact that two battalions of the King's African Rifles were stationed in the Territory.¹²⁹

Police officers in Kenya and Tanganyika demonstrated little enthusiasm for broadening their role and forming larger, more mobile and better-armed police forces. In fact, a number of police and military officers pointed out that such a policy would be negative for the police as well as the military, and that the ideal police force would be a colonial version of the London Bobby, able to patrol armed with nothing more lethal than a truncheon. The Overseas Defense Committee, responsible for all matters relating to colonial forces in Africa, proved unwilling to allow the East African governments to disband their few remaining KAR battalions. The reasoning behind this decision was primarily strategic. Imperial forces, already stretched thin, would be hard pressed to send additional troops to East Africa should serious trouble break out.¹³⁰

The refusal of the Overseas Defense Committee to disband the KAR brought only a temporary halt to the debate. In 1933, the Tanganyika government sent a proposal to the Colonial Office inquiring about the possibility

¹²⁹Gilchrist Alexander, *Tanganyika Memories*, p. 93.

¹³⁰Parsons, *African Rank and File*, pp. 43-45.

of using military aircraft to replace part of the KAR. Having already used air power to good effect in Somaliland, the Middle East and along the Northwest Frontier in India, the Colonial Secretary instructed the Inspector General of the KAR, Brigadier Norman, and Vice Air Marshal, C. N. L. Newall, to conduct a feasibility study on the possibility of replacing several KAR battalions with military aircraft. The Norman and Newall report recommended consolidating the regiment into one Brigade by disbanding two battalions of the KAR and combining 2 KAR with the Northern Rhodesia Regiment. This tiny force would be supported by local police units, the KAR reserve and a single squadron of aircraft. The plan was quickly rejected by the War Office on the grounds that East Africa lacked adequate airfields and facilities and the funds did not exist to implement such an ambitious project. Should the need arise, aircraft could be flown in from the Middle East on short notice. but serious questions were also raised about how aircraft could effectively be used in East Africa. Aircraft would be next to useless, for example, in recovering stolen stock, especially if inadequate forces existed to carry out joint land-air operations. The recommendations contained in the Newall-Norman Report, of questionable military value and impossible to fund, were quickly abandoned and no further reductions of the KAR took place.¹³¹

External Threats and the Modernization of the K.A.R.: 1935-1939

During the 1920's and through the mid 1930's, the prospect of British East Africa being invaded from the surrounding Portuguese, Belgian, and Ethiopian territories seemed remote at best. With the exception of Kenya's turbulent

¹³¹Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 465-466.

Northern Frontier District, where incursions by lightly armed Somali and Ethiopian raiders continued, no serious external security threats were anticipated. This feeling of complacency vanished abruptly in October 1935 when Italian forces launched a massive invasion of Ethiopia. Mounting coordinated attacks from their colonies in Eritrea and Somalia, Italian troops steadily advanced into Ethiopian territory, relying on modern weapons, including aircraft, tanks, and poison gas, to defeat the poorly armed and equipped Ethiopian army. On May 5, 1936, Italian forces entered the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa shortly after the Emperor Haile Selassie reluctantly fled into exile in England. Although the Italians had defeated the Ethiopian army and quickly went about setting up a new government, sporadic guerrilla warfare continued throughout the newly conquered territory.¹³²

The Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia forced British civil and military authorities to reconsider the strategic situation in East Africa. It became immediately apparent that, after more than a decade of fiscal parsimony and forced reductions, the KAR was in no position to deal with a modern enemy, well organized and equipped with armor, artillery, motorized transport and military aircraft. The weaknesses of the KAR were immediately demonstrated when, following the Italian invasion, 1 KAR, the reserve battalion of the Southern Brigade, had to reorganize and even borrow askari from 2 KAR to get the unit up to strength before it could be deployed to Kenya's northern border. A

¹³²For a detailed description of the Ethiopian campaign, see Angelo Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War: 1935-1941*, trans. P. D. Cummins, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-1941*, (Lawrenceville NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997) and Anthony Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War*, (Oxford: Oxford

reexamination of the KAR reserve revealed a hollow force lacking adequate officers and with the majority of the rank and file consisting of aged World War One veterans, many of who were certainly no longer fit for active duty.¹³³

Although Italy had no short term plans to continue its military expansion beyond Ethiopia into East Africa, the continued presence of large Italian garrisons so close to the Kenyan frontier was one of several factors that forced military officials to reorganize the KAR and prepare the regiment to fight a modern war.¹³⁴ While the Italian invasion of Ethiopia gave the most immediate cause for concern, the rise of the Nazi party in Germany also had repercussions on military policy in East Africa in general and Tanganyika in particular. Under Adolf Hitler's leadership, Germany once again began military conscription, reoccupied the Rhineland and began rearming, all of which threatened the peace Europe had enjoyed since the end of the First World War. German demands for the return of lost colonial possessions hit closer to home, and met with the approval of many of Tanganyika's German settlers who had been allowed to

University Press, 1984).

¹³³The poor reserve situation was especially noticeable in Nyasaland, and despite special efforts to attract recruits, problems continued through the 1930's. Annual Report Southern Brigade KAR 1937. TNA 24834.

¹³⁴In the more than half a century since the end of the Second World War, the level of British concern about the rise of Italian military power has largely been forgotten. The dismal performance of the Italian military in World War II has often obscured the fact that, during the 1920's and mid 1930's, the Italian military, particularly the air force, had military equipment comparable to or even better than that of most European powers. Early British air defense plans, for example, revolved around the possibility of the Italian air force using long-range bombers to drop bombs or poisoned gas on British cities. In East Africa after 1935, the local strategic situation gave cause for serious concern. For the invasion of Ethiopia, the Italians mustered an expeditionary force numbering approximately 500,000 troops equipped with modern communications and weaponry, including aircraft. Following the seven-month campaign, many of these troops continued to be garrisoned in Ethiopia. British military authorities remained keenly aware that, should hostilities break out between Italy and Britain, the only local forces immediately available to stop an Italian thrust into British Somaliland or Kenya were six under-strength infantry battalions which lacked adequate transport, supporting arms, and communications equipment.

return in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

Changing conditions in both Europe and East Africa resulted in the Inspector General of the KAR and RWAFF, Major General G. J. Giffard carrying out a massive reorganization of the Regiment. For years the primary role of the KAR had been ensuring internal security, but from 1936 on increasing emphasis was placed on countering an Italian attack either across Kenya's northern frontier or along the coast towards Mombasa. To prepare for these eventualities, between 1936 and 1939 KAR battalions slowly began to be re-equipped with more modern machine guns and communication equipment. The widespread Italian use of yperite, mustard gas, during the fighting in Ethiopia, prompted the military to issue boots to KAR askari, and, for the first time since World War One, battalions were equipped with heavy weapons, including mortars, artillery and anti-tank rifles. Giffard also devoted attention to the need for support units. He planned to increase the size of the Supply and Transport Corps and the Signal Sections, and laid the groundwork for forming a Field Ambulance Company and a Coastal Defense Unit. So that the KAR could quickly be expanded should a war break out, Giffard altered the role of the KAR reserve battalions, changing them to cadre battalions that could quickly be brought up to wartime establishment through a combination of reserve askaris and new recruits. Giffard thought that, provided adequate arms and equipment were available, cadre battalions could be trained and ready to take the field in six months. The new battalions would be led by a combination of officers and NCO's from the King's African Rifles Reserve Officers (KARRO), the Kenya Regiment and additional officers seconded from the British army. The Northern Rhodesian Regiment (NRR), which had been formed in 1933, was reorganized along the same specifications as a KAR battalion so it could be readily integrated into the force. Despite these improvements to local East African forces, Giffard and many other

officers and officials were not overly optimistic about the ability of the KAR to prevent an Italian invasion of Kenya.¹³⁵

Political and Military Relations in the Inter-war Period

During the inter-war period, Tanganyika was garrisoned by a combination of askaris recruited from within the borders of the territory and from neighboring Nyasaland. A number of factors contributed to this policy, including British worries about complying with the requirements of the League of Nations mandate, initial concern about the reliability of Tanganyika's African population many of whom had worked with the Germans, and the personal preferences of some KAR officers, who believed that the members of certain ethnic groups from Nyasaland provided the best military material.

Following the establishment of the Tanganyika Territory, one of the first questions civil and military officials had to resolve was what forces could be raised or maintained within the borders of the Mandate. Article IV of the Mandate stated, "The Mandatory shall not establish any military or naval bases, nor erect any fortifications, nor organize any native military force in the territory except for local police purposes and for the defense of the territory."¹³⁶ In the early years of British rule, KAR officers interpreted article IV of the Mandate as stipulating that troops recruited within the territory could not be used beyond Tanganyika's borders. In 1927, Inspector General of the KAR J. Harrington clearly demonstrated this view when writing concerning 6 KAR, "This Battalion is now

¹³⁵ Malcolm Page, *KAR*, pp. 54-58.

recruited in Tanganyika Territory and is not available for use elsewhere on account of the Mandate."¹³⁷ Some Battalion commanders also raised questions about whether Nyasaland battalions remaining in Tanganyika following the war could be considered an occupying military force. Harrington's interpretation of the terms of the Mandate created a series of problems for civil and military officials in Tanganyika and Nyasaland. As postwar demands for economy increased, one of the arguments KAR Inspector Generals frequently raised in their attempts to prevent the downsizing of the regiment was that obstacles might be raised to the Tanganyikan component of the force being used outside the Mandate. Responding to such concerns, the East African Governors, working with the Colonial Office, revised the debate on the interpretation of the mandate. Eventually they decided that askaris recruited in Tanganyika could be employed beyond the borders of the Territory, provided their services contributed to the defense of Tanganyika. According to the KAR Ordinance:

The Governor may at any time and for any purpose, as the Secretary of State may direct, order that a battalion of any part thereof which may be stationed in the Territory shall be employed out of or beyond the Territory: Provided that nothing in this Ordinance shall authorize any native officer or soldier enlisted or enrolled in the Territory to be employed in any manner contrary to the terms of Article IV of the British Mandate for East Africa.¹³⁸

Many KAR officers however, remained uncomfortable with this new interpretation, claiming that it was vague and could be subject to local or external

¹³⁶ Text of the Mandate for the Tanganyika Territory. Cited in Callahan *Mandates and Empire in Africa*, pp. 372-374.

¹³⁷ Memorandum on Defense in East Africa by Inspector General of the KAR September 17th 1927. PRO, CO 820 2/23.

¹³⁸ *King's African Rifles Ordinance, 1931*, Part I. TNA 1145, Vol. II.

political pressures. Such concerns certainly contributed to the desire of Southern Brigade Commanders to continue to maintain two battalions of Nyasaland troops that could always be mobilized to serve in one of the other East African territories should internal unrest breakout. Since Nyasaland required only a single KAR battalion to ensure its continued internal security, throughout the inter-war years the remaining Nyasaland battalion garrisoned Tanganyika.

Questions surrounding the extent to which Nyasaland askari stationed in Tanganyika would be the financial responsibility of Nyasaland or Tanganyika would be hotly debated between the two governments in the years leading up to the Second World War. The costs of maintaining 2 KAR fell on Tanganyika, and this, combined with confusion over interpreting the provisions of the Mandate, proved a source of some friction between the Nyasaland and Tanganyikan governments. In 1933, the acting Governor of the territory, D. J. Jardine, broached the question of recruiting Tanganyikan natives into 2 KAR, with the Colonial Office pointing out that the presence of Nyasaland askaris might perhaps "constitute a military presence that violated the word or spirit of the Mandate." Jardine went on to note that since the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had already determined that Tanganyikans could serve in 6 KAR without violating the terms of the Mandate, that it would make sense to begin to phase Tanganyikans into 2 KAR as well, since the whole of the battalion was then stationed in the territory.

Such an arrangement would not only be most welcome to the natives of this Territory but would go far towards reconciling public opinion here to the heavy

expenditure involved by maintaining two battalions in Tanganyika. Both from a political and a financial point of view, it would be most advantageous gradually to replace the Yaos in the 2nd Battalion by Tanganyika natives.¹³⁹

Jardine went on to voice the belief, widely held by many in the military and administration, that military service provided Africans with an excellent form of practical education. Since the cost of maintaining 2 KAR was borne by Tanganyika's African population, it was only just that they should realize any benefits resulting from service with 2 KAR, instead of Africans from Nyasaland. Other fiscal arguments in favor of local recruiting were the additional costs involved in transporting recruits and discharged askaris and their families to and from Nyasaland, and that Nyasaland askaris paid their hut tax in their home districts, thus drawing even more revenue out of the territory. Finally, Jardine argued that the plan made military as well as economic sense, pointing out the excellent performance of Tanganyikan askaris under both German and British command during the East African campaign. Even the policy of varying the ethnic composition of units could be adhered to since Tanganyika contained enough "martial tribes" that it would be possible to allot different recruiting areas to each battalion. The result of such a plan was to ensure that tribes represented in one battalion would not be present in the other, thus lessening the chance that the government might be forced to order troops to fire on members of their own ethnic group.

Despite their economic and local political appeal, Jardine's arguments met with opposition from the Southern Brigade commander Colonel Case. Case

¹³⁹Letter from D. J. Jardine to Sir Philip Cunliffe Lister, 16 June 1933. PRO, CO 820 15/2.

pointed out that, even though the Overseas Defense Committee had extended the ability of natives from Tanganyika to serve beyond the borders of the territory as long as they were acting in defense of Tanganyika, restrictions still existed as to where and under what circumstances they could be deployed. Since 2 KAR constituted the Southern Brigade's reserve battalion, Case claimed it was essential that no restrictions existed that might limit how or where it could be used. In the end, military arguments once again carried the day and 2 KAR remained a Nyasaland Battalion and Tanganyika continued to foot the bill for its upkeep until the outbreak of the Second World War.¹⁴⁰

The Military Hierarchy: 1920-1939

The KAR had an established chain of command based on that of the British Army. Unlike the British Army however, race, instead of class, education and competence, was the primary factor determining where an individual stood within the military system and how far they could advance up the chain of command. In the early days of the KAR, a small number of Sudanese had served as junior officers, and during the First World War 4 KAR, a Ugandan Battalion, had one native officer per company. African officers held ranks corresponding to lieutenant, second lieutenant and captain, and were responsible for running one of the company's platoons, maintaining discipline and dealing with askaris' grievances. The interwar reorganizations that reduced the number of companies in each battalion resulted in the rank of Native Officer being eliminated. Africans would continued to be denied the opportunity to

¹⁴⁰Excerpt from correspondence between Colonel Case and D. J. Jardine, Acting Governor of Tanganyika. PRO, CO 820 15/2.

become officers until the shortage of suitable European officers during the Second World War left the army with no choice but to promote promising Africans to the rank of platoon commander.¹⁴¹

British Officers

The British officers who served with the KAR were normally seconded from their home regiments for a period of between two to three years. If they found life in East Africa congenial and demonstrated an ability to lead African soldiers, they could extend their tour for up to a further three years. During the inter-war period, candidates volunteered for service with the KAR by asking the commanding officer of their regiment for permission to apply for secondment. Provided their commanding officer agreed, their application was forwarded to the Colonial Office for consideration. A member of the Colonial Office interviewed applicants in London, and throughout the 1920's considerable effort was made to ensure that only healthy, promising, competent officers were sent to East Africa. One reason for the stringent vetting process may have been a desire on the part of Colonial Office officials to avoid a repetition of mistakes made during the First World War, when a number of unsuitable officers had been seconded to the KAR. During the war, some British regiments used the KAR and other colonial forces as a dumping ground for numerous problem officers who had demonstrated incompetence, cowardice, alcoholism or some other undesirable character trait. Another factor involved was the expense connected with selecting suitable candidates, kitting them out and sending them to East Africa. Colonial

¹⁴¹Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 464-465.

Office officials did not want to send an officer all the way to Africa, only to discover that he possessed neither the disposition nor the constitution for African service. Efforts to weed out unsuitable candidates were not entirely successful, and the KAR certainly contained a percentage of officers who viewed their African service as a form of exile instead of a career opportunity or adventure. Such officers' negative attitudes were reflected in the way they carried out their duties and interacted with their comrades and subordinates. The small number of officers present in each battalion would certainly have provided an incentive for them to get along, since the alternative, particularly at an outstation, would have resulted in either friction within the unit or the isolation of the unpopular officer.¹⁴²

The Colonial Office did not devote the same amount of time to preparing officers for what to expect in East Africa as it did in determining their suitability for service. Officers' experiences varied from receiving a fairly detailed briefing on what service life in Africa would entail, to being told their application had been approved and, after having been given a list of clothing and equipment to purchase and a ticket, sent off with little more than a "farewell." Few arrived in East Africa with more than a rudimentary understanding of where they would be stationed, what local conditions were like and what their official duties would consist of. An extreme example of this was one young officer who arrived in Dar

¹⁴²It is extremely difficult to assess what impact the presence of poor officers had on interactions with rank and file askaris. Most of the information we have on how British officers viewed their African service comes from oral and written accounts collected in the years following the Second World War. With few exceptions, the ex-officers who agreed to sit for interviews or responded to surveys were those who claimed they enjoyed military life in general and had positive things to say about their years of service. Most regimental misfits, rogues, officers forced out of the military or individuals who hated serving in Africa, left few records. Although some British officers do occasionally mention the presence of incompetent officers, few give any details and there is clearly a lack of desire to point out the poor performance of comrades even after so many years

es Salaam and was shocked to discover that "all the soldiers were black."¹⁴³ A few candidates applied for service with the KAR after talking with fellow officers who had themselves completed a tour in East Africa, but this was the exception rather than the rule.¹⁴⁴

Officers sought secondment to the KAR for a variety of reasons. A few had met fellow soldiers who had served in East Africa before or during the First World War and decided to apply for secondment after listening to their stories or advice. Some officers were attracted by a sense of mystery and adventure and wanted to see Africa, or were interested in hunting or shooting. Others simply thought anything would be better than languishing around a barracks in Britain. Service with the KAR offered young officers opportunities to practice their trade far beyond anything available in Britain during the 1920's and early 1930's. One officer looking back at his period of service with the KAR noted:

The advantages of soldiering in East Africa before the 1939-45 war was that as a young officer you were given far greater responsibility at an early age, the pay was much better and the prospect of promotion more attractive. Instead of commanding an under strength platoon of 10 men as one would in the UK. where training exercises entailed men carrying yellow and green flags to represent Lewis Gun or Anti-Tank rifle sections, you found yourself commanding a full strength KAR company of 150 men, which included an African clerk, a native dresser, 4 stretcher bearers, 4 sweepers, 4 Lewis gun porters and bricklayers.¹⁴⁵

The small number of officers in each battalion meant that there was always

have passed.

¹⁴³Hickson, J.G.E. IWM, Department of Sound Records, 3838. While Hickson's case was certainly an extreme example and he readily admitted he was "young," other officers' accounts mention not knowing what to expect and being poorly briefed prior to their arrival in Africa. For another example, look at the records of Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM, Department of Sound Records, 4404.

¹⁴⁴For an example of this, see Glass, RHL, Mss. Afr.s. 1715/105.

¹⁴⁵Glass, RHL, Mss. Afr.s. 1715/105. See also Bannister, Desmond John, RHL, Afr.s. 1715/5.

plenty of work and few places for shirkers to hide, but also that individual effort was acknowledged and rewarded. Only officers in command were allowed to be accompanied by their wives, and since relations with local women were generally frowned upon, many officers spent the majority of their time carrying out their official duties. Despite having additional responsibilities, many found the time to take periodic breaks for local travel or sport. Another extremely important incentive was financial. While serving with the KAR, officers benefited from Colonial Office rates of pay, which far exceeded what they would make serving with their regiment, and the cost of living in Africa was lower as well. Secondment was one way young officers could amass some savings or get out of debt. The financial incentives accompanying KAR service could also serve as a detriment, since some officers sought secondment with only the improvement of their situation in mind. One officer who served in Tanganyika in the 1930's recalled, "I met lots of chaps there who just went out to save a bit of money and loathed every moment of it and longed to get back".¹⁴⁶

Official duties varied greatly depending on rank and where officers were stationed. While lower ranking officers applied for secondment, brigade and battalion commanders did not volunteer but instead were selected and informed that they would be released by their regiments for service with the KAR. From personal accounts, it appears that some of the mid-ranked officers, captains and majors, that served with the KAR in the inter-war years had considerable previous African experience, many during the East African campaign. Often such individuals would take newly arrived junior officers in hand, providing them with

¹⁴⁶Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

advice on how to train and lead African troops and help them with their language studies. Like senior African NCO's, officers who had already served a tour or more in Africa played an important role in maintaining continuity and minimizing the disruption caused to units by the regular turnover of officers.

Officers stationed in Tanganyika during the interwar years served either in the two Nyasaland battalions 1 and 2 KAR or in the Tanganyikan 6 KAR. The reductions in the regiment, the shifting of units and the closing of outstations in response to the changing economic and security situation make it almost impossible to describe the "typical process" a officer went through once he arrived in East Africa. Starting in the late 1920's, commonalties do exist, however, between officers serving with the Nyasaland battalions and those serving with 6 KAR. Officers made their way to East Africa by ship, traveling either through the Suez Canal or around the Cape. Those posted to 6 KAR generally arrived in Dar es Salaam, where they were introduced to their fellow officers at Brigade and Battalion HQ and briefed on their duties, how to perform them and what to expect. Most officers in 6 KAR remained stationed in Dar es Salaam, but a few were sent to outstations at Mahenge and Arusha. Most officers serving with 1 and 2 KAR traveled to Nyasaland, either by way of Mozambique or through Tanganyika. When they arrived, they reported at the depot at Zomba and received the same kind of instruction as their fellows in 6 KAR. Following the introduction to the regiment, some officers found themselves returning to Tanganyika for garrison duty at Songea, Masoko or Tabora. In the early 1920's, however, when 6 KAR was responsible for the garrison at Songea, it was not uncommon for officers posted at the station to travel through Mozambique or Nyasaland, never stopping at Battalion HQ during their entire period of service. Similar problems existed with officers stationed at Mwanza, who would travel to their post via the Kenya-Uganda railway and then across

Lake Victoria by ferry.

Living and service conditions varied widely, depending on an officer's rank and where he was posted. At Dar es Salaam, home to both Southern Brigade HQ and the HQ for 6 KAR, many officers found daily life little different from that of an officer serving in Britain. Stationed in the largest city in Tanganyika, with its sizable European population, officers had access restaurants, clubs and the companionship of Europeans who were not members of the military establishment. They lived in comfortable bungalows and ate in their own mess. Living conditions at other stations, including the depot for 1 and 2 KAR at Zomba, were in large part determined by the numbers of Europeans in the locality and the accessibility of the post. The stations at Tabora and Arusha, with reliable road and rail links with Dar es Salaam, as well as Arusha's proximity to Nairobi, meant officers at these posts enjoyed the benefits of being near fellow Europeans including a sports pitch, club, restaurants and shops. At Tabora, junior officers were housed in two-room bungalows complete with washing facilities and a verandah.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, there were also benefits to being stationed at extremely isolated posts such as Songea or Masoko. The tiny European population in these areas (the number of combined military and civil personnel seldom numbered more than 12 individuals) left officers with little choice but to interact with their soldiers, improve their language skills and go on shooting safaris or collecting trips. The poor roads, combined with long distances separating Songea from both Dar es Salaam and Zomba, meant that officers were free to attend to local military matters as they saw fit without interference

from headquarters. The negatives that went along with this freedom involved more primitive living conditions, long periods without mail or access to luxury items and little choice in one's companions.¹⁴⁸

One of the first tasks newly arrived officers had to undertake was to learn the language spoken by their troops, in the Nyasaland battalions, Chinyanja (Chichewa), and in 6 KAR, Swahili.¹⁴⁹ In both cases, the language served as a *Lingua Franca* helping to facilitate training and unify askaris, many of whom spoke a number of African languages. African NCO's and askaris were not required or expected to learn English; therefore, in order for an officer to be able to lead his soldiers, he had minimally to master basic commands and be able to carry on simple conversations. Officers were normally given three or four months to learn Swahili or Chinyanja, after which they were expected to pass a language exam. Attaining proficiency in the battalion language was one of the service requirements for all KAR officers, but there appears to have been particular emphasis on language study in 6 KAR. While many of the officers in Ugandan and Kenyan battalions learned a bastardized form of Swahili, often referred to as KiKAR, just slightly more advanced than the KiSetla spoken by Kenya's white population, officers in 6 KAR were expected to speak Swahili properly. To ensure they learned *safi* (clean or uncorrupted) Swahili, complete with proper

¹⁴⁷Bannister, Desmond John, RHL Afr.s. 1715/7.

¹⁴⁸For comments on life at Zomba, see: Logan, P. Q. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3864. On the isolation and living conditions at Songea: Yeldham, R.E.S. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3960 and Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404. On living conditions and isolation at Masoko, see Glass, Harold Patrick, RHL, Mss. Afr.s. 1715/105

¹⁴⁹In order to avoid confusion, I will refer to the language used by the troops of a particular unit as the battalion language, instead of the local language. It would be inaccurate, for example, to describe the Chinyanja spoken by the askaris of 2 KAR stationed at Songea as the local language since Swahili was more widely spoken in most parts of Tanganyika.

pronunciation and grammar, officers were given a reward of ten pounds when they successfully passed their language exam. In addition to the Lower Standard Examination that all officers were required to pass, a few also completed a Higher Standard Examination the Army Interpretership Examination. Neither examination was a formality, despite the tendency in many officers' accounts to make light of the requirement. Officers had to take the same written and oral exam as members of the civil service, and their ability to speak Swahili was assessed by three examiners, at least one of whom was a native speaker.¹⁵⁰ A similar requirement existed for officers who had to learn Chinyanja. In 1928, the Commanding Officer in Dar es Salaam requested that the Tanganyikan government grant a ten-pound reward to officers serving with 2 KAR who passed the Nyasaland Standard Examination in Chinyanja.¹⁵¹ Many officers took considerable pride in their linguistic skills and often credited their ability to lead and interact successfully with African soldiers to their ability to speak Swahili or Chinyanja.

British officers serving in East Africa arrived having already been trained and influenced by the traditions and values of the British Army, with its heavy emphasis on the importance of class and the regimental system. Depending on the officer, preconceptions about colonial rule, racial superiority and military life were either reinforced or began to break down during their tour of African

¹⁵⁰Lists containing the scores of members of the Civil Administration and KAR officers on the written component Lower Standard Swahili Examination show that many officers took the language requirement seriously and attained a high degree of proficiency, at least when compared to their colleagues in Government. Sample lists of scores and correspondence relating to the language examination process can be found in: TNA 10096

service. Most officers believed in the concept of the regimental family where a group of officers were responsible for training and leading soldiers bonded to both the regiment and their superiors by feelings of respect, loyalty and obedience. Many officers' interactions with their askaris were characterized by benevolent paternalism. If the "father knows best" approach failed, officers could usually rely on African NCO's to serve as intermediaries who would explain to askaris the wisdom of an officer's decisions. As a last resort, harsh discipline could be used to maintain control over the troops, but most officers worked hard to avoid confrontations with askaris, since lingering discontent in the ranks potentially could lead to strikes or mutiny. The paternalism with which some officers viewed their soldiers can be seen in the language they used to describe their askaris. Officers often compared or referred to askaris as "children" or possessing "childlike" mentalities and phrases such as "mischief" or "misbehavior" are frequently used to describe minor breaches of discipline.

While the KAR certainly had its share of officers who despised Africans, there were also good officers, many of whom were just as guilty of using such language, who took their role as father figure very seriously and worked hard to learn about and care for their soldiers. A good example of the paternalistic pride officers felt in their soldiers can be seen in the following excerpt recorded from a officer who served in 2 K.A.R.:

You know the Africans were very much keener soldiers than the British were. I mean they loved soldiering. They were just like children playing at soldiers. And

¹⁵¹Letter from O.C. Troops, Dar es Salaam to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam. November 13, 1928. TNA 10096.

you'd very often -I'm just digressing a bit here - but in the line, in Tabora, you'd often in the afternoon be passing through the lines and you'd see a soldier drilling a friend of his. You know, sloping arms, presenting arms, and ticking him off and telling him how to do it properly. They just adored that sort of thing, And they were wonderfully smart. You could compare the soldiers on parade almost to the Brigade of Guards; they were absolutely terrific.¹⁵²

Such officers expressed interest in the daily lives of their askaris, studied their language and customs, paid attention to their family situations, listened carefully and dealt fairly with grievances brought before them. More senior officers encouraged new arrivals to command by earning the respect of their askari and forming bonds with their soldiers, but many junior officers soon realized that they had little choice but to lead using a combination of firmness and discipline.¹⁵³

British NCO's

In addition to officers, a small number of British NCO's also served in the KAR. Due to the expense involved, Colonial Governments would have liked to entirely replace European with African NCO's, but the military proved reluctant to implement such drastic measures. Military authorities argued that the continued presence of a small number of European NCO's was essential to serve as drill instructors, armorers, supply and pay clerks and other specialists, because Africans had not yet acquired the necessary technical or educational prerequisites for such tasks. The presence of both African and European NCO's heightened racial tensions and exposed even more glaringly the inequalities

¹⁵²Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

¹⁵³Many of the senior British officers seconded to the KAR had either served in the Indian Army or knew about military service in India, and this knowledge certainly influenced the traditions and day-to-day affairs of KAR battalions. Higher-ranking officers realized that unlike India, there were no local units of European troops to turn to if discontent in the KAR ranks escalated into all out mutiny. The memory of the Indian Mutiny, the Uganda Rifles mutiny, and the more recent Singapore mutiny remained fresh and stood as examples of what could happen if "native" soldiers were not properly cared for and led.

present within the force. British NCO's received higher wages, wore different uniforms, had their own mess arrangements, were given European instead of African rations, and were not required to salute African NCO's who outranked them. Similar contrasts existed between British NCO's and officers. NCO's service requirements and living conditions differed from those of officers. Unlike officers, who were required to attain proficiency in the local language, British NCO's were under no such obligation and many made little or no effort to learn the local language. Similarly, while East African service presented officers with opportunities that might help them advance up the chain of command, few such incentives existed for British NCO's. Often exactly the opposite was true, and sergeants frequently found themselves doing increased amounts of work or shouldering added responsibilities while receiving few additional benefits. Finally, the same class distinctions present in Britain often existed in East Africa, and these served to isolate European NCO's both from their fellow countrymen who were officers, but also from African NCO's and askaris. In Britain and India, NCO's dealt with this enforced isolation by forming their own messes and clubs, but due to the small numbers of British NCO's in East Africa this was not an option. Considering all these factors, it is not surprising that many of the British NCO's who served in East Africa disliked their tour of service and had poor relations with their fellow African NCO's and askaris.¹⁵⁴

African NCO's

The few African officers in 4 KAR were the exception to the rule. In the Nyasaland, Kenyan and Tanganyikan battalions, the highest rank an African

¹⁵⁴ Clayton and Killingray, *Khaki and Blue*, pp. 220-221.

could hope to reach was that of Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM). Africans also served as Company Sergeant Majors (CSM) and as Sergeants. The primary job of African NCO's was to maintain discipline and efficiency in the Battalion and serve as a link between British officers and the rank and file. African NCO's were responsible for all the tasks common to an NCO in any other army, but, in addition, they also served as culture brokers and mediators bridging gaps in understanding and cultural differences between African askaris and European officers and NCO's. Askaris looked to their NCO's for instruction and guidance in negotiating daily military life. Officers were equally dependent on African NCO's relying on them to train askaris and as a barometer that would identify discord with their units. One officer, describing the important role sergeants played in training new recruits, noted that African NCO's had a much better feel for how much training new recruits could take and how to handle askaris from different tribes and educational levels.¹⁵⁵ Officers relied heavily on the counsel of African NCO's when they had to listen to soldiers *shauris* (grievances), particularly when the problem involved matters related to "traditional" customs or religious beliefs. It was also not uncommon for African CSM's to help guide their significantly younger and less experienced superiors through the process of how to train askaris and complete their daily tasks. Many KAR officers, following their arrival in Tanganyika, found themselves entirely dependent on their NCO's until they learned enough Chinyanja or Swahili to be able to understand and communicate with their soldiers. Even after acquiring the necessary language skills, officers still could seldom penetrate the racial and cultural barriers that separated them

¹⁵⁵Logan, P.Q. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3864.

from "their men" even if they were willing to ignore their own training which frowned on fraternization between officers and men.¹⁵⁶

In most armies, senior NCO's play an important role in passing down unit history and traditions to new recruits, but in the KAR the presence of long serving African NCO's was vital in maintaining the military traditions of the KAR. Unlike British officers and NCO's seconded to the regiment for a fixed period of service, seldom more than three years, most senior African NCO's served in the same battalion for a decade or more before attaining the rank of sergeant. In order to rise up through the ranks, askaris had to exhibit loyalty and leadership ability in addition to a long period of service. The importance placed on length of service during the interwar years is worthy of some note in the Tanganyikan case, since many of the senior NCO's in 6 KAR during the 1920's appear to have been Sudanese or Ugandans, while the new recruits came from Tanganyikan ethnic groups. A further point of interest is the presence of large numbers of older soldiers who had started their military careers with the Germans. The presence of *ex-Schutztruppe* askaris led to comparisons between military service under the two regimes and some German traditions continued often without officers even being aware of their origins. One humorous example of an unintended holdover from the German period occurred shortly after the Tanganyikan Government approved the official march of 6 KAR, *Ngoma*, in 1951. A member

¹⁵⁶One indication of the gulf that existed between officers and enlisted personnel can be seen in many of the ORDP files by examining which Africans officers claimed to have interacted with on a personal basis. Even officers who enjoyed their KAR service and liked and respected their askaris seldom mention developing relationships with any soldiers other than their NCO's. The one exception to this is their personal orderly, who along with the NCO's, often provided information about the morale of the unit, pointed out mistakes the officer made, and often helped with language training.

the government, who had visited German East Africa before the First World War, wrote that he remembered that he had heard the tune played by the *Schutztruppe* band and that he thought it was written by a Goan Band Master. Instead of changing the march, the Government decided to "let sleeping dogs lie" and *Ngoma* remained the official march of 6 K.A.R.¹⁵⁷ By the end of the inter-war period it is unlikely that large numbers of ex-*Schutztruppe* askaris remained in the KAR, but their age and experience made them stand out, and many of the officers who served with the regiment comment in their memoirs on the presence these older askaris.¹⁵⁸

The Rank and File

For askaris, tradesmen, military families and followers, life was organized around daily and seasonal military routines. KAR personnel and their dependents spent the majority of their time within the boundaries of the cantonment, and their interactions with the outside civilian population was carefully regulated. The physical layout of KAR cantonments varied depending on the local terrain and building materials as well as the number of officers and askaris posted to the station, but all contain a number of common features. Military life in every post revolved around the parade ground and its accompanying flagstaff, where the troops were summoned first thing in the morning and dismissed at dusk. This square patch of ground, dusty in the dry season and a morass of mud during the rains, was the scene of drill exercises,

¹⁵⁷East African Command Circular from Lt. General, G.O.C. E.A. Command to Chief Secretary Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Nyasaland, February 26, 1951. TNA 28209 Vol. 1.

¹⁵⁸KAR battalions stationed in Tanganyika may have had a higher percentage of these ex-*Schutztruppe* askaris, but there are also occasional references to them appearing in the accounts of British officers who served with Kenyan battalions as well.

instruction in the care and maintenance of everything from uniforms to small arms, and the place where promotion, discipline, kit and medical inspection parades occurred. The parade ground was surrounded by a variety of other buildings where officers performed their daily tasks and where military stores were housed. At an out-station such as Masoko, Songea or Mahenge, usually garrisoned by a company, only a handful of European officers would be stationed at the post, and they would work out of a few small headquarters buildings. At a larger post like Dar es Salaam, housing not only the headquarters for 6 KAR but also the Headquarters for the Southern Brigade, the cantonment was far more extensive, with additional storehouse facilities, an armory, workshops for the Supply and Transport Corps and the Brigade Signal Section. Each cantonment also contained a small shop where askaris and officers could buy household goods and small luxury items. Indian or Greek traders who purchased a license from the military and received permission to set up shop usually ran these civilian establishments.¹⁵⁹ Included in storeowner's agreement with the military was the understanding that they would comply with sections of the KAR regulations applicable to the running of their business and would refrain from selling alcohol.

In addition to the above named military buildings, housing for both officers and askaris and their families was also located in the grounds of the cantonment. Officers lived in their own quarters, usually bungalows, and took their meals and socialized at the officer's mess. Larger stations, like Dar es Salaam, also maintained a separate mess restricted for the use of European NCO's. Askaris

¹⁵⁹Hickson, J.G.E. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838.

and other non-combatants lived with their families in the lines. Although the living and dining quarters of European and African members of the force were kept separate, officers regularly inspected the askaris' lines to ensure that sanitary regulations were being followed and that the buildings remained in good repair. In Dar es Salaam, askaris lived with their families in modern brick barracks fitted with electric lights. At outstations such as Mahenge, Masoko and Songea, conditions were somewhat more primitive. The buildings for the rank and file were either barracks constructed out of wattle and daub and thatched with grass or round single-family rondavals neatly arranged in rows, made with the same materials.¹⁶⁰ While British officers and NCO's ate in their respective messes, no communal cooking or dining facilities were provided for the askaris. Askaris relied on their wives or female companions to cook their rations and ate their meals in the lines with their families.

During the inter-war period, once a week, African NCO's, askaris, specialists and their families would be given their rations, which consisted primarily of *posho*, maize meal, supplemented with a small amount of meat. The maize meal was boiled and eaten in a solid porridge. Units stationed along the coast occasionally substituted beans and rice for maize meal. Askaris supplemented their filling but nutritionally lacking rations with food purchased from local shops or with fruits and vegetables cultivated in small family plots near the lines.¹⁶¹ While on flag marches and exercises, officers often shot game for

¹⁶⁰Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404. According to Sherwood askaris preferred to live in huts instead of barracks, because families enjoyed a greater degree of privacy in the former.

¹⁶¹Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

the pot and askaris assigned to construction work were given extra meat to maintain both their physical condition and their enthusiasm for manual labor.

In addition to their rations, askari were allowed to brew and drink African beer, *pombe*, fermented from millet, sorgum or maize. Distilled liquor was strictly forbidden for Africans. British officers and NCO's maintained a bar in their mess and some officers ran up substantial monthly tabs. Officers viewed the consumption of alcohol as detrimental to discipline, but there was little they could do to stop soldiers from drinking. Efforts to force askaris to remain sober proved singularly unsuccessful. If denied access and permission to drink within the confines of the cantonment, askaris would slip off to the nearest town in search of alcohol, forcing officers to discipline soldiers for being absent without leave. Askaris under the influence of alcohol would get into fights with civilians and the police, thus causing friction between the KAR and members of neighboring communities. Such actions increased complaints from local civilian administrators and police officials for officers to keep their men away from the civilian population. Officers also connected the sale of strong alcohol with prostitution, which in turn led to increased rates of venereal disease and caused a decline in unit effectiveness. Realizing the impossibility of an outright ban on alcohol, military officials instead sought to limit when, where and how much alcohol soldiers drank. Units brewed their own beer in the lines, where it was consumed during permitted times in a bar under the supervision of senior NCO's. By allowing regular access to *pombe* and encouraging askaris to drink in the lines, KAR officers were largely successful during the inter-war years in limiting soldiers access to both the stronger spirits and prostitutes thought to be so detrimental to military discipline and performance.

Another factor in keeping askaris content and maintaining the effectiveness of units was the presence of wives and military women in the lines.

While only senior KAR officers were allowed to be married and have their wives accompany them, military officials encouraged askaris to either marry or form a temporary liaison with a local woman for the duration of their military service. As so often the case in the KAR, the decision to allow askaris to live with their wives was not based on any feeling of reluctance to break up families, but was instead designed to increase military efficiency and discipline. Officers realized that askaris would go to great lengths to be with women, and that it was preferable to allow married couples to live together than to have deal with the inevitable desertions and fights with the local civilian population that would accompany a ban on women in the lines. Furthermore, military officials also feared that unattached soldiers would engage the services of prostitutes or other undesirable women, thus spreading disease or socially disruptive ideas in units. The alternative was allowing askaris to live with their wives or female companions in the cantonment, where they could be interviewed and approved by the commander, regularly inspected by the medical officer for disease, taught the basic principles of sanitation by African NCO's, and could aid the military in providing for askaris' sexual and domestic needs. Isolated from the rest of the population, askaris and their wives and children could be sheltered from external negative political and social influences and taught the traditions and values of the regiment. Furthermore, by allowing askaris the opportunity to marry and father children, military officials prevented the need for askaris to leave the KAR after their first term of service, for fear that they would not have fathered grown children who could provide for them in their old age when they retired from service. The ability to marry was also an important economic and social status symbol for many ethnic groups. Allowing soldiers to marry ensured that askaris would maintain their status in their home communities. Finally, during the inter-war years the KAR viewed askaris' children as potential future recruits that from

their first days could be instilled with the proper military values and prepared for a career in the army.¹⁶²

Following their initial period of training, askari could ask their commanding officer for permission to bring one wife to live with them in the lines. Wives provided companionship and domestic labor, in addition to giving military life a veneer of normality. Military life was not easy and women were responsible for almost all domestic tasks involved in running the household, including preparing meals, cultivating the family garden, keeping the quarters clean, washing laundry and bearing and raising children. The importance of women's labor was not lost on KAR officers. Commenting on a plan to provide askaris' wives in 6 KAR with medical inspections and care, Inspector General Brigadier H. A. Walker noted that "appreciation of the benefits of the scheme may be adversely affected if women are kept waiting for an undue length of time without being attended to. Women have to cook their husbands' food and attend to their household duties."¹⁶³

Military women not only freed askaris from daily domestic tasks, thus giving them more leisure and training time, but their presence also allowed the military to stress the idea of military service as a "man's" occupation. When women were not allowed to accompany askaris on maneuvers, the moral and health of units quickly declined. Askaris resented cooking and cleaning and viewed such tasks as women's work and beneath them. To overcome such resistance, the standard procedure when women were not around was for an

¹⁶²Several officers mention that the children of askaris often planned to follow their fathers into the service. See for example Hickson, J.G.E. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838.

officer or NCO to delegate one or two members of the unit to do the cooking. Askaris often tried to get out of the duty by burning or undercooking the food, in the hope that their comrades would excuse them from the hated task. To prevent such ploys, many units adopted the policy of beating the cook if the food was unsatisfactory. The inability or reluctance of askaris to cook affected the nutritional value as well as the taste of *posho* and, over time, poorly cooked food could contribute to the declining physical health of a unit.

While KAR officers viewed military women as somewhere between a necessary evil and an asset, little attention was devoted to demarcating their official position in the military hierarchy. Almost no mention is made concerning either the place or the duties and responsibilities of women in the KAR's regulations and battalion standing orders. The result of this policy of neglect was that wives were viewed as an extension of their husbands and possessed no official identity of their own, despite their important contribution to the battalion. Some sense of how wives and children were forced to adapt their living patterns to conform to military standards can be seen in the following description of weekly company kit inspection in the 2 KAR garrison at Masoko.

This parade was attended by his wife and children, who fell in immediately behind him at the entrance to their quarters, dressed in their best. The inspection would include looking into their quarters to see they were spotlessly clean, including pots and utensils. If there had been an addition to the family, the Company Commander would invariably congratulate them.¹⁶⁴

The social position of an army wife in the military hierarchy depended on

¹⁶³Inspector General's Report on 6 KAR PRO, CO 820 6/14.

her husband's rank. The wife of the senior African NCO was charged with maintaining discipline among a unit's female population. Her position in the battalion was clearly marked by a military badge or sash, and she could administer corporal punishment to women committing infractions of KAR regulations or causing dissension in the ranks.¹⁶⁵ Askaris also were held responsible for the actions of their wives, and KAR regulations stated that husbands could discipline their wives by administering a beating, provided they first received permission from their commanding officer. If a woman proved particularly troublesome, a commanding officer would order her husband to send her away, but such a measure was only used in extreme circumstances.

To preserve unit harmony and ensure that askari did not have to perform demeaning domestic duties, African NCO's encouraged young unmarried men to either marry or come to a temporary arrangement with a local woman. In some cases, NCO's would even facilitate such liaisons. Both Officers and NCO's thought it was undesirable to have unattached askaris living in close proximity to married women. Many British officers believed Africans had little ability to control their sexual desires and that young askaris without access to female companionship would not pass up the opportunity to sleep with the wife of a fellow askari. It is extremely difficult to characterize or define the "informal" relationships that existed between women and askaris, since most evidence that they existed and were encouraged comes from European officers' accounts. Clearly such women were not prostitutes in the traditional sense, because they

¹⁶⁴Glass, Harold Patrick. RHL Afr.s. 1715/105.

¹⁶⁵Mileham, John Gerard, RHL Afr.s. 1715/185.

were officially attached to either a single askari or a group of young unmarried soldiers, and they were required to fulfill the same domestic duties as wives. Nor was the practice of engaging in such liaisons limited to younger unmarried askaris. An officer who served with 2 KAR during the inter-war years, noted that a number of Nyasaland askaris left their wives at home to maintain ties with their communities and access to land and formed a liaison with a local wife while stationed in Tanganyika.

KAR cantonments were largely self contained communities where everyone, from the Commanding officer down to the askaris children playing behind the lines, was expected to conform to established codes of behavior based on military orders and rank. Regulations also applied to the specialists, craftsmen and laborers attached to units. Officers' accounts of their inter-war service occasionally leave the reader with the impression that KAR cantonments theoretically, and in some cases physically, resembled African villages with all the hierarchy and tradition Europeans imagined normal in such a setting. Yet the comparison is a superficial one at best. While most Africans had to deal with competing loyalties to their families, religious organizations, ethnic leaders and the government, the military could use regulations and discipline to advance its own agenda and partially isolate askaris and their families from external influences. Missionaries and district officers could talk about how Africans were dependent on God or the Government for their welfare, but in the KAR this was literally true to a much higher degree. Askaris received their food and clothing from the army and their daily lives were much more tightly regulated than those of civilians. The military intruded into the smallest aspects of daily life and askaris could not eat, drink, go on leave, marry, or practice their cultural traditions or religious beliefs without permission. Admission to the cantonment or to go on leave was carefully regulated and officers tried to limit askaris contact with the

civilian population to a high degree.

Yet for all the attempts to create a self-contained environment, military authorities could only restrict external contacts, not eliminate them entirely. Askaris and their families were not isolated, and most soldiers tried to keep strong ties to their home communities both within the confines of the battalion and externally. By associating with comrades from the same ethnic group, marrying members of their local communities, and returning home on leave at regular intervals most askaris tried to ensure that they would have a community to return to when their period of military service came to an end. Despite stressing the importance of loyalty to the government and encouraging askaris to think of themselves as part of a Regimental or battalion family, Tanganyikan soldiers maintained strong ethnic and regional ties. This trend is hardly surprising, considering the slow rate of promotion, the fact that askaris were not eligible to become officers, and the inability of the KAR to provide ex-askaris with either pensions or any other form of support once they left military service.

In both Britain and India, soldiers responded to the concept of the regimental family in part because the military, with financial backing from government, maintained regimental organizations that continued to provide a social environment where ex-soldiers could maintain ties not only with old comrades but also with their regiment. In addition to social functions, regimental associations also occasionally provided veterans and their families with economic support in the form of scholarships and emergency funds, and in extreme hardship cases even housing and board. Thus the idea of the regimental family was not an abstract concept that ended once a soldier was discharged. Regiments took care of their own, and soldiers and officers were encouraged to think of fellow members of the regiment as family irregardless of whether they had served with them and knew them or not. The fiscal position of

the East African governments precluded any consideration of such schemes. The fact that officers were members of other regiments meant that the KAR lacked a cadre of officers to set up such a program, and the askaris' low rate of pay militated against the KAR raising the funds needed for such projects. The fact that the KAR was an inter-territorial force organized around battalions, instead of as a regiment, further complicated matters.

At the end of their period of service, most askaris could hope for little more from the KAR than that one of their officers would put in a good word with the district commissioner if they tried to get a job. Even this benefit was often short-lived, owing to an officer's average three-year tour of service and the high rate of turnover. Furthermore, the Tanganyikan Government was anxious not to have ex-soldiers think of themselves as a special class deserving rights and privileges beyond those of the "average native." Both military and civil officers were instructed to stress to ex-soldiers that their government did not owe them anything for their services once they had been discharged and paid their gratuity. Askaris were neither unintelligent nor naive, and the majority must have had little trouble separating rhetoric from reality. The tiny size of the inter-war battalions, combined with the prevailing peaceful conditions in Tanganyika, and European ideas about the rapidity with which Africans aged meant that only a handful of senior NCO's would be allowed to serve with the regiment long enough to receive gratuities large enough to retire on. The majority of the rank and file would have to rely on the same kinship and local networks for support in their old age as did the rest of the African population.

Chapter 5

Military Life in the Interwar Years

The primary function of the KAR battalions stationed in Tanganyika was to ensure the internal security of the territory by providing a visible armed presence, thus discouraging any serious resistance to colonial rule. The number of KAR askaris stationed in the territory as well as the location of military posts changed as the territory's road and rail network improved and reductions in the number of first companies and later battalions took place throughout the 1920's and 1930's. For KAR askaris and their officers military service during the interwar years proved different from both the pacification campaigns of the early KAR and the arduous fighting that took place during the First World War. KAR detachments settled down to garrison life occasionally interrupted by flag marches, parades and training exercises. The drastic budget cuts during the lean years following the First World War and the depression of the early 1930's resulted not only in reductions in the force but also in the funds available for training, maneuvers, improvement of military infrastructure and for new equipment and spares. For much of the interwar period KAR officers struggled to keep the units under their command trained to the standards the force had reached in 1918. By the mid 1930's, the combination of fiscal austerity and the small remaining number of KAR battalions made it all but impossible to carry out training exercises that involved more than a few companies.¹⁶⁶

For KAR officers and askaris stationed in Tanganyika in the period from

¹⁶⁶Annual Report by Southern Brigade Commander, 1937. TNA 24834.

1920-1935, military life was heavily influenced by the poor economic conditions present in the territory. One result of the scarcity of funds was that KAR officers frequently did not receive adequate support to allow them to hire civilian labor to improve crumbling military infrastructure. Consequently askaris often found themselves not only responsible for the routine maintenance of their lines and other military buildings, but also charged with the construction of new buildings. The extra work involved with repair and building projects interfered with training, and some officers resented what was seen as excessive government parsimony that left them with no choice but to use their soldiers as laborers. Writing in 1937 after a number of improvements had already been made to both the askari lines and medical facilities in Arusha and Dar es Salaam, the Commander of the Southern Brigade noted:

While I am satisfied with the general standard of equipment of the Brigade, the condition of the Military Buildings, especially in Tanganyika Territory, gives rise to some anxiety. Drastic reductions of financial provision for this service has resulted in inevitable arrears of maintenance work and as a result, many of the officers' quarters, native ranks lines, and other barrack buildings fall far short of what is expected of Military Cantonments.¹⁶⁷

The poor state of many of the KAR cantonments mirrored a similar inability or unwillingness on the part of the Tanganyikan government to allocate anything more than the minimum funds necessary to modernize the force. Only when conditions in Europe began to deteriorate and Italy invaded Ethiopia did the East African governments begin to give some thought to improving the outdated equipment and arms used by KAR askaris.

The dire condition of Tanganyika's economy and the recognition that, despite drastic budget cuts, considerable public funds were being spent on the force, encouraged both settlers and administrators to demand that KAR battalions "make themselves useful." In 1931, one district officer stationed at Songea wrote his superior concerning the local KAR garrison:

I cannot understand how this detachment of King's African Rifles justify the expense they must be. If they must be stationed here, then they might at least be given definite work on pioneering and engineering and build a few bridges and do some road work.¹⁶⁸

Even before 1931, the Tanganyikan Government established a commission that sent out a circular to all provincial commissioners to explore the possibility of employing troops stationed in their regions on road and bridgework. Enthusiasm for the idea varied from province to province, with several provincial commissioners expressing their concerns about how the monetary value of the askaris' labor would be calculated and the cost involved in transporting troops from their lines to work sites. Despite these reservations, the commission decided to approach the military as to the possibility of utilizing soldiers to improve the road network. To make the request more palatable to the military authorities, the acting chief secretary stressed that without the co-operation of the KAR, the government lacked the funds properly to maintain the roads and this would harm the ability of the KAR to respond rapidly to security threats. The commandant of the Southern Brigade agreed to the proposal provided that the

¹⁶⁷Annual Report by Southern Brigade Commander, 1937. TNA 24834.

¹⁶⁸Extract from a letter from the DO, Songea to the PC Mahenge, 19/3/1931. TNA, 19639.

work did not interfere with the askaris' training, would not last for more than two months, and that askaris must work in their military units and not be divided into smaller parties. Colonel Case also mentioned that a number of NCO's could be used as superintendents to supervise road gangs of tax defaulters.¹⁶⁹

Roadwork commenced following the end of the rainy season, with KAR officers and askaris working under the direction of engineers from the Public Works Department or members of the civil government. Askaris helped clear roadways, improve embankments, and repair bridges in the regions surrounding Mahenge, Songea, Masosko, Arusha and Dar es Salaam. The experiment proved such a success that it was continued for several years. Both military and civil authorities claimed that the askaris found the work hard but enjoyed being in the field away from the daily routine of life in the lines. Due to the strenuous nature of the work, the troops were given a weekly addition of meat to their rations to help keep up their strength. The willingness of KAR officers to have their men participate on locust control, guarding tax defaulters, or road work was tempered with concerns that regular performance of such tasks would damage morale and cut into the time available for training and conducting maneuvers. Military and civilian officials took great care to disassociate the work askaris engaged in from compulsory labor.¹⁷⁰ To continue askaris' enthusiasm for road work after the first year of the experiment, the government approved the cost of

¹⁶⁹Letter from Colonel Case to the Director of Public Works, Dar es Salaam, September 18, 1931. TNA 19639.

¹⁷⁰Letter from Colonel Case to the Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, October 5, 1932 and Letter to Officer Commanding, Southern Brigade from Provincial Commissioner, Mahenge Province, August 25, 1932. TNA 19639. For comments on KAR askaris doing bridgework, see Mundy, P.R.M. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3835.

a meat ration of 1 LB every two weeks and agreed that askaris should not be employed on road work for more than six weeks.¹⁷¹

Construction was not the only area where KAR officers and askaris pitched in and lent assistance to the government to help weather the lean budget years of the early 1930's. In 1929, the 6 KAR detachment stationed in Arusha spent so much time on locust control that both platoon and company training were delayed, leading Inspector General Brigadier Walker to comment that, "While I appreciate the importance of the work, I trust the calls for assistance from the troops will be limited to cases of absolute necessity."¹⁷² Again in 1934, the askaris of 6 KAR spent nine weeks working on locust control and, due to training requirements, could not help the Public Works Department work on the roads.¹⁷³ In 1935, the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province decided to improve compliance with the Native Tax Ordinance by jailing increasing numbers of tax defaulters. To house this expected increase, a number of temporary camps had to be constructed, and a tentative request was put forward to the military to loan askaris to the prison service who could serve as camp guards or supervise gangs of prisoners working on the roads. Initially the commissioner of prisoners wanted the KAR askaris and NCO's to be gazetted as temporary prison officers so that they could legally fire on any convict attempting to escape; however, the Attorney General objected to the plan on legal grounds. Two NCO's and 17 askaris from the Arusha garrison eventually ended up serving

¹⁷¹Letter from Governor G. S. Symes to Officer Commanding Southern Brigade, October 28, 1932. TNA 19639.

¹⁷²Inspector General's Report 6 Battalion KAR, December 5, 1929. PRO, CO 820 8/11.

for a short time as supernumerary wardens guarding tax defaulters.¹⁷⁴

For KAR officers and askaris, the occasional headaches of repairing aging military infrastructure or short stints aiding the Public Works Department proved a not unwelcome break from garrison life. During the interwar years, askaris' daily life consisted primarily of drill, training exercises and military tasks, the monotony of which was occasionally broken by a flag march, field training or civil or military celebration.

British Recruiting Policies in Tanganyika and the Concept of Martial Races

British officers serving in the KAR had been raised in a society and trained in a military tradition that had long accepted that certain races and classes possessed inherent traits that made them superior soldiers or officers.¹⁷⁵ The British Army had a long history of relying on conquered peoples to fill the ranks of its armed forces, and the construction of stereotypes and martial myths certainly existed long before British involvement in Africa. One of the earliest and best-documented examples of martial myth-making concerns British recruiting and deployment of Scottish soldiers. Soldiers serving in Highland regiments wore traditional highland regalia in the form of badges and kilts, carried claymores and marched into battle led by musicians playing bagpipes. The British military effectively co-opted many Scottish traditions and trappings and used them to

¹⁷³Telegram from 6 KAR at Tabora to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam. March 29, 1934 TNA 19639.

¹⁷⁴Summary of minutes relating to employment of KAR as guards for tax labor in the Northern Province and letter from Commander Southern Brigade to the Chief Secretary to the Government, Dar es Salaam, September 15, 1936. TNA 24440.

¹⁷⁵According to Anthony Clayton, most British officers who volunteered for service with the KAR came from the upper middle class and had received public school education before going to The Royal Military College, Sandhurst. Clayton and Killingray, *Khaki and Blue*, pp. 199-200 and 207-209.

make military service desirable to the male population of Scotland. Well into the 19th century, long after the myth of "highland warriors" bore little resemblance to reality, the ideal Scottish soldier was depicted as a hardy Scot from a rural area uncorrupted by urban life or work. British officers serving in the Indian Army constructed similar myths. Before the Indian Mutiny of 1857, many of the Indian Sepoys (soldiers) had been recruited from Bombay and other urban areas. After the suppression of the mutiny, British officers turned their attention to filling the ranks of the new Indian Army with Sikh and Rajput recruits, many of who came from rural areas. The Sepoys, who for years had demonstrated their suitability for military service, found themselves considered untrustworthy, treacherous and lazy. Many of the Officers who served in the KAR brought similar biases and beliefs with them, and it only took a short time for them to create new "martial races" in East Africa.

Although numerous variations existed among the ethnic groups considered by KAR officers to make good soldiers, some general characteristics can be noted that were applied throughout all of East Africa. Officers preferred to recruit askaris from among ethnic groups inhabiting harsh and remote areas. According to many KAR officers, the more desolate and isolated the region, the hardier the recruit. Officers often also thought soldiers from less affluent areas were far less likely to be organized politically. As a rule, pastoralists, with the notable exception of the Masai, were considered better military material than agriculturists who, it was thought, had access to more abundant food supplies and were less used to walking long distances. One British officer serving in 2

KAR succinctly summed up these attitudes by noting a comment a fellow officer had once made; "The blacker their faces, the huskier their voices, the thicker their neck and darker their skin and the more remote part of Africa they came from, the better soldiers they made."¹⁷⁶ Within these broad categories existed more detailed criteria that credited each ethnic group with its own distinct qualities. Thus certain groups like the Ngoni were considered excellent for offensive actions, while others, such as the Yao, while supposedly less aggressive, were more steadfast and reliable and thus perfect for defense. One KAR officer noted, "I think the Ngoni made the best askaris, followed by the Nyamwezi, Hehe and Yao. The Wasukuma were ponderous and slow-witted, and the Jalu full of "bull", but tended to pack up under stress. The Watende were scruffy, but quite courageous."¹⁷⁷

Most British officers felt that education, religion and urban life, each with its share of accompanying distractions, dulled the fighting qualities of African soldiers. As a result of such theories, most recruiting campaigns were carried out in rural rather than urban areas. Even tribal groups that had provided good military material in the past could fall under suspicion if conditions in their district improved. In 1938, the Commander of the Southern Brigade, Colonel C. C. Fowkes, noted:

As regards the 6th Battalion, which recruits in the Tanganyika Territory, the tribe with the highest proportion is Nyamwezi and I think rightly so. I consider the proportion of Wasukuma is high as I am not certain that the prosperity of the land

¹⁷⁶Glass, RHL, Mss. Afr.s. 1715/105.

¹⁷⁷Robson, George G. RHL, Afr.s 1715/231 for another example, see Walker, H. A. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/284.

they live in has not slightly weakened their moral. Though their homes are far from Dar es Salaam and they are difficult to get a hold of in a emergency, more use should be made of the Songea, Angoni and the Tunduru Yao.¹⁷⁸

Religion and education, except in the cases of clerks or specialists, were also viewed as a danger instead of an asset, and school or mission trained recruits were seen as potential disciplinary problems. The assumption was that educated Africans would either be unable physically to stand the rigors of soldiering or they would be "bush lawyers" and spread dissent within their units. As a result, ethnic groups in Tanganyika that had better access to education, such as the Chaga, were almost never recruited into the army and then only in non-combat roles such as clerks. Another well-documented example of a ethnic group being considered poor military material and pigeon-holed for a support role was the Gogo, who had the misfortune of being considered perfect only for the lowly job of sanitary orderly.¹⁷⁹

It is interesting to note how quickly British policies of recruiting from among only the "martial races" resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy and became part of KAR tradition and unalterable, except under the most desperate circumstances. If only Hehe, Sukuma, Ngoni and other groups were recruited into the army because they supposedly made good soldiers, then only these groups would have the opportunity to prove their worth as soldiers. The only way

¹⁷⁸Comments written by Colonel C. C. Fowkes in the Inspector General's report on the Southern Brigade, referring to the racial distribution of African combat ranks on October 31, 1938. PRO, CO 820 34/12

members of non-martial ethnic units could enlist in the army was if they claimed be members of a "martial" tribe, thus making it impossible to correct mistaken stereotypes. One result of KAR recruiting policies was that they closely linked the ethnic identity of certain groups with military service.

It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how or when the British judged certain tribes worthy of inclusion as a "martial race." British officers serving in Tanganyika in the 1920's were aware that the Ngoni were related to the Zulu and had come into the region from South Africa, establishing themselves by using Zulu-style military organization. Armed with this knowledge, it was only a short jump to the assumption that the Ngoni were easily excitable but excellent on the attack, a recommendation that is noted in the accounts of more than one British officer. The Hehe likewise benefited from a rich military history, and the British had no qualms about recruiting askari from an ethnic group that mounted such a successful guerrilla campaign against the Germans. The fact that many Hehe had fought in the *Schutztruppe* for the Germans during the East African Campaign, far from giving the British pause about their loyalty, was seen as further evidence of their quality as soldiers. Sukuma also were recruited, based on perceptions of their performance as German askaris during World War One.

During the interwar period, only one of the battalions stationed in

¹⁷⁹The Gogo provide one of the cases where it is difficult to determine why the British deemed the ethnic group unfit for military service. The Germans had enlisted Gogo into the *Schutztruppe* and also formed them into irregular units to curtail raids by the Masai. Although there is no hard evidence to support this theory, it is possible that the low regard the British had for the Gogo dates back to the famine that struck Ugogo following the First World War, where most of the population barely survived on meager food aid distributed by the government.

Tanganyika, 6 KAR, contained askaris recruited from within the territory. Following the First World War, 6 KAR was formed by amalgamating one company from 7 KAR with two companies from Ugandan battalions and one company from 2/4 KAR. At first the battalion contained a high percentage of Ugandan and Kenyan askaris, but over time this number steadily declined as the Ugandans retired and were replaced by Tanganyikan recruits. There was also a handful of ex-German askaris in the battalion.¹⁸⁰ The race classification return contained in the Annual Report on 6 KAR for the year 1925 lists 49 Waganda, 16 Acholi and 11 Lango in the ranks of the battalion.¹⁸¹ By 1928, the numbers had dropped to 13 Waganda, 5 Acholi and 2 Lango and by the mid-1930's there is no mention of any askari from Ugandan ethnic groups in 6 KAR.¹⁸² Throughout the 1920's the Ugandan presence in 6 KAR declined as increasing numbers of Tanganyikans enlisted in the battalion. The majority of the rank and file came from four ethnic groups: the Wanyamwezi, Wasukuma, Wangoni and Wahehe, while small numbers of Wafipa, Yao, and Wanyasa were also present. For the remainder of the territory's ethnic groups, participation in the KAR was limited to only a handful of soldiers, rarely exceeding 5 individuals, when represented at all. Despite the fact that four tribes contributed the bulk of askaris in 6 KAR, the battalion contained more askaris from different tribes than any other in the

¹⁸⁰Inspector Generals Report on 6 KAR, 1928. PRO, CO 820 3/8.

¹⁸¹Race Classification Return in Inspector Generals Report of the 6 KAR, 29 December 1926. PRO, CO 820 1/6

¹⁸²Race Classification Return in Inspector Generals Report of the 6th Battalion of the KAR, 1 November 1929. PRO, CO 820 8/11 and Racial Distribution of African Combatant ranks on 31 December 1936 in Annual Report by Southern Brigade Commander. TNA, 2438.

regiment.¹⁸³ In 1929, the race classification return listed the battalion as having askaris belonging to 66 different tribes. The majority however, 444 out of a total of 681, were Wanyamwezi, Wasukuma, Wahehe and Wangoni, while out of the remainder, 35 tribes were represented by only a single askari each.¹⁸⁴

The second battalion stationed in the territory, 2 KAR, was raised in Nyasaland and trained at the depot at Zomba. The battalion's rank and file was composed almost entirely of Nyasaland askaris, primarily Yao, Anyanja, Anguru, Angoni and Atonga.¹⁸⁵ Following the First World War, 2 KAR garrisoned stations in central Tanganyika headquartered in Tabora, with companies at Mwanza and Dodoma and a half-company at Kondoa-Irangi. Following the 1923 reorganization of the Regiment, the headquarters of 2 KAR remained at Tabora and the battalion maintained stations at Mwanza, Masoko and Iringa.¹⁸⁶ During the period of drastic reductions, 2 KAR was the only battalion that could be used as a reserve in the event of an emergency throughout British East Africa. The presence of detachments of Nyasaland askaris stationed across western Tanganyika led to few problems on the ground. Askaris spent little time interacting with the civilian population, except when they were carrying out their official duties, and most Nyasaland askaris returned to their communities for home leave once they left the service.

Throughout the late 1920's and 1930's, officers tried, when possible, to keep askaris from the same tribe together in platoons or companies. In 6 KAR,

¹⁸³Inspector General's Report 6 KAR, 1931. PRO, CO 820 10/7.

¹⁸⁴Inspector General's Report 6 KAR, 1929. PRO, CO 820 8/11.

¹⁸⁵Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105.

the first time tribal organization was used for Tanganyikan askaris was in 1929, when three of the four squads of young recruits being training at the depot to replace older Ugandan askaris were already organized into squads based on their tribal affiliation.¹⁸⁷ Organizing sub-units of the battalion along tribal lines supposedly improved camaraderie, strengthened tribal martial traditions and fostered feelings of competition and *esprit de corps*. When recruits finished their training they could then be added to units of older askari from the same ethnic group who, because of shared language and traditions, would be more likely to accept them and help mold their military skills.¹⁸⁸ Security reasons also supported concentrating askari into units based on tribal affiliation. If dissatisfaction broke out in the ranks, British officers hoped to play off one unit against another, thus guaranteeing that at least part of the battalion would remain loyal. Should a strike or revolt start in one part of the territory, the government could also send askaris from a different region and ethnic group to quell the disturbance. Although most officers felt that their askaris would follow orders and not hesitate to use deadly force on members of their own ethnic group, they also agreed that, if possible, it was better not to put them to the test.

While the practice of forming sub-units from askaris of the same ethnic group was both accepted and well established by the 1920's, the system also had its failings. Some officers noted an increase in competition between platoons and companies composed along tribal lines. Improving morale and creating a

¹⁸⁶Inspector General's Report on Southern Brigade KAR, 1937. PRO, CO 820 25/9, see also Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 457-458.

¹⁸⁷Inspector General's Report 6 KAR, 1929. PRO, CO 820 6/14.

¹⁸⁸ Inspector General's Report 6 KAR, 1930. PRO, CO 820 8/11.

sense of *élan* within the ranks of a unit was positive, but only if the unit could then function effectively with the rest of the battalion. Occasionally pride in the "martial traditions" of their ethnic groups resulted in arguments or fighting between askaris. Another problem was the reluctance of some NCO's to discipline members of their own tribe.¹⁸⁹ For these reasons and the fear that soldiers from the same tribe would be more likely to form a united front if serving together in the same unit, the policy of forming units from a particular tribe or set of tribes had already begun to be phased out in the years just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Although platoons in 6 KAR were formed on a tribal basis, the battalion seemed to have much less trouble with abuses of the system than Nyasaland units stationed in Tanganyika. One possible reason for this may have been that during the interwar years many of the long service askaris and senior NCO's in 6 KAR were either Ugandans or Nubians (Sudanese), while the majority of the rank and file consisted of askaris from Tanganyika. While there is no way to connect either rank or length of service with race using the annual battalion returns, other sources, particularly officers' accounts, indicate that the few Sudanese remaining with the regiment were long serving soldiers or NCO's. Like the Ugandans, a few Nubians continue to show up on the race classification forms for 6 KAR into the early 1930's.¹⁹⁰

During the mid 1920's, KAR preoccupation with the ethnic affiliation of

¹⁸⁹Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

askaris reflected a much broader trend in the social and administrative structure of Tanganyika to stress the importance of tribal groups. In 1925, Sir Donald Cameron took over the Governorship of the territory and was appalled at the haphazard condition of the administration. In his memoirs he graciously attributed some of the problems to the growing pains associated with setting up a new government and to the need to repair damage done by the Germans during the war. He was shocked however, to find that the territory was still organized into 22 districts, and that the method of taxation that continued to be employed in many districts was just as it had been under German control. Furthermore, Cameron noted that much of the territory, including the two southern administrative centers, not only had never been visited by a British Governor, but, due to the poor transport network in the colony, remained effectively outside of official oversight during the rainy season. Some civilian and military officials serving in the southern administrative centers of Songea and Tukuyu had never been to Dar es Salaam and seldom had contact with their superiors; entering and leaving Tanganyika through Nyasaland. Officers stationed along the shores of Lake Victoria at Mwanza and Bukoba engaged in a similar practice, finding it more desirable to travel to their posts via Uganda and Kenya instead of taking the central railway across Tanganyika.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰During the 1920's, the ethnic affiliation of every recruit in the battalion was listed on a race classification form of the annual report submitted to the Inspector General. In the 1930's, after set percentages had been established for the main ethnic groups considered good military material, the tribal origin of the small number of soldiers from non-martial tribes was simply listed as other. For mention of Sudanese serving as senior NCO's Mans, Rowland Spencer Noel. RHL MSS Afr.s. 1715/178.

¹⁹¹Sir Donald Cameron, *My Tanganyika Service and Some Nigeria*. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1939), pp. 21-31, 47-48. For a good picture of how isolated the administrative center at Songea, see Sherwood, P. O. B. IWM, Department of Sound Records ACC. 4404 reel 2.

Unlike his predecessors, Cameron arrived in Tanganyika determined to drastically overhaul the administration. Shortly after completing a tour of the territory, he set to work on establishing a system of indirect rule that would not only aid the government in the work of administration, but also thwart the desire of Kenyan settlers to establish plantation agriculture in the region around Iringa. The system Cameron devised and soon installed in Tanganyika established local native governments responsible for collecting taxes, running a court and treasury, drafting laws, maintaining law and order and carrying out policies dictated by the colonial government. District officers would be responsible for supervising the activities of the Native Authorities in their district. Ideally, district officers would act as an advisor or liaison between the government and Native Authorities, but when necessary they could also issue instructions or overrule decisions made by chiefs or councils of elders. The decision rapidly to establish a system of indirect rule proved beneficial to both the government and many of the chiefs, elders and educated clerks and advisors who ran the native authorities.

Much of what Cameron thought and knew about the benefits of indirect rule was based on his lengthy service in Nigeria, where he had been a protégé of Lord Lugard. Unlike Nigeria however, Tanganyika had been a German colony and very few ethnic groups possessed political institutions that could easily or quickly be transformed into native administrations the way Lugard had incorporated the emirs of northern Nigeria into the government structure. Despite the changes the British administration made during and after the First World War, some of the chiefs who remained in power had attained their positions by allying themselves with the Germans. Other districts continued to be administered by *akidas*, usually Swahilis from the coast, who were not native to the areas they controlled. The question also remained about what to do with

stateless ethnic groups like the Makonde, who did not recognize a central tribal authority. Cameron and his subordinates dealt with these not inconsiderable obstacles in a variety of ways, but the two dominant ideas to emerge were the primacy of the tribal unit in African life, and the extent to which the previous German administration had disrupted and attempted to destroy "traditional" political and social institutions. Therefore the first task of the administration was to reconstruct and restore the African political systems as they had existed in Tanganyika before the German conquest.¹⁹²

Both military and civilian authorities adopted the idea that all Africans belonged to a specific tribe and that each tribe had its own distinct language, cultural traditions and, in some cases, physical characteristics. If KAR officers were wedded to their ideas of "martial races," civilian authorities were no less committed to the idea of preserving "traditional" native authorities. Despite the poor relations that existed between the upper echelons of the military and the Tanganyikan Government during the tenure of Governor Cameron, lower level military officers often worked closely and amicably with their civilian counterparts to integrate military service into the community life of specific ethnic groups. Military officials often relied heavily on district officers, not only for assistance in procuring suitable recruits for the army, but also for information on the attributes and traditions of various tribes, so they could form efficient sub-units of askari from similar tribes. Another motivation was that KAR officers also envisioned establishing a recruiting system similar to the one that existed in many parts of

¹⁹²Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*. pp. 318-341 also Cameron, *My Tanganyika Service*, pp. 75-118.

India, where in certain villages generations of sons followed in their father's footsteps and joined the regiment when they came of age. To this end, military authorities made efforts to establish relationships with chiefs or tribal leaders from ethnic groups dominant in the ranks of the KAR such as the Wahehe and Wanyamwezi. For their part, government officials viewed military service as a positive outlet for aggressive or militarily inclined young men who, before the days of colonial rule, would have engaged in stock raids or other martial pursuits.

The policy of "martial" recruiting and the creation of "martial traditions" served to elevate the position of askaris within colonial society, but it also helped to separate and isolate them, even from members of their own tribe or community. While military and civil officers encouraged tribes to celebrate their "military traditions" during the interwar years, only a small number of the fittest young men passed the medical screening and were selected to serve in the KAR, thus immediately distancing them from their peers.

Enlistment was the first step in a process designed not only to introduce recruits to discipline and military decorum but also to instill a sense of elitism, *esprit de corps*, and superiority from not only members of their communities but the larger African population. Recruits enlisted in the KAR for a first engagement of a minimum of nine years. Askari could choose a variety of options when enlisting, including six years with the KAR followed by three years in the reserve, six years with the KAR and six years in the reserve or nine years with the colors and six years with the reserves. After they had been found medically fit and approved for service, all recruits, as well as askaris re-engaging for further terms

of service, swore an oath of allegiance to the King and promised to obey their officers and the regulations of the KAR for the duration of their service with the colors.¹⁹³ Following training at the battalion depot, askaris then took up garrison duty; most serving far from their homes. Tanganyikan recruits for 6 KAR, the majority of them Wangoni from Songea, Wanyamwezi from Tabora, Wahehe from Iringa and Wasukuma from the northwest part of the territory, received their basic training at Dar es Salaam. Once fully trained, most of the battalion's askaris remained stationed at Dar es Salaam, but detachments also maintained posts in the north at Arusha and at Mahenge.

During training, British officers and African NCO's emphasized the need for recruits to be loyal to their officers, comrades and the regiment. Officers continued to encourage askaris to celebrate the "martial traditions" of their own ethnic groups, but at the same time they also inculcated trainees with the belief that they were superior to other Africans because of their position in the KAR. Askaris were told that they served King George, and some British officers took pains to paint a picture of the English sovereign as a great warrior chief, in what they thought was the "traditional" African mold. The monarch was kept at the forefront of askaris' thoughts, the very name of the regiment reinforcing the idea that they served the King. The King's birthday was celebrated every year, and

¹⁹³*Tanganyika King's African Rifles Ordinance, 1931* Part IV pp. 40-41. TNA 11145 Vol. II.

several KAR marching songs referred to the King as well.¹⁹⁴ The emphasis on service and loyalty to the King was not lost on askaris, and often, when making petitions to their officers or the government of Tanganyika, they would mention not only the length of their military service but also their continued loyalty to the monarch. Some trace of the idea that the King himself was responsible for "his" soldiers lingers on in the petitions for pensions and assistance put forward to the British Government by a few surviving veterans. During interviews, some ex-askari commented that if they could only state their case for pensions directly to the Queen instead of to bureaucrats in the British Government, she would remember their loyal service and grant their requests. One askari, after spending years petitioning first the British Legion and later the British High Commission for his still unpaid war gratuity, tried to send a series of letters directly to Queen Elizabeth II requesting a personal audience so he could plead his case. Referring to the lack of response to his queries, the veteran commented that if Kingi Georgi or another King was in power they would not neglect old soldiers such as he, but since Queen Elizabeth was a woman, she probably was not aware of the sacrifices askaris had made on behalf of the British.¹⁹⁵

While the idea that the askaris' primary loyalty was to the King and his regiment instead of to his "traditional rulers" or tribe certainly existed, this was only a small component in the process of distancing askari from the African

¹⁹⁴Two examples of KAR marching songs where the King is mentioned are *Kingi Georgi Tumpe Salama KAR* and *Kingi Joji*. A pamphlet, *Some Marching Songs of the King's African Rifles and the Northern Rhodesian Regiment* containing the lyrics of both these songs can be found in the materials of Bowie, Donald. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/24. A recording of many KAR marching songs is available in *Songs of the King's African Rifles from the Second World War*. IWM, Department of Sound Records, 17367.

population. Like their counterparts in the civil administration, clerks, native authority messengers, and police, the societal position of KAR askaris was determined by their usefulness to the government and defined by the benefits that accompanied their service. Although askaris were not as well paid as some members of Native Authorities and African clerks, they made considerably more than most Tanganyikans, especially when one considers their low levels of education. Furthermore, askari received additional benefits beyond their salaries, including housing, daily rations, exemption from hut and poll tax for the duration of their military service, and an allotment of military clothing.

Few things marked askaris as being different from the rest of the population as much as their uniforms. The askaris' uniform, like the western style dress of the African clerk, instantly stamped him as a government servant, with the important difference that askaris, as armed servants of the state, could use lethal force in the commission of their duties. For clothing, askaris were issued with three khaki drill bush shirts, khaki shorts, two dark blue heavy jerseys, two fezzes, two pairs of puttees, three white shirts and a pair of sandals. Nyasaland askaris in 1 and 2 KAR wore black fezzes while Tanganyikan askaris in 6 KAR sported red headgear. Members of the garrison at Arusha were also given greatcoats, because of the higher elevation and colder temperatures in the area. During training and field exercises, askaris usually wore their khaki bush shirts while the dark blue jerseys were reserved for more formal occasions. The white shirts and shorts were worn when the askaris were off duty.¹⁹⁶ KAR uniforms

¹⁹⁵Interview #36.

¹⁹⁶Glass, Harold Patrick L. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/105 and Cree, Gerald H. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/57.

owed their design to Egyptian Army uniforms, and dated back to the early days of the regiment when many of the askaris had formerly served in the Egyptian Army.

One point of contention between askaris and their officers concerned suitable footwear. While marching and on operations in the bush, askaris wore leather sandals but the majority of the time they preferred to go barefoot. Throughout the 1920's and early 1930's, African troops' requests for boots were repeatedly denied. Military authorities argued that African soldiers had naturally tough feet and the extra expense involved was unnecessary. Conditions changed drastically in 1936, following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The Italians' widespread use of mustard gas wrecked havoc on Haile Salassie's unshod soldiers and both military and civilian officials realized that, overnight, boots had become a military necessity. Throughout the late 1930's, askaris were issued with leather combat boots and two pairs of thick socks. Officially designated as "boots African," the new footwear was designed to accommodate large African feet with their fallen arches, a result of years of walking barefoot. Although askaris were delighted with the new boots, many found them a curse as well as a blessing. Boots were a highly prestigious item, since most Africans did not wear shoes, and they further increased the status of askaris in the eyes of the civilian population. Adding boots to askaris' standard kit also calmed some of the resentment askaris had felt that European officers and NCO's were provided with footwear while they were not. On the other hand, askaris found the boots heavy and cumbersome to wear, and many suffered terrible friction blisters before their feet became accustomed to the new footwear. Officers complained that boots cut down on askaris' mobility and hindered their ability to move quietly in dense brush. In some units, long after boots were issued, askaris wore them only for ceremonial functions, preferring to carry out fatigues and march

barefoot.¹⁹⁷ Many officers seem to have turned a blind eye to such practices and, according to one, it was not uncommon for askaris to march out on maneuvers just beyond the perimeter of the lines and stop and remove their boots, hanging them around their necks by the laces. The troops would put on their footwear just before they returned to the lines, and the Commanding Officer either did not comment or was none the wiser that the askaris had been "out of uniform". Most askaris had grown accustomed to wearing their boots by the outbreak of the Second World War, but new recruits continued to have trouble breaking in their new footwear.¹⁹⁸

African NCO's received the same clothing allowance as privates, but they were also issued with whistles and lanyards. The military authorities encouraged askaris to maintain their clothing and gear to a high level, but allowance was made for garments wearing out, and new items of clothing were issued at regular intervals. Along with their clothing ration, askaris were also provided with a supply of cleaning products and shown how to care for their uniforms. Even when on leave, askaris were required to wear their uniforms and identity discs, thus ensuring that, even away from the rigid military hierarchy of the barracks, both askari and civilians would be reminded of the power of the government.¹⁹⁹ Regulations also required that askaris shave their heads and this also served to identify them as soldiers.

Training

All potential askaris began their military service with a four-month training

¹⁹⁷Glass, Harold Patrick, RHL Afr.s. 1715/105 and also Cree, Gerald H. RHL Afr.s. 1715/57.

¹⁹⁸Hickson, J. G. E. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838.

period designed to introduce them to and to determine their suitability for military life. During the interwar years, new recruits were formed into training companies connected with a specific KAR battalion and were taught basic military decorum, hygiene and discipline. Training companies seldom numbered more than 30 recruits, led by an officer and several NCO's. Officers and NCO's used drill and repetition not only to teach recruits tasks but also to reinforce to askaris their position in the military hierarchy and the importance of obeying orders. As one officer bluntly put it:

But basically they were all - one not wishing to be unpleasant and rude about them - they all came to us more or less off the trees, and we had to build up their characters and teach them new ideas, teach them health, how to look after themselves, cleanliness - which they hadn't always learnt in their villages, how to wear the uniforms, how to clean them, to learn the language, how to stand properly, how to march properly.²⁰⁰

After askaris had received basic instruction, their training was expanded to include how to handle small arms and the history of the regiment. Officers were keenly aware of the cultural and educational differences between their askaris and British soldiers. One officer with 1 KAR commented:

Well, having been given their kit and shown army life, they would be trained in the use of a rifle and, possibly later, on a light machine gun. Taught rudimentary drill and the general basics of soldiering life; discipline, and instructed in what they could and couldn't do. And, of course, including the history of the regiment itself. One must remember that they would not come there not like a British soldier in knowing the traditions and obviously a lot of history of the British Army. They would come knowing absolutely nothing at all, except that they knew roughly, I suppose, what the life of a soldier was like, and were usually anxious to be

¹⁹⁹Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

²⁰⁰Yeldham, R.E.S. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3960.

soldiers, and so, therefore, be both docile and keen, which is an ideal combination for a recruit anyway.²⁰¹

KAR instructors used the same training techniques that British Army NCO's had used for years to turn uneducated recruits from the "lower classes" into proficient soldiers.

The lifestyle change African recruits experienced must have proved a shock to many. Although most recruits came from rural areas and had worked as herders or cultivators, the pace of military life was completely different from anything they had known previously. Rural daily life revolved around seasonal changes dictated by weather patterns or the cycle of planting or harvest. Military life however, was organized around a daily schedule based on hours, and recruits quickly learned the importance of adhering to military timetables. From the moment the bugle blew the wake up call summoning soldiers to the parade ground in the morning until lights out in the evening, askaris were allocated specific amounts of time in which to carry out training exercises, clean their kit, eat their food, and enjoy free time in the company of their comrades and families. Askaris lived with their families in the lines and thus the entire family unit became subject to military organization and discipline. Officers and NCO's intruded into almost all aspects of askaris' daily lives and they were seldom away from the supervision of their superiors.

Battalion and Brigade Organization and Daily and Seasonal Routine

Following training at Dar es Salaam or Zomba, recruits were added to units in their battalions. The KAR was organized along the same lines as the

²⁰¹Yeldham, R.E.S. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3960.

British Army. The smallest unit was the section, containing a NCO, a lance corporal and seven or eight askaris. Sections would be combined to form platoons containing thirty or more askaris and NCO's. During the interwar years, platoons were usually led by senior African NCO's, although occasionally officers would take command during field exercises and flag marches. Out stations such as Mahenge and Songea were garrisoned by companies, which contained four officers, and around 130 African combatant ranks, including NCO's. Reductions and changes in the strength of battalions in the interwar years make it impossible to give a standard number of British officers and NCO's, and African NCO's, and other ranks in battalions throughout the period. Choosing a representative example, in 1935, 6 KAR had 12 officers, 2 British Warrant Officers or NCO's, and 389 African NCO's, askaris and specialists on the battalion strength. An additional 43 other non-combatants, including clerks, tailors, motor drivers, storekeepers, a single schoolmaster, and gun porters, also were also included in the authorized establishment of the battalion. In 1936, the entire Southern Brigade, including Brigade Headquarters, Signal Section and Supply and Transport Corps, as well as the 1st, 2nd and 6th battalions, had a total strength of only 43 officers, 9 British NCO's and 1,235 African combatant ranks.²⁰²

Daily and seasonal routines varied, depending on the station, training schedules, special events or duties, local security concerns and climatic factors. Officers tried to adhere as closely as possible to the standard daily and weekly

²⁰²Inspector General's forms 2 and 3 contained in Annual Report by Brigade Commander Southern Brigade KAR, December 31, 1936. TNA 24834. It should be noted that two out of the 12 officers listed on the strength of 6 KAR were on leave. Between sickness, local and home leave, battalions often contained far fewer effectives than indicated in the battalion returns.

routines of the British Army, making some concessions for local tropical conditions. At most posts, askari started their day by falling out on the parade ground at 6:30 a.m. Officers and NCO's used the cool morning and evening hours for field training and weapons drill, while the heat of the afternoons was reserved for instruction, cleaning kit and other less arduous duties. At 6:00 p.m., the day ended with Tamaam parade, the local equivalent of the British Army's retreat parade. The roll was checked, notices or punishments read out, and then all askari not posted on guard duty turned their rifles, ammunition and bayonets in to the armory where it was kept under locked guard.²⁰³ Kit parade was held once a week and, like their British counterparts, askaris were always paid on Friday. Askaris had to fire the same musket course British soldiers did, and spent time on the rifle range each week improving their marksmanship.

Occasionally garrison routine would be broken by a month or more of field training, during which companies would practice small unit tactics, bush craft, digging trenches, constructing camps and other exercises. Battalion commanders would have liked to conduct larger exercises involving entire battalions or several battalions, but the dispersal of battalions throughout East Africa and the transport costs involved ruled out large-scale field training.

During the interwar years, active operations were almost non-existent, and consisted of flag marches intended to remind local African and German populations not to disturb the peace. If administrators thought that lawlessness, particularly stock smuggling or failure to pay tax, in their district had increased

²⁰³According to Hickson, the practice of locking up arms every night was a tradition carried over from the Indian Army, where there was a constant danger of theft of rifles and ammunition.

beyond the ability of the police to control, they would ask the local KAR commander to stage a flag march. Although flag marches seldom involved more than a platoon of askaris and a Lewis gun team led by an officer, marching down roads, presenting arms and raising the Union Jack in villages could be forceful demonstrations of the power of the colonial state.

In 1934, three officers and 61 askaris from 6 KAR stationed at Arusha carried out a military demonstration in Mbulu district designed to cow local Barabaig who had engaged in cattle raids in the area, and were suspected of killing several Wanyiramba passing through the area. The district officer summoned the Barabaig to a *baraza* (meeting) and, backed by a KAR honor guard in dress uniform, delivered a lecture on the power of the government and announced that if such actions continued, the tribe would be fined 1000 head of cattle and have part of their land taken away. To demonstrate that he was not issuing idle threats, he then told the Barabaig to retire to a nearby hillside to watch the KAR carry out a live fire exercise. The askaris quickly changed into field uniforms, mounted their Crossley lorries and proceeded to stage a mock attack. After thoroughly ventilating several empty petrol drums with rifle and light machine gun fire, the askaris dismounted from their trucks and charged the hill with fixed bayonets. Following further admonishments from the district officer and Tamaam parade, carried out by askaris once again wearing their dress uniforms, the Barabaig were dismissed.²⁰⁴ Few flag marches involved such forceful demonstrations as the one mentioned above, but it was not uncommon for KAR

Hickson J.G.E. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838.

²⁰⁴Cree, Gerald H. RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/57.

detachments to carry out live fire exercises, albeit in a more festive manner. In such cases local administrators and native authorities treated the occasion almost as a kind of celebration, with the civilian population turning out to watch the soldiers drill and conduct target practice. After the martial display, either the district officer or members of the native authority would show their appreciation by providing the askaris with enough beer and meat for a feast.

The administration also called on officers and askaris to march in parades and provide honor guards for official visitors. Askaris from 6 KAR mounted guard on the steps of Government house in Dar es Salaam. and the battalion also maintained a boat crew so that important guests and newly arrived KAR officers could be rowed ashore with due ceremony. Before it was disbanded for reasons of economy, the Southern Brigade band attached to 6 KAR and stationed at Dar es Salaam gave concerts, marched in parades and was present at other official functions. Each battalion also maintained a small drum and fife band that played at official functions and sometimes accompanied recruiting safaris.

In addition to training, and meeting official requests from the administration to provide help with infrastructure, security or ceremonial projects, KAR annual routine was also determined by climatic conditions particularly the rainy season. The rains limited the mobility of the force, put a virtual halt to field exercises and construction projects, and played an important role in deciding when units were moved and askaris sent on leave. In outstations, such as Masosko or Songea, the garrison would be virtually cut off for a period of three to four months, as heavy rainfall rendered the roads impassable to motor traffic and all mail was carried by runners. Being unable to communicate quickly with headquarters, either Dar es Salaam or Zomba, depending on the year and which battalion formed the garrison, forced junior officers to take on greater responsibilities and become more self-reliant. Several officers noted that during

the rainy season they became more creative in how they disciplined askaris, since most standard punishments involved a loss of pay which in turn required formal proceedings that had to be passed on to headquarters. The enforced isolation and the lack of a European population of any size in the vicinity of most outstations meant that officers serving as company commanders or company officers in such posts spent most of their time with their askaris. For all but the most introverted or racist officer, such a setting must have proved highly conducive to improving language skills and interacting with askaris on a more regular basis than would have been possible if stationed in Dar es Salaam or Arusha.

Health

KAR askari and their dependents enjoyed much better access to health care than did the majority of the civilian population. Good health was a prerequisite for military service and with demand for the few openings in the KAR far outstripping supply, recruiting parties enjoyed the luxury of being able to select only healthy recruits. Although the monotonous diet of posho supplemented by meat left a great deal to be desired nutritionally, askaris never had to worry about seasonal food shortages or famine as did many Tanganyikans. In malarial areas such as Dar es Salaam, askari were issued with prophylactic quinine.²⁰⁵ To ensure askaris remained fit, medical officers conducted regular physical inspections and officers and NCO's also watched soldiers for any signs of illness. To prevent the spread of disease, medical officers regularly toured the lines, inspecting not only the askaris' living quarters,

cooking facilities and latrines but also their wives and children.

When ill, askaris and their dependents reported for sick parade and would be cared for either by an African medical orderly, a British medical officer, or a local civilian doctor, depending on the nature of the injury or illness and the medical resources available. Personnel and the quality of military medical facilities throughout the territory varied widely. Although both 6 KAR and Southern Brigade were headquartered in Dar es Salaam along with the head Medical Officer for the Battalion, for much of the interwar period hospital facilities at Dar es Salaam were substandard. Sick askaris had to make their way to the KAR ward in Dar es Salaam's Native Hospital for diagnosis and treatment. Both officers and askaris disliked the arrangement, since it required sick askaris to walk from their lines to the hospital. The lengthy journey exhausted already ill men, and the traveling back and forth for treatment disrupted training schedules and required sick askaris to be absent for long periods. The medical officer for 6 KAR thought the KAR ward was a considerable improvement on those reserved for African civilians, but conditions were still less than ideal. Several times, the CO Southern Brigade requested that the Tanganyikan Government improve hospital facilities for askaris, but problems persisted. Askaris stationed at Arusha faced similar difficulties, particularly after a fire burned down part of the local hospital. Although the native section of the hospital, including a room reserved for KAR askaris escaped the fire, the medical officer reported the place unsatisfactory for use as a medical facility. Conditions at Mahenge were generally better, although one annual battalion report mentions the roof of the

²⁰⁵Cree, Gerald H. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/57.

operating theater leaked and needed repair. The shortage of trained medical personnel serving with the KAR often resulted in outstations being without the services of a medical officer or even a sub-assistant surgeon. Minimally, every station had a number of African medical orderlies in its ranks, askaris trained as stretcher-bearers and able to administer basic first aid. To counter the possible lack of local military medical personnel, officers at isolated stations often developed relationships with local missionaries or government medical personnel to ensure they and their troops and dependents would have access to treatment.

With the exception of the occasional traffic or training accident, medical personnel spent the interwar years combating disease, improving sanitation and hygiene, and inspecting askaris and their wives and female companions for venereal disease. Annual reports by battalion medical officers indicate that the health of askaris in Southern Brigade Battalions was generally good. Limiting askaris' contact with local civilians helped cut down on the spread of some communicable diseases. In 1929, when Dar es Salaam suffered a smallpox epidemic, not a single case was reported in the KAR lines.²⁰⁶ Isolation from the civilian population however, was not a panacea, and the annual medical report for 1928 mentions that the unusually high number of sick cases in the ranks of 6 KAR was due to the combination of an influenza epidemic that swept the lines and malaria cases.²⁰⁷

Despite access to medical care, a few askaris did die while in military service, the overwhelming number of deaths due to natural causes. To give a

²⁰⁶MO's Report on Health of 6 KAR for 1929. PRO, CO 820 10/7.

²⁰⁷MO's Report on Health of 6 KAR for 1928. PRO, CO 820 6/14.

representative example, in 1936, seven askaris in the Southern Brigade died. The causes of death were listed as pneumonia, cardiac failure, malaria combined with diarrhea, abscessed lung, Beriberi, tuberculosis and gas gangrene. Considering the brigade contained 1,235 African combatant ranks and 68 carriers, the casualty rate was not high.²⁰⁸ Although brigade records show that few askaris died on peacetime service, the military did not keep statistics on askaris who contracted serious diseases or permanent injuries while in the military. Askari suffering from persistent medical complaints and judged unlikely to respond to treatment or unfit for service were callously discharged. During the interwar years no allowance was made for the diagnosis or treatment of mental illness. Askaris relied on traditional remedies, and some officers allowed askaris to return home to seek treatment at the hand of traditional healers. Less sympathetic officers tended to view mental illness as malingering and treated it with harsh discipline or, in extreme cases, discharge.

Unfortunately, battalions did not keep records on the health of askaris' dependents, although mention is occasionally made of the provision of medical facilities for wives and children in battalion annual reports. Askaris' wives underwent routine medical examinations and, if sick, received the same kind of treatment as their husbands. In Dar es Salaam, a civilian female doctor, referred to as a "health visitor," accompanied by nurses, would visit the lines, inspecting the health of askaris' wives and advising them on how to care for their children. The battalion supported the effort by building an inspection room and ensuring

²⁰⁸Health statistics of African ranks for 1936, in Annual Reports by Brigade Commander, Southern Brigade. TNA 24834.

that women showed up at the appointed time.²⁰⁹ At outstations it is not clear whether askaris' wives and children were given routine medical inspections or if they simply requested treatment when sick.

Military Discipline

Most askaris who served during the interwar years joined the KAR because military service was more lucrative and provided better working conditions than the docks, mines and plantations of Tanganyika or Nyasaland. Positions in the KAR were scarce and askaris knew that plenty of volunteers could be found to take their place. Consequently, although discipline in the KAR could be draconian, officers were seldom faced with serious acts of disobedience or collective resistance. In addition to most askaris being generally content with peacetime conditions of service, other factors militated against askaris challenging either the authority of their officers or the legitimacy of the colonial state. First, the small size of the force made it almost impossible for officers and NCO's to be unaware of discontent within the ranks. Troublemakers or "bush lawyers," as some officers referred to them, were quickly discovered and either reasoned with, punished or dismissed from the regiment. Furthermore, the military took great pains not to recruit members of ethnic groups or more educated Africans who had existing grievances against the KAR or the colonial power structure. Military regulations strengthened askaris' relations with their officers while at the same time weakening the bonds between members of the military and civilians. One of the primary reasons for separating askaris from the

²⁰⁹Inspector General's Report on 6 KAR PRO, CO 6/14 and Inspector General's Report on 6 KAR PRO, CO 820 3/8.

civilian population was to prevent members of the force from being influenced by radical anti-colonial, social or religious ideas. Probably most important, the very nature of peacetime service, with its lack of combat and comparatively easy life, limited discontent.

Officers were encouraged to, and frequently did, listen and respond to grievances raised by askaris, no matter how petty they thought the problem was. One officer who served with 6 KAR in the early 1930's commented that his troops were extremely disciplined but, if they felt their complaints were not considered, would unite in an attempt to improve conditions of service.

To ignore them however, was to court trouble. Also it was fatal to lose one's temper, whatever the temptation. There was a case, before my time, where an officer had persistently ignored a general complaint about which the troops felt strongly. He ordered the company to march out to camp in the bush. They duly obeyed, and set up the camp. The next morning, the officer awoke to find himself entirely alone, except for his personal boy. During the night the whole lot, NCO's and all, had silently crept away, returned to the station, and next morning marched to the Boma and confronted the P.C. They had not disobeyed any order, they had only been told to march out of camp, nothing about staying there, and to their way of thinking, were in the right. ²¹⁰

Such actions however, were infrequent, and askaris tried to avoid challenging officers' authority, preferring to rely on officers' personal servants, or NCO's, to pass their grievances up the chain of command.

KAR battalions were not homogeneous institutions and, while in extreme cases askaris would organize collectively, such actions were rarely sustained. Askaris were divided by ethnicity, rank, education level and religious affiliation, and officers relied on differences between groups of askaris to counteract

²¹⁰Cree, Gerald H. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/57.

attempts at wide scale indiscipline. Although most askaris signed up for one tour with the KAR and then returned to civilian life, the force did contain a significant core of professional, long- serving soldiers, that officers and NCO's counted on to help instruct and supervise younger recruits. The result of this combination of factors was that disciplinary problems in the peacetime KAR appear to have been relatively infrequent, and centered on personal instead of collective grievances.

Most disciplinary cases involved minor infractions of regulations or petty crimes. The severity of punishment handed down depended on the nature of the offense. Guidelines on discipline were laid out in the KAR regulations, battalion standing orders, and the KAR ordinance for the Tanganyika Territory. When a charge was leveled against a soldier, the commanding officer would investigate and then either dismiss the charge, proceed with a court martial or deal with the matter summarily. Although the KAR ordinance established a series of guidelines for punishments, company officers had wide powers to hand down harsh or lenient punishments, and many exercised a good deal of discretion when dealing with disciplinary cases. With the exception of askaris being absent without leave and drunkenness, officers could order one or more of the following punishments: up to forty-two days' imprisonment, stoppage of pay not to exceed twenty-one days, confinement to barracks for up to twenty-eight days, extra duties or fatigues, or corporal punishment not to exceed twenty strokes. Officers could also summarily discharge askaris from the regiment in addition to any other punishment that was handed down. Followers who ran afoul of military regulations could be disciplined in the same manner as askaris. Punishment for NCO's usually involved loss of pay or reduction in rank. Only in special circumstances would they be awarded corporal punishment. Officers generally preferred to deal with lesser offenses, including drunkenness, disgraceful

conduct, neglecting the care of one's arms or uniform, or ill treating a fellow soldier, by handing out summary judgments and avoiding the complications and paper work that accompanied court martial proceedings. Serious crimes, such as striking a superior officer, mutiny or demonstrating "a willful defiance of authority" usually were dealt with by holding a court martial, because askaris found guilty of such offenses faced imprisonment for up to three years.²¹¹

Officers' preference for handing down summary judgments for minor breaches of discipline makes it very difficult to determine the frequency and nature of crime and resistance to military authority in the KAR. The infrequency of court martials can be seen by looking at battalion and brigade annual returns of severe punishments. In 1936, the Southern Brigade return lists 407 cases, ranging from drunkenness to desertion, requiring severe punishment. Not a single court martial was held; all the cases were dealt with summarily.²¹² An additional obstacle to studying discipline in the KAR is created by the fact that when soldiers committed murder, manslaughter or rape, they were not court martialed and punished under military law, but discharged and handed over to the civil authorities for trial and sentencing. This makes it impossible to trace the frequency with which members of the force committed serious crimes by relying solely on military records. Annual district reports and police files, in addition to court records, occasionally mention askaris or former askaris being arrested for crimes against civilians, but examples of this are rare. The general trend seems to have been to refer to the accused party as an askari only until he was

²¹¹*King's African Rifles Ordinance, 1931, Part II. TNA 1145, Vol. II.*

discharged from service. From that point on, civil authorities would use the individual's name and, unless it was directly relevant to the case, seldom refer to him as an ex-soldier. This policy suited local civil and military authorities, both of which had little wish to tarnish the image of the KAR.

A few cases exist of askaris making a public nuisance of themselves, but they are the exception to the rule, and the fact that they are well documented has more to do with tensions between military and civilian authorities than the disruption caused to the civilian population. In one notable example, ten askaris from 2 KAR started a brawl with local police at Shinyanga. The incident was relatively minor, involving no property damage and only a few injuries, suffered mainly by police constables. The ten askaris who participated in the fighting were handed over to the civil authorities for trial, convicted and sent to prison. The commanding officer 2 KAR requested that prison officials inform him when they had finished their sentence, since he had decided to have them dismissed from the regiment and would have them sent back to Nyasaland under escort so they would not create further disturbances.²¹³

A more publicized case occurred in Dar es Salaam in 1938, during a march, when officers and askari from 6 KAR forced Indians and Africans to take off their hats and turbans in a show of respect to the regimental colors. Under the impression that watching bystanders were being impertinent, the askaris broke ranks and accosted a number of observers, removing their headgear by

²¹²Return of Severe Punishment, in Annual reports by Brigade Commander Southern Brigade KAR for 1936. TNA 24834.

²¹³Various correspondence concerning KAR fracas with police at Shinyanga, February-April 1928. TNA 11819.

force, knocking them down and even caning several Indian schoolboys. Several accounts of the disturbance appeared in local papers and the Indian Association sent a formal letter of protest to the southern brigade commander, Colonel Fowkes. Fowkes apologized for the conduct of the troops, and assured the Indian community that the military had dealt with the matter and that there would be no repetition of such behavior.²¹⁴

Except for the occasional mention of court martial cases and statistics on severe punishments, military records contain few details about why and how soldiers were punished. For part of the interwar period however, there is one notable exception to this dearth of material, and it concerns cases involving corporal punishment. Here, once again, historians have a disagreement over policy between the military and the civil authorities to thank for the preservation of evidence. When Donald Cameron arrived from Nigeria to take up his new post as Governor, he was surprised to discover KAR and police officers in the territory still awarding corporal punishment for minor offenses. In the West African Frontier Force, flogging during peacetime had been abolished before the First World War. Cameron's attempts to convince officers in the KAR likewise to abolish corporal punishment met with stiff resistance. Cameron and later, Leo Amery and other Colonial Office officials, asserted that flogging was barbaric and that the continued use of the cane reminded both Africans and Europeans critical of colonial rule of German methods of justice and their reliance on the *kiboko* (a

²¹⁴For details, see "The "Union Jack" People forced to Salute it." *Tanganyika Herald*, July 9, 1938. and a brief follow- up story. *Tanganyika Herald*, July 11, 1938, and "Assaults of Friday," *Tanganyika Opinion*, July 11, 1938. Cuttings from these articles can be found in Complaints against or by King's African Rifles TNA 25870.

whip made of hippo hide). KAR officers countered by arguing that flogging was one of the most effective punishments available and that no comparison could be made between the brutal whippings German officials subjected African civilians to and corporal punishment as carried out in the KAR. Part of the difficulty Colonial Office officials faced was that they wanted to abolish flogging throughout the KAR, not just in Tanganyika. The process was complicated by the fact that, although all KAR battalions relied on the same manual of regulations based on the British Army Act, each territory had its own KAR ordinance that would require revision and approval by local governments. Furthermore, while the majority of support in favor of retaining corporal punishment came from KAR officers in Kenya, settlers joined the military establishment in opposing abolishing the practice.²¹⁵

Unable to get the local military authorities to agree to a ban on flogging, Cameron, with the backing of the Colonial Office, required battalion commanders to submit reports on every disciplinary case involving corporal punishment. This system remained in place from 1927 until the start of the Second World War, and allowed civil officials to monitor closely the number and severity of cases. The monthly summary of floggings for the year 1927, for example, revealed that corporal punishment was used much more liberally in the 2 KAR, where 34 sentences totaling 350 lashes were handed down, as opposed to 6 KAR, which had only 14 sentences for 159 lashes. The Acting Chief Secretary also noted that the police and prison service, with more than double the number of

²¹⁵Cameron, *My Tanganyika Service*, pp. 42-43. David Killingray, "The 'Rod of Empire': The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946." *Journal of*

personnel of a KAR battalion, had reported only 24 cases of corporal punishment.²¹⁶ Examination of individual reports of flogging awards reveal that, although officers occasionally awarded strokes for petty infractions, including malingering, damaging government property or insubordination, more often than not the incident was more serious than conveyed in the charge, or part of a pattern of behavior. It is difficult to draw conclusions without access to disciplinary or personnel files, but in many cases officers appear to have turned to flogging when other methods of punishment failed or reserved the punishment for certain offenses. In their reports, officers often point out that the askari or follower being flogged had either committed multiple offenses, often in a very short period of time, or possessed a "bad military character." In one case, the captain commanding No. 1 company 6 KAR reported giving an askari 10 stokes for damaging his uniform. Civil authorities thought the punishment excessive for a relatively trivial offense and demanded an explanation. The officer defended his action explaining that an investigation revealed that the askari had torn his own uniform, and then claimed the damage was done by the wife of a corporal in an attempt to get her in trouble. The askari was severely punished, according to the officer, not because he tore his own clothing, but because he lied and was attempting to disrupt life in the lines.²¹⁷

Officers viewed flogging as a particularly valuable form of punishment

African History, 35 (1994), pp. 201-216.

²¹⁶Confidential letter from Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam to Officer Commanding Troops, Dar es Salaam, December 5, 1927. Statistics on cases of corporal punishment are in Monthly Summary of Floggings, 1927. TNA 10489 Vol. I.

²¹⁷Letter from Officer Commanding No. 1 Company 6 KAR to the Adjutant 6 KAR, May 26, 1928. TNA 10489 Vol. I.

when askaris committed crimes against their comrades. It was one thing to confine an askari to barracks or make him dig and fill in holes in the blazing mid-day sun for showing up on parade dirty or speaking disrespectfully to a NCO, but infractions such as sleeping with the wife of a comrade, or stealing from a fellow soldier, demanded a punishment that would satisfy the "honor" of the aggrieved party and restore harmony in the lines. As the commander of the southern brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Case, stated in one report when a soldier was given 16 strokes for having sexual relations with the wife of a fellow soldier:

It may seem an unnecessary sentence in an adultery case but with a large number of men and women living in close proximity in the lines, I have found that it is essential to deal most severely with cases of this nature, otherwise this offense becomes prevalent, and injured parties are inclined to take the law into their own hands with the most regrettable result, as in the case at Iringa some years ago when a soldier shot three of his comrades.²¹⁸

In part, flogging was seen as an effective punishment for crimes committed against one's comrades because of the public fashion in which it was carried out. Unlike fines, imprisonment or work details, floggings were administered in an almost ceremonial fashion. The battalion would stand at attention while the commanding officer read out the askari's crime and sentence. Then, under the supervision of the medical officer, the askari would lower his shorts and a cloth would be placed over his buttocks. The provost sergeant of the battalion would use a wooden cane of specified length and thickness and would then administer the allotted number of strokes. At any time, the medical officer could order a halt

²¹⁸Letter from Officer Commanding Southern Brigade to the Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, July 18, 1930. TNA 10489 Vol. I.

to the proceedings. Following the punishment, the askari would be inspected to ensure he was fit for duty.²¹⁹

While much of the military defense of corporal punishment clearly was predicated on racist ideas about the state of development and the supposed child-like nature of Africans, many officers raised strong arguments in support of flogging. While officers did not go so far as to say askaris liked to be beaten, some pointed out that soldiers often preferred strokes to other forms of punishment, particularly being confined to barracks or fined. Officers attributed askaris' supposed preference for corporal punishment to a variety of factors, citing racial, economic or cultural reasons to support their claims. While all officers admitted that receiving six or ten strokes of the cane was painful, it was widely held that Africans were "tough skinned" and that askaris suffered no ill effects from the experience. Officers also justified the practice by pointing out that they often gave askaris a choice between other forms of punishment and strokes. One officer who served in Tanganyika claimed his askaris always used to say, "Bwana for God's sake don't give us fines or CB (confined to barracks), give us six for backside."²²⁰ Considering the monotony or unpleasantness of other KAR punishments, it is perhaps not so surprising that some askaris would voluntarily choose corporal punishment, which would be over with quickly. The speed with which sentences of corporal punishment were carried out, also meant

²¹⁹The Oxford Development Records Project aide memorie sent out to former KAR and RWAFF officers contained a question about methods of discipline in the colonial forces, and many of the interviews recorded by the Imperial War Museum likewise include questions on the subject. Therefore there are numerous descriptions of how corporal punishment was administered and the way African soldiers responded. See, for example, Hickson, J. G. E. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838.

that askaris were not separated from their wives and children, thus minimizing disruption to family units. An even more convincing argument had to do with economics. As one officer pointed out, askaris made only 28 shillings a month, and heavy fines punished not just the guilty party, but his entire family.

And if they lost any of that, it meant of course that the wife and the family didn't get all the posho and food they were hoping to get. And it affects the family rather than the askari, so that the askari preferred to be given a punishment. He disliked CB, which was confinement to barracks and reporting to the guard so many times when the bugle blew, and in some respects he didn't mind too much when he was ordered to be lashed. And lashing in those days was a punishment and it was accepted.²²¹

Officers' final justification was the long history of the use of corporal punishment in East Africa. They argued the practice was accepted and even valued by both officers and askaris. A civilian seconded to the KAR in the 1930's to train the Southern Brigade signal section made the following comments about askaris' attitudes towards British methods of discipline.

The askari hated British discipline as then practiced. They could and did mimic any administrator looking through endless papers and reciting the misdemeanor for years past, with many "Tut! Tut!" and "Oh! Dear, you have been naughty" ejaculations, and then punishing the "crime" in a manner quite incomprehensible to them. A few askari were old enough to remember the Germans who, it was insisted, were better. "They beat one hard but they did then forget that offense."²²²

While askaris' attitudes toward flogging may have been dictated largely by pragmatism and less by tradition or acceptance, British officers' backgrounds

²²⁰Yeldham, R.E.D. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3960

²²¹Yeldham, R.E.D. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3960, and also Sherwood, P. O. B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

²²²Catt, Cyril W. RHL Afr.s. 1715/39.

certainly influenced how they viewed corporal punishment. Flogging had been abolished in peacetime service in the British Army in 1881; however, the ban did not apply to active service, and officers continued to administer corporal punishment throughout the First World War. Yet only a few of the young subalterns and captains seconded to serve with the KAR had served in World War One, and it is highly unlikely that more than a handful had firsthand experience of the practice. Furthermore, most KAR officers had received their commissions from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst instead of coming up through the ranks, which made it even less likely that they themselves would have ever ordered the punishment or been flogged. Why then did officers accept corporal punishment so readily when it had most likely not been part of their own military experiences?

Many KAR officers probably supported the practice based on their own experiences in British public schools. Some officers even disliked using the term flogging to describe the punishments they handed out, and pointed out that caning would be a much more appropriate description. For many, there was little difference between the strokes administered by the RSM and their own disciplinary experiences at the hands of schoolmasters. The fact that they were on occasion subjecting soldiers old enough to be their fathers to the rod appears not to have influenced their views on the practice.²²³ Officers' acceptance of flogging once again demonstrates the paternalism that so permeated the KAR

and defined the relations between officers and askaris during the interwar years. On the one hand, officers readily admitted that Africans made good soldiers, but at the same time they viewed them as childlike, and disciplined them using methods similar to those used on adolescent schoolboys in England.²²⁴

Recreation and Religion

During the interwar years, the daily routine of garrison life provided askaris with adequate free time to relax with their comrades, engage in sporting events or spend time with their families. To the amazement of officers, some of the younger askari occasionally used their free time to refine their skills and would get a more experienced soldier to put them through their paces, brushing up on their drill. When not on duty, askaris spent much of their time in the lines spending hours cleaning their kit, talking or singing with fellow soldiers or playing with their children. Occasionally, soldiers would be given a pass to travel to the nearest town where they would drink, dance, go shopping or otherwise enjoy the break in routine. Daily routine usually relaxed during the weekends, and some soldiers spent considerable amounts of their off duty time drinking *pombe* at the garrison canteen. Despite attempts to control soldiers brewing and consumption of *pombe* several officers describe overdrinking on the weekends as a common problem.²²⁵

²²³It should be noted that, even in the detailed reports on flogging submitted to the Governor, no mention is made of an askari's age, so it is impossible to tell if officers were less likely to flog older or more senior soldiers. The reports do, however, mention rank. While many of those flogged are listed as boys, followers and privates, a handful of NCO's were also awarded strokes. This certainly indicates that older soldiers were not exempt from the punishment.

²²⁴Referring to askaris' reactions to being flogged, Hickson, who served with 2 KAR, noted: "They didn't resent it a bit. They took it, I think, in exactly the same spirit that we did at school." Hickson, J. G. E. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838

²²⁵Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

Music and dance also both had an important place in military life. More than one recruit was drawn to KAR by recruiting parties accompanied by a small drum and fife band playing martial music.²²⁶ Although battalion drum and fife bands, as well as the band for the Southern Brigade, were used primarily for official occasions, both units held regular band practice that often served as an impromptu form of entertainment. Some askaris also formed themselves into makeshift bands, fabricating instruments out of local materials such as spare wire and petrol tins. Both drum and fife bands and their less formal counterparts would play at dances, feasts and other special occasions.

Most celebrations, including the King's birthday, ended with a feast followed by singing, drumming and dancing, which would continue far into the night. Such dances, known as *ngoma*, were heavily influenced by the traditions of the Beni dance societies that sprang up in East Africa following the First World War. In Beni societies, dancers organized themselves into units loosely based along military lines, with dancers acting as KAR and German askaris and porters. Although not all characteristics of Beni carried over into the KAR, askaris did incorporate certain aspects of Beni dance into their celebrations, including many of the marches.²²⁷ During *ngomas*, officers encouraged askaris to perform songs and dances practiced by their own ethnic groups, believing that such events helped foster and reinforce martial traditions and unit pride. *Ngomas* were always organized by one of the African NCO's who, following Beni tradition, for

²²⁶For composition of a Battalion Drum and Fife band, see Glass, Harold Patrick RHL. MSS Afr.s 1715/105

the duration of the celebration was given the honorary rank "General Officer Commanding *Ngoma*." For the duration of the *Ngoma*, the military hierarchy was relaxed, and British officers who participated in the celebration did not wear badges of rank, were not saluted and deferred to the NCO in charge.

Song also played an important formal and informal role in military life. Askaris often sang while marching or carrying out fatigues to relieve monotony and raise morale. While many of the regiment's official songs celebrated the traditions of the KAR or helped remind askaris of the power of the empire they served, others were more impromptu and occasionally dealt with the more negative aspects of military life. Songs such as *Nyumba ya Mpenzi* (My Lover's House) and *Kwaheri* (Good-by) mention homesickness and having to leave loved ones and relatives behind. Askaris also used song as a venue where they could safely comment on the personality and performance of their officers, mocking martinets, drawing attention to lapses in judgment or physical characteristics, or lavishing praise on officers they liked or admired.²²⁸

In addition to dancing, askaris also spent some of their leisure time playing sports. Many British officers encouraged their soldiers to engage in athletic pursuits, believing that team sports would foster competition and improve the troops' physical fitness. Officers taught askaris how to play a variety of team sports, including soccer, tug of war, rugby and field hockey. Commonly played

²²⁷For a discussion of the spread of Beni dance societies in Tanganyika following the First World War, see Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 248-249 and Terrance Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970*. (London: Heineman, 1975), pp. 42-47.

individual sports included running, wrestling and boxing. One British officer who served with 2 KAR at Masoko in the late 1930's mentioned that when the company had a sports day, the festivities would end with the final race of the day being run by the askaris' wives, and that first prize was a brightly colored umbrella.²²⁹ Officers' efforts to coach teams often enjoyed mixed success. During the interwar period, most askaris quickly learned how to play soccer, but field hockey never gained the same popularity, due in part to the lack of a suitable grass-playing surface for much of the year at most stations. Likewise, individual officer's attempts to teach their askaris how to play cricket amounted to nothing, and the game was seldom played. Although askaris occasionally played rugby, over time the sport was transformed into a new game played only by members of the KAR known as *Karamoja* football. Although *Karamoja*, like rugby involved running, kicking and tackling, there were no rules establishing either the size of the field or the number of players, the result being that the game was little more than rough and tumble chaos.

Officers not only acted as coaches, teaching their soldiers new games, they were also expected to play alongside askaris in athletic contests. This informal contact between officers and askaris was supposed to improve communication, build trust and strengthen relationships. Dances and team sporting events provided one of the few venues where the strict military and racial hierarchy of the KAR was temporarily put aside, and European officers and

²²⁸For examples of some of the official marching songs of the KAR, see: *Some Marching Songs of the King's African Rifles and the Northern Rhodesian Regiment*. A copy of this pamphlet is included in the record of Bowie, Donald RHL, MSS Afr.s 1715/24. For comments on singing, see Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105.

African enlisted personnel competed as equals. Yet attempts to use sport and dance as a vehicle to create a feeling of camaraderie between askaris and their officers were not entirely successful. Officers could remove their insignia and declare that rank and race was not a factor, but differences still remained. In his memoirs, one officer remarked that, while askaris always played sports barefoot, officers wore boots or shoes; something the soldiers always felt was "rather caddish."²³⁰ Furthermore, easing racial and hierarchical barriers also posed dangers for officers. Unpopular officers ran the risk of being roughly handled by unhappy subordinates. Such unstructured contact also posed the danger of officers being shown up by athletically more gifted Africans, thus causing askaris to question the racial superiority on which colonial rule was predicated.

In addition to recreation, askaris were also allotted time to practice their traditions and religious beliefs. Army chaplains had been attached to KAR forces during the First World War, but the positions were discontinued at the end of the war, and the KAR had no chaplains on its strength until the start of the Second World War. KAR battalions stationed in Tanganyika relied on local Christian and Muslim authorities to give occasional services to askaris. The military recognized holy days and other celebrations by giving troops light duties on religious holidays. The time allowed for religious observances varied at each station depending on the attitude of the commanding officer, the proximity and zeal of local missionaries, and the level of askari interest. In 6 KAR, in accordance with officers' perceptions that the battalion was a predominantly Muslim battalion,

²²⁹Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105.

askaris stationed at Dar es Salaam were given light duties on Friday so they could practice their faith. One officer who served with 6 KAR in the 1930's recollected:

In the KAR there was a fair number of Moslems. For their sakes, Friday was a holiday for everyone. They were quite strict in their observances of Ramadan and the ritual slaughter of animals, but they did not pray noticeably, nor refrain from drink. A large number were Christians, chiefly R.C. (Roman Catholic) mission trained or were converted after enlistment. They observed the usual Christian festivals at the nearest mission, but did not let their beliefs interfere too much with their polygamous habits.²³¹

At stations in the interior, the routine differed considerably. In the late 1930's, approximately one-third of the company of 2 KAR stationed at Masoko were Catholic. These soldiers were visited once a month by a White Father from the nearby German Mission who would say mass in a chapel built by the askaris. Services were not held for other denominations, although all askaris had to perform only light duties on Sunday.²³²

Length of Service, Pay, Exemptions from Tax and the Question of Pensions and Gratuities

During the interwar years, KAR askaris were well paid by local standards, especially considering the low level of education throughout the force, and the limited number of employment opportunities available in the Tanganyika Territory. By the late 1930's, a private earned twenty-eight shillings a month and

²³⁰Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404, Logan, P.Q. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3864 and Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105.

²³¹Cree, Gerald H. RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/57.

was also provided with lodging, board, a supply of military clothing and exemption from hut and poll tax while he was in service. In addition to their pay, askaris also received a lifetime exemption from either hut or poll tax and a cash gratuity if they served for more than nine years.²³³ Askaris with multiple wives who were required to pay tax on more than one hut, could only claim exemption on one dwelling. In addition, it also became the established practice for ex-askaris who had earned exemption from tax also to be exempt from the thirty days of mandatory unpaid labor all Africans were required to provide to their local Native Authorities. Retired KAR and police askari were also exempted from house tax if they lived in a township where house tax was payable. In Dar es Salaam in 1930, the house and municipal tax amounted to 20.40 Shillings but very few ex-askari settled in Dar es Salaam on retirement.²³⁴ Although all soldiers who served for nine or more years received a certificate informing district officers that the bearer was entitled to exemption from tax, the amount of gratuity paid depended on a soldier's rank and his years of service. Privates who served for twelve years or more received 180 shillings, while sergeant majors were given 600 shillings. The small number of soldiers who served for more than eighteen years received more generous sums, with privates and sergeant majors

²³²Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105. Walker, who served with 1 KAR at Tabora mentions that there were no Church parades, but on Friday duties were lighter since it was a Muslim holy day. Walker, Henry Arthur, RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/284.

²³³*Tanganyika King's African Rifles Ordinance, 1931* Part IV pp. 43-46. TNA 11145 Vol. II.

²³⁴Government notice No. 24 of 1930.

being given 270 shillings and 900 shillings respectively.²³⁵

Compared to the low wages, poor living conditions and extremely hard work in Tanganyika's mines and plantations, military service offered excellent financial benefits. Askaris could also live with their families, thereby further alleviating the discomforts of army life, an option denied to many workers. Disadvantages included having to enlist for a minimum of seven years and the possibility, however remote in the interwar years, of having to participate in combat. While it is true that askaris and their families often resented the KAR's rigid regulations that monitored and curtailed much of their daily lives, it is unclear to what extent this discouraged Africans from enlisting in the army. Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, labor migration became increasingly common throughout the territory as workers sought wage employment, responding to the increasing power of the administration to collect taxes and punish defaulters. Askaris were not the only Africans who had to leave their homes and travel far afield to find work.²³⁶ While askaris remained away from their homes for a longer duration than did Africans who worked on the sisal plantations around Tanga or on the Lupa gold fields, the additional benefits that came with military service alleviated some of the disadvantages involved in the lengthy absence from home communities. Probably the best indicator that the benefits of military service outweighed the disadvantages is the lack of difficulty the KAR had in finding

²³⁵Information on the amounts of gratuities is contained in correspondence from Governor Cameron to Sidney Webb June 21, 1929. TNA 12325 Vol. I. The table also lists the rate of gratuities for enlisted followers, corporals and sergeants, in addition to privates and sergeant majors. *Tanganyika King's African Rifles Ordinance, 1931* Part IV pp. 43-44. TNA 11145 Vol. II.

adequate numbers of recruits during the interwar period.²³⁷

While civilian employers occasionally raised concerns that military rates of pay were too high and that they were being forced to raise their wages to compete with the KAR, the small numbers of askaris actually serving made such discussions more academic than real. A much stronger objection to the benefits askaris enjoyed as a result of their military service came from the administration, which was concerned that askaris' wealth and prestige would result in their becoming detribalized. Civil officials pointed out that KAR and police askaris were the only groups of Africans employed by the government that received exemption from tax following their period of service. Government officials in Tanganyika worried that the combination of adequate wages, good service conditions, gratuities and especially the exemption from paying taxes, would result in ex-askaris considering themselves superior and lead to the formation of a special class of Africans. Many Tanganyikan officials recalled that German askaris had been encouraged to form a new identity based on their military service that separated them from their tribal units. According to the British, the Germans had given their askari the legal authority to requisition whatever they required from the civilian population, with disastrous consequences. While many of these "memories" were kept alive as a East African equivalent of the Spanish black legend, throughout the 1920's a number of cases did occur, where former

²³⁶For a account of conditions on sisal plantations in Tanganyika, see Anse, Tambila. "A history of the Tanga sisal labor force: 1936-1964," M.A. Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1974. An overview of Tanganyika's economy during the interwar period and the Africans increasing shift to migrant labor to pay tax can found in Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 301-311

Schutztruppe askaris were brought up on charges for abusing their authority. In one instance, a former German askari serving as a prison warden marched into a village escorting several prisoners and proceeded to "indulge in a debauch," after which he shot down two of his charges.²³⁸ Officials cited the behavior of African members of the *Schutztruppe* as evidence supporting their assertions that KAR askaris should not be granted special privileges following their period of service that would set them apart from other members of their communities. They argued that making ex-askaris exempt from paying taxes weakened the ability of both the government and tribal authorities to control former soldiers.

In the late 1920's, the East African governments examined the possibility of replacing the exemption of ex-askaris from hut and poll tax with increased gratuities. The Governor of Uganda, W. F. Gowers, led the fight, arguing that complete exemption from tax gave ex-askaris a benefit not available to civilian government employees, thus creating a special class of former government servants. Gowers' objections were seconded by the other East African governors, including Cameron, who stated:

I am very much in agreement with the views of Sir W. Gowers. There are the strongest political objections against giving natives a special status of this kind: it is essential that they should render some tribute to their chief in the same manner

²³⁷For comments on recruiting in Nyasaland and comparing military service with working in the mines in the copper belt, see Logan, P. Q. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3864. On service conditions in 6 KAR, see Robson, George G. RHL, Mss. Afr.s. 1715/231.

²³⁸Gilchrist Alexander, who served as a Judge in Tanganyika in the 1920's, wrote about several examples of ex-*Schutztruppe* askaris failing to understand that their social position in the territory had changed with the end of German rule. In another example, Alexander mentions the wife of a former German askari who had been "putting on airs" despite that fact that any power she had wielded in her community had ended with the defeat of the German forces. Alexander, *Tanganyika Memories*, pp. 43-44, 69-70.

as other tribesmen, that, apart from other objections in principle, the privilege is too lightly earned after nine years service.²³⁹

Cameron and the other East African governors believed that the good pay, combined with the prestige of serving in the armed forces, would provide ample incentive to guarantee a steady supply of good recruits.

Lieutenant Colonel Case, the Officer Commanding Troops Tanganyika Territory, did not agree with the conclusions reached by the East African governors. Responding to a letter from the Chief Secretary of Tanganyika on the issue, Case admitted that while the exemption from tax was perhaps too easily earned, he strenuously argued against its withdrawal, claiming that he was anticipating having trouble competing with labor recruiters in the Songea district and that "exemption is the prize to which askari look forward". Case convincingly argued that the proposal to replace the exemption from tax with an increased gratuity was unsatisfactory, since the majority of the money paid out to askaris would be quickly squandered and ex-soldiers would become disgruntled that they had so little to show for their years of service. To support his argument, Case used the recent example of the payment of ex-German askaris, the great majority of who had quickly spent the funds disbursed by the German government. Case's final objection was an attempt to refute the claim made by Governor Gowers that most askaris were still young men when they left the service and could find good employment after leaving the KAR. The Lieutenant Colonel wrote: "It is our experience that an askari as a general rule is no longer up to hard work after 12 years service, he is getting old and very near the age

²³⁹Minute by the Governor of Tanganyika, Donald Cameron, May 26, 1928. TNA, 12325 Vol. I.

when he can no longer earn the good living claimed for him by the governor of Uganda. It must be born in mind how quickly the native ages."²⁴⁰

The KAR Inspector General, Brigadier H. A. Walker, agreed with many of Lieutenant Colonel Case's statements and also opposed replacing the exemption with an increased gratuity. Walker did support a modification where exemption from tax would be abolished and soldiers' gratuities would be paid out as an annual payment, the amount of which would cover ex-askaris' tax obligations. In order to receive such a pension, Walker proposed the length of service be increased from nine to twelve years, and might also include a obligation to serve for three years in the KAR Reserve.²⁴¹

Governor Gowers reluctantly agreed with Brigadier Walker's suggestions and forwarded them to the other East African governors and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Governor Cameron also continued to support abolishing the exemption, but, like Gowers, was extremely reluctant to replace gratuities with pensions, which would require district administrations to pay small pensions to ex-askaris throughout the territory. In place of pensions, he proposed increasing the amounts of the gratuity, noting:

Moreover, the argument of the Inspector General referred to by Sir William Gowers that a gratuity would be squandered has, in my opinion, no great weight; a gratuity is already payable under the present law after 12 years service and it is that gratuity which is the provision made for the man's future, and not the exemption from hut tax, which is merely an enticement to the native to enlist.²⁴²

²⁴⁰O.C. Troops Dar es Salaam to Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam, April 3, 1928. TNA 12325 Vol. I.

²⁴¹Brigadier Walker's comments are included in correspondence between Governor W. F. Gowers to The Secretary of State for the Colonies, May 3, 1929. TNA 12325 Vol. I.

²⁴²Governor Donald Cameron to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 21, 1929. TNA 12325 Vol. I.

When the East African Governors conference met in January 1930, discussion on how best to eliminate the exemption continued, but no consensus was reached. The Governors of Tanganyika and Uganda both argued that the tax exemption should be abolished and replaced with a gratuity, although if necessary they would agree to establish pensions. The Governor of Kenya disagreed and pushed for replacing the exemption with a pension set at the highest rate of poll tax in each territory. The one dissenting voice was raised by the Governor of Nyasaland who opposed replacing the exemption with an increased gratuity and argued that there was nothing to be gained by substituting exemption for pensions. After considering the governors' views, as well as the objections raised by the KAR Inspector General, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Passfield, issued instructions that, starting on April 1st 1931, all recruits for the KAR and police and prison services would no longer be exempt from hut and poll tax, and instead would receive a pension. Pensions would be established by each government and set at a fixed rate, taking into account the average rate of native taxation in each territory. Askaris who had already enlisted in the KAR or police forces before March 31, 1931 would be allowed to choose if they wished to be exempt from tax or participate in the new pension arrangement.²⁴³

Far from ending the debate, the decision to establish a system of

pensions gave rise to a whole new set of questions, including how the pensions would be administered, which governments would pay for pensions of askaris who served in one territory but retired to another, and whether the recipients of awards for long service or valor would continue to be exempt from paying tax or would be given increased pensions. Governor Gowers wanted to make receipt of a pension contingent on an askari being discharged from the forces with an exemplary military character, arguing that such a provision would improve discipline within the ranks. The suggestion was quickly dismissed by KAR officers, who pointed out that not only had very few members of the British Army, let alone the KAR, received a rating of exemplary when they were discharged, but, furthermore, pensions were paid in Britain regardless of a soldier's military character. For their part, the colonial officials dealt equally swiftly with a suggestion raised by the Commander of the Southern Brigade that, since it had become common practice for long-service soldiers in Nyasaland to receive exemptions from tax for two huts, askari who served 18 years or more should receive two pensions. The Government of Nyasaland and military officials in the Southern Brigade continued to oppose the pension scheme, not only on the grounds that it would lower morale in the force, but also that it would be an administrative nightmare for both civilian and military officials. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, the officer commanding the Southern Brigade wrote:

²⁴³In the original copy of this document, the date listed for KAR and police askaris to decide if they wished to receive exemption from tax or a pension is March 30, 1930. Correspondence concerning this matter showed that it was a typing error, so the correct date of March 31, 1931 has been included above. Secretary of State for the Colonies to Sir Donald Cameron, November

May I take this opportunity to again urge that pensions are not introduced in lieu of life exemptions. I consider pensions of the scale proposed and life exemptions are synonymous, a pensioner will appear before his District Officer, receive his pension, and return it in the same breath in payment of his hut tax. The introduction of pensions will cause an infinity of extra work on all concerned, especially upon the District Officers, a careful watch will have to be kept upon every pensioner so as to ensure that on his death the pension is not paid to a dishonest relative - all casualties will have to be reported by District Officers through the usual channels to these headquarters for purposes of estimates - vouchers for all payments will have to be made out and submitted etc. etc., where hut tax exemption only entails the issue of a parchment certificate to the man himself.²⁴⁴

KAR and Nyasaland officials also began to attack the notion that giving ex-soldiers tax exemptions automatically "detrribalized" them or made them less inclined to accept the legitimacy of local Native Authorities. One of the arguments that Growers and his supporters often made was that exempting ex-askaris from hut and poll taxes freed them from having to work and increased their status in communities. Nyasaland officials strongly disputed this claim, arguing that, since most Nyasaland askaris had multiple wives, almost all ex-askaris had to continue to participate in the workforce. Furthermore, opponents to the proposed changes pointed out that replacing tax exemption with pensions provided little more than a change in the mechanism by which a special class of African was created. Some officers even went so far as to question if it might not be desirable to have a core of Africans who had a financial stake in continuing to support the colonial state. One official neatly summed up several of the main arguments as follows:

20, 1930. TNA 12325 Vol. I.

²⁴⁴Extract from letter from O.C. Southern Brigade to Colonial Secretary, August 10, 1931. TNA. 12325 Vol. I.

The point is whether the exemption of an ex-soldier from hut and poll tax frees him from tribal control. I do not myself see why it should do so, as the hut and poll tax is paid to the Government the Native Administrations' receiving a rebate only, and as a matter of policy, there is something to be said for an arrangement which gives an ex-soldier a special privilege and puts him under obligation to the government of the territory.²⁴⁵

The heated arguments against continuing to grant soldiers tax exempt status, and concerns over the administrative problems involved in administering pensions eventually carried the day. In Tanganyika and Nyasaland, soldiers were given a gratuity in lieu of a pension. Exemption from hut and poll tax for ex-askaris was abolished in 1932, although serving soldiers continued to be exempt from tax.²⁴⁶ The only ex-askaris who qualified for pensions were those who had been given small pensions because they had been seriously injured while serving in the armed forces.²⁴⁷

Despite the clearly expressed wish of the Tanganyikan government that retired soldiers simply return quietly to their home areas and civilian life, KAR officers occasionally tried to make special arrangements for former soldiers. Such assistance usually took the form of a recommendation to a prospective employer. In a few exceptional cases, long service KAR and police askaris asked their superiors to intervene on their behalf with district officers to obtain larger concessions; in particular, plots of land. One case involved an ex-askari who had

²⁴⁵Extract from a minute by Mr. Durman, October 23, 1931. TNA 12325 Vol. I.

²⁴⁶*Tanganyika King's African Rifles Ordinance, 1931* Part IV pp. 43-46. TNA 11145 Vol. II.

²⁴⁷There is no mention in the debate over pensions covering such an exception, but a file containing correspondence between the Governments of Tanganyika and Southern Rhodesia, regarding restoring the pension of an ex-askari, demonstrates that at least a few such cases existed. In this particular case, Whiskers Mlemba, a former private serving in 2 KAR, sustained an injury to his wrist that was improperly treated by the medical officer. Private Mlemba, unable to use his hand, was discharged from the KAR but awarded a pension of three shillings a month for life to compensate for his injury and subsequent deformity. TNA 27224.

served in the KAR and KAR reserve from 1900 until 1919 and then joined the Tanganyika police, where he served with distinction for a further 19 years, until retiring as the senior Sergeant Major of the force. The ex-askari wanted to return home to Nyasaland, and requested special consideration in view of his long service to the government. He asked his commanding officer if it would be possible for the government of Tanganyika to approach the government of Nyasaland about providing him with a plot of land that he could cultivate in his old age. Following up on the request from the commissioner of police, the Chief Secretary of Tanganyika forwarded the matter to his counterpart in Nyasaland, who responded that "this government will gladly afford him all possible facilities on his return to Nyasaland" and inquired as to the amount of land the ex-askari would require.²⁴⁸ Unfortunately, when asked for details, the ex-askari demanded not less than one square mile of land to be held free of tax by himself and his heirs in perpetuity. Despite advice from the commissioner for police that the request was entirely unreasonable, the former askari asked that his demands be submitted. Not surprisingly, both governments hastily withdrew their support. The askari was advised that following his retirement he should return to Nyasaland and petition the local district officer for a reasonable plot of land. The Tanganyikan government took no further action, although the commissioner of police did send a series of letters to Nyasaland requesting that they grant a reasonable request. Following this case, similar requests dealing with soldiers wishing to receive land upon return to their former homes in Uganda and

²⁴⁸Chief Secretary of Tanganyika to the Chief Secretary of Nyasaland, October 14, 1937. TNA 25273 Vol. I.

Nyasaland were quickly dismissed for fear that they would be equally problematic. A more modest request, by another long serving KAR and police askari, for a plot of land in Tabora on which to build a house was granted, indicating that civil officials were not indisposed to reward askaris who had demonstrated their loyalty to the government.²⁴⁹

In examining the debate over replacing tax exemptions with pensions, it is easy to dismiss many of the less significant points in the argument as minutia unworthy of mention, let alone detailed consideration. Yet, as in the debate over flogging, a great can be learned about the interaction between colonial governments and the military and also about how both sides had to struggle with the dual objectives of maintaining a content and loyal force, possessing a high *esprit de corps*, and the stated objective of not "detrribalizing" African soldiers. The debate often dealt as much with colonial ideas and perceptions as it did with the pragmatic realities of how to implement administrative change, as demonstrated by the difficulties caused by the decision to replace exemption with pensions. Furthermore, examining the arguments raised by both sides reveals details about the regional variations and common practices that existed in African military service that would otherwise probably not have made it into the historical record. Finally, the pension debate again highlights the administrative problems the government of Tanganyika had to deal with in the interwar years because more than half of the military force in the Territory came from neighboring Nyasaland.

²⁴⁹Correspondence regarding the settlement of ex-askaris after retirement, Sergeant Major Yessaw and Sergeant Major Shaibu bin Makoljii. TNA 25273 Vol. I and Vol II.

Conclusion

During the interwar years, KAR units stationed in Tanganyika underwent a series of transformations that altered both the ethnic composition and size of local KAR battalions. Tanganyika, unlike the British colonies surrounding it, initially was garrisoned by occupying battalions composed of askaris from Uganda and Nyasaland. Throughout the 1920's, this hybrid force evolved until two-thirds of the Tanganyika's military force consisted of askaris from Nyasaland while in the remaining battalion, natives of the territory gradually but steadily replaced the Ugandan askaris who previously filled the ranks of 6 KAR. While all KAR battalions had unique characteristics connected with the territory in which they were raised, the regiment's single Tanganyikan battalion serves as an excellent example of how officers, askaris and civil administrators all helped influence conditions and traditions of military service in the battalion. Evidence shows that 6 KAR was by no means the only battalion to contain ex-*Schutztruppe* askaris in its ranks. The fact that so many officers who served in Tanganyika commented on the presence of these askaris, however, indicates their importance in shaping traditions of military service in the battalion. Furthermore, while some evidence of lingering German practices and traditions are merely suggestive at best, such as the example of *Ngoma* being a German era march and officers' comments about askaris preference for "German discipline," others are more convincing. Numerous parallels exist between ethnic groups that served in the *Schutztruppe* and the "martial tribes" recruited during the first two decades of British rule. The emphasis on the importance of officers learning to speak good Swahili also probably owed a good deal to German emphasis on the use of Swahili as an administrative *Lingua Franca*. Why were officers in Tanganyika held to a higher standard than their comrades in Kenya and Uganda, where it was perfectly acceptable in military, as well as civilian

settings, to rely on crude Kikar or Kisettla Swahili? Even more interesting than the fact that 6 KAR developed its own traditions is the surprisingly short time it took for the differences between 6 KAR and Kenyan, Nyasaland and Ugandan battalions to solidify, and then transfer and manifest themselves in new Tanganyikan battalions raised during the Second World War.

Despite the stagnant economic conditions in the territory and the reductions in the force, most British officers and African askaris found military service in the interwar years pleasant and rewarding. The ranks of interwar KAR battalions were filled with professionals who had volunteered for military service. There was no need to use coercion to persuade either Africans or Europeans to enlist in the force. Although the upper echelons of the KAR, particularly the Inspector Generals, spent much of the period trying to thwart attempts by the East African governments to abolish the regiment, these discussions seldom traveled far enough down the chain of command to affect lower ranking officers and askaris. When companies were disbanded, efforts were made to minimize the disruption of such actions within units, and there is no evidence that shifting garrisons adversely affected either the rank and file or local civilian populations.

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**The Military and Social Change in Colonial Tanganyika:
1919-1964.**

VOLUME II

By

Kevin K. Brown

A DISSERTATION

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Chapter 6

The Second World War

People did not know how big the war had been, because most of them had never seen a big war fought with planes, poison, fire and bombs - bombs that would finish a country just like that when they were dropped from the air. It was indeed a big war, because it made the British worry and pray, and those black sons of the land who had gone to fight said it was a big war. There was once another big war. The first one was to drive away the Germans who had threatened to attack and reduce the black people to slavery. Or so the people had been told. But that was far away and long ago and only the old men and middle aged men could remember it. It was not as big as the second, because then there were no bombs, and black people did not go to Egypt and Burma.²⁵⁰

writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

Kenyan

The Start of the Second World War in East Africa

If Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 provided a warning to civil and military officials that British East Africa was ill prepared for a large scale conflict, fear of further Italian aggression quickly subsided once it became clear that Italy had no immediate plans to advance beyond Ethiopia's borders. The Italian invasion, with its accompanying atrocities, angered many Tanganyikans, but outside of condemning Italian aggression, no action was taken by African communities. With the exception of the northern border region of Kenya, where large numbers of Ethiopian refugees and several hundred Eritrean deserters from the Italian Colonial Forces sought refuge, the invasion posed numerous strategic concerns but few immediate problems for East Africa's military authorities.²⁵¹ While Inspector General C. C. Norman and his successor G. J. Giffard worked to reorganize the KAR and modernize its equipment to meet the

²⁵⁰Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not Child*, (New York: Heinemann, 1987), p. 5.

²⁵¹The KAR apprehended approximately 600 Eritrean deserters who crossed the border into Kenya. After being disarmed, the Eritreans were interned at a special camp where they remained under armed guard. Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War*, p. 94.

new regional threat posed by the Italians, many settlers and officials in Tanganyika became increasingly concerned with the rise of Nazi Germany in Europe.

Anxiety over Germany's increasing influence in world affairs and the growing tension in Europe revolved around two fears. The first was that the British Government might be pressured to return part or all German former colonial possessions, including Tanganyika. To make their strong objections to any such proposals known to both the Tanganyikan and British governments, the settlers formed themselves into a body known as the Tanganyika League and became increasingly active following the Munich agreement.²⁵² By 1938, the Governor, Mark Young felt that local concerns about the future status of the territory had reached such a significant level as to warrant a reassuring speech to the Legislative Council. Addressing the council, the Governor sought to set the public at ease by referring to recent remarks made in the House of Commons by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain that the British Government was not contemplating the transfer of any overseas territories.²⁵³ Governor Young's comments, coming so soon after the start of the German occupation of the Sudetenland, and a mere four months before German troops crossed the Czech frontier to occupy the Czechoslovak Republic, did little to allay public fears.

²⁵²One of the leaders of the settler community, F. S. Joelson, published a newspaper *East Africa* which closely followed the actions of German missionaries and settlers, and which constantly sought to remind the administration that to return Tanganyika to German rule would be unthinkable. Joelson was fervently anti-German, and through his writings sought ensure that the memory of past German atrocities in Tanganyika, both real and rumored, would be remembered. For a representative sample of his views on German rule, see: F. S. Joelson, *The Tanganyika Territory*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd. 1920), pp. 201-205, 218-237.

²⁵³Bannister, Desmond John RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/7 and Message from the Governor of Tanganyika to the Legislative Council, November 15, 1938. IWM Documents, Miscellaneous 679.

The second concern, mainly held by the administration, was that pro-German elements among the settler population might ally with Africans disgruntled with the British administration and foment a revolt. Many in the administration retained vivid memories of the East African Campaign and wanted to avoid any repetition of a costly, drawn out guerrilla war. To guard against such an eventuality, KAR detachments conducted frequent flag marches in Oldeani, Arusha and Moshi: portions of the territory populated by large numbers of German settlers. KAR officers also worked closely with the police to monitor and report suspicious activities, and helped compile lists of settlers thought to have pro-Nazi sympathies. Detailed plans were drawn up so that, in the event of a war with Germany, all German settlers as well as any other pro-German elements would be arrested and detained. To ensure adequate military forces were on hand in the heavily German northern part of the Territory, in 1938, 1 KAR moved from Tabora to Moshi and Arusha.²⁵⁴

In addition to preparing internment camps clandestinely, recruiting special constables and monitoring German settlers, the Government also began to prepare the Territory for war. As early as January 1938, a Voluntary Service Register was sent out to all government departments and many private businesses to compile a detailed census of all adult male European residents in the territory. The administration used the information in the census to determine the exact number of potential enemy subjects in the territory and to plan how to make the transition from peace to war with as little disruption as possible. Arrangements were also made to mobilize the KAR and the Tanganyika Naval

²⁵⁴Logan, P. Q. IWM Department of Sound Records, 3864.

Volunteer force, and to establish and staff a Censor, Information Officer, Food Controller and Custodian of Enemy Property, as soon as war was declared.²⁵⁵

When radio broadcasts and telegrams announced the start of hostilities with Germany on September 3, 1939, Tanganyika's security forces proceeded with plans to round up the majority of the German settlers. KAR officers and askaris did not play the lead role in the operation, but instead accompanied police officers or special constables, serving as an armed reserve should German settlers resist. The author Roald Dahl, who was living in Dar es Salaam at the start of the war, found himself issued with a red arm-band and a platoon of askaris with a machine gun, and he was ordered to prevent any Germans from leaving the city. Dahl and his small force established a roadblock on the coast road and prevented a organized convoy of German settlers from heading towards Portuguese East Africa.²⁵⁶ By noon on September 9, out of a total of 1,147 Germans targeted for immediate internment, 882 had been arrested, 126 arrested and paroled, 62 located but not interned, and a further 62 remained at large. Internment operations had been slightly hampered by the inability of the government to prevent settlers from traveling from district to district while intelligence and daily internment statistics were compiled and reported at the district and province level. Despite such minor problems, the operation proved highly successful, and, with the exception of a handful of settlers who had crossed the borders into Portuguese East Africa or the Congo just after hostilities were declared, almost all of the male German population had been disarmed,

²⁵⁵*Report to the League of Nations on Tanganyika Territory* 1939.

²⁵⁶Roald Dahl, *Going Solo*, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986), pp. 63-73.

and either interned or paroled. Missionaries, settlers deemed too sick to be moved, and the majority of German women and children were not interned during the first round of operations.²⁵⁷ By the 4th of October, 947 male German prisoners had been moved under guard from temporary holding areas to a central internment camp located in Dar es Salaam. The most dangerous Nazis were removed from the general population and kept in isolation on Quarantine Island, which was located off the coast.²⁵⁸ Despite the wish of some anti-Nazi settlers to remain in Tanganyika, the majority of the territory's German population, over 3,000 in all, were eventually interned or deported to South Africa for the duration of the war. In addition to German settlers, a small number of pro-German Africans, many of them former *Schutztruppe* askaris, were also detained. The most notable example of African support for Germany came from Sapi bin Mkwawa, the Chief of Uhehe, who was removed from his office after declaring to the district officer that, should the Germans occupy Dar es Salaam, he would deliver Iringa.²⁵⁹

Throughout the Second World War, Tanganyika's major contributions to the Imperial war effort consisted of military manpower, increased agricultural production of needed raw materials, and cash contributions raised by the European and African populations. Following the outbreak of the war, the administration immediately implemented its plans to place the Territory on a wartime footing. Fortunately for the British, the only other major threat, once

²⁵⁷Internment Operations, Summary by Provinces, September 7, 1939 TNA 27375.

²⁵⁸Report to the League of Nations on Tanganyika Territory 1939.

²⁵⁹Iiffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 357. Four pro-German Africans were deported from Tanga and confined in Nzega district. Nzega DAR 1940 TNA.

Tanganyika's German settlers had been dealt with, was posed by Mussolini's garrisons in Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. Italy did not declare war on Britain until June 10, 1940. The East African governments, working with the military authorities, used the nine-month reprieve to reorganize the KAR and prepare for the probable coming conflict with Italy.

Following the outbreak of war in 1939, the War Office assumed responsibility for all East African Military units and the Inspector General of the KAR became the General Officer Commanding East African forces. From the start of the conflict, officials at the War Office impressed on the East African Governors and the East African Command (EAC), that the region was of little strategic importance, and that neither the British nor Indian governments had forces available to reinforce East Africa. With this warning in mind, and facing a numerically superior, better armed and equipped enemy, the EAC had no other option but to strengthen local colonial forces. Shortly after the declaration of war, the EAC called up members of the KAR reserve and KAR Reserve Officers (KARRO) to active duty, and began to implement plans to expand the regiment.

In 1939, Britain's military forces in East Africa consisted of seven battalions of the KAR. By 1942, the KAR had mushroomed to 28 battalions. By the end of the war, East Africa had contributed 43 KAR battalions to the Imperial war effort. In addition to the new infantry battalions, EAC also required officers and recruits for a host of specialist and support units. These included the East African Army Medical Corps (EAAMC), the East African Engineers (EAR), the East African Army Education Corps (EAAEC), the East African Signal Corps (EASC), the East African Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EAEME) and the East African Artillery (EAA), to name just a few. In the early months of the war, adequate numbers of eager recruits were forthcoming for both fighting arms of the KAR and, later, for the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (AAPC). However,

this promising start was short lived. By the start of the Ethiopian campaign in June 1940, the majority of eager volunteers had already enlisted. The drying up of the recruiting pool corresponded with drastic increased military demands, primarily for laborers for the recently formed East African Military Labor Service (EAMLS). The EAC also quickly had difficulty finding sufficient numbers of qualified educated recruits to fill the ranks of the growing number of support units, particularly the medical and signal corps.

While European and African recruits were initially forthcoming, the same condition did not apply to supplies, transport and new armament. As in the First World War, necessity became the mother of invention. Askaris were transported to the front in ancient First World War vintage trucks requisitioned from civilians, bearing slogans such as "Shah Ranji Danji, Vegetables Nairobi" under a thin coat of paint, and fired mortars fabricated from lengths of pipe from the Nairobi railway yards.²⁶⁰ To compensate for a lack of armor, engineers in Kenya welded iron plates to the bodies of 3-ton trucks and armed them with pivot mounted machine guns. These vehicles, used by the Kenya Armored Car Unit and affectionately known as the "wreckies," were so heavy that they had trouble braking, and easily bogged down in sand or mud.²⁶¹ In September, a mountain battery arrived from India, and another artillery unit, the 1 Light Battery, was raised locally, but initially they had to train using the mountain battery's howitzers. Despite a steady improvement in the supply situation, KAR battalions

²⁶⁰Rowland Spencer Mans, RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/178. The poor state of the KAR's equipment, particularly transport, is corroborated by a number of other officers, including one who described the vehicles as "1914-18 open topped lorries...in a pretty bad state of repair." Patrick Leslie Edwards, IWM Department of Sound Records 7180.

often had no choice but to go into battle with obsolete equipment. In 6 KAR, the askaris continued to use their vintage 1914-18 Lewis light machine guns for most of the Ethiopian campaign before they were replaced with modern Bren guns. Throughout the war, most askaris continued to be armed with No. 1 Lee Enfield .303 rifles, although later small numbers of Thompson and Sten submachine guns were issued to African battalions. Communications in KAR battalions remained primitive. In 6 KAR, only battalion HQ had a radio; company commanders had to exchange messages using runners or flags.²⁶² The East African forces were also deficient in rear echelon units capable of carrying out supply, transport, pay and other organizational tasks, so a Service Corps, Pay Corps and medical units had to be established.²⁶³

Despite deficiencies in equipment, transport and arms, in October, after the internment of Tanganyika's German settlers, the Southern Brigade concentrated at Namanga for training. Following the completion of exercises, 6 KAR traveled to Nanyuki, where along with 5 KAR, they were in charge of garrisoning the western area of Kenya's Northern Frontier District. The remaining KAR battalions also took up positions along Kenya's northern border, with the exception of 2 KAR, which was stationed first at Moshi and later at Nairobi on internal security duties. While the KAR battalions in Kenya dug in and prepared

²⁶¹Tim Harris, *Donkey's Gratitude*. (Cambridge: The Pentland Press, 1992), pp. 77-79.

²⁶²Rowland Spencer Mans, RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/178 and Philip Arthur Thorne. IWM Department of Sound Records, 6912. While the arms and equipment given to askaris improved throughout the war, East African units continued to lack technical equipment. One askari remembered that, when his column was mistakenly strafed by an American aircraft in Burma, British officers tried to signal the plane by opening and closing a red umbrella, because the unit did not have a radio. Interview #8.

²⁶³Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp.478-479.

for an Italian attack either from the north or along the coast towards Mombassa, the first of the new battalions, 2/6 KAR was being formed in Dar es Salaam. Tanganyikan authorities had also begun work improving the Great North Road, which would run the length of the territory and form one link in the road network connecting Kenya with South Africa.

In the spring of 1940, the phony war in Europe came to an abrupt end, and in early May, German forces invaded France, Belgium and the Netherlands. By the end of the month, Allied resistance had crumbled and the British Expeditionary Force was beginning its desperate evacuation from the beaches of Dunkirk. On June 10, seeing that French defeat was imminent, fascist Italy declared war on Britain and France.

The start of hostilities with Italy came as no surprise to military authorities in East Africa. In February, EAC was placed under the control of Middle East Command. Plans had been drawn up to use Kenya as a base from which to mount raids on Italian forces. British authorities also began to arm and train small bands of Ethiopian refugees in Kenya and the Sudan, with the aim of fomenting revolts in Italian territory. What British military planners had not anticipated however, was the rapid fall of France. The success of the *blitzkrieg*, the collapse of French arms, and the subsequent formation of the Vichy government, left British forces in East and North Africa in a precarious position.

In East Africa, the strongest allied force in the region did not belong to the British, which was slowly massing in Kenya and the Sudan, but to the French, who at the start of the war had some 10,000 troops garrisoning Djibouti. According to British and French plans, following the outbreak of war with Italy, French troops would invade Italian-held Ethiopia. Eight days after the declaration of war, Italian forces attacked French positions but were quickly repulsed. Before either side could mount further operations, the French government signed an

armistice with Italy. According to the terms of the Franco-Italian agreement, Djibouti would remain a demilitarized zone under French control, but Italy would have access to the port and railway facilities. For a short time, Djibouti's commander, General LeGentilhomme, resisted Italian and Vichy demands that he comply with the agreement, but on July 22 he was removed from command and the garrison came under Vichy control. Neutralizing the formidable French forces in Djibouti freed up additional Italian units for operations in East Africa, and left poorly defended British Somaliland open to attack.²⁶⁴ The larger strategic picture was just as bleak, because French garrisons in North and West Africa also no longer posed a threat to Italian forces in Libya, making more units available for operations against British forces in Egypt.

To stiffen British defenses in East Africa, early in 1940 EAC had requested reinforcements. On the very day Italy declared war on Britain, the first detachment of South African troops landed at Mombasa. They were soon followed by more South Africans, as well as units from Rhodesia, India, Britain, and RWAFF askaris from Nigeria and the Gold Coast. Even before reinforcements started to arrive, the KAR units stationed in the NFD mounted several reconnaissance operations against the Italians. The first major engagement in the region took place in July, when Italian infantry, supported by armored cars and artillery, attacked a KAR border post at Moyale, garrisoned by 1 KAR and detachments from 6 KAR. After enduring sporadic shelling and infantry assaults, the KAR withdrew under cover of darkness, abandoning the

²⁶⁴For broad appraisal of the strategic situation in the Sudan and Horn of Africa see Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War*, pp. 223-224, 241 and Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, p. 494.

fort to the Italians. Although the Italians did not pursue the retreating KAR units, and British casualties had been light (10 killed, 35 wounded and 3 missing), British commanders received news of the loss of Moyale with unease. General Wavell, in charge of Middle East Command, informed EAC that offensive operations should be postponed until sufficient forces could be assembled. At the end of July, British forces in East Africa suffered another setback when Italian troops mauled a British force at Dobel, composed of Nigerian, Northern Rhodesian and KAR askaris. A company from 6 KAR, which was providing a covering force, retreated in disarray, and the askari performed poorly.²⁶⁵ A further blow to British prestige and security in the region occurred in July and August, when a large Italian force occupied British Somaliland. With the exception of a few raids, British forces in Kenya remained on the defensive until the beginning of 1941, amassing the troops and supplies needed to mount an invasion of Italian East Africa.

The Ethiopian Campaign

By January 1941, EAC included a total of nine brigades organized into three divisions supported by aircraft, armored cars, artillery, medical units, a squadron of South African light tanks and various support units. The KAR's contribution to the invasion of Italian East Africa included four of the nine brigades: the 21st, 22nd, 25th and 26th brigades. The remaining force consisted of three South African brigades: the 1st, 2nd and 5th, and two West African

²⁶⁵Mockler and Bartlett present very different accounts of these two actions. According to Bartlett, following the retreat from Moyale morale remained high and it was not until the second action at Dobel that officers became concerned that their askaris had shown little stomach for the fight. Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, p. 486-491. In contrast, Mockler describes the British reaction to Moyale as "despondent" and claims that, at Dobel, the Italians not only routed 6 KAR, but

brigades: the Nigerian and Gold Coast Brigades. In addition to the regular KAR, South African and RWAFF soldiers British commanders could also occasionally count on the support of Ethiopian irregulars, who operated on the flanks of the army or behind Italian lines. Two KAR battalions from Tanganyika participated in operations in Ethiopia, 1/6 KAR, which was in 22nd East Africa Brigade under the command of Brigadier Fowkes, and 3/6 KAR, in 26th East Africa Brigade commanded by Brigadier Dimoline. The second unit to be raised in Tanganyika, 2/6 KAR, also participated in fighting against the Italian colonial forces in Ethiopia, but it was sent to the Sudan outside of EAC. At first the battalion was split into companies and charged with the defense of Juba, Malakal, Melut and Renk. Later, in February 1941, supported by Belgian units and elements of the Sudan Defense force, it was concentrated into two forces, and attacked Italian positions at Kurmuk and in the Baro Salient.

A detailed discussion of the military operations of this and the other campaigns in which East African forces participated is unnecessary, since other works already meet this need. Yet, to understand the pace of the campaign, the caliber of the enemy, service conditions and the types of engagements fought, it is necessary to give brief descriptions of the major battles that Tanganyikan battalions participated in and to describe the daily obstacles the East African forces had to contend with.

Allied forces attacked Italian East Africa on multiple fronts. In addition to EAC's invasion, first, through Italian Somaliland and later, across Ethiopia's Southern border with Kenya, a small British force crossed the gulf of Aden,

captured its standard as well. Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War*, pp. 237-239.

landing at Berbera, and began advancing through occupied British Somaliland. Other British attacks were mounted from the Sudan. A large force consisting of colonial, British and Indian units, led by Lieutenant-General Platt, advanced from Kassala in January, and crossed into Eritrea, defeating a large Italian force at Agordat. The force then made for the port of Asmara, which was occupied on April 1. Other smaller attacks were launched in April from the region around Gallabat, driving towards Gondar. In addition to having to repel attacks from all points of the compass, the thinly stretched Italian forces also had to contend with guerrilla forces operating behind their lines, led by members of the Patriot movement, and supported and advised by a cadre of British officers, led by the energetic and enigmatic Orde Wingate.

East African forces, under the command of General Cunningham, entered Italian territory in early February 1941, striking through Italian Somaliland and occupying Mogadishu on February 25. From Mogadishu, Cunningham's forces turned north, completed a rapid 660 mile advance, and took control of the town of Jijiga on March 17. From Jijiga, British troops turned west and, after driving Italian forces out of Harar and crossing the formidable natural obstacle of the Awash river, occupied the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, on April 6. With isolated exceptions, the fighting that took place between February and April was sporadic and light, often resembling an ongoing pursuit instead of a series of battles. Despite their initial numerical superiority and abundant supplies, Italian forces, suffering from low morale, and cut off from re-supply, were unable to check the British advance for any length of time. The Italians frequently abandoned prepared fortified positions and supply dumps without a fight. On the British side, the pace of the fighting advance was impressive to say the least, especially considering the aged transport much of the force relied on. Despite petrol shortages and the need to replace demolished bridges, maintain

machinery, round up prisoners and fight battles, the 11 East African Division advanced 1,687 miles and averaged 76 miles a day.²⁶⁶

Although they had abandoned Addis Ababa and were in retreat on all fronts, Italian forces in Ethiopia were far from finished, despite British propaganda broadcasts claiming that British forces had little more to do in Ethiopia than mop up remaining pockets of resistance. One of the difficulties British commanders faced in the closing stages of the campaign was increasing pressure on a already overburdened supply and transport system. The rains had come and British units often had to advance along sodden muddy roads without adequate transport.

The most noteworthy engagement Tanganyikan troops participated in during the Ethiopian campaign occurred at Colito on May 19, when British units, including 1/6 KAR, were pursuing Italian forces recently defeated at the Battle of the Lakes. Attempting to check the British advance, Italian troops dug in along the thick scrub covering the banks of the Billate river, and demolished the only bridge in the area. Companies from 1/6 KAR crossed the river and successfully stormed the Italian trenches. The Italians, attempting to dislodge the askaris, counterattacked with infantry supported by six tanks. Armed only with light anti-tank rifles and holding a position from which it would be impossible to retreat without taking heavy casualties, the KAR askaris had no choice but to repulse the Italian attack. Supported by artillery fire from the far bank, the askaris held back the Italian infantry, but were shaken by the tanks, which were almost impervious to small arms fire. Sergeant Nigel Leakey, who had been posted to

²⁶⁶Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, p. 521.

1/6 KAR from the Kenya Regiment, climbed aboard the leading tank, forced open the hatch and dispatched the crew with his revolver. After disabling the first tank, Leakey went after another on foot, following it into the scrub. Encouraged by Leakey's example, and with the Italians in full retreat, the askaris held their position. Italian losses were heavy, with approximately 100 dead, 500 taken prisoner, and 10 field guns, 13 heavy and 25 light machine guns taken, as well as various other small arms, transport and supplies. 1/6 KAR suffered three European and 18 African casualties, one of whom was Sergeant Leakey, last seen following the retreating Italian tank and whose body was never found. For his role in halting the Italian counterattack, Leakey was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. Four Military Crosses and one Military Medal were awarded to Europeans, and five askaris also received Military Medals.²⁶⁷

Colito, and a handful of other fierce engagements, proved exceptions to the rule. Throughout the campaign the Italians rarely offered protracted resistance or succeeded in halting the Allied advance for long. The campaign came to a close following a series of battles around Gondar, which took place at the end of November and involved, among other units, two Tanganyikan battalions.²⁶⁸ The Italian troops were ably led, defending fortified positions and supported by artillery, and fought for a week against 25 EA brigade. During these

²⁶⁷ Moyses Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, p. 544-547 and letters from officers in 1/6 KAR describing the battle, June 15, 1941 and June 1, 1941. Both letters were censored, so the names of the officers who sent them as well as the specific company they were attached to is unknown, but both contain an account of the battle and list the number of enemy dead and amount of supplies captured. There are some discrepancies concerning whether the tanks should have been designated light or medium tanks, as well as minor differences over how much material was captured. TNA 30043. For a description of commendations awarded to members of 1/6 KAR, see Philip Arthur Thorne. IWM Department of Sound Records, 6912.

²⁶⁸ *Tanganyika Standard*, December 10, 1941.

battles, the Italians inflicted the heaviest casualties of the campaign on East African forces, killing eight officers and 108 askaris and wounding 15 officers and 370 other ranks. On November 27, following the loss of the Gondar positions, the 22,000 Italian troops remaining in the field under the command of General Nasi surrendered, bringing the campaign to a successful end.

Following the liberation of Ethiopia, several KAR battalions remained as a garrison, occupying key communication hubs, guarding the large numbers of Italian prisoners of war and removing useful captured military stores. There was some discussion of sending additional East African units to the Middle East, but, for the time being, with the exception of one garrison battalion, this was considered impracticable.²⁶⁹ With the Italians defeated, for the first time EAC had adequate resources available to move against the Vichy French in Djibouti. The garrison of French Somaliland consisted of 6 battalions of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* and a few military aircraft: a tiny force compared with those fielded by the Italians. However, the French occupied well-fortified positions around Djibouti and General Cunningham realized that the port could only be taken by assault. Furthermore, unlike the Italians, the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* would almost certainly put up a stiff defense if attacked, and Djibouti's vital harbor installations could be damaged in the fighting, or mined for demolition. Facing a determined and well entrenched foe, and with much of his command still stuck on garrison duty in Ethiopia, Cunningham decided to blockade the port. KAR patrols along the borders of French Somaliland partially succeeded in cutting the French garrison off from local food supplies, but goods continued to enter the port via the sea,

brought primarily by dhows from Arabia. One of the Tanganyikan battalions, 3/6 KAR, participated in the blockade action. It took up positions in August 1942, and remained in French Somaliland until local Free French forces and deserters from the Djibouti garrison, supported by British troops, occupied the port at the end of December 1942, thus removing the last remaining land-based military threat in the region.²⁷⁰

The lackluster Italian defense of Ethiopia, and the decision not to try to take Djibouti by storm, resulted in East African forces suffering surprisingly few casualties during the first three years of the war despite the large numbers of troops involved. East African fatalities numbered only 1,935, spread among the territories of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Sudan and Somaliland. Considering some 85,000 East Africans were serving in EAC, the death toll was extremely light. Tanganyikan losses totaled 414, with the great majority of the casualties coming not from combat, but from disease and accidents involving firearms or vehicles. Combat casualties for the year 1940-1941 were 300 killed in action and 65 who died of wounds.²⁷¹

The successful culmination of the Ethiopian campaign temporarily put to rest fears voiced by some members of the military establishment that African troops would not perform well when matched against European troops armed with modern weapons. Despite the poor showing of some KAR units in the early stages of the war, the askaris soon proved just as steady and effective as their

²⁶⁹C in C Middle East to War Office 7/24/41. PRO, CO 968 2/12.

²⁷⁰Moyses Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 568-573.

British, South African and Indian counterparts, when facing artillery barrages, strafing aircraft and assaults spearheaded by armor. Furthermore, as they had during the First World War, African soldiers convincingly demonstrated their physical stamina and ability to adapt to, and operate in, a wide variety of climatic conditions. Finally, the pace of the Ethiopian campaign allowed the EAC time adequately to train and prepare KAR units for battle. Commanders were able to introduce untried troops to battle gradually, starting out with small raids and proceeding to battalion and brigade operations. For the African rank and file, the victory over the Italians gave them confidence, helped build *esprit de corps* within units and eased lingering fears remaining from the First World War that African units would suffer heavy casualties either from combat or inadequate rations or medical care. The benefits of victory went far beyond increasing military efficiency. Askaris returning home on leave told stories of their experiences to family and community members, which increased confidence in the war effort and raised public awareness of the benefits of military service.

The Formation of the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps

While Allied forces in the Horn were liberating Ethiopia, British units in North Africa threw back an Italian invasion of Egypt and then counter attacked driving deep into Libya, occupying Italian territory and capturing 130,000 prisoners. Starting in early 1942 however, the allied position in North Africa and the Mediterranean rapidly deteriorated. Spearheaded by General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps Axis forces regained the initiative, and in a series of offensives

²⁷¹ Correspondence between H.L.G. Gurney, Conference of East African Governors to Sir Arthur Dawe, Colonial Office, June 4, 1942 and August 1, 1942. PRO, CO 980/93 and Quarterly Medical

drove the British back out of Libya, advanced into Egypt and took the key port of *Tobruk*. In the Mediterranean, German and Italian armies occupied Greece, *Yugoslavia* and the island of Crete, inflicting heavy casualties on Allied forces. *Japan's* explosive onslaught in the Pacific forced the Australian Government to *recall* troops serving in North Africa, and British and Commonwealth forces were *stretched* even thinner by the need to reinforce Malaya and Burma. The *desperate* need for combatants and military laborers in North Africa prompted *military* officials to ask the East African governments to recruit and train Africans for *garrison* and pioneer units. The newly created AAPC was organized into 300 *man* companies. The primary role of the pioneers was to provide military labor and fulfill support functions for the British 8 Army. Unlike laborers serving in the *EAMLS*, the pioneers of the AAPC were given rudimentary military training and *armed* with rifles. Many pioneers experienced more combat than members of *front* line KAR battalions that served in Ethiopia, despite the fact that they had *not* been trained as soldiers. The performance of the pioneers varied, depending *on* the military situation they found themselves in. Serving in a support role, they *made* a valuable contribution to the war effort, building fortifications, doing *roadwork*, repairing airfields and guarding supply depots.²⁷² However, it was not *uncommon* for AAPC pioneers to find themselves under direct attack. During the *British* retreat from Libya, while some companies fought well, others collapsed, *thus* confirming in the minds of skeptics that African soldiers were not first-class *fighting* material. Despite such reservations, Middle East Command had few

Reports, East Africa. PRO, WO 222/2806.

options and had to rely on African pioneers to fill support roles. By 1944, fifty-six AAPC and six EAASC general transport companies were serving as Imperial *troops* in the Middle East and Levant.²⁷³

Operations in Madagascar

The rapid Japanese advance across the Pacific throughout 1942 created a **new** threat that the East African governments and EAC had to address. The **Japanese** occupation of Malaya, the rapid fall of "fortress Singapore" and the **disastrous** retreat from Burma shocked the British government. Following a **series** of stunning sea victories, the Japanese gained naval superiority over **much** of the Indian Ocean, which created fears of a Japanese Invasion of East **Africa**. The deteriorating situation in the East forced the British to reorganize their **forces** in East Africa. To meet this new threat, East African forces were removed **from** the control of Middle East Command and a new East African Command **was** formed. Under the leadership of General Sir William Platt, EAC was **responsible** for the defense of all territory from Eritrea to the Zambezi River.²⁷⁴ In **addition** to maintaining internal security, guarding Italian and Vichy French **prisoners** of war, and preparing for the possibility of a Japanese landing along **the** coast, EAC was also instructed to provide East African troops for service **overseas**. As early as December 1941, the War Office requested two brigades, **one** of which, 21 EA Brigade, was sent to Ceylon in March 1942, and the other, **22** EA Brigade, conducted operations in Madagascar. The culmination of the

²⁷²For a very general description of the AAPC contributions to the fighting in the Middle East, see **stories** in the *Tanganyika Standard*, February 25, March 28, and April 21, 1942.

²⁷³Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, pp. 27-28. In addition to the military laborers in the EAASC and AAPC, two combat units 23 KAR and 5 NRR also served in the Middle East.

decision to use East African troops overseas was the formation, in February 1943, of 11 EA Division, containing three brigades of infantry and numerous **support** units. Along with 11 EA Division, two independent infantry brigades were **also** sent to Asia for service with the South East Asia Command (SEAC) and **participated** in the defense of India and the re-conquest of Burma. The total force **sent** to East Asia included a single battalion of the Rhodesia African Rifles, two **battalions** of the NRR, and 14 KAR battalions: three of which were Tanganyikan. **By** the end of the war, the East African contribution to SEAC numbered 1,862 **officers**, 4,343 NCO's and 46,927 rank and file, the majority being Africans with a **few** Asians serving primarily in rear echelon units.²⁷⁵ In the middle of the **Madagascar** operations in 1942, in addition to recruiting and training African **units** for overseas service and maintaining internal security throughout East **Africa**, EAC was also charged with garrisoning Islands Area, which included **Madagascar**, Reunion, the Seychelles, and Mauritius.

To prevent the possibility of Japan gaining a foothold off the East African **coast**, or basing submarines out of nearby ports, and cutting vital maritime **supply** routes running along the coast, Vichy French controlled Madagascar had **to be** occupied. In May 1942, the Royal Navy landed a British Brigade at Diego **Suarez**, which secured the port in two days. With Diego Suarez under British **control**, the occupation of the rest of Madagascar fell to 22 EA Brigade, **com**manded by Brigadier W. A. Dimoline, which landed on the island on June **7th**. Supported by warships, artillery, some remaining British troops and a South

²⁷⁴ War Office to GOC, EAC PRO, CO 968 2/9.

²⁷⁵ Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 574-575.

African armored car squadron, the three KAR battalions of 22 EA Brigade spent just under six months advancing from Diego Suarez across the island until the last Vichy French defenders surrendered at Ambalavao on November 5.

Tanganyikan 1/6 KAR was one of the three KAR infantry battalions involved in ending French resistance on the island. Vichy forces in Madagascar consisted of *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, supported by locally raised Malgache troops, and French crewed artillery. Cut off from re-supply, the French defense, though protracted, was halfhearted and consisted primarily of constructing road blocks and blowing culverts and bridges before retreating. The lackluster nature of the Vichy stand is evident by the lack of major battles fought during the campaign, and by the light casualties suffered by the three KAR battalions that spearheaded the British effort. Total casualties for 22 EA Brigade included four officers and 23 askari killed, and a further seven British and 75 Africans wounded.²⁷⁶

While 22 EA Brigade eliminated the Vichy threat in Madagascar, EAC was busy reorganizing its forces and raising new units for service in South East Asia. EAC made the decision to form an entire division, in part because they feared that if East African units were sent overseas piecemeal or in brigade strength, they would seldom see combat and would instead be relegated to monotonous garrison or construction duties. Such concerns were certainly justified, and the first brigade to be sent to Asia, 21 EA Brigade, was dispatched to Ceylon in March 1942, to free up British and Indian troops serving as garrison forces.

²⁷⁶Malcolm Page, *A History of the King's African Rifles*, pp. 115-132 and Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp.579-609.

British officers had begun to worry about using African troops in such static **duties** for an extended period of time, because of the increasing number of **cases** of unrest occurring in African units in the Middle East, Somaliland and **Ethiopia**. Following the culmination of the Ethiopian campaign, instances of **indiscipline** and discontent rose in KAR and other units where askaris found **themselves** guarding airfields, supply dumps or prisoners of war, or repairing **roads** and bridges. The askaris' boredom and discomfort was exacerbated by **EAC's** refusal to permit African rank and file to take home leave, while often **providing** extended leave for European officers and NCO's to go to Nairobi or **Cairo**. Many askari had volunteered to help "throw Mussolini out of Africa" to **ensure** the security of their home communities, but now that the task had been **completed**, they wanted to be allowed to return home, if only for a short visit. **Members** of the EAMLS were also discontented because many could not be sent **home** immediately after their period of service expired, due to lack of transport. **As** active operations ended in Ethiopia, Somalia and parts of the Middle East, **officers** found their askaris, pioneers and military laborers chafing at military **restrictions** and routine. When EAC began to reorganize its forces, and **announced** that units would be serving overseas, discontent flared into protest in **several** units. The most serious incident took place in Ethiopia, where all three **KAR** battalions of 25 EA Brigade staged a strike, refusing to move until their **officers** granted home leave. Powerless to disarm three fully armed battalions of **infantry**, and aware that, should the strike turn into a mutiny, it would be a **propaganda** disaster, EAC had no choice but to bow to askaris' demands.²⁷⁷ The

²⁷⁷Yeidham, R.E.S. IWM Department of Sound Records 3960.

action of 25 EA Brigade, and similar smaller protests, alarmed EAC and once **again** raised fears about the reliability African soldiers. In large measure to avert **the** possibility of a similar strikes, officers commanding battalions in 22 EA **Brigade** explained to their troops that the invasion of Madagascar was necessary **to ensure** that adequate food supplies could reach East Africa.

Officers worked to prepare their askari mentally for service overseas and **also** concentrated on physical and technical training. While African soldiers had **performed** well against Italian and Vichy French forces, British commanders **were** fully aware that the Japanese would prove a much more dangerous foe. **Before** the war, many British commanders had dismissed the Japanese army as **a inferior** force that could be held at bay by the combination of British, Indian and **local** colonial forces stationed in Asia. By mid-1942, even the most reticent **British** officers had been forced to abandon their notions about Japanese **inferiority**, in the face of the poor showing of British forces in Malaya and Burma. **However**, more important for the EAC, analysis of British failures in the East led **to an** increasing realization of the importance of adequately training troops for **Asian** conditions before committing new units to battle. To prepare askaris for **service** in Asia, EAC established jungle-warfare training courses and many **infantry** battalions were rearmed with new weapons and transport. Shortly after **arriving** in Ceylon, the askaris of 21 EA Brigade went through a rigorous period **of** training to help them adjust to the new climate and to practice new skills **needed** for jungle warfare, including patrol actions, swimming, and how to remain **calm** and deal with Japanese "jitter tactics" or night probes. Units stationed in

Madagascar set up a similar training scheme, practicing how to move through dense jungle and ford rivers and streams.²⁷⁸

Operations in South East Asia

In addition to guarding Ceylon, the major contribution East African forces made to the British war effort against the Japanese was the role they played in the re-conquest of Burma. The first East African unit to see combat in Burma was the 11 EA Division Scouts, who fought alongside 81 West African Division in the Arakan offensive, starting in February 1944. The scouts were originally intended to be a specialist unit but were put into combat before they had completed their training in Ceylon. While they remained in the field from February until early June, and performed satisfactorily in small engagements and patrols, during more sustained Japanese assaults, the scouts fought poorly. In August, the unit returned to Ceylon and was disbanded.²⁷⁹

At the same time the Scouts and 81 West African Division were engaged near Arakan, a series of crucial battles was being fought to the north at Imphal and Kohima. These two towns, located just across the Burmese border in eastern India, housed supply bases, and would serve as staging points for an allied invasion of Burma. The Japanese managed to encircle both towns but were unable to take them, despite almost four months of savage fighting. By June allied forces had relieved both Imphal and Kohima, successfully stopping the Japanese advance into India.

²⁷⁸Robson, George G. RHL, Mss. Afr.s 1715/231.

²⁷⁹Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 610-613.

With the enemy in disarray following the unsuccessful invasion of India, **the** commander of the Allied Fourteenth Army in Burma, General Slim, ordered **11** EA Division to mount an attack down the Kabaw Valley. South East Asia **Command** (SEAC) hoped that the poor physical condition of the retreating **Japanese** soldiers, many dying of starvation, combined with the fact that the **attack** would be mounted during the middle of the monsoon season, would allow **11** EA Division to fight its way through the Kabaw Valley and establish a position **on** the Chindwin River. ²⁸⁰

Eleventh EA Division had been specifically chosen for the operation **because** members of SEAC continued erroneously to believe that East African **askaris** were used to operating in dense jungle and also believed they had better **resistance** to tropical diseases than other troops. Furthermore, African askari had **the** reputation of being hardier and more accustomed to privation than their **European** or Indian counterparts, which were valuable assets when operating in **a** region that many officers referred to as a "green hell." Neither jungle training in **Ceylon**, nor the operations in Madagascar, could prepare askaris for the **conditions** they encountered in the Kabaw Valley. The valley floor and **surrounding** slopes were covered with thick teak forests and dense undergrowth, **which** often limited visibility and allowed the Japanese to effectively camouflage **their** positions. Several major rivers and numerous smaller streams (chaungs) **crossed** the valley, providing further obstacles to movement. To add to the list of **undesirable** features, malaria and typhus both were endemic to the region. **Difficult** at the best of times, conditions in the valley were made even worse by

²⁸⁰ Viscount Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, (New York: Cassell, 1956), pp. 299-305.

the torrential monsoon rains which drenched everything, turning tracks and roads **into** quagmires, fox holes into pools, camps into swamps and small waterways **into** raging torrents. To allow much needed supplies to get to the front line, **pioneers** built airfields, corduroy roads, bridges and ferry crossings. In **September**, when the rains should have been easing, the opposite occurred and **several** bridges and a ferry crossing washed away, temporarily isolating units **until** communications could be restored. When road conditions deteriorated to **the** point where supplies could not reach the front in sufficient quantities, **ammunition**, food and medicine were dropped by parachute. Despite the best **efforts** of supply, transport and pioneering units, askaris not infrequently had to **continue** to advance on reduced rations.²⁸¹

The resistance East Africans faced from the Japanese proved as savage **as the** climate. The High Command's prediction on the condition of the Japanese **troops** remaining in the valley was fairly accurate. The Japanese 15th Army had **suffered** heavy casualties at Kohima and Imphal. Yet despite inadequate **supplies** and suffering increasingly heavy casualties from starvation and disease, **Japanese** soldiers continued savagely to resist the British attack. During the **initial** stages of their advance askaris primarily encountered scattered units or **stragglers**, which were quickly dealt with. As East African forces moved farther **down** the Kabaw Valley, however, Japanese resistance stiffened and askaris **often** had to outflank or take well-fortified, concealed positions by frontal attacks. **To** locate the Japanese in the dense terrain, battalions had to carry out **numerous** small patrol actions to probe the enemy lines. Despite the arduous

²⁸¹Moyses Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, pp. 614 and 626.

conditions and stubborn Japanese resistance, 11 EA Division advanced steadily, and in December succeeded in crossing the Chindwin River and taking the town of Kalewa. Shortly after occupying Kalewa, the worn-out division was removed from the front and sent to India for much needed rest and reorganization.

The East African contribution to the Burma campaign did not end with the capture of Kalewa. Following the departure of 11 EA Division, 22 EA Brigade operated in the region around Arakan, moving down the Mayu and Kaladan valleys. These operations were designed to tie down Japanese forces in western Burma and prevent them taking part in the then ongoing battles for central Burma. The Brigade was still in the field when the end of the war was announced in August 1945. The other East African force, 28 EA Brigade, played an important role in the recapture of the key town of Mandalay by serving as a decoy. Commanded by Brigadier W. A. Dimoline, 28 EA Brigade that consisted of three KAR battalions, the 7 Ugandan, 71 Somali and 46 Tanganyikan, as well as a number of transport, engineering and medical units, began to advance south of Mandalay in January 1945. In an elaborately orchestrated ruse, the brigade moved down the Gangaw valley on a wide front, attempting to use troop movements and radio signals to simulate the advance of the entire 11 EA Division. The Japanese, taken in by the deception, staged a series of strong counter-attacks on the brigade in February, but failed to hold the Africans back. By the end of March, the East African units were exhausted and began to be withdrawn, but they had fulfilled their objective of tying down the enemy and guarding the flank of British units advancing on Mandalay. The units in 28 EA

Brigade paid for their success by suffering the heaviest casualties of any EA Brigade, with 18 Europeans and 151 Africans killed, 23 European and 420 Africans wounded and a further 30 Africans reported as missing.²⁸²

The 11 EA Division was training in India when the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. With the war over, 28 EA Brigade was disbanded. Its units were divided up to be used as guards along the lines of communication or were added to 11 EA Division. The units in 22 EA Brigade, which were still involved in active operations when the war ended, were repatriated directly from Burma. By the end of 1945, some 9,000 East Africans had returned home to be demobilized, with the remaining 40,000 following throughout 1946.

East Africa's contribution to the Burma campaign was relatively small, especially when the size of East African forces is compared with those from Britain and India. Furthermore, East African units arrived in Burma late in 1944, while British and Indian, as well as West African, Chinese and American forces, had been attempting to prevent Japanese control of the region for much longer. Nonetheless, the East Africans did play an important role in the battle for Burma, first by establishing a bridgehead across the Chindwin River, thus setting up the British advance into central Burma, and later serving as blocking forces, taking pressure off the main thrust towards Mandalay. Possibly because of the relatively light casualties suffered, or the perception that they were pursuing a shattered and broken army, 11 EA Division's advance down the Kabaw Valley is

²⁸²Moyse Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, p. 672, Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, pp. 335, 359-360.

often overlooked in the secondary literature on the Burma campaign.²⁸³ Although Japanese resistance was beginning to crumble, and the myth of the Japanese infantryman as an invincible jungle warrior had suffered a serious reverse at the battles of Imphal and Kohima, the task assigned to 11 EA Division remained extremely difficult. General Slim, commenting on the performance of the division noted:

The 11th East African Division had, with the 5th Indian Division, the honour of achieving what had to then 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.²⁸⁴

Out of all the theaters askaris served in during the Second World War, conditions in Burma were certainly the worst. To this day, Tanganyikan veterans who survived the campaign refer to their experiences with a distinct mixture of pride and sadness that is frequently missing from the accounts of men who saw combat in Ethiopia, Madagascar or the Middle East.

The East African Military Contribution to World War Two

The Second World War was the first time the British government had to call on large numbers of East Africans to served outside the region. The decision was not based on choice, or because of a widely held belief that Africans made good soldiers, but was dictated by necessity. Similarly, the rapid expansion of the skills askaris would learn and the tasks they would be called upon to perform

²⁸³In his memoirs of the Burma campaign, General Slim seldom refers to African troops, and in Louis Allen's lengthy study on the war in Burma 11 EA Division's advance up the Kabaw Valley is hardly mentioned. Allen, *Burma*, p. 389.

²⁸⁴General William Slim quoted in Moyse Bartlet, *King's African Rifles*, p. 682. See also General Fowkes comments on the performance of African troops in Burma in *Tanganyika Standard* September 15, 1945.

while serving in the armed forces, were forced upon both the military and reluctant colonial governments. As will be seen in the following three chapters, neither the military nor the East African governments were entirely comfortable with arming, training, educating and promoting large numbers of Africans, but there was simply no other choice. Many British officers, to say nothing of Tanganyikan and Kenyan settlers and administrators, would have preferred East Africans to serve primarily as military laborers, pioneers, and garrison troops, who would be responsible for maintaining and guarding the lines of communication, thus freeing up European and Indian units for combat. Such duties would reinforce Africans' inferior position in the colonial social hierarchy, while elevating askaris to front line troops and allowing them to learn new skills and fight alongside European troops would have the opposite effect. Even when Africans participated in combat, efforts were made to downplay their contributions. For example, Kenyan askaris returning from the Ethiopian campaign on leave, were told that the Italians were a inferior type of European, to prevent them from thinking they were the equals of members of the settler community.²⁸⁵ Yet it became clear very early in the war, that to use Africans only as noncombatants was unfeasible for three reasons. First, EAC had to raise new combat units almost immediately to deal with the possibility of an Italian attack on East Africa. Second, Britain's wider military fortunes continued to deteriorate rather than improve during 1941 and 1942, despite victories over the Italians in Ethiopia and North Africa. One important consequence of early British reversals was that neither Britain, nor the East African governments, had adequate

²⁸⁵Parsons, *African Rank and File*, p. 26.

supplies of European manpower available to serve as officers, let alone technicians, for the armed forces. In the First World War, small numbers of askaris had been trained as signalers, drivers, stretcher-bearers and other specialists. During the Second World War, equipment became increasingly sophisticated. Consequently, more askaris had to be educated and trained to a much higher standard. While their predecessors had signaled with flags and mirrors, fired mortars and drove trucks, askaris who served in World War Two used radios, crewed artillery pieces and drove Bren gun carriers. The war also forced the military to change its views on education. Before the war, officers viewed educated recruits as poor military material and potential disciplinary problems. By 1941, the situation had changed, and officers eagerly recruited schoolboys and begged European employers to release their educated African employees for service with the forces. Third, EAC and the East African governments realized that Africans would not be content merely serving as garrison troops or military laborers. The care with which the Tanganyikan government made a distinction between the EAMLS and the KAR, the rising discontent in many East African units in North Africa and Ethiopia as they were relegated to monotonous garrison duties following the early round of victories, the decision not to disarm AAPC units for fear of unrest, and, finally, the refusal of 25 EA Brigade to serve overseas if not granted home leave, all demonstrate that, despite official claims to the contrary, African views about where and how they would serve had to be taken into account. One of the reasons EAC insisted on forming 11 EA Division, was to ensure that the askaris would be used in combat, thus hopefully eliminating some of the discontent within the ranks that would occur if the askaris were only allowed a supporting role in operations.

While Britain's need for African troops cannot be disputed, their performance remained a matter of some debate. The specific causes and

consequences of breakdowns in morale and incidents of indiscipline will be discussed in the following chapter, but it is also important to put African failures in a broader context and compare them to similar cases where non-African units suffered similar problems. During the early stages of the Ethiopian campaign, several battalions, including 1/6 KAR, performed extremely poorly, which raised doubts about the ability of the KAR to fight a trained enemy equipped with modern weapons. KAR battalions however, were not the only British forces to retreat in disarray from Italian attacks. When British troops from the Sudan mounted a combined infantry and tank attack on Italian positions at Gallabat, a battalion of British infantry broke and retreated in disarray after they took casualties from strafing Italian planes. The Indian and British troops were so unnerved that the British commander decided to cancel of the entire attack. In the desert campaigns against the Afrika Korps, several AAPC units collapsed during the British retreat into Egypt, once again causing British commanders to question to value of Africans in combat. Small, lightly armed AAPC companies however, were not trained as front line infantry units, and it was ludicrous to expect them to fight like ones. What is perhaps more surprising is that some AAPC companies, including one stationed at Tobruk, served in a combat role, or carried out support functions while under enemy attack and held up well under artillery bombardments and air raids.

In Burma, Indian, African, Burmese and British troops all suffered similar reversals. While General Slim publicly praised 11 EA Division's efforts in the Kabaw Valley, as the Burma campaign progressed, he became increasingly

concerned with the low morale of East African troops.²⁸⁶ Fear over poor African performance was not confined to the upper echelons of command, and one KAR officer, looking back on his service with the regiment, commented:

Now, so far as fighting is concerned, Monty (General Bernard Montgomery) - there were African troops up in North Africa still when Monty took over the 8th Army - and he wouldn't have them. He sent them back to Africa. And I think he was right. And he was proved on more than one occasion I think in Burma eventually because, mark you, they were not first-class troops. And I always maintain that it was more or less a crime to put them up against the Japanese. And I had one very interesting proof of that, when, years later, when I was in Germany a chap turned up who'd been in my regiment - my own regiment - and also seconded to the KAR and he'd been in Burma with them and they were fighting the Japanese. Now he got surrounded with his company by the Japanese once and he said the African troops panicked completely. They didn't run away but they couldn't load their rifles and he and the white NCO's in our company, they had to run around loading their rifles for them. They completely panicked.²⁸⁷

Yet morale and performance problems were nothing new to the British forces in Burma and certainly were not concentrated in African units. A British officer serving in Burma in May 1943 commented on the quality of many of the British troops that took part in the first Arakan offensive:

I saw the impossibility of any form of success with the present force, and those that sit at home in comfort only have the knowledge to read the black and white of the Sitreps (Situation Reports). What do they know of the jungle, and what would be their answer if you were to tell them that the British soldier is a rotten and gutless fighter after he has spent a little while against the Jap. What would they say if you told them of the spirit of the men who come here to fight. They come, hating the powers that sent them, they come only hoping to return on the morrow, and they come praying that they may not have to fight. Those were the men of your Army.²⁸⁸

Such criticism, though certainly overly harsh considering the circumstances,

²⁸⁶Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, p. 33.

²⁸⁷J.G. E. Hickson, IWM Department of Sound Records, 3838.

²⁸⁸Quoted in Allen *Burma: The Longest War*, pp. 115-116.

nonetheless demonstrates that British, as well as African units could, and did, suffer from such low morale that unit cohesion and effectiveness was threatened. Morale reports from SEAC indicate that Africans were no more unhappy with conditions in Burma than British soldiers, but commanders seldom reacted as strongly to reports of dissatisfaction in British units.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, while such reversals and poor morale are common in any army where the troops going into combat are untested or have suffered a series of recent defeats, the stigma of breaking under the strain of battle seemed to linger over African units longer than it did on their Indian or British counterparts.

Notwithstanding the mixed reviews about their effectiveness in combat, and continuing doubts about their ability to face "first class" troops, East African soldiers and military laborers did play a small but important part in the Second World War. During the war, military officials estimated that 323,483 East Africans served in the armed forces, with up to one-fourth of this number serving outside East Africa; either in Southeast Asia or with the AAPC in the Middle East. Although askaris were drawn from all East African territories, including Nyasaland, Zanzibar Northern Rhodesia and Somaliland, the majority of askaris and military laborers came from Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. Tanganyika contributed approximately twenty-seven percent of the total force and only Kenya, with thirty percent, contributed more.²⁹⁰

Despite the large number of East Africans serving in the armed forces, officially reported casualties were extremely low, numbering only 7,301. The

²⁸⁹Morale of British Indian and Colonial Troops of ALF SEA, November -December 1945, PRO, WO 203/2268

single most deadly engagement involving East African troops took place not on land but at sea, where some 900 askaris, including most of the members of 301 Field Regiment East African Artillery, died en route to Ceylon when their troopship, the *Khedive Ismail*, was sunk by a Japanese submarine. Throughout the war, battle casualties remained extremely low and more askaris died from accidents and sickness than in combat or from wounds inflicted by the enemy. Civil and military officials used the low casualty statistics to support claims that Africans were being well cared for in the army, and not being used as cannon fodder, or expendable labor, the way they had been in the Carrier Corps during the First World War. Yet despite the assertions that plentiful rations and access to medical care improved the health and welfare of askaris far beyond what they would enjoy in their home communities, official casualty statistics should be approached with skepticism. In June 1942, the Office of East African Governors sent the Colonial Office figures of how many East Africans had died during the Ethiopian campaign. In August, the total had to be increased because it was discovered that an additional 131 askaris from Northern Rhodesia and 194 from Nyasaland had not been included in the earlier calculation because the records were housed at Lusaka and Zomba.²⁹¹ In addition, non-combat casualties probably went under-reported despite the best efforts of the military to keep its paper work up to date. One officer who joined 1/6 KAR shortly after the battalion returned from Ethiopia noted that one of his first jobs as Adjutant was to "try to

²⁹⁰Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, p. 35.

²⁹¹H. L. G. Gurney, Conference of East African Governors to Sir Arthur Dawe, Colonial Office, June 4, 1942 and revised estimate August 1, 1942. PRO CO 980/93.

work out how many Africans we had in the Battalion.”²⁹² Military authorities also had considerable difficulty in determining what had happened to Africans who went missing in transit or while on leave. District records contain correspondence indicating that, infrequently, askaris did die from accidents or natural causes while on leave, and these numbers may also have been under-reported.

²⁹²Gimber, Walter Stephen RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/104.

Chapter 7

Military Service During the Second World War

For the small number of officers and askaris who served in the pre-war KAR, the beginning of hostilities led to a series of radical changes within the regiment. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most important of these was the rapid increase in the size and capabilities of the East African forces. The expansion of the KAR and the addition of a host of other units changed, at least temporarily, both the nature and perception of service in the colonial forces. Before 1939, the primary mission of KAR battalions was to ensure the internal security of East Africa. Following the outbreak of war, guaranteeing the Pax Britannia took secondary priority, first, to defending British East African territories, and later, to using the KAR and other locally raised forces to support Imperial efforts overseas. These new requirements, combined with changes to the force caused by Britain's tenuous strategic position and lack of military manpower, opened up new possibilities for African advancement in the military. The need for askaris to use more modern weapons and equipment, as well as take over many of the support and clerical duties, that during the inter war years had been done by British NCO's, required soldiers who were better educated than their predecessors. During the Second World War, askaris became better trained and equipped than at any other time in the regiment's history. However, service during the war years was also characterized by increased hardship, much greater risks and lengthy absences from home communities and family members. Furthermore, wartime experiences, especially service overseas and interaction with soldiers from South and West Africa, India, Britain, and the United States, as well as Italian prisoners and Ethiopian, Burmese and Indian civilians, also widened askaris' horizons and exposed them to new ideas and cultures. These experiences caused many askaris to rethink the colonial social

hierarchy and some of the more perceptive realized that Britain was not the great power they had been led to believe.

British Officers and NCO's

Outwardly the military hierarchy did not undergo any radical changes during the Second World War. The position of KAR Inspector General was abolished and replaced with the EAC, which increased both in terms of size and responsibilities as the war progressed. The war created new opportunities for officers. While some officers chose to return to England to serve with their own regiments, others remained with the KAR for the duration of the war. The rapid expansion of East African forces quickly created a serious shortage of qualified officers experienced in dealing with African troops. Initially such gaps were filled by calling up members of the King's African Rifles Reserve Officers or with settlers or administrative officials who volunteered for the army and were quickly trained. Both groups came with disadvantages. Some members of the KARRO were veterans of the First World War and too old for active service. Difficulties also existed in transforming settlers into senior NCO's and officers. While it was true that many of the settlers from Kenya, Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia did have African experience, dealing with farm laborers or miners was a far cry from commanding askari. While it was commonplace for settlers to strike their employees, an officer engaging in such actions in a KAR battalion would instantly lose the respect and earn the enmity of his troops, with possibly disastrous consequences. To avoid such potential problems, regular KAR Officers took great pains to explain military regulations and decorum to new arrivals. A further group of officers, referred to as Imperials, arrived in East Africa shortly after the war began and their number was supplemented by later drafts sent out by the War Office. Officers and NCO's were also seconded to KAR battalions from the Kenya regiment.

Unfortunately for the EAC, ex-settlers were not the only problematic European members of the force. When the Colonial Office relinquished control of East African forces to the War Office, the careful vetting process was abandoned and, not surprisingly, the quality of officers sent to East Africa quickly declined. As during the First World War, some British regiments viewed War Office demands for officers as a perfect opportunity to get rid of inefficient or incompetent officers, which gave rise to complaints that the East African forces were being used as a dumping ground for some of the British Army's less gifted or desirable personnel. The EAC was forced to replace a number of officers. General Fowkes in particular developed a fierce reputation for "sacking" subordinates who performed their duties poorly.²⁹³

The damage poor officers could wreak on a battalion was immense. During the Ethiopian campaign, the officer commanding 46 KAR was relieved of command, and his replacement, who had served with both the KAR and RWAFF, recalled that the battalion was in dismal shape. During his briefing, the Brigade Commander informed him that the battalion had the worst VD record and had lost more rifles than any other battalion in the brigade. The new commander discovered that conditions were every bit as bad as he had been told and that, furthermore, one of his company commanders was an alcoholic who had to be removed.²⁹⁴

One of the major obstacles EAC faced when assigning new officers to

²⁹³For comments of General Fowkes leadership, see Philip Arthur Thorne, IWM Department of Sound Records, 6912.

East African units was the inability of many to speak Swahili. While most members of the settler community and the KARRO possessed at least a slight familiarity with the language, these were not the individuals who would be commanding companies or support units. Usually it was the regular officers, the so called "Imperials," the military professionals, who arrived in East Africa not knowing not a word of Swahili and finding themselves in charge of African soldiers for the first time. A working knowledge of Swahili was essential for giving orders and carrying out the day to day routine involved in running units, and because it made officers accessible to their troops. Almost none of the African NCO's and askaris spoke English; therefore, in order to establish smoothly running units and build up trust with the rank and file officers had to learn Swahili very quickly. Although senior KAR officers insisted that new officers learn correct Swahili as soon as possible, this could not be accomplished overnight, and more English was used than in pre-war battalions. Furthermore, there was a serious erosion of quality, and officers and askari who had served in 6 KAR before the war commented that, while the Swahili spoken in Tanganyikan battalions continued to be of a higher standard than that spoken in Kenyan units, it certainly was not up to pre-war standards. In addition to the obstacles involved with comprehensive language study while trying to prepare for or conduct a campaign, another factor contributing to the problem was that, shortly after the start of the war, the policy of verifying how well officers had mastered Swahili was altered. Instead of requiring officers to take a test administered by a colonial

²⁹⁴Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404. Despite the poor conditions he found in 46 KAR, Sherwood generally thought that the officers seconded to the KAR during the

service officer accompanied by a second individual fluent in the language, tests had to be administered by officers in each battalion.²⁹⁵ Although standards may have varied widely between battalions, most of the commanders of Tanganyikan battalions remained very serious about the language requirement. One officer remembers his commanding officer telling him:

Normally in peacetime we give a Subaltern three months to learn the language up to a lower certificate standard. As there is a war on you can have six. During the next six months, when I was not firing my mortars in anger, I was immersed in Bishop Steer's *Swahili Grammar*. I took the exam at a six-foot table under a big tree outside Addis Ababa three days after we had captured it.²⁹⁶

Two other officers serving with Tanganyikan battalions, one in 3/6 KAR and the other in 4/6 KAR, thought that learning Swahili may have been easier during the war, because there were more mission educated askaris in the KAR than there had been in regiment before the war and they helped officers learn the language. In spite of the difficulties, most officers seem to have taken the language requirement seriously. This is corroborated by former askaris who served the Tanganyikan KAR battalions who stated that most of their officers spoke adequate, although not good Swahili.²⁹⁷ Unfortunately, the same rigorous standards did not exist in many of the support units. Some veterans who served in transport companies, the EAAMC, the EASC and the EAMLS claim that very few of the European officers and NCO's in these units knew Swahili, and those that did spoke it badly. A lack of adequate language skills was particularly problematic in units of the EAAMC where many of the doctors could not speak

war were not bad.

²⁹⁵Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

²⁹⁶Roland Spencer Mans, RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/178.

directly to their patients and had to make diagnosis and explain treatments through interpreters or orderlies.²⁹⁸

Finding officers with good African language skills for AAPC companies was also a problem. The officers and senior NCO's in AAPC companies were all Europeans and, officially, the East African governments provided two Swahili speaking officers or NCO's for each AAPC company. The standard of Swahili spoken, however, varied widely, and unlike officers who served in the Tanganyikan battalions of the KAR who were required to learn the language, AAPC officers and NCO's were usually not tested on their language skills.²⁹⁹

To compensate for the shortage of Swahili speaking officers during the war, the EAC reversed the KAR's long held policy on not training Africans to speak English. Askaris who spoke English and passed an oral exam were issued with cloth arm badges bearing a black letter E. indicating they could serve as interpreters. Several former members of the EAAEC who passed their interpretership test said they resented wearing their badges because European officers would constantly demand their assistance, and also treated them with suspicion, fearing they would eavesdrop on conversations. One former askari who served with the EAEME remembered learning English in the army.

In the war they formed the education unit which taught African people, and it was divided into three groups, i.e. first class, second class and third class. In the first class, you got the chance to learn simple things like tenses and simple words in English. In second class, you were taught hard things together with mathematics. After understanding these things, you will go to third class which was very difficult. After finishing that, you could read, write and count and other things. If

²⁹⁷F. W. Hann, IWM Department of Sound Records, 3962 and Patrick Leslie Edwards, IWM Department of Sound Records, 7180. Interview #13.

²⁹⁸Interviews #32, #20 and #12.

²⁹⁹*Tanganyika Standard*, April 21, 1942.

you completed all these classes they gave you a E, so if a European saw you he would say "you soldier, come here." This is because he knows you speak English. Also if they want to talk about you, they can't, because they know you will understand what they are saying.³⁰⁰

Askaris who passed their interpretership test did not receive any additional pay. One former askari interviewed for this study actually refused to speak English, fearing that if he revealed he was well educated, he would be forced to serve as a teacher and interact with European officers.³⁰¹ Education Instructors serving in the EAAEC were also charged with teaching askaris military skills and disseminating propaganda to African units.³⁰²

Language and a lack of knowledge about how to deal with African troops were only two of the hurdles new officers had to overcome. An additional problem during the Second World War was that many officers had little to no experience commanding soldiers, let alone African soldiers. In the inter-war years, although officers applied for secondment for a variety of reasons, even the most junior had either finished their training at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, been trained elsewhere, or had risen through the ranks. This did not mean that they were good officers, or particularly suited for African service, but minimally they had all been trained. During the Second World War, the British Army had to expand its officer corps in order to turn qualified civilians into soldiers. The result was the Officer Cadet Training Units (OCTU), where likely prospects were quickly trained and granted commissions. A similar system was used in East Africa, where settlers and members of the administration who

³⁰⁰Interviews #2 and #20.

³⁰¹Interview #1.

wished to serve with the forces were instructed at the OCTU school in Kenya, at Nakuru. While many OCTU graduates did become competent officers, it must have taken many of them considerably longer than their brief three-month tenure in a OCTU course to learn the management and leadership skills necessary for command.³⁰³

Even when officers were fully trained and had established themselves within their units, there was no guarantee that they would remain in the same position for the duration of the war. Combat casualties, promotions, transfers and the removal of good officers from active service due to ill health or age, all resulted in movement of officers within the EAC. In addition to the normal fluidity of wartime service, in 1943, as the Madagascar campaign came to a successful conclusion, many of Tanganyika's administrative officers who had been released for service with the forces returned to civil employment.³⁰⁴ The frequent changes of officers often made it difficult for askaris to form relationships and communicate with their officers, and such problems certainly contributed to tension and disciplinary problems in some units.

The breakdown of relations between officers and men that took place in certain units was not limited to the East African colonial forces; it was symptomatic of what was occurring throughout much of the British Army. The regimental system had been formed with a small volunteer army in mind and under those conditions worked well. The stresses imposed on the system by the

³⁰²For a detailed discussion of the importance of Military Education in East Africa and the formation and goals of the EAAEC, see Parsons, *African Rank and File*, pp. 111-117.

³⁰³J. Pitt, IWM 89/1 and GOC Officers Training School Expansion Nakuru, November 15, 1939. TNA 27780.

Second World War however, often resulted in officers and soldiers not having the necessary time to build relations and confidence in each other's abilities. The strain of active service, protracted absences from their families, and the shift from a small professional force to an army of volunteers and conscripts, all combined to change military service in the East African colonial forces during the Second World War.

African NCO's and Askaris

Two of most significant changes to affect East African forces during the Second World War were the abandonment of the heavy emphasis on recruiting Africans from "martial tribes," and the increasing demand for more educated soldiers. In the early months of the war, when the military continued to oversee recruiting, official correspondence shows that officers tried to recruit KAR askaris from ethnic groups with "strong military traditions," particularly the Sukuma, Ngoni, and Hehe. Initially volunteers from other tribes were placed in support units or encouraged to join the EAMLS, but long term, such a policy was untenable. By early 1940, the emphasis had shifted from trying to find adequate recruits from a selected set of ethnic groups to gladly allowing any men who were physically fit and eager to join combat units. The increase in the size of the armed forces, combined with the elimination of the requirement that only Africans from "martial" tribes could join the KAR, allowed large numbers of Africans who had previously been prevented from joining the army to enlist.

This change in recruiting methods, along with EAC's technique of forming new KAR battalions by removing approximately half of the NCO's and rank and

³⁰⁴J. Pitt, IWM 89/1.

file askaris from a existing battalion, and forming a new battalion by bringing both up to strength with new recruits, must certainly have resulted in more ethnically diverse battalions than the pre-war 6 KAR.³⁰⁵ Veterans bear this out. In their interviews, they spoke of serving not only alongside Kenyans and Ugandans, but also with Africans from all over Tanganyika. Furthermore, according to many Tanganyikan ex-askari, while there were sometimes tensions within mixed units, between groups of Ugandan, Kenyan and Tanganyikan askaris, it was uncommon for askaris to band together in informal groups based solely along ethnic lines while in their units. However, outside the confines of the unit, particularly when on leave and during demobilization, askaris did form temporary associations with fellow askaris and these were often based on ethnic affiliation. While some admit that there was a level of comfort involved in serving with askaris from one's own ethnic group, including a shared language, ethnicity was but one of many factors involved in the internal dynamics of units.

An individual's territory of origin seems to have been far more important than ethnic affiliation, especially when Tanganyikan askaris served in units with askaris from other colonies. Recruits learned to identify themselves as soldiers, but they also began to think of and refer to themselves as Tanganyikan askaris. The distinction is an important one, because although there were few serious

³⁰⁵This conclusion is primarily based on the battalion returns submitted by 6 KAR during the inter-war years, which show that the majority of askaris were recruited from four tribes. However, it is not inconceivable that a African who wanted to serve with the military could simply say he was from a certain ethnic group so that he would be recruited. Even if this happened, however, the KAR's policy of recruiting only in certain areas with high concentrations of specific tribes would mitigate against large number of recruits lying about their ethnic identity. The one veteran interviewed who served in the KAR before 1939 was unable to conclusively speak to the question of whether the KAR became more representative of the Tanganyikan population as a whole, since he served in a special signal unit where all the askaris had been recruited right out of school, and

problems between askaris from different East African territories, occasional fights, disagreements and petty inter-unit rivalries did occur. Furthermore, since most East African Brigades contained only a single Tanganyikan KAR battalion, it is not surprising that askaris measured their military prowess against the performance of the other battalions in their brigade. One result was that it was not just important that one was a member of a specific battalion, but that it was a Tanganyikan, as opposed to a Kenyan or Ugandan battalion. During interviews, askaris would mention the name of their unit, but when talking about military operations, they frequently referred to themselves not as 1/6 or 36 battalion, but as "the Tanganyikans." Other battalions were identified in the same way. Askari who served with 46 KAR in Burma as part of 28th EA Brigade would say "we fought alongside 7 Uganda KAR and 71 Somali battalion KAR." When describing operations during interviews however, battalion designations were seldom used and, particularly when relating poor performance by another battalion, Tanganyikan veterans would say "those Ugandans ran away" or "Tanganyikan people were better soldiers than those people from Somalia."³⁰⁶ In mixed units containing askari from several East African territories, relations were slightly different, but askaris did tend to congregate with soldiers from the same territory. However, this did not mean that relations between groups of Africans from different areas was poor. One pioneer who served with the AAPC in Egypt recalled:

the signal section was raised and run differently from 6 KAR.

³⁰⁶Interview #15.

Life in Egypt was very good. Better than in Nairobi. The towns were nice. Also we were mixed up with Americans, so I liked Egypt more than Kenya, and the food there was very good. There was no difficulty in living with fellow soldiers from different places, such as the Kikuyu and people from Uganda, Nyasaland and Americans. We were all living like brothers.³⁰⁷

While not all former askari described serving with soldiers from other East African territories in such a positive light, the tensions within mixed units appear to have been limited to petty quarrels. Almost all askari agreed that communication was seldom a problem, even with African soldiers who spoke absolutely no Swahili. Several veterans mentioned interacting with West African soldiers using a combination of English, gestures and hand signals. Such forms of communication appear to have been used primarily with other Africans, and occasionally with Americans, but seldom with British and Indian soldiers.³⁰⁸

While many officers continued to think of their soldiers as members of a tribal unit who did not really consider themselves "Tanganyikans," the evidence given by veterans strongly indicates that, at least during the war years, many identified and thought of themselves not as Mpare or Mzaramo askaris, but as Tanganyikan askaris.³⁰⁹

Although the need for African manpower did create new opportunities for groups which had been underrepresented in the military, tendencies definitely remained to channel recruits from specific ethnic groups into certain tasks. The Gogo, who had developed an excellent reputation as sanitary orderlies, but were considered fit for little else, were not recruited into the forces in large numbers

³⁰⁷Interview #24.

³⁰⁸Interview #29 and #35.

³⁰⁹Interview #13.

although a few did join the EAMLS. Similarly, the Makonde, who expressed little interest in serving in the military or the war in general, were conscripted and also served primarily as military laborers.³¹⁰ Would-be askaris among the Chaga suffered a different problem. As members of Tanganyika's best-educated ethnic group, many Chaga tried to avoid military service, preferring the commercial opportunities available in the Kilimanjaro region during the war. Following earlier stereotypes that the Chaga were fit only to be drivers and clerks, most were earmarked for these or other support roles. One Chaga veteran, who spoke with great pride about his military service, said the war presented him with the first opportunity to join the army, and since he wanted to be a soldier, he eagerly took it. He refused work as a driver and joined 6 KAR, eventually becoming a machine gunner.³¹¹ The only ethnic group that the military authorities continued to consider absolutely unsuitable for use as both soldiers and laborers was the Masai, whose reputation as undisciplined and un-trainable remained intact, and they were exempted from service for the duration of the war.

While some officers may have feared that abandoning the strict tribal quotas would fill the ranks of the KAR with inferior askaris, there is little evidence that most officers thought that the poor performance of some Tanganyikan units was a result of recruiting from among non-martial ethnic groups. Most KAR officers realized that cases of insubordination or lackluster action in the field

³¹⁰J. Gus Liebenow, *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 160-162. and Interview #138.

were due primarily to poor officers, lack of training or morale problems within the unit. As the officer who was brought in to "pull up" 46 KAR in Ethiopia put it, "The material was there. As someone once said to me many, many years ago, there are no bad soldiers. There are only bad officers."³¹²

In addition to altering patterns of recruiting based on concepts of "martial races," the EAC was also forced to change the KAR's earlier stand on the suitability of educated Africans for military service. Many officers who had served in the pre-war KAR, commented on how the changing educational requirements for the force resulted in more educated but less disciplined recruits. One officer who served with 2 KAR before the war noted:

It was noticeable that during the early part of the war, when the KAR started to expand and the old Regiments were milked of their best African NCO's, recruiting went by the board, and recruits were often found from mission boys with above average intelligence, who were able to read and write in order to carry out their duties in the signal section in the use of buzzer, lamp and flag. The same remarks apply to manning the 3" mortar and finding drivers for the jeeps, 15 cwt and 3 ton lorries. A more intellectual type of recruit was required and was enlisted from the Townships, as opposed to the Bush, and they possessed more imagination, but were less disciplined.³¹³

Interviews revealed no single dominant position among veterans regarding the question of relations between European officers and members of the African rank and file. While many could cite instances of having known of, or experienced first hand, officers who were unjust, inefficient, or martinets, others

³¹¹Interview #3. Clearly an exception to the theory of "martial races," this individual not only insisted on joining the KAR, but fearing that he would have to leave the army following the war, he was one of the first men in his unit to reengage for post war service, and he remained in the KAR until 1951. Even then, he had not entirely tired of military life, and when the war with Uganda broke out in 1979, he attempted to join the TPDF but was turned down due to his age.

³¹²Sherwood, P.O.B. IWM Department of Sound Records, 4404.

³¹³Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105.

recalled that some officers were concerned about the welfare of their soldiers and did their job well. Other askaris drew a sharp distinction between military discipline and decorum and the actions of their particular officers, arguing that, while most officers were strict disciplinarians, this was "army life," and did not reflect on their relationship with those under their command. Several askaris who expressed such views served in Burma, where the extremely primitive conditions in the field forced units to abandon many of the more glaring examples of military segregation based on both race and rank. The following heated conversation between two former askaris took place during an interview and it highlights some of these complexities. When asked about relations between Europeans and Africans, and if there had been a color bar in the KAR one informant responded:

Askari 1. No we had good cooperation between us. As to discrimination, we had different toilets, dining halls etc. but it was army life, so, no, it was not color bar.

Askari 2. You said there was no color bar. Did you sleep with them (Europeans)? Did you eat with them? Did you get their rank?

Askari 1. During the war we had no mess, no dormitory. We all slept in the trenches, no Europeans no Africans. Because, even for Africans ourselves, we were separated according to rank. Why don't you call that discrimination?

Askari 2. What about life in general, including in the camps, was there no segregation?

Askari 1. That's true: in the camps there was segregation between officers and NCO's, Africans and Europeans...that's not segregation. It was just army respect. (long pause) OK. I agree. They didn't give us officer's rank because they didn't respect us.

Askari 2. So what was that? ...it's color bar!³¹⁴

Many askaris understood that there were differences between officers and enlisted men and accepted these conditions as part of military service. What they

found unacceptable was that they were denied the opportunity to become officers simply because they were Africans. Many other askari were less accepting and one veteran bitterly remembered:

Also racial discrimination was very common during that time, because one funny thing was, if there was a Black RSM and a White one, the Black will report to the White and even salute him. Whites considered themselves superior to Black soldiers, even, for example, the Sergeants' mess was separate for the Blacks and Whites and the other rank's mess also. It was impossible for a Black to stick his nose in a White's mess except to do some labor. So in general, we were not human beings to Whites.³¹⁵

Askaris' anger increased when they served alongside Indian, South African and British troops and discovered that the military did not function using two sets of rules, one for officers and one for soldiers, but three. The third set of rules applied only to Africans. Receiving separate rations, indifferent access to amenities, and less pay than Indian and British soldiers of the same rank infuriated many askaris. Military policies that did not require British soldiers to salute African NCO's, and, in some cases, even allowed British soldiers to contradict or overrule higher ranking Africans, fueled askaris' anger. The fact that British soldiers could not show the same disrespect to Indian officers and NCO's made matters even worse. The military's insistence on maintaining dual standards, and treating askaris as inferior to their Indian and British comrades, was at the center of many disciplinary problems within African units.

One of the most striking things when interviewing former askaris was how few of them differentiated between soldiers who served in combat units and

³¹⁴Interview #34. The second askari who interrupted was interview #32.

³¹⁵Interview #16.

those in specialist and support units. When asked why veterans drew almost no distinction between a rifleman in a KAR battalion, an orderly in the EAAMC, or a technician in the EME, informants responded in a number of different ways. Several said the only criterion for determining if a person was an askari was whether they had gone through a period of basic military training that involved marching and learning how to fire a rifle. Once these two qualifications had been met, an individual was a soldier even if he spent the entire war in Dar es Salaam working as a clerk and never heard a shot fired in anger. Other veterans pointed out that, while askaris in KAR battalions did serve in the front lines, they were not the only ones who faced hardship and danger. Stretcher bearers, pioneers, signalers and technicians, all operated in forward areas and occasionally came under enemy fire.

Colonial and military officials realized the importance African soldiers attached to training with and possessing arms. When, due to a shortage of rifles, Middle East command planned on withdrawing some weapons from AAPC companies, several officials argued that such a move would have a adverse affect on the discipline of AAPC units and could hurt further recruiting efforts.³¹⁶ The one major exception to this noticeable lack of tension between front line and rear echelon askaris occurred when several of the askaris who served in the AAPC in Egypt were interviewed. These individuals felt that their wartime service had been minimized, despite the fact that they had been fighting the Germans, while the better-armed and equipped KAR battalions had only fought the Italians. As one pioneer who served in Egypt said, "We fought the Germans. They had

planes and big guns, but the KAR, they fought the Italians who ran away".³¹⁷ While veterans had a clear definition of who had the right to refer to themselves as former askaris, they were equally adamant that members of the EAMLS were not soldiers but only laborers. This low opinion of members of the EAMLS was certainly reinforced by their much shorter term of service, the fact that many were conscripts instead of volunteers, the monotonous work they were forced to perform and the fact that they were issued with sandals instead of boots. With the exception of the EAMLS, most veterans are adamant that there was no tension between KAR and other askaris who served at the front and the members of rear echelon units.

Health

Both the East African governments and the EAC wanted to avoid any repetition of the mistakes that had so plagued British East African forces during the First World War, when tens of thousands of carriers had died from a combination of overwork, inadequate rations and lack of medical care. Consequently, following the declaration of war, the East African governments seconded medical personnel to the forces, and the EAC formed medical and sanitation units to ensure that East African forces had adequate medical facilities. Tanganyika mobilized a Field Ambulance Company, Motor Ambulance Convey and Casualty Clearing Station, and another Field Ambulance Company was formed in Zanzibar. In addition to locally raised units, the South African forces that took part in the Ethiopian campaign included a magnificently

³¹⁶Proceedings of Manpower Conference, 1942, PRO, CO 968/131/6

³¹⁷Interview #29.

equipped Field Ambulance company, and the Belgian Congo provided a Casualty Clearing Station and EAC's only ambulance aircraft. Severely wounded askari were also flown to rear hospitals on communication aircraft, but the majority of medical evacuations were carried out using ambulances.³¹⁸

Notwithstanding these efforts, Tanganyika and the other East African governments were fortunate that the Italians never managed to inflict large numbers of casualties on British forces. If they had, the medical services would have been overwhelmed. With the exception of the South Africans, the ambulance units fielded by the East African governments were quickly thrown together at the start of the war. Consequently, their equipment was often aged or ill-suited for battlefield conditions, and both junior staff and many of the doctors had no experience running a medical unit during active operations. Shortly after the war began, a major reorganization was mounted to bring the organization of the East African ambulance units up to the South African standard, but changes were still being implemented when the campaign started. Furthermore, while standardization and training could overcome some of the deficiencies of the East African ambulance units, other problems, such as lack of suitable vehicles and equipment, remained.

Fortunately for both the troops and medical personnel, East African forces suffered only light casualties during the campaign. Medical units also benefited from a cornucopia of excellent medical supplies abandoned by Italian units at regular intervals during their hasty retreat. The Italians left so much material

³¹⁸Medical Quarterly Reports, February-April 1941. PRO, WO 222/1806, *Annual Report of the Medical Department, 1939* and *Abridged Annual Report of the Medical Department 1940*. TNA

behind that the British described it as "almost embarrassingly large." When British units walked into the Italian main depot at Addis Ababa, they captured medical stores worth an estimated one million pounds. While able to re-supply their stores from captured Italian stockpiles, the East African ambulance units could do little about their poor ambulances and that casualties often had to endure long agonizing journeys over poor roads.³¹⁹ Ambulance units and casualty clearing stations were stationed well behind the front lines. Askaris wounded in combat were first treated by battalion stretcher-bearers and dressers, and then carried to the battalion medical officer or an ambulance. One KAR officer described the medical arrangements, noting that the medical staff gave priority to wounded British and South African troops.

We had these ghastly ambulances. Many an African died as a result of not having attention. And there was a bit of a tendency among the RAMC to say, "Are there any white ranks here?" - to look after the white ranks. And I wouldn't have it. I was in an ambulance with three Africans, one of whom died. He had the whole of his back blown out. It was dreadful.³²⁰

During the campaign, in addition to battle casualties and injuries sustained during accidents, the diseases most commonly treated by medical personnel were dysentery, pneumonia, malaria and venereal diseases. When the fighting drew to a close, most of the ambulance and casualty clearing units were withdrawn to East Africa, and injured and sick askaris received treatment from the medical officers or dressers assigned to their units. Seriously injured or ill patients were accommodated in local hospitals or sent back to Kenya for

11727.

treatment at No. 1 EA General Hospital.

Following the completion of the Ethiopian campaign, the 1st (Tanganyika) Field Ambulance returned to Nairobi and was later stationed in Moshi. The 2nd (Zanzibar) Field Ambulance was attached to the 21st EA Brigade and accompanied the brigade to Ceylon. The 10th Belgian Casualty Clearing Station also served in Burma with 11 EA Division. In addition to complete medical units, all the infantry and support units preparing to go overseas as part of 11 EA Division, but not connected with specific brigade groups, required medical and sanitation officers as part of their establishment. Demands to furnish medical officers, nurses, and technicians for units going overseas became particularly difficult in 1943, when the East African governments asked that administrative personnel who had joined the forces be required to return to their pre-war positions. The gradual removal of these officers from the armed forces created a serious shortage of trained medical personnel who spoke Swahili and had experience working with African soldiers and civilians. The lack of such qualified personnel, combined with inadequate hospital facilities for Africans, was already a problem for some AAPC units serving in the Middle East, where pioneers complained of the inability of their officers and doctors to speak their language. The Deputy Director of Medical Services, fearing that such difficulties would spread throughout the EAC, noted "It is unnecessary to stress the bad effect caused by the substitution of officers experienced with handling the African by

³¹⁹Medical Quarterly Reports, February-April 1941. PRO, WO 222/1806.
³²⁰Philip Arthur Thorne, IWM Sound Archive 6912.

others, quite inexperienced, who cannot even ask him his symptoms."³²¹ Despite such concerns, and efforts to delay the inevitable, the return of medical officers to their respective governments was well underway by the end of 1943, and many of the new doctors found themselves treating patients they could not communicate with, except through interpreters.

In Burma, wounded askari would either make their way back from the front lines, or be carried back by stretcher bearers, and would be treated at aid stations by unit medical officers. Seriously wounded or sick askari would be flown to hospitals in India. One askari who was shot in the upper thigh remembers being flown out of Burma to 88 General Hospital in India for emergency treatment. After his operation, he was transferred from the "Indian hospital" to 105 General Hospital, which "was only for Africans" to recover.³²² In addition to treating wounded or injured askaris, medical personnel kept busy trying to maintain the health of soldiers living in appalling conditions. To prevent malaria, askaris were required to take prophylactic Mepacrine and were provided with mosquito nets. Sanitation officers further attempted to cut down on instances of malaria and other fly-borne diseases by spraying latrines, campsites and kitchens with DDT. Despite these measures, askaris continued to succumb to the disease. In addition to malaria, askaris also suffered from dysentery, cholera and scrub typhus. To prevent the spread of cholera and smallpox, askaris were given vaccinations every three months. Another common complaint was a variety of skin diseases, especially foot rot, that askaris contracted either

³²¹Medical Quarterly Reports, April-June 1943. PRO, WO 222/1806.

³²²Interview #34.

as a result of going barefoot or from wearing sodden socks and boots for days on end.³²³

Tanganyikan askaris and military laborers who were discharged on medical grounds returned home. According to demobilization policy, those askari who required further medical care would receive follow-up treatment at civil hospitals along with the rest of the African population. Although there was some discussion of establishing special wards for former askaris, the administration lacked the funds to build such facilities. The Director of Medical Services also weighed in, arguing that the territory lacked the necessary medical personnel to meet the African population's current demands for treatment, and therefore it was impractical to build special facilities that could not be equipped or staffed. Furthermore, throughout the war, the numbers of veterans returning to the territory for medical reasons remained small, and according to the authorities, they could be easily accommodated at existing facilities. The Tanganyikan government was also extremely reluctant to support any proposal that established former soldiers as a special class. Towards the end of the war, when demobilization was well underway, the possibility was raised of allowing ex-soldiers to receive priority treatment at medical centers. District officers noted that some veterans became angry when forced to wait for long periods of time to see a doctor and felt that the easiest way to deal with the problem was to give them preferential treatment. Like the earlier proposals, this idea was quickly vetoed. Former askaris had to wait in line to receive medical care just like any

³²³Malcom Page, *The King's African Rifles*, pp. 169-170. Glass, Harold Patrick RHL, MSS Afr.s. 1715/105.

other member of the population.

Few seriously wounded or diseased askaris appear to have returned to Tanganyika until late 1944. Askari who required serious care, or the fitting of artificial limbs, were accommodated at a rehabilitation center in Nairobi. Less serious cases were cared for at a subsidiary center opened up during the war in Dar es Salaam. Provision was made to house a few AAPC pioneers who contracted leprosy while serving in the Middle East at government or mission settlements. Askaris suffering from tuberculosis or other chest complaints were treated by the military authorities at the Nyeri chest center, and fifty additional beds were also provided at Kibongoto for similar ailments. Finally, the Tanganyika Government came to an arrangement with the Government of Kenya, whereby blinded askaris from Tanganyika would be accepted at a institution at Thika, managed by the Salvation Army under the supervision of the Kenya Education Department. These temporary measures proved sufficient to care for the small numbers of wounded that trickled in throughout the war. The debate over how to organize and fund the long term care of wounded veterans would continue, however, long after demobilization was completed.³²⁴

The EAC also made some provision for treating askaris suffering from mental disorders. Military psychiatrists considered a wide variety of medical conditions and behavior as mental disorders, including anxiety, hysteria, homosexuality, psychoneurotic depression, schizophrenia, manic depression, temperamental instability, chronic alcoholism and "dull and backward," a diagnosis that was certainly seldom applied to non-Africans. Medical personnel

frequently diagnosed Africans as suffering from "transient hysterical pseudo-dementia, simulating psychotic insanity" or to put it simply, "hysterics with motor symptoms." To treat such cases, army psychiatrists used a variety of treatments, including "electrical convulsion therapy." Hysterical paralysis in Africans was treated with small injections of intravenous alcohol. African personnel serving in the EAC who suffered from mental disorders were sent to No. 1 EA General Hospital in Nairobi for treatment. Depending on the diagnosis and how the patient responded to the treatment, askaris were either discharged or sent back to their units. Dangerous mental cases remained hospitalized in a mental institution in Kenya. The decision to return individuals to their original units following successful treatment was complicated by the fact that their comrades often did not want them back.³²⁵

The hospital's mental health ward, like other units, suffered from a lack of trained staff capable of communicating with Africans. These problems became particularly noticeable in 1944, when government officials seconded to the forces returned to their government posts, as noted in the quarterly report in psychiatry.

The medical problems of the African do not seem to get quite the same trouble spent on them as the same problems of the Europeans. This may be due to the exigencies of the command which demand that MO's (Medical Officers) who have little or no experience of Africans, must assume responsibility for their medical care.³²⁶

Askari serving in South East Asia who suffered mental breakdowns or exhibited

³²⁴Notes of contents of demobilization booklet, August 16, 1944. TNA 33137.

³²⁵Medical Quarterly Report in Psychiatry NO. 1 EA General Hospital, October-December 1943. PRO, WO 222/1827

symptoms of mental disorders were originally diagnosed by unit Medical Officers and sent for treatment to hospitals in India.

The question of how mental patients considered unfit for further military service would be cared for following their discharge was extremely difficult. Neither the EAC, nor the East African governments, wanted mentally damaged veterans returning to their communities, where no mental health services were available. Despite such concerns, there was almost nothing the Tanganyikan government could do, other than accommodate the more serious mental cases at the Dodoma Mental hospital, which was seriously overcrowded. Milder cases in which rest was required were placed at Lutindi. At the district level, some mental patients were also temporarily housed in jails until space could be found for them at the Dodoma mental hospital.³²⁷ Despite this lack of facilities, relatively few discharged askaris appear to have returned home suffering from serious mental illnesses. Although district files contain few references to mentally ill askaris, this does not mean that men did not come home exhibiting symptoms of shell shock or post-traumatic stress syndrome. Several former askaris, who served as orderlies with the EAAMC, claimed that they saw men manifesting such symptoms in their communities following the war. These statements are corroborated by similar claims made by some of the askaris who served in Burma. According to both sources, a few askaris who had experienced combat while serving in South East Asia returned home tense and withdrawn, and it took some time for the memories of the campaign to fade and for them to return to

³²⁶Medical Quarterly Report in Psychiatry NO. 1 EA General Hospital, January-March 1944.
PRO, WO 222/1827

civilian life.

None of the askaris interviewed expressed any dissatisfaction with the quality of medical care they received during the war, although several voiced dissatisfaction with postwar arrangements. Those former askaris who were wounded or became sick during the Ethiopian campaign described the facilities run by the EAAMC as being clean, well supplied and adequately equipped. Although several remembered being treated by doctors who spoke little or no Swahili, none said it was a problem, since they just described their symptoms to an interpreter or orderly who passed the information on. Some veterans described being in hospital as a relaxing break from normal routine where they could catch up on their rest and eat regular, well-cooked meals.³²⁸ For others however, the experience was terrifying. One EAMLS laborer responded to a question about casualties and the state of hospitals as follows:

Yes, there were casualties, many of them, but because I was in the labor service most of the casualties were from accidents and others were just sick. I also had a disease. These maggots had infected my feet and I could not even stand because my feet were bleeding and it was terribly painful. You can see even now how my feet are. When we arrived in Somalia, I was taken to hospital and there were many soldiers who were hospitalized for dysentery. It was awful, because when you woke up in the next morning you found a patient in the next bed had gone, and after a few hours another...It was very bad. Many people died.³²⁹

Other veterans who served in East Africa as dressers in the EAAMC recalled occasionally treating seriously wounded patients who had lost their arms or legs

³²⁷Notes in Secretary of State's Confidential Circular, August 16, 1944. TNA 33137

³²⁸Interview #30.

³²⁹Interview #14.

or had severe chest or stomach wounds.³³⁰

Discipline

Military discipline changed little during the Second World War and officers continued to resort to a number of harsh measures to keep control over their soldiers. Yet officers also found they had to be increasingly careful about over-relying on punishment. The growing numbers of Africans serving in the armed forces, the changing of recruiting and training standards, and askaris' rising discontent with racial discrimination, all made discipline a highly contested area. While most askaris continued to acknowledge that discipline was an integral part of military life, few were willing to accept a harsher standard of discipline than that meted out to non-African soldiers.

Much of the debate continued to center on corporal punishment. It is difficult to dispute claims by British officers that, prior to the Second World War, askaris accepted a variety of punishments, including flogging, simply as a part of army life. What is abundantly clear from both officers' memoirs and interviews with former askaris is that African soldiers vigorously objected to the practice once they realized that neither Indian nor British soldiers were flogged. During interviews, several ex-askaris mentioned flogging and all voiced their disgust at the punishment.³³¹ Although some officers, including many who arrived in East Africa after the start of the war, found the practice distasteful, others argued vehemently that corporal punishment was necessary to maintain control over the increasing numbers of askaris. Officers stationed in Tanganyika reported cases

³³⁰Interview #12, #32, and #20.

³³¹Interview #10 and #19.

of corporal punishment to headquarters in Dar es Salaam and, judging by the correspondence, regularly resorted to the cane. The officer who commanded the KAR Depot in Tanganyika in the early years of the war frequently awarded strokes for such minor offences as leaving the barracks, drunkenness and being improperly or slovenly dressed. He argued that corporal punishment was one of the few effective deterrents available to keep askaris from leaving their barracks and going to a nearby village to drink, noting:

It is not possible to prevent men from leaving a large unenclosed camp. Without severe deterrent punishment of men breaking barracks, and particularly of those doing so for the purpose of visiting places like Keko, a serious situation might develop. The trained recruits, followers, details etc. is approximately 900 and the number of African NCOs (many of whom are very inexperienced or of doubtful quality) is comparatively small.³³²

Lack of suitable manpower figures prominently in a number of similar reports from other installations. Another justification for using corporal punishment was a reluctance on the part of the commanders to impose long prison sentences on askaris, as they would have to serve their time in the civil jail, and would be exposed to "hardened criminals."³³³

Administering corporal punishment became much more difficult once askaris began to be posted outside East Africa. One officer who served in the prewar KAR, and had routinely offered askaris six strokes of the cane as an alternative to being confined to barracks, noted how his soldiers' views towards corporal punishment changed during the war.

³³²CO Depot, Tanganyika to HQ Lines of Communication, Dar es Salaam, February 3, 1940. TNA 10489 Vol. II.

Later on in the war, when I was Commander of a battalion in Burma where the askari served outside Africa for the first time, I had a caning administered on active service. Shortly after this, the African RSM requested that caning should no longer be administered, as it did not happen in British or Indian units. I immediately agreed, as it was now clear that caning was no longer considered a man's punishment.³³⁴

Not all officers were so quick to appreciate that the African attitude towards corporal punishment had changed, and in many units, canings continued to be administered until the practice was formally abolished in 1946.

Although askaris loathed the practice and, when possible, attempted to pressure their officers and NCO's to abolish corporal punishment, it was by no means the only form of physical discipline available. Officers who did not want to resort to corporal punishment but found other measures, such as fines, confining soldiers to barracks or imprisonment, ineffective or impracticable, could always assign exhausting physical exercises or added fatigues. One askari who served with the AAPC commented on the various forms of punishment administered.

Discipline during that time was very high, because the only thing that existed was the command from the commander to his subordinates, and if you were caught doing something wrong you would be punished. You would be flogged, or have to jog with all your kit on your back, for three days sometimes. Or have to report to the commander every six hours with all your kit. So these were the types of punishment. Sometimes you can be imprisoned for seven days or more. If you are not satisfied, you can file a complaint with you commanding officer, which was rarely done.³³⁵

Resistance to disciplinary measures varied widely. Resistance was

³³³CO Depot, Tanganyika to HQ Lines of Communication, Dar es Salaam, January 13, 1940. TNA 10489 Vol. II.

³³⁴George, G. Robson. RHL MSS Afr.s. 1715/231.

³³⁵Interview #16.

heavily influenced by the composition of the unit, conditions of service and the quality of officers and NCO's. The lowering of recruiting standards and the introduction of conscription resulted in large numbers of Africans entering the forces who never would have been considered suitable material during the inter-war years. Furthermore, the Tanganyikan government's policy of conscripting tax defaulters and petty criminals into the military ensured that the force contained a much greater number of undesirables than it had pre-war. For example, military authorities discovered that one private, stationed at the depot in Dar es Salaam, had amassed 15 convictions between 1922 and 1939, when he joined the KAR. His criminal record came to light when he was brought up on charges for stealing money from a fellow soldier and subsequently flogged.³³⁶

While many askari were aware that they had the right to go to their unit's commanding officer and appeal punishments, few chose this option. Most thought it would do little good to protest, while others feared reprisals from NCO's or officers should their original sentence be reduced. As one askari who served in Burma put it:

Even if we were mistreated, we were afraid of doing anything, because we were far from home and those people (British officers) could leave us there. If they did that, we would not know anything and who knows what we would have done.³³⁷

In addition to imprisonment, corporal punishment and assigning askaris additional fatigues, officers could also impose fines on soldiers. Military

³³⁶CO Depot, Tanganyika to HQ Lines of Communication, Dar es Salaam, February 5, 1940. TNA 10489 Vol. II.

³³⁷Interview #1.

authorities fined askaris for losing or damaging their equipment and for other minor offenses. In extreme circumstances, commanding officers also occasionally resorted to holding parades where they attempted to shame members of their units into altering their personal habits or improve unit efficiency. One area where military officials attempted to use both these disciplinary strategies concerned problems related to the high rates of venereal disease in East African units.

The question of how to deal with venereal disease in the KAR had perplexed both the Tanganyikan government and the brigade commanders during the interwar years. Throughout the 1930's, several officers, including Colonel Case, who served as the Southern Brigade Commander, argued that askaris who contracted VD could not effectively perform their duties and therefore should lose a portion of their pay, until they were declared fit by the medical officer. Members of the government, backed by health officials, argued that such a policy was counterproductive, because askari would not come forward to seek treatment and instead would try to hide their infirmity for as long as possible. The small size of the force and the high standard of both supervision and medical care meant that VD was only a minor problem during the inter-war years. With the rapid increase in the size of the East African forces after 1939 however, the number of confirmed cases of VD increased drastically. Military authorities worried that such diseases would negatively affect unit performance, while their counterparts in the civil government feared that VD would rapidly spread to the civilian population, carried by soldiers returning home on leave or discharge.

Throughout the war, officers remained conflicted on how to deal with the problems posed by the rising number of VD cases in the ranks. Military authorities viewed venereal disease as both a health and a disciplinary issue and

tried to use a combination of prevention, education and punishment to keep askaris from contracting such diseases. As can be seen in the following excerpt from a officer who served in 1/6 KAR when it was stationed at Adigrat in 1941, such measures proved largely ineffective, and officers resorted to setting up brothels.

The askaris were able to get what they wanted in the town and VD was becoming a problem. Anyone who contracted it lost his proficiency pay, so company brothels had been started. However, these did not work, as some askaris still went out, caught a disease and passed it on to the women in the brothels before it was detected; other better disciplined men caught it, although they had not been out in town and lost their proficiency pay.³³⁸

While some officers argued that the number of VD cases dropped substantially following the establishment of regulated brothels, such appeals were not enough to convince the EAC in Nairobi to continue the practice. When word leaked out that officers in the EAC were organizing brothels, there was public outrage and the brothels were quickly closed. Following the closure of the military brothels, company commanders once again began to complain about the rise in the number of VD cases. One brigade was treating between 800 and 1,000 cases a day and there is no doubt that this impacted the formations' effectiveness.³³⁹ Some officers tried to prevent the spread of STD's to their units by refusing to allow askaris weekend passes and confining units in garrisons, but even these methods proved ineffective, and askaris became very proficient in smuggling

³³⁸J. Pitt. IWM 89/1

³³⁹Suggested Notes for Lectures: African Troops, Circular No. 14 EAC, November 30, 1941. TNA 29489.

women into the lines.³⁴⁰

For their part, many askaris viewed the military response to the spread of venereal disease as yet another intrusion into their private affairs and resented being fined and harangued.

In our free time we would go out to town visiting pombe shops and would meet prostitutes. We would give them money and dance with them. But it was very difficult if you got sexually transmitted diseases and, for example, if you had a rank and they find out that you got such a disease they would lower your rank. When I was on leave in Dar es Salaam, I was a sergeant. The military police found me in Kariakoo in a dance hall, dancing with my army uniform on. I was sent to quarter guard. I was held for several days and sent to Nairobi where I was examined by a medical officer and they took away one rank. That was in 1943.

Threatening entire units proved no more effective than fines. When the commanding officer of 1/6 KAR told assembled askaris that they would not be allowed to enter Addis Abbaba, because so many of them had shown a lack of discipline and contracted STD's, the soldiers responded that if they were disgraced in such a fashion, they would sell their rifles to the Italians and return home. Faced with mass resistance, the battalion commander had no choice but to back down and had to be content with holding special *sindano* (needle) parades and restricting local leave.

Following the defeat of Italian forces, the EAC found itself having to deal with rising VD rates and restless and discontented garrisons. Military authorities acknowledged that fining askaris suffering from VD by itself was inadequate to force askaris to change their leisure habits. Furthermore, officers realized that it would be both impossible and dangerous to limit contact between askari and the

³⁴⁰Philip Arthur Thorne, IWM Department of Sound Records, 6912.

civilian population for an extended period of time. Since harsher punishments might provoke a serious response, members of the EAC decided that the only option remaining was to attempt to educate askaris about the danger posed by STD's. Working closely with the East African governments, the military authorities pressured members of Native Administrations to encourage families of askaris to write to their kin in the army reminding them of the dangers involved in associating with prostitutes and drinking.³⁴¹ Material on STD's was disseminated by unit medical officers and was available at army reading rooms. A sample lecture on the subject was distributed to all commanding officers, advising them to appeal to their askaris "major loyalties" such as the government, their families, and their unit. Askaris were encouraged to engage in physical activities, such as sports, which would supposedly diminish the "sex-urge," or advised to spend time at the nearest African Institute canteen, where they could write home, read or listen to the radio. Acknowledging that a large percentage of askaris would not alter their behavior, medical officers passed out free condoms and soldiers who contracted VD were encouraged to seek immediate treatment. Finally, military authorities slightly amended the punishment for askaris who caught some form of VD, as can be seen in this summary from a lecture on the subject.

³⁴¹Circular from the Chief Secretary to the Governors Conference, May 12, 1943. This document included information from HQ EAC explaining the start of a campaign in the army against VD and requesting the help of the East African governments. Also included was a sample letter written by a Kenyan Chief to askaris warning them of the dangers posed by VD and asking them to remain true to their families, which the EAC recommended be distributed to members of Native Authorities so they could write similar appeals. TNA 19153.

Not a bit necessary to go with women, to do so in this country (Ethiopia) is particularly dangerous. If you do, you must take precautions. The man who does take precautions and is unlucky enough to get VD is not going to be punished as long as he does not hide it; but the man who does not take precautions by using the E.T. (early treatment) Room, or tries to hide it, will be punished.³⁴²

Despite such efforts, the spread of gonorrhoea and syphilis remained a major cause for concern for both civil and military officials. Later in the war, the *Tanganyika Standard* carried a series of articles and letters to the editor which declared venereal disease a "Nuisance and a Menace." Medical officials worried that soldiers returning home on leave, or new drafts coming up the great north road, would increase the spread of STD's among Tanganyika's civilian population.³⁴³

The battles over corporal punishment and how to deal with STD's highlight some of the limitations colonial forces faced when soldiers either overtly or passively resisted military discipline. Military authorities, fearing large scale resistance, and concerned about the reliability of African units, frequently had to resort to propaganda, education and compromise to motivate askaris. For their part, while many askaris grudgingly accepted that discipline was necessary, few proved willing to submit meekly to forms of control that they found degrading or discriminatory.

Pay, Rations and Conditions of Service

African soldiers frequently argued that their rations, clothing, and particularly pay, were all inferior to those enjoyed by British and Indian soldiers.

³⁴²Excerpt from the summary of Suggested Notes for Lectures: African Troops, Circular No. 14 EAC, November 30, 1941. TNA 29489.

³⁴³Extract from the Proceedings of the Conference of Directors of Medical Services, held at Entebbe, October 27, 1943. TNA 29489. *Tanganyika Standard*, November 2, 1944.

Such complaints were definitely justified. By far, the most serious issue was the problem of the low pay rates for all East African ranks. In the inter-war years, askaris were content with their wages because military pay scales exceeded what most men could expect to earn as civilians. This situation changed drastically during the Second World War when East African members of the armed forces began to interact with soldiers from Britain, India and West Africa and discovered that everyone else received higher wages, and often enjoyed superior amenities, despite doing exactly the same work. The influx of more educated askaris into the forces may also have stimulated grievances over the poor wage scale. Privates serving in the KAR continued to receive 28 shillings a month, exactly what they had been making when the war began. Following the creation of the EAMLS and AAPC, military officials complied with requests from the East African governments to set pay scales low so that they would be only slightly higher than civilian rates. The East African governments justifiably feared that if military laborers were significantly better paid than their civilian counterparts they would return home with heightened expectations and demand higher wages. If East Africans had not been serving alongside other military laborers, they might have been more content with their wages, since they certainly made more than unskilled laborers in Tanganyika, but such was not the case. AAPC pioneers serving in the Middle East discovered that they not only made less than KAR askaris, but that West and South African military laborers serving in pioneer units also received higher wages. Many pioneers became bitter that their service lacked the prestige of the KAR, despite the fact that they frequently saw more combat and endured greater dangers than many KAR askaris serving in Ethiopia. KAR askaris who served alongside South African units in the Ethiopian campaign were equally disgruntled about discrepancies in pay.

The anger askaris and military laborers felt about the differences in African, European and Indian pay scales increased when East African units served farther afield. In part, this was due to greater exposure to other Imperial forces in the Middle East and South East Asia. Living and serving alongside West African, Indian and British units, East Africans had ample opportunity to observe and compare their food, living conditions, and the amount of money they had to spend with those of their comrades in arms. Another cause for complaint however, was the high price of necessities and luxury items in Egypt, India and Burma. Askari responded to the claims, put forward by the EAC and the Tanganyikan government that they were well paid by local standards, by pointing out that they were serving abroad and that local East African standards did not apply. Although problems did occur in East African units serving in the Middle East, the most glaring disparity became apparent in South East Asia. East African askaris who served abroad received an additional two shillings to their standard pay rate. British soldiers in Asia were given a "Far East Allowance," a "War Service Increment," and a "Japanese Campaign Allowance" which, combined, more than doubled their pay.³⁴⁴ Askaris also discovered that the Indian soldiers that they fought alongside were better paid, and this increased discontent and ill feeling among East African units in India and Burma. Such feelings were certainly exacerbated by askaris' increasing perceptions of self-worth, combined with the terrible conditions they had to fight and live in. Askaris who fought their way down the Kabaw Valley had managed to cross the Chindwin during the monsoon, something neither the British nor the Indians

³⁴⁴Parsons, *African Rank and File*, pp. 193-194.

could do. Why then were they being paid so much less? A further grievance several askaris mentioned was that the families of British soldiers received a maintenance allowance, while askaris had to provide for their families out of their scant wages. Most askaris had approximately one-third of their wages set aside for the use of their family members. Therefore, a private earning 28 shillings a month, who had signed the required forms to allow the army to remove 10 shillings a month from his wages for the upkeep of his family, was being paid only 18 shillings a month for possibly risking his life.

The standard rate of pay for a KAR private was 28 shillings a month. A corporal earned 48 shillings a month and a sergeant earned 64 shillings per month. Warrant Officers received 80 shillings or 120 shillings a month, depending on grade. Askaris also received increases in pay for military proficiency, education or for possessing technical skills. For example, a private (grade II) serving in a medical unit earned an additional 12 shillings a month, while a sergeant received 30 shillings on top of his standard wage.³⁴⁵

For some askaris, anger over low rates of pay was often compounded by difficult service conditions, and the fact that askaris received what they perceived to be inferior rations than those issued to British and Indian troops. African grievances over the quality and quantity of their food was not based on inadequacy. It centered on the fact that askari felt that they were being discriminated against because British troops received a more generous ration scale. The EAC began the Ethiopian campaign with five or six different ration

³⁴⁵Rates of Pay Medical Units-KAR, Medical Conference August 30, 1939. TNA 27475. Interview #12.

scales for African troops, three for Indian soldiers and two for Europeans (one for South Africans and one for British soldiers). These diverse scales led to supply problems and the EAC realized that maintaining such a complicated system was untenable. In June 1940, the ration scales were consolidated to one scale for each race. Later a special ration had to be added for Somali askaris, who refused to eat the standard African rations. The caloric value of each scale was 4,403 calories for European troops, 4,248 calories for Indians and 3,634 calories for Africans.³⁴⁶

Most of the African veterans interviewed for this study were satisfied with their rations, stating that they usually received adequate portions of meat, maize meal or rice and, when available, fresh fruits and vegetables. During the Ethiopian campaign, troops occasionally had to push on with reduced rations and often had to do without fresh produce, but this caused few hardships. In Madagascar, soldiers supplemented their rations with fruit foraged from gardens or purchased from local villagers. While campaigning in Burma, askaris were supplied with the same rations as Indian and British soldiers, including maize meal, rice and canned fruit, vegetables and meat. In Burma, once again, the askaris' main complaint with their food was not the quality but the quantity. The pace of operations and difficulties involved in keeping units supplied, occasionally resulted in failure adequately to supply troops in the field, and at times, askaris had to operate on reduced rations for short periods.³⁴⁷

In addition to having their own rations, askaris also continued to be issued

³⁴⁶Medical Quarterly Reports, East Africa 1940-1941. PRO, WO 222/1806.

³⁴⁷Interview #11.

with a different style of uniform from those worn by other Imperial troops. African battle dress uniforms consisted of a khaki shirt and shorts, a belt, thick socks and boots. For warmth, askaris were issued with a blue long-sleeved pullover, and some also had army greatcoats. At the start of the war, the traditional fez was replaced by a Australian style bush hat for every day use. KAR battalions continued to wear the fez for parades and other formal occasions. In South East Asia, the askaris' long khaki drill shorts were replaced with long pants and a bush jacket both in jungle green. Askaris secured the cuffs of their trousers to their boots with khaki ankle puttees.³⁴⁸ Although veterans describe military clothing as durable and well made, African uniforms were clearly inferior to those worn by British troops; they lacked pockets, belt loops, collars or a fly. As with their rations, African soldiers did not take issue with the uniforms they were issued because they were not functional; they took issue because they felt they should be as well dressed as any other soldiers in the British army. Military laborers in the EAMLS wore a similar style uniform, but were issued leather sandals instead of boots.

Service conditions varied widely, depending on the unit, where it was stationed and the availability of supplies and transport. In almost all units, however, wartime service entailed considerably more hardship, privation and danger than askaris had encountered either during their previous military service or civilian lives. During the advance through Somaliland into Ethiopia, water was so scarce that British and African ranks sometimes had to make do with a gallon or less a day. Following the occupation of Addis Abbaba, columns advanced

³⁴⁸George G. Robson, RHL, MSS. Afr.s. 1715/231.

during the rains and often spent miserable nights sheltering under blankets and groundsheets or huddled in the backs of trucks. Certainly the worst conditions in the field that East African forces had to contend with were in Burma, but service behind the front line also brought its own miseries. Several askaris who were stationed in Calcutta described it as "a terrible place."³⁴⁹ Others mention the lack of amenities and boredom that quickly set in when their units were garrisoned in isolated posts in Somaliland, the Sudan or the northern frontier district of Kenya. For pioneers in AAPC companies serving in North African and the Middle East, living conditions were often equally stark. Companies stationed in forward supply dumps in Libya lived in small camouflaged tents dug deep into the ground to provide the pioneers with minimal protection from enemy air strikes. Although the pioneers had adequate access to food, water was in extremely short supply, and many companies had to wash both themselves and their clothing using sea water.³⁵⁰

Askaris' descriptions of their service conditions reveal a wide variety of experiences and emotions, both about the areas where they were stationed and how they viewed the war in general. When asked to describe the areas they campaigned in, most askaris who served in Ethiopia agree that both the country and people were pleasant. Several askari also referred to Ethiopia as an African country, and described the campaign as a fight for Africans, which is significant, since neither Somalia or Egypt is described in a similar fashion. In part, askaris' fond recollections of Ethiopia may have had something to do with the relief they

³⁴⁹Interview #19

³⁵⁰*Tanganyika Standard*, April 21, 1942.

must have felt finally to move out of their dusty, dry, hot defensive positions in the Sudan and Northern Frontier District in order to begin their rapid advance up to the cooler and much more pleasant conditions on the Ethiopian escarpment. While most askari had positive things to say about their period of service in Ethiopia, their response to Somalia was quite different. A former askari serving with 6 KAR compared the two regions as follows:

About conditions in Somalia, it was dry and warm. No rain and the country was level and sandy. In Ethiopia it is different than Somalia, because it rains and the country is not dry. So in Ethiopia they can farm and grow crops but in Somalia you can't. But also in Ethiopia it is warm and the country is good.³⁵¹

One laborer who served with a EAMLS unit stationed in Mogadishu described the country as "a terrible place" and other askaris who stayed in Somalia, either during the blockade of Djibuti or after the advance through Ethiopia, had similar reactions. For many, their dislike of the country stemmed not only from the fact that the landscape was barren hot, dusty and dry, but also because they distrusted, and in some cases even despised, Somalis. Some of this dislike, particularly among KAR askaris, may have stemmed from the fact that during the campaign, the Italians used Somali irregulars, called *Bande*, and askaris described such units as *shifita* (bandits) and not "proper soldiers." Support troops, however, developed their own dislike of Somalis, which centered on the civilian population who are often described as thieves. The EAMLS laborer described the months he spent in Mogadishu digging trenches and repairing roads as miserable, saying:

Somalia was not good. We were hungry and it was dry and the people of Somalia are thieves. They were taking so many things from our camp that we just could not stand them anymore. We set up shifts to guard our tents so they could not come into our camp and steal.³⁵²

Askari serving in Somalia faced similar problems and had to be particularly careful with their arms and ammunition, since these were highly prized by Somalis and frequently taken. Several former soldiers also complained that while they were stationed in Somalia that they were not allowed to drink beer, and they attributed this to the fact that the Somalis were Muslims.³⁵³

Former Tanganyikan members of the AAPC who served in the Egypt and the Middle East voiced mixed reactions to the areas where they were stationed and their living conditions. One ex-pioneer described life in Egypt as miserable, saying "I did not like Egypt at all. The whole place was a desert and if the wind blew, sand would be all over your head, all over your food, if you were eating."³⁵⁴ For others, however, particularly those stationed near urban areas, the experience proved more congenial, since they could get weekend passes to go to towns and living conditions were slightly better.³⁵⁵ Life was very different in Madagascar and Burma. Askaris describe both places as jungles, but here the similarity ends because not only was there more combat in Burma but the climate, vegetation and terrain all proved more difficult as well.

³⁵¹Interview #13.

³⁵²Interview # 6.

³⁵³Interview # 15. Another askari who served in Egypt had a similar complaint, saying "Arabs do not drink *pombe* (beer). This is the reason why we did not get *pombe* in Egypt and Lebanon and even the British had to drink soft drinks like soda". Interview # 4.

³⁵⁴Interview # 37.

³⁵⁵Interview # 22 and # 31.

One area in which there was universal agreement among askaris concerned the terrible conditions aboard the ships used to transport African units to Somaliland, Madagascar and South East Asia. One former laborer who served in the EAMLS described how his unit was transported from Mombasa to Mogadishu in the hull of a ship. The terrible voyage took nine days, and the laborers were only allowed on deck for a few hours each day, despite the intense heat and crowded conditions.³⁵⁶ Another askari who fought in Madagascar remembered that on the voyage over many of the askaris were seasick and very afraid that the ship would sink. Askaris traveling to Ceylon, who could be on board for up to six weeks, were even more miserable. According to an askari who served with 3/6 KAR, the convoy that took his unit to Ceylon had almost forty ships in it and the transports were guarded by warships. The trip took twenty-four days, because the transports zigzagged to escape enemy attacks. Another askari described the fear he felt when his unit arrived in Mombassa for departure:

We were told that tomorrow we will travel overseas. We did not know where we were going, so we just packed our kit bags and the next day trucks took us to Mombassa. There we found four big ships and two submarines. We were under a very heavy guard of Military Police and we saw some other soldiers who had arrived early already on board looking at us through the windows. All my hope sank down, because the atmosphere around there was terrifying and many of the soldiers and the guards were talking in a murmur. Everyone I think was afraid. No one I knew was around and I was wondering why we were being given this heavy guard when I had joined the army voluntarily. I could get no answer and we did not know where we were going and those White MP's gave us a terrifying feeling.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶Interview #14.

³⁵⁷Interview #8.

Askaris' aversion to being crammed into transports for weeks on end turned into genuine fear following the news of the sinking of the *Khedive Ismail*. If the EAC made any effort to hide news of the disaster from African troops, it proved ineffective. Almost one-fourth of the askaris interviewed made some mention of what happened to the *Khedive Ismail* and several could recall specific details about what units were aboard and that the ship was sunk by a Japanese submarine.

Amenities and Leisure

In addition to complaints over pay, another frequent cause of grievances among East African askaris, pioneers and military laborers was inadequate or substandard facilities, equipment or access to amenities. For a variety of reasons, military authorities found it impossible to provide the same level of comforts for African troops as they did for European and Asian members of the forces. Much of the difficulty stemmed quite simply from a lack of resources. While the EAC and SEAC were able to provide all units with simple comforts like footballs and other basic sports equipment, when it came to other amenities, the task became more difficult and military authorities had to prioritize. Not surprisingly, African troops, at the lower end of the military hierarchy, had either to wait until the needs of British and Indian units had been met, or had to get by indefinitely with what little was available. In part, military authorities justified their decision not to provide Africans with access to anything but the most basic amenities, because Africans were more used to privation and therefore had less need of additional comforts than European troops. Askaris, naturally, viewed the matter very differently, and it reinforced the perception of many that the military minimized their contributions, and treated them like second-class citizens.

In addition to efforts made by the military authorities, a number of philanthropic organizations throughout East Africa also worked to provide African

and European members of the forces with additional articles of comfort. In Tanganyika such efforts were spearheaded by the Women's Service League of Tanganyika, which solicited contributions from both the government and individuals. To coordinate efforts with the other East African governments and the EAC, the Tanganyika War Contributions Advisory Committee was established. Despite a number of public appeals, Tanganyikan contributions to fund for the comforts for the troops were very small. The cash and in-kind donations raised were sent to the Kenya Women's Emergency Organization, (KWEO) which was responsible for distributing small grants of money or parcels to Tanganyikan units. In 1941, while the Ethiopian campaign was still under way, the KWEO managed to provide Christmas packages to 1/6, 2/6, 3/6, 4/6 and 9 KAR, as well as to No. 1 Motor Ambulance Convoy and 1st Hygiene Field Company, both support units composed mainly of Tanganyikan askaris. Officers in these units received individual packages called "glory bags" containing candy, cigarettes, socks, and toiletries. Askari were provided with similar items, as well as pullovers and writing materials. The thousands of other Tanganyikans serving in the EAMLS, AAPC or other mixed units, had to make do with gifts of sports equipment, which were presented to the unit as a whole because there were inadequate funds to provide comfort packages to individuals.³⁵⁸

The difficulties involved in ensuring that African troops had adequate access to amenities increased when units were sent overseas to serve in India and Burma. Amenities for Africans appear to have been all but non-existent in

³⁵⁸Correspondence relating to the provision of comforts for the troops. TNA 27663. See also *Tanganyika Standard*, November 13, 1939.

Ceylon, despite the sizable numbers of askari present. While local philanthropic organizations such as the YMCA and Salvation Army existed, SEAC encouraged these groups to serve British other ranks, claiming East African troops would be cared for out of Army resources. The actual care Africans received was substandard to say the least. A single officer from East African Headquarters was stationed at Ceylon Army Command and responsible for providing for the welfare of all East African troops. Although he reported conditions as being "satisfactory," the only amenity provided specifically for East Africans was a single club. This facility was located on Slave Island, Colombo, and not surprising, considering the name of the location, was not adequately patronized by askaris to justify its retention.³⁵⁹

Despite concerns expressed by the Colonial Office, the East African Governors and East African philanthropic groups, amenities for African troops did not markedly improve. The primary reason for this was a lack of resources combined with increasing demands among discontented British troops that they did not enjoy many of the services and facilities possessed by their American counterparts. In SEAC, the familiar mantra about American soldiers being over-sexed and over-fed, were repeated with minor regional variations that drew attention to the quality of American housing, refrigeration facilities, transport and entertainment. A report on the welfare of British service personnel in SEAC noted:

The aim should be to provide British sailors, soldiers and airmen with a standard of amenities as close to that enjoyed by American troops as the resources at your

³⁵⁹Lt. General Kings Report on Morale and Welfare of British Troops in the Far East. PRO, CO 968/98/1

disposal will allow. Financial considerations must not be allowed to stand in the way of improvements which are otherwise possible. Indian and Colonial troops must receive full consideration, but improvements in the amenities for British troops must not be held back because they cannot be fully extended to troops more accustomed to the climate and local conditions.³⁶⁰

Despite the fact that military officials acknowledged that African troops in India and Ceylon suffered from "disabilities of separation and strangeness" and agreed that some improvement should be made in their amenities, little was done before the end of the war. East Africans had to continue to be content with little more in the way of comforts and leisure activities than cigarettes, beer, sports equipment and the occasional movie show put on by a traveling cinema unit.³⁶¹

One of the few activities widely available to most East African units was sports. Pre-war KAR officers had been encouraged to use physical exercise and sporting events to foster askari's feelings of pride for their unit. This policy remained unchanged throughout the war. Both philanthropic organizations and the EAC found it easy to distribute sports equipment to units, and from the Middle East to Burma, askaris played a variety of games, the most popular of which was soccer. While many of the competitions were informal matches played between askaris from the same unit, some games were also organized between different units. Askaris who served in Egypt and Madagascar remembered playing games against Africans from other units. In Burma, members of 22 EA Brigade who were attached to 82 West African Division played a number of

³⁶⁰War Cabinet Morale and Welfare in the Far East, In Annex "A" a draft to the Viceroy of India, the C in C India and the Supreme Commander South East Asia Command, November 7, 1944. PRO, CO 968/98/1.

³⁶¹Brief for the Secretary of State, November 3, 1944. PRO, CO 968/98/1.

soccer games against the West Africans.³⁶² In addition to soccer, many units also continued to enjoy rough and tumble games of karamoja football.

There was one noticeable difference between the role of sport in East African units in the inter-war years and during the Second World War. In the 1920's and 1930's, officers often participated in sporting events, playing alongside askaris in order to build relationships and earn the respect of their troops. During the war however, some officers discovered discontented askaris could use the physical nature of soccer and karmoja football matches as a cover to vent their frustrations at either individual officers or military injustices in general.

By far the most anticipated leisure activity however, was leave. For those units not serving in the front lines Saturday and Sunday were usually set aside for rest. Units that had access to army chaplains held religious services, and askaris also used the free time to repair their clothing, play games, bathe, read or just relax. If the unit was stationed near a urban area, askaris would occasionally be given a pass allowing them a brief leave to go into town. The availability of local leave depended not only on an individual's military conduct, but also on the location and recent performance of his unit, the extent of the military presence in the area, relations between local civil authorities and the military, and, finally, on the consent of the units' commanding officer. What askaris did during local leave depended on the facilities available. In Somalia, troops stationed in the interior used the opportunity to hitch a ride to the coast

³⁶² Interview #17 #16 and #24. Morale Reports of Allied Land Forces, South East Asia,. November 1945-January 1946. PRO, WO 203/2268.

where they would swim and fish. In Egypt, AAPC pioneers did the same or went into town looking for shops, restaurants, brothels and bars. Like any other groups of soldiers throughout history, many askaris appear to have devoted much of their local leave to satisfying pleasures of the flesh. The fact that many succeeded is borne out by the high VD statistics for many units and the recollections of veterans themselves.

While askaris were glad to leave their camps or barracks for the comparative freedom of local leave, they eagerly looked forward to extended or home leave. With the exception of EAMLS laborers, most askaris and AAPC pioneers were allowed at least one period of home leave. Some of the askaris who enlisted in 1939 were allowed to return home for fourteen days after they had completed their training in Nairobi. According to one veteran, this abbreviated home leave was known as "Italian leave."³⁶³ Askaris who served in Ethiopia were granted forty days of home leave following the defeat of Italian forces. In some units, askaris could choose to either return home for 20 days each year or forty days after two years of service. However, the administrative and logistical problems involved in sending thousands of askaris home and then returning them to their units often meant that soldiers had few options about when they were sent on leave. Askaris from remote areas had a particularly difficult time and often had to spend weeks in transit before they arrived home.

Most askaris used extended leave to return to their families, even though such visits often involved a considerable amount of time in transit. Homecomings were usually extremely festive affairs and several former askaris recalled that

their families were overjoyed to see them and prepared huge feasts in their honor. Askaris also used home leave as an opportunity to put their personal lives in order. Two former askaris said that they had been conscripted so quickly that they did not have time to say goodbye to their families, or prepare themselves to go to war. During home leave one former askari said he went to the local traditional healer for medicine to protect him when he returned to his unit.³⁶⁴ Another askari got married during his leave and returned at the end of the war to discover that he had become a father. Still others used their leave to look to the future and inquired about purchasing land, stock or began negotiating bride price. Theoretically, askaris could also apply for compassionate leave to return home if a family member became seriously ill or died, but few were aware of this possibility and such requests were seldom granted.

Due to a lack of shipping and the disruption involved in having to take men out of their units, SEAC found it impracticable to grant home leave to askaris serving overseas in India and Burma; units stationed in the Middle East suffered similar difficulties. Members of AAPC units stationed in the Middle East were occasionally given a choice between spending leave in Cairo or going on a tour of the Holy Land in lieu of home leave. Those askari who chose the latter option spent a week being driven around in trucks visiting Jerusalem, Bethlehem and other sights.³⁶⁵ Many askari, particularly conscripts, resented being absent from home for a long period, and complaints over lack of leave figured regularly

³⁶³Interview #8.

³⁶⁴ Interview #30. Dr. Todd Sanders, an anthropologist who works in the Singida District, told me that several of the old men he interviewed who were conscripted during the Second World War said they were taken away before they had time to consult with traditional healers.

in soldiers' grievances and protests.

Combat

The Somalis were thieves,
the Italians were cowards,
the Japanese were very fierce.
(askari saying)

For askaris who participated in combat, their reaction to the war often depended on where they served, and the fighting ability of their adversaries. The majority of askaris who saw action during the Ethiopian and Madagascar campaigns describe the Italian and French colonial forces as well-equipped, but poorly led. Several of the askari interviewed fought in the larger engagements at Colito and Gondar but even these individuals show little respect for their former foes. While the Italians are often dismissed as "bad soldiers" or "cowards," former askari who fought against the Germans and Japanese found military life much more harrowing. One pioneer who served with the AAPC in Egypt recalled what it was like to live under the almost constant threat of attack:

Life during the whole period of war was not bad, but one thing was you had to live a very tense worrying life. You never stayed at ease thinking if you will be alive the next day. Hitler would attack us from the air with his planes every time and we were always running here and there to take cover. One day I was at the anti-aircraft gun and the plane came and we shot at it and missed but it shot back at us and the bomb just dropped a few miles from where I was lying. Thank god that the bomb never exploded! So you can think of what it is like to be in the war.³⁶⁶

Askari who fought in Ethiopia and were then sent to Burma found jungle warfare far more fluid and the Japanese much more dangerous.

³⁶⁵Interview #16.

³⁶⁶Interview #29.

During the war in Ethiopia, the country was not a forest, it was only desert and mountains, so it was easy to fight with the enemy from far away. But in Burma it was very difficult because the country was jungle and there were so many trees. So it was easy for the enemy to hide himself and fight. Also the Italians were cowards compared to the Japanese, who were strong and used proper military tactics.³⁶⁷

Another askari who served as a stretcher-bearer in Burma also recalled how difficult it was to fight an enemy you seldom saw until he opened fire.

The conditions in Burma were very hard because they (the Japanese) lived in the forest and there you cannot see anything because they wear clothes that look like the grass. So it was difficult to see the enemy and for them to see us. But other people died because they wore light clothes that allowed people to see them easily. Also, those whites (British officers) used to smear on a black color which was shoe polish in order to become black. This is because their color was easy to see but if they smear it on they can't be seen easily. They were afraid of dying, and when African soldiers saw them they just laughed.³⁶⁸

When asked if he thought British officers were cowards for blackening their faces, this askari as well as another who also served in Burma and remembered witnessing the same thing, strongly disagreed. Both said that, although the askaris laughed and made fun of their officers, they understood the reason why they did it and did not think less of them. As one askari said: "I remember during the war Whites used shoe polish to make them appear like Blacks because Japanese were mostly aiming at Whites, so they had to change their color." He went on to comment somewhat wryly that that was the only time in the army that he "saw White men wanting to be Africans."³⁶⁹

Africans who rose to command platoons quickly learned that the privilege of rank came with a heavy price. Japanese snipers automatically targeted British

³⁶⁷Interview #4.

³⁶⁸Interview #11.

officers in command of African troops. When KAR battalions began to promote African NCO's to the rank of platoon commanders to fill these vacancies, Japanese snipers began to watch their targets for patterns to indicate who was in charge. One askari who served with 46 KAR in Burma was temporarily put in command of a platoon after the former British platoon commander was shot in the head by a Japanese sniper and killed instantly. After several close calls, he soon learned to do nothing that would draw attention to himself, such as using hand signals or giving orders, except when he thought the platoon was in a safe area.³⁷⁰ Another askari who served as a platoon commander in 3/6 KAR was not so fortunate:

I was a platoon commander, and on that day it was raining a little, so we were withdrawing our unit for reorganization and letting another move forward. Then I felt something hot in my thigh and my corporal Kibisi Mahende told me "commander look at your leg you have been shot!" Then I looked and it was all bloody so I lay down and I was sent to hospital.³⁷¹

Several askaris who served in Burma stressed how important the additional jungle training they received in Madagascar and Ceylon was in preparing them to fight the Japanese. One askari describing an engagement he participated in said:

Now we were at the actual battlefield. We started marching on foot in a single file, one-two, one-two, moving forward. We reached a big river where we had to wait for the engineering unit to build a bridge so that we could cross over to the other side. When soldiers had started to cross, bullets started firing at us from the trees but thanks to the British training we had done before, within seconds everyone

³⁶⁹interview #11 and #35.

³⁷⁰interview #4.

³⁷¹interview #34.

had concealed and camouflaged themselves among the trees. Bullets were being fired at us from all directions and we started to fire back at the trees where smoke was coming from and after several minutes of machine gun fire we had ten Japanese soldiers on the ground before us.³⁷²

Although some Tanganyikan units did experience combat, relatively few askaris served in frontline units, and the number in KAR infantry battalions was smaller still. In 1940, the establishment of a British infantry division was 15,500 men. Out of this total however, only 6,750 soldiers were infantry.³⁷³ Since EAC's brigades were organized along similar lines as British infantry brigades, notwithstanding some significant variation in the number and quality of supporting arms, the ratio of support troops to front line askaris should have been roughly the same. Thus few askaris actually participated in engagements or even saw the enemy unless they were guarding prisoners of war. Even if underreported, the casualty figures from the Ethiopian and Madagascar campaigns support the assertion that, at least in these two regions, military service, although often difficult, was seldom deadly. Such claims are backed up by former askari who admit that the Italians and French seldom put up a protracted defense.

Yet while it is important to put askaris' combat experiences in the proper perspective to avoid exaggerating their importance to the Allied victory or portraying them as paragons of martial virtue, it is equally crucial to remember that many askaris did not understand the war, and wanted no part of it. Some askaris in KAR units were professional soldiers who had volunteered for the

³⁷²Interview #8.

military, but the vast majority of Tanganyikans did not fall into this category. Many volunteers and conscripts entered the army with very little comprehension of why they were fighting and what they would be doing. Discipline, routine, propaganda and the generally good service conditions reassured many, but several askari still remember the war as an extremely stressful period in their lives. Even askaris who never experienced combat recalled the emotional toll the war took on them. One former pioneer who volunteered for the AAPC described how he felt when his unit went off to the war.

When we were going to war it was a very hard experience. You could have been singing, but you were very afraid in your heart. It's as if you have been told you are going to meet a lion, how will you feel...? So that was how we felt but for my unit there were no problems, because we did not fight in the war and those who died, it was because of an accident or sickness.³⁷⁴

Another askari who served in the EAAMC remembered being terrified that his unit would be transferred to Burma, because he was convinced the ship would be sunk.

Furthermore, while askaris serving in support units were less likely to be killed in combat than those in infantry battalions, their lives were far from safe. AAPC units in the Middle East came under enemy artillery and air attack and Japanese planes bombed rear areas in Burma. Stretcher-bearers and drivers, while often not technically members of combat units, served at the front and took the same risks as infantry. Most askaris died from disease or accidents and both

³⁷³David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War Against Germany, 1919-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 186-187.

³⁷⁴Interview #16.

were equally prevalent in rear echelon and front line units. One askari who worked as a driver survived nine auto accidents, although he was slightly injured twice. Members of the EAAMC, even those who spent the entire war in East Africa, saw their share of sick and wounded soldiers, experiences that lost none of their poignancy even though they occurred far from the fighting.

Resistance

Askaris resorted to a variety of tactics to protest poor service conditions, discriminatory policies or simply to get individual officers or the military's complex bureaucracy to listen to their concerns or demands. Protests can be broken down into two broad categories: individual acts and collective resistance involving groups of askari and occasionally entire units. Askaris demonstrated their displeasure by using a variety of tactics, including slowdowns and strikes, writing petitions, overstaying leave, speaking disrespectfully to their NCO's and officers, breaking out of barracks, drinking, and engaging in the destruction of military property or petty theft. More extreme forms of resistance included desertion, physical assaults on officers and NCO's, threatening to mutiny, and murder.

Military discipline and routine made it extremely difficult for askaris to organize large protests, and most acts of resistance involved individuals or small groups of soldiers. Many askaris manifested their dislike for military life in general, and discipline in particular, simply by refusing to follow the rules or doing the absolute minimum required of them. Askaris made conscious choices to drink, break out of camp, fraternize with prostitutes, return late from leave and appear on parade dressed in a slovenly manner. It is difficult to tell however, if such actions were undertaken by individuals simply refusing to live their lives according to military regulations, or if askaris were reacting to discrimination or poor service conditions.

In other instances however, there was no ambiguity. One former askari described a confrontation he had with an officer who ordered him to serve as his orderly.

One day I had a misunderstanding with my South African officer who wanted me to work as his servant. I did not feel good about this. I refused and it was the first time I used my English to show my superiority. I was taken to the quarter guard for six days as a punishment for refusing an order. When I came out, he gave me the order again and I refused, because I joined the army to be a soldier not a servant. When I told him this he let me go without punishment.³⁷⁵

According to several ex-soldiers askaris often tried to improve conditions or the general atmosphere within their units by either speaking directly to their officers or sending messages through their NCO's or officer's orderlies. Such a strategy only worked however, if good communications already existed between officers and soldiers, and this was frequently not the case. When these measures failed, askari turned to more direct confrontations like the one described above, started slow downs or surreptitiously damaged equipment.

The most severe disturbances in East African units frequently occurred as a result of poor communications between officers and the rank and file. The refusal of 25 EA Brigade to go overseas following the conclusion of the Ethiopian campaign was in part due to an assurance given to askaris that they would be allowed a period of rest once the Italians were defeated. Many askaris assumed that they would be given home leave and when they were told they would only receive a brief local leave before shipping out, three infantry battalions refused to move until their demands were met. Facing a determined protest by three fully

armed infantry battalions, EAC had no option but to give in to the askaris' demands.

Similar protests took place in Burma. The leading battalions of 25 EA Brigade refused to cross the Chindwin, claiming that they had been in the field for a long time and had been told they only had to reach the river, not establish a bridgehead on the far bank. The standoff was successfully resolved, but the episode once again shook officers' confidence in the reliability of their units. The strike also demonstrates how difficult it was for military authorities to deal with such actions. According to the brigade commander:

Courts martial were demanded and ringleaders sought. They proved extremely difficult to find and nobody could or would say who they were. The African NCO's appeared to be quite ineffective in these situations, but with the help of the African RSM (a lone Somali) of one of the dissident battalions, a number of men were apprehended and tried. It all happened so long afterwards that their sentences were merely nominal. And it did not stop further similar, though not so serious, occurrences.³⁷⁶

While military authorities downplayed such incidents, dismissing them as strikes or collective insubordination, and they receive only a brief mention in Moyse-Bartlett's regimental history of the KAR, such actions of mass disobedience were extremely serious. Officers realized that calling such incidents collective insubordination amounted to little more than word games. As the commander of 25 EA Brigade in Burma noted:

These "incidents" were technically mutiny, although never to my knowledge, accompanied by violence or the threat of it. In fact, they were more like the

³⁷⁵Interview #1.

³⁷⁶Cree, Gerald H. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/57.

tantrums of naughty children soon over and forgotten, but awkward at the same time and disconcerting in a war situation.³⁷⁷

Other officers however, felt that such an assessment was inaccurate. The commander of one of the battalions involved in 25 EA Brigade's first "collective insubordination" in Ethiopia, noted that if any attempt had been made to bring in other units to disarm the askaris, the officers would have been very fortunate to escape with a beating, and a bloodbath may have resulted.

Incidents of insubordination, including those involving some degree of violence, increased as units began to serve overseas. Disgruntled askaris occasionally struck their superiors, and morale reports from Burma mention soldiers being disciplined for such behavior.³⁷⁸ Askaris also increasingly used sports events and *Ngomas* as venues where they could beat up unpopular officers. Even more serious, however, were cases where askaris tried to kill their superiors. One Nyasaland askari killed and wounded several British officers and NCO's with a grenade, and several African NCO's were also murdered by their men. In his book on the KAR, Timothy Parsons wrote that many of the Kenyan askari he interviewed claimed to know about, or had participated in, the murder of European officers.³⁷⁹

Only one former Tanganyikan askari interviewed for this study admitted taking part in such a action, and although it is impossible to verify his account, it

³⁷⁷Cree, Gerald H. RHL, Afr.s. 1715/57. It should be noted, that 25 EA Brigade had been reorganized between the Ethiopian campaign and when it was sent to South East Asia, and the battalions that refused to cross the Chindwin were not the same ones that had participated in the sit-down strike in Ethiopia.

³⁷⁸Report on the Morale of British, Indian and Colonial troops of allied Land Forces, SEAC, November-December 1944 and January 1945. PRO WO 203/2268.

is certainly compelling. According to this individual, the incident took place in Burma after a new officer took command of his company. After several engagements, it became clear to the askaris that the officer did not know how to command troops in combat and was going to get them all killed unless he was removed. Several askaris met with their sergeant and asked him to speak to the commanding officer of the battalion, but following a brief discussion, they all agreed that this would do no good. Several days after this meeting, two askaris were killed and two others wounded during an ambush. The next time the officer led a platoon on patrol, the askaris waited until they approached the Japanese lines and then several of them, acting on a prearranged signal, shot him in the back. After making certain he was dead, they returned to their battalion and reported that they had come under heavy fire and the officer had been killed.³⁸⁰

For obvious reasons, the military was extremely reluctant to publicize such actions, even when they knew about them. In their memoirs, former officers seldom mention serious discord in their units, in part because many felt it reflected poorly on their ability to command. African soldiers were even less likely to leave a record of how and why officers and NCO's were assaulted or murdered. Parsons argues that: "There are few satisfactory explanations for why an individual resorts to violence, but in this case, the violent acts committed by African soldiers appear to have, at least in part, constituted a rejection of racial

³⁷⁹Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, pp. 200-202.

³⁸⁰ To protect the identity of this former askari no record was made of the interview and he is not listed in the table in Appendix B.

inequality in the colonial military."³⁸¹ Yet to claim that such attacks were motivated by discontent over racial inequality seems much too simplistic. If this was the case, why is there almost no evidence of askaris resorting to such measures during the Ethiopian or Madagascar campaigns? By 1941, many askaris had served alongside British, South African and Indian soldiers, and were aware that in comparison to both they were poorly paid and equipped. The fact that most of these attacks took place when askaris were stationed far from home, undoubtedly suffering war weariness and fighting a determined enemy under extremely strenuous conditions, would seem to be far more significant factors than discord over racial discrimination, at least for the murders that took place during combat. Statements made by several former askari who served in Burma support this. They said that, in the front lines, conditions were so bad that Africans and Europeans lived side-by-side, working together just trying to survive. Finally, the single Tanganyikan account dealing with the murder of a British officer casts doubt on the importance of either racial tensions or poor service conditions as factors influencing the decision of groups of askaris to kill their officers. The official version of such incidents, which appears in court-martial transcripts, often claims that askaris who carried out such actions were insane or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Such accounts are of questionable veracity, but to go to the other extreme, and assert that many such actions were a form of protest, seems equally incongruous. What seems much more likely is that askaris were as unprepared for the strain of combat or the

³⁸¹Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, p. 202. In the same section of the book, Parsons also alleges that a few African soldiers took their own lives "when subjected to racial taunts by British

rigors or military life as any other group of soldiers, and occasionally attempted to deal with their problems through violence.

Not all askaris protests' were confrontational. During the Second World War, askaris continued the practice of using songs to communicate displeasure with specific officers or express longing for home. Some soldiers would also swear at or mock their superiors, using Swahili if the officer did not speak the language, or if he did, then switching to another African language. Other askaris enjoyed "playing dumb" and found it hilarious to slowly repeat commands while a disliked officer or NCO fretted with impatience. Askaris also told jokes about their officers and frequently commented on the fact that many of the British and Indian soldiers in the forces could not work as hard or for as long a period as Africans. Askaris, like all soldiers, grumbled not because they thought they would change anything, but because it helped to pass the time, relieved tension and made them feel better.

Other common methods of resistance included overstaying leave, desertion, selling military equipment, building illicit stills and leaving depots and barracks in search of liquor and women. Many askaris spent considerably longer on home leave than the 28 days officially sanctioned by the military authorities. The failure of many askaris to return when they were supposed to, combined with the not inconsiderable numbers who did not come back at all, reinforced many officers' reluctance to grant their soldiers home leave. District records are filled with correspondence between district officers and unit commanders concerning the location of askaris on leave, and requests to have either the civil

personnel."

or native authorities track down those long overdue. Some askaris also took such a dislike to military service that they deserted. As will be seen in the next chapter, conscripts escaped from the recruit camps in droves and many askaris also deserted during training. The military authorities drew a sharp distinction between deserters and "absentees" absentees being askari who had overstayed their leave. In many cases the argument came down to little more than semantics. One absentee remained in his home district for fourteen months before he was apprehended and sent back to his unit. After they were apprehended, askari who failed to return from leave were given a minor sentence, but deserters faced a court martial, followed by imprisonment and discharge. Considering that, from 1942, on hundreds of askaris were overstaying their leave every month, it is not surprising that the military authorities did not charge absentees as deserters. Such an action would have necessitated the building of new prison camps and a loss to the forces of thousands of askaris, at a time when EAC needed every able bodied recruit. Even with these efforts, by the end of the war some 4,000 Tanganyikans had been officially listed as having deserted from the armed forces.

For their part, many askaris viewed leave as a reward for loyal service, and many were angry that military authorities were so parsimonious in granting leave. Leave was much more important than mere recreation, and askaris used their time at home to put their family and legal affairs in order and ensure they maintained contact with their communities. Military authorities argued such communication could usually be conducted by mail, and that both members of native authorities and the administration would help askaris settle their domestic problems. Many askaris, particularly those who were illiterate, remained justly skeptical of such assurances and maintained that local authorities often were unwilling or unable to respond adequately to their petitions for information or

assistance.

Although askaris certainly resorted to numerous forms of resistance, not every soldier who overstayed his leave was protesting poor conditions or discrimination within the armed forces. Some returned home and discovered that it took longer to discharge their family obligations than 28 days. Other men had to bring cases before native courts and, despite the efforts of Native Authorities to grant priority to cases involving serving askaris, such legal actions often took time. Most askaris were also adamant that they were entitled to spend the full period of their leave at home and, if it took them longer to reach their communities than the army estimated, few cut their leave short. Askaris also often faced significant obstacles in negotiating transport. Soldiers who lived near rail lines and roads usually had little trouble returning to their homes, but those who lived in isolated rural areas sometimes spent weeks walking to their communities and back. Especially in the early years of the war, military officials paid scant attention to the logistical and climatic issues involved in sending askaris home on leave. During the rainy season some parts of the territory became almost inaccessible to road traffic and this influenced the length of communication time required for leave. Finally, many askari had difficulty negotiating both the military and civil bureaucracy. The considerable correspondence about granting rail warrants for askaris, what to do with individuals who lost their paperwork and other difficulties relating to transport issues, indicates that overstaying leave was not always the choice of soldiers.

In addition to slowdowns, strikes and overstaying leave, another tactic askari commonly used to express their disgust with both individuals or conditions in the military in general was by feigning sick or malingering. Often askaris resorted to such methods to attempt to avoid being sent overseas or to get out of dangerous or unpleasant duties. One askari who served in Burma with the East

African Electrical and Mechanical Engineers grew tired of being constantly covered with oil and grime after fixing truck and jeep engines day after day, and feigned a serious illness just before his unit was transferred. After a brief stay in hospital, he managed to get transferred to another unit where he was put in charge of maintaining projectors and showing newsreels and movies to British and African soldiers, a job that allowed him to stay neat and clean and which he "enjoyed very much."³⁸² Nor were such actions restricted to individual askaris. Another former askari mentioned that many of the men in his AAPC unit ate soap in an attempt to make themselves sick and prevent the unit from being sent overseas.³⁸³ In 1942, the medical officers at No. 1 General Hospital noticed a marked increase in "functional diseases and malingering" among askaris brought about by low morale stemming from patients' complaints over leave and pay, and a widespread conviction that the war was a long way away and would go on forever.³⁸⁴

Resistance to military authority, although certainly present, occurred relatively infrequently. With the exception of a few large scale strikes, such as those mounted by 25 EA Brigade and similar actions carried out by several AAPC companies serving in the Middle East, most protests mounted by groups of askaris were short-lived. Military authorities' reactions to both individual and collective protests depended both on the resources they had available to deal with such actions and the nature of askaris' grievances. Almost all protests, both

³⁸²Interview #1

³⁸³Interview #29.

³⁸⁴Quarterly Report for No. 1 EA General Hospital, ending October-December 1942. PRO, WO 222/1827.

collective and individual, concerned working conditions, disparity between the treatment given to Africans and other British soldiers and issues relating to leave. In many instances, military authorities chose to adopt a dual system for dealing with such disturbances court-martialing ringleaders and militant individuals, while negotiating or even giving in to the demands of most askaris. Such a policy made excellent sense and diminished the risk of continuing discord within the ranks. When such an accommodation proved impossible, as in Burma, where askaris continued to demand home leave and protest racial discrimination, officers were instructed not to make any statements that might be misconstrued by askaris and lead to conflict. Following the first strike by 25 EA Brigade, military authorities and individual officers also devoted more resources to "taking the temperature" and carrying out internal surveillance on units. While such efforts were concentrated on discontented units serving in the SEAC, similar measures existed throughout East Africa. Military censors read askaris' mail, looking for signs of unrest, and a small special unit was established in Dar es Salaam to gather intelligence on askaris stationed at installations in Tanganyika.³⁸⁵

Communication with Home

Most former askaris stated that communication with their families and information about what was happening in their home districts was extremely important. Military authorities certainly understood that news from home could both raise and lower the morale of units. For askaris, by far the most important method of communication was letters from relatives or friends. To ensure that

³⁸⁵Interview #31.

even those soldiers who did not receive regular letters from family members could keep abreast of what was happening in their home districts, the EAC published newsletters in Swahili and English containing information on conditions at home. At regular intervals, district officers provided the military with news of harvests, weather conditions, agricultural policy and community affairs. Units serving in the Middle East received news broadcasts over the radio, and in the closing years of the war, a film unit traveled around Tanganyika shooting dances, market days, and interviews designed to be edited into news broadcasts, which would be shown to askaris serving in Burma. While the main intent of such forms of communication was to reassure askaris that everything was going well at home, the military also used this information for its own ends. Before the Madagascar campaign, askaris were told that the operation was essential to ensure food supplies continued to get through to East Africa. Such an argument would have gone a long way towards convincing Tanganyikan askaris, who were aware that in several parts of the territory the rains had failed and the harvest was expected to be poor.

While most askaris eagerly read or listened to any news from home, these general communications were a poor substitute for personal correspondence. Military and civil officials encouraged both askaris and their families to write and established a free letter system to facilitate the process. The high rate of illiteracy in many communities, however, combined with other obstacles, often made it difficult for family members to write to relatives serving in the army. In many rural areas, illiterate individuals wishing to communicate with relatives in the forces would often have to pay someone to write a letter for them, and then walk to the nearest mission station or boma to post the letter. Many district officers and native administrations tried hard to facilitate correspondence by setting aside time for a clerk to write letters, or even hiring a part or full-time letter writer.

Missionaries did their part as well, and not only wrote and posted letters, but also occasionally disbursed family remittances. Despite such assistance, the process often involved more than minor inconvenience and one former askari commented his parents told him it took them a great deal of effort to mail him letters.³⁸⁶

Askaris who were able to maintain regular contact with family members or friends back in Tanganyika knew that their personal affairs were being looked after and that they would have something to come back to when they left the army. Others said that hearing from relatives reminded them about what they were fighting for, and made them more determined to finish the war quickly so they could return. One askari said:

Contact with home was very important during a situation like that. I was writing home and also they were writing me, telling me about everything I left behind. Of course letters were important and we had this contact without any problem. Letters were coming and going very smoothly.³⁸⁷

Few veterans remember having any difficulty sending letters. Most can describe the process in great detail, even remembering how to address their correspondence. Illiterate soldiers asked comrades to write letters for them or paid African or Indian clerks to do so. Several askaris expressed minor annoyance that their letters were censored, but understood the reasons. Many veterans however, received few, if any, letters from home, and this led to anxiety and a decline in military performance.

³⁸⁶Interview #35.

³⁸⁷Interview #16.

While askaris serving in East Africa could apply for compassionate leave, those overseas could do very little if a matter came up at home that demanded their immediate return. To demonstrate that the military was concerned about askaris' welfare and wanted to ensure that moral remained high, East African units organized special *shauri* parades to listen to askaris' grievances and domestic concerns. As in all armies, rumors circulated at an astounding rate, and news that the harvest had failed at home, or that many wives were being unfaithful while their husbands were in the forces, was often enough to depress or anger askaris, particularly if they had heard nothing from home. To deal with such rumors, the EAC worked with the Tanganyikan government and established a system whereby soldiers could send complaints directly to district officers for investigation. While this system often allayed askaris' fears and convinced them that both military and civil officials were looking after their interests, it proved cumbersome and created a great deal of work for district officers. In addition to being asked questions about the fidelity of wives, district officers found themselves inundated with requests to look into questions related to family remittances, inheritance and land claims. Although many askaris' suspicions proved to unfounded, most had good cause for concern. Askaris were well paid, and jealous relatives, unfaithful wives, and corrupt native officials occasionally took advantage of men serving far from home to dispossess them of their land, steal family remittances or cause them various personal or legal difficulties. Furthermore, askaris' lengthy absence from home meant that they could not fulfill their family obligations, and district officers were occasionally asked if they could arrange to repair the houses of aged relatives or provide other social services that the askari could not perform. Additional difficulties were caused by the military's decision at the start of the war that askaris could not apply for compassionate leave to return home to settle court cases. District officers

frequently complained of having to deal with complicated legal matters that should have been handled by members of the Native Authority. Not infrequently, district officers handed askaris inquiries over to the local Native Authorities to deal with and this occasionally exacerbated problems, when askaris were complaining about the abuses of these authorities.

Another way in which the EAC attempted to maintain contact between serving soldiers and their home communities was by appointing S. H. Fazan as the East African Political Liaison Officer. Fazan was an excellent choice as he spoke fluent Swahili and had formerly worked as a Kenyan Provincial Commissioner. Although part of Fazan's job was to assist the army in gathering intelligence on discontent within the ranks, he also acted as an advocate, explaining soldiers' grievances to the military authorities, and he listened to their concerns about what was happening at home in their absence. Fazan traveled widely, visiting units throughout East Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. When he met with soldiers, he occasionally forwarded a few examples of domestic complaints to civil officials for investigation. Several askaris serving in Ceylon asked Fazan to inquire if the rumors they had heard about their wives being deprived of part of their harvest were true. Fazan investigated the matter and found that, although neither the administration nor Native Authorities had requisitioned grain supplies, some district officers had required a portion of the harvest to be put aside to guard against food shortages.³⁸⁸ In addition to Fazan's activities, the EAC also arranged for small groups of chiefs to visit units serving

³⁸⁸Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam to the Chief Secretary to the Governor's Conference, April 14, 1944. TNA 31269.

at the front. In 1943, several Tanganyikan chiefs traveled to the Middle East and met with AAPC pioneers, and in 1945, another group went to Burma. Although such efforts were more symbolic than practical, they did serve to assure Native Authorities that askaris were being well cared for, and allowed askaris a momentary connection with home. Two former askaris remembered such visits, although neither spoke with the representatives.³⁸⁹

Civil and Military Relations during the Second World War

Throughout the Second World War, the East African Command enjoyed mixed relations with the Tanganyika administration. In the early days of the war, civil authorities gave their whole-hearted support to the war effort and attempted to work closely with the EAC. As the conflict progressed, however, the administration found itself taking over numerous additional duties, including recruiting, conscription, disbursing family remittances, propaganda, problems relating to communication between civilians and soldiers, and leave issues. District officers increasingly complained that they were spending an inordinate amount of time dealing with military matters to the detriment of civil affairs.

One cause of tension between civil and military authorities was poor communication, but the primary problem was that officers and officials often had incompatible agendas. The fundamental goal of army officers was to ensure that the askaris under their command maintained a high standard of military discipline and fought well. To ensure that morale remained high, officers encouraged

³⁸⁹For examples of askaris petitions forwarded by Fazan, see *Askaris Domestic Complaints* April 20, 1943. TNA 31269. Mention is made of the chiefs visit in Moshi DAR 1941 TNA 69/63/11. The 1945 visit by chiefs to SEAC is noted in Report on the Morale of British, Indian and Colonial troops of allied Land Forces, SEAC, May-July 1945. PRO WO 203/2268 and in correspondence from PC Southern Province to Chief Secretary, November 25, 1945 33136.

members of the civil administration to give special consideration to the complaints and problems of serving soldiers. Such instructions were diametrically opposed to the administrations' long held view, that nothing should be done that might make soldiers believe they were part of an elite class entitled to special rights and privileges not available to other civilians. While officers tried to promote the interest of their men, district officers and other in the administration were equally concerned about preserving the power of local Native Authorities, and limiting the disruption askaris returning home on leave and discharge caused in their home communities. In the resulting struggles, members of the administration often expressed outrage at some of the demands made on them by the military authorities, claiming that most officers were ignorant of local conditions and failed to give non-military matters due consideration. For their part, officers dismissed many of the objections raised by government officials as trivial; believing that what was important was winning the war.

Such attitudes manifested themselves in a number of circumstances, but became particularly pronounced when askaris had difficulties during leave, or felt that district officials were not doing an adequate job seeing to their affairs. Many district officers complained that askaris returning home on leave failed to show proper respect for both civil and Native Authorities. One common source of confrontation concerned returning soldiers brewing and drinking beer. In June 1943, a Lieutenant in 3/6 KAR wrote to the district commissioner of Nzega, complaining that one of his men had been arrested by Sultani Kapuli, the head of the local native authority.

I have been informed by the above named of what was in my opinion a disgraceful instance of injustice administered by Kapuli of the location of Mwisi. This man Unega after two and one-half years active service, returned home on leave, and according to his tribal custom, brought two tins of *mtama* (millet) to make *pombe* with to celebrate his return home. The Sulatni Kapuli arrived late at the mild festivities and found, on demanding some *pombe*, that it was all finished whereupon he ran the man in his court for brewing pombe, stripped all his

government clothes from him, a highly irregular proceedings, and refused to return them until a fine of 20 shillings had been paid. You will no doubt realize as well as those of us who have to live and fight with the askari that he lives for nothing but his leave, and to be treated in such a manner on his return is highly detrimental to morale. I have been led to understand that this is not an isolated case by any means, so far as this particular chief is concerned, and I feel that inquiries into the matter would really assist morale of askaris returning from that location. Those of my unit are all complaining of an unsuccessful leave.³⁹⁰

For district officers struggling to perform increased amounts of work with drastically reduced levels of staff to be cavalierly reminded that there was a war on must have rankled, to say the least. The district commissioner of Nzega had a very different account of the incident, and firmly supported the actions taken by members of the Native Authority. Writing to his superior in Tabora he noted.

The chief quite rightly, and in accordance with your instructions, forbade all beer brewing in his area for the reasons for which you are aware. The detail concerned Unega Mapolo, while on leave asked chief Kapuli if he could indulge in a beer party and his request was refused. The detail then told the chief that he was an askari and would do as he liked. He and some other details on leave then proceeded to have a prolonged bout of drinking. The chief attempted to stop it, but the detail informed his messenger that they would resist arrest. The chief himself later arrested the detail and he was taken to the chief's Baraza. He was extremely insolent in the Baraza, and refused to pay a fine of 30 Shillings impressed on him. The chief said that he must be handcuffed and sent to Nzega for imprisonment, but in order that he should not disgrace the army, ordered that he should be sent to Nzega in civilian clothes and the messenger accompanying him was ordered to hand his uniform over to the District Commission. The detail then decided to pay his fine.³⁹¹

In addition to the askari mentioned in both letters, four other details who went on leave in the same area were also sentenced to fines or imprisonment for committing similar offenses. It transpired that the local Native Authorities were merely enforcing a general order prohibiting all beer brewing, so that grain supplies could be conserved for famine relief in the Central Province. This was

³⁹⁰Lieutenant J. L. St. Clair 3/6 KAR to DC Nzega. June 1, 1943. TNA 31642.

by no means an isolated occurrence, and the Provincial Commissioner for the Southern Province informed the Chief Secretary in Dar es Salaam that many district commissioners complained of askaris marching into the Boma unannounced, being dressed in a unkempt manner, demanding special privileges and otherwise failing to show proper respect for authority. The Provincial Commissioner himself questioned why askaris seemed incapable of saluting his car as he drove by, despite the fact that less worldly Africans managed to acknowledge his presence. He advocated hiring retired KAR NCO's to maintain control over askaris who came to Bomas seeking interviews, and issued a defense regulation giving district commissioners the power of summary punishment over soldiers on leave, similar to that held by company officers. Neither proposal was implemented, due to lack of available manpower and the administrations' concerns over blurring the lines between civilian and military jurisdiction.³⁹²

Many civil officials believed that the military authorities were contributing to these problems. By encouraging askaris to rely on district commissioners to intercede in their personal affairs, soldiers were frequently allowed to circumvent the Native Authorities. Members of the administration became increasingly concerned that if askaris were not forced to acknowledge the legitimacy of their chiefs, demobilized soldiers would begin to think of themselves as a special class and refuse to comply with local ordinances or customary laws. In their view, such a development could irreparably damage the power of traditional

³⁹¹DC Nzega to PC Tabora, June 6, 1943 TNA 31642.

³⁹²PC Southern Province to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam. TNA 31642.

Native Authorities and weaken the entire, carefully constructed system of indirect rule. The provincial commissioner of Lake Province commented that one chief asked him whether askaris on leave had to obey local ordinances and were subject to his jurisdiction. He then went on to remark that soldiers were being given special treatment.

Soldiers are being advised by the regimental officers to see their DO if they are in difficulties. Unfortunately this is interpreted to mean that all disputes must be brought to the Boma, and they are apt, in some cases, to be settled by the DC in person. If not, a letter to the Native Authority is demanded. Soldiers on leave are privileged to have their affairs expeditiously dealt with and instructions to the local Native Authorities have been issued to this effect, but to create the impression that soldiers are socially privileged is laying up immense trouble for the future, when the Native Authorities will need every ounce of authority they possess and more to keep their communities in order. The Boma is fitted with an ever-open door but it is the front entrance, not the back door. I should be grateful if regimental officers were asked to impress on military personnel proceeding on leave that their status in tribal life and their relations with their Native Authorities remain unaltered.³⁹³

To prevent the spread of such difficulties the administration persuaded the EAC to remind officers in command of units that, following the war, askaris would have to be reintegrated into society. To facilitate this process, officers were requested to disabuse askaris of the notion that they enjoyed a special status and reinforce that their military service in no way altered relations with their Native Authorities.³⁹⁴

Despite this and similar actions, administration officials continued to have difficulties with askaris failing to acknowledge tribal authority. In January 1944, a lance-corporal in 26 KAR sent a threatening letter addressed to Chief Kapere of Sumbawanga, accusing him of wanting to extend his power over neighboring

³⁹³PC Lake Province, Soldiers on Leave, April 27, 1943. TNA 31642.

regions. Attached to the letter was a caricature cut from a newspaper, showing Benito Mussolini. The askari reminded the chief of the recent defeat of the Italian forces, indicating that a similar thing could happen to him. He wrote: "Look at this picture of a heathen who wanted to swallow Africa, this Mussolini is now helpless." Later he threatened "Do not forget that the Europeans are fighting because they want every man to stay where he has a right." The Tanganyikan authorities sent a complaint to the military, asking that the lance-corporal be required to write a letter of apology. They also suggested that the Company Officer who signed the letter be reminded that it was inappropriate to forward threatening letters written by their soldiers.³⁹⁵

At a conference in 1944, several district commissioners again advised the administration to co-operate with the military authorities to limit friction between soldiers and Native Authorities. Several district commissioners supported a suggestion that, when soldiers' *shauris* were dealt with, the return reply should "state clearly that the Native Authority has investigated the affair." Furthermore, officials argued that correspondence concerning soldiers' domestic affairs should first be sent to the Native Authority, and only then transferred to the district commissioner for action if necessary. District commissioners noted that even under the system then being used, even where askaris sent their correspondence to the Boma, it was the Native Authorities who usually carried out the inquiries. Civil officials believed that if askaris received replies to their correspondence stamped and signed by their local Native Authority, it would

³⁹⁴HQ EA Command, Tribal Discipline African Ranks. June 19, 1943. TNA 31642.

convince soldiers that their chiefs were looking after their affairs. The commissioners also advised that Army Education Officers should be encouraged to remind askaris of the position of their Native Authorities.³⁹⁶ In April 1945, civil officials complained that in the Swahili Newspaper *Askari*, a regular advice column entitled "Askari Mzee Anashauri" (advice from an old soldier), recommended that soldiers who had problems at home contact the "Bwana DC." Members of the administration protested that no mention was made of the important part played by Native Authorities in looking after askaris' welfare. Officials recommended that in a forthcoming issue of *Askari* that "Askari Mzee" should give credit to the Native Authorities, thus "stressing their importance in the general administrative system."³⁹⁷ While the military authorities understood the administration's concerns, many officers were reluctant to change the existing system, arguing that askari found it reassuring that district commissioners investigated their affairs. There is little doubt that askaris understood that having district commissioners take care of their domestic problems, raised their position in society, and they enjoyed being marked as different from the rest of the population.

Some of the tension between military and civil officials was caused by more mundane matters. District commissioners and police officers had to deal with the occasional disturbances that broke out when askaris fought or argued

³⁹⁵Letter from L/Cpl J. K. K. Steven Chimazi 26 KAR to Chief Kapele, October 10, 1943 and PC Western Province to Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam, December 20, 1943. TNA 31642.

³⁹⁶Political Mafia to Provicer Dar es Salaam. November 27, 1944, and PC Eastern Province to Director of Manpower. February 6, 1945. TNA 31642.

³⁹⁷Acting Chief Secretary to the Government to Chief Secretary to the Governors Conference. April 13, 1945. The letter refers to *Askari* January 31, 1945. TNA 31642.

with civilians. In December 1940, the district commissioner of Shinyanga complained to his superiors that several askaris from 6 KAR had been allowed to take their rifles and fifty rounds of ammunition with them on leave. The administration had little trouble convincing the army to discontinue the practice, but district commissioners were also asked to account for missing equipment. To prevent askaris from selling their military clothing, many army officers adopted the policy of sending details on leave with minimum equipment.³⁹⁸ District commissioners also complained that the policy of allowing askaris to correspond with them sometimes resulted in unreasonable requests. One sergeant from Tabora wrote to his DC, telling him that he would send him money, and asking that arrangements be made with the local *Jumbe* for the construction of a modern house. When the DC politely replied it was impossible for civil officials to undertake such tasks, the Commanding Officer Headquarters Company of 1/6 KAR acknowledged that the request was unreasonable but noted:

It is possible that a more courteous reply would have been received had the letter been written either by his Platoon Commander or Commanding Officer Headquarters Company, which should have the case, as it now stands, an impression has been received by the askaris of this company that the Boma has lost interest in its fighting soldiers and is not prepared to assist them in matters such as these.³⁹⁹

Adding insult to injury, when the Adjutant for 1/6 KAR eventually sent his response to the DC, he also enclosed a letter from another DC "in a very different strain" who had agreed to arrange to have a house built for an askari serving overseas.

³⁹⁸PC Lake Province to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam. December 17, 1940. TNA 29342.

³⁹⁹OC HQ Company 1/6 KAR to Adjutant 1/6 KAR. November 17, 1942. see also OC 1/6 KAR to DC Tabora November 18, 1942. TNA 31269

Many civil officials found the sheer volume of correspondence from askaris almost impossible to cope with, and DC complained that an inordinate amount of their time was being taken up investigating trivial matters, such as trying to trace askaris relatives who had not written, dealing with problems relating to family remittances and trying to collect debts owed to askaris. The final category of requests clearly shows that some askaris used the privileged position of having ready access to the civil authorities to pursue grievances which normally would have been handled by the Native Authorities. While DC's often turned such matters over to the Native Authorities for investigation, the civil authorities remained responsible for replying to letters. Some DC's hired additional clerks just to deal with askaris correspondence. In February 1943, the administration sought relief, asking the Chief Secretary for the Governors Conference to request that the military authorities do everything in their power to limit unreasonable requests for assistance. The EAC agreed to the request, and sent out a circular asking all officers to carefully scrutinize askaris letters and reject those they deemed unreasonable. Despite this and other attempts to relieve the workload of DC's, the flood of letters, and other military matters requiring action, continued throughout the war⁴⁰⁰

Military Service and Askaris' Expectations for the Future

Military and civil officials both hoped and feared that service in the armed forces would permanently change many askaris. Such concerns were particularly noticeable on the part of members of the administration, who worried that large

⁴⁰⁰Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam to Chief Secretary EA Governors Conference, February 18, 1943. TNA 31269.

numbers of askaris would return home with heightened expectations of government that would be all but impossible to fulfill. Officials feared that the comparatively good life in the army, combined with training, education and exposure to new ideas and foreign lands, would all influence many askaris to leave the rural areas and seek paid employment in Tanganyika's cities and towns. The term officials increasingly used to describe such individuals was "detribalized native," referring to a group of predominantly urban Africans who were perceived as having few, if any, connections to their ethnic group. As long as the numbers of detribalized natives remained small, they posed little threat to the administration's carefully constructed system of indirect rule, but many officials worried that large numbers of returning askaris would join this category. In 1943, district and provincial commissioners began to talk about plans to reintegrate askaris into their home communities but little was actually done until 1945.

Much of the information coming through official channels about the attitudes and experiences of askaris on the surface seemed to indicate that the administration's concerns were justified. Through their letters, actions and personal conversations with the Political Liaison Officer, Fazan, their officers and members of the administration, many askaris made it clear that they expected the end of the war would be accompanied by social and economic change in Tanganyika. Although few articulated hopes for widespread political change, many askaris hoped to play a significant role in the local administration, and several voiced their opinion that elderly chiefs should be replaced by younger, better-educated and more experienced men.

Officials also feared that askaris would return home from the war having grown accustomed to receiving wages and luxury items unavailable to most Africans. Even though askaris complained that they were poorly paid compared

to other soldiers, most realized that they made far more in the army than they could have in civilian employment. Many hoped that, following the war, they would be able to use the skills they acquired in the military to get better paying jobs either in the government or private sector. As the war drew to a close and askaris began to contemplate being demobilized, some planned on using their gratuities to open businesses or buy land or stock. During military service, askaris also became accustomed to receiving clothing, rations, and a much higher standard of medical care than was available in Tanganyika. Military service also influenced askaris' consumption habits and a number of veterans remarked that they received a ration of cigarettes in the army and were also occasionally provided with other luxury items, such as personal hygiene products and sweets, free of charge. There is no doubt that many askari looked forward to a much higher standard of living following the war. Several soldiers corresponded with district officers and informed them that they planned to build modern houses when they returned home. One askari described the plans for his future dwelling as follows:

The building must be of brick with a ceiling, brass handle locks on the doors and six windows in each room. After receiving the whole total expenditure for this building for you, I will send out a plan for the house. I also request you to find me a suitable plot for this building.⁴⁰¹

Although few askari expected to build such grand houses, many men intended to build a European style dwelling made from brick with a tin roof on their return.

One unavoidable consequence of having askaris serve overseas was that

they were exposed to different regions, cultures and ideas. Some members of the administration viewed such experiences as positive and voiced the hope that askaris would act as examples and encourage social change. When a AAPC sergeant who had been captured by the Germans and held as a prisoner of war in Italy and France returned to Tanganyika, the Chief Secretary requested a report on the askaris' reaction to his return to Tanganyika. The DC who interviewed the former sergeant noted that the man stated that education and health needed to be priorities for the African population. However, the askari did not blame the government for failing adequately to provide these essentials, but instead laid the failure for development squarely on the civilian population, saying "They eat anything in dirty ways. They wear dirty clothes and drink dirty water." Considering the askari was speaking to his DC, his response is hardly surprising. Predicting the long-term repercussions of military service on this individual, the DC concluded:

Sergeant. Rutenganio has certainly benefited from his stay in Europe. He is the epitome of courtesy and is fully appreciative of all that has been done for him. But I doubt whether his stay was long enough for him to obtain a permanent veneer of civilization. His tribal roots have been strained but not pulled out. I fear the value of his experiences will fast fade when he returns permanently to his tribal home.⁴⁰²

Yet other indicators were not so reassuring. Askari who had received advanced training during the war, particularly those in the EAAMC and EAAEC, expressed no desire to return either to the land or to poorly paying jobs. Many of these men

⁴⁰¹PC Tabora to the Director of Manpower, January 29, 1943. TNA 31269.

⁴⁰²PC Southern Highlands Province to Chief Secretary to the Government, May 5, 1945. TNA 31642.

had learned to speak good English and some specialized skills and definitely considered themselves in a different class from their less educated comrades. When asked what he had done during the war, one former member of the EAAEC said "I spent the war teaching those ignorant people how to do things. Teaching them about the army and what they needed to do."⁴⁰³

Some administration officials hoped that serving overseas would broaden askaris' horizons, expose them to other cultures and convince them to improve themselves and their communities. In some instances however, overseas service had several unintended consequences. In both India and Burma, askaris came into contact with Indians and discovered that many of them lived as meanly as the most destitute Tanganyikans. Such interactions resulted in most askaris seriously questioning East Africa's racial hierarchy, which automatically placed Indians above Africans. Many askari were appalled at the poverty they encountered in Calcutta, Ceylon and other areas where they were stationed. As one askari remarked: "Here the Indians controlled many things, but when we went there (India), they were nothing. They were beggars. They were the poorest and dirtiest people I have ever seen in my life. They had nothing."⁴⁰⁴ This reaction was by no means isolated and askaris' growing contempt for Indians also appeared in letters home. The SEAC's morale reports reported this trend and one noted:

⁴⁰³Interview #19. Other askaris voiced similar opinions, including interviews #18, #36 and #32, although most did not use such harsh terms.

⁴⁰⁴Interview #19.

The askari had not had an opportunity of meeting the better class Indian, and his opinions of the race have been based on observations of the poorer classes. He is therefore firmly convinced that India consists of ragged beggars and undernourished peasants. Consequently he has begun to despise the Indian civilian, and wonders why Indians are considered superior to Africans in Africa. One pointed out that, in Africa, the Indian is addressed as "Bwana" by the African, whereas in India the Indian calls the African "Sahib" and is glad to beg from him. The result has been growing resentment against the Indians domiciled in East Africa and their grip on trade there.⁴⁰⁵

While most askaris expressed the hope that economic opportunities would open up for Africans after the war, thus diminishing the power and prestige of the Indian community, others advocated more strenuous action. In one letter, an askari recommended that all Indians in East Africa should be sent home to live like their impoverished fellows, while another NCO was even more forceful, ominously writing:

The Indians in this country are horrible. Although in Africa they are well off, here they are poor and dirty and begging is uncontrollable. I have never in my life seen such filthy beggars as these Indians. Mind you, in future we will wring their necks.⁴⁰⁶

While most askaris expressed nothing but contempt for most Indian civilians, relations with the Burmese and Karens was satisfactory. One KAR officer noted that the askaris occasionally made fun of the Burmese because they did not wear shoes, and a former askari commented that some of the inhabitants of Burma were like the Masai, because they did not wear proper clothes, but only a blanket draped around their bodies.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵Report on the Morale of British, Indian and Colonial troops of allied Land Forces, SEAC, May-July 1945. PRO WO 203/2268.

⁴⁰⁶Excerpt from an askaris letter, in Report on the Morale of British, Indian and Colonial troops of allied Land Forces, SEAC, November-December 1945, and January 1946. PRO WO 203/2268.

⁴⁰⁷Interview #1.

Equally significant were the encounters some askaris serving in the Middle East and South East Asia had with American troops. Interactions with American personnel, both White and African-American, caused some askaris to rethink not only race relations, but also much of what they had been told about Britain's position as a world power. Askaris serving in South East Asia became aware that American NCO's made as much as low-level British officers, and that African-American troops were better paid than British soldiers holding the same rank. Furthermore, the lowest ranking American personnel often lived in luxury, compared to British soldiers. Evidence of America's wealth and resources was impossible to miss. As one former askari concluded:

In fact, we received much assistance from the Americans. Even gifting us with airplanes. We were getting drugs and trucks mostly from America. Without America, I do not know whether the British would win the war. Because these American aircraft super fortress and another one called... I forgot the details. But without America, I doubt if the British would win because the Japanese were very powerful on the sea, in the air and on the land.⁴⁰⁸

Many former askaris also identified the atomic bomb as "the American bomb." Askaris were also exposed to cultural influences serving alongside American troops, and many enjoyed listening to popular U.S. bands and jazz, and learning new dance steps. One former askari serving in Burma decided he wanted to be a jazz musician when he left the army, and other men purchased gramophones or brought records back with them, which were played at dance hall parties.⁴⁰⁹

Askaris' expectations for the future were also influenced by the

⁴⁰⁸Interview #20. Later he remembered that the second type of aircraft were Dakota transport planes.

⁴⁰⁹Interview #19.

progression of military service. Many veterans make a distinction between the Ethiopian and Madagascar campaigns and later operations in the Middle East and South East Asia. At the start of the war, at least some of the Tanganyikan askaris who volunteered for service did so because they wanted to defend their communities from a possible German return. As one askari put it, "We went to fight because Mussolini said he was going to have breakfast in Nairobi." Information officers played on these fears, and even askaris who had been conscripted understood why they were fighting. Following the Italian defeat in Ethiopia, and the successful occupation of Madagascar, many askaris began to feel that, since the immediate threats had been eliminated, they should be allowed to return home. Despite the efforts of education officers, and other forms of propaganda, few askaris understood why they should be called on to fight overseas. Although it is difficult to generalize, interviews, morale reports and other sources indicate that askaris' attitude towards the war effort changed during the later years of the conflict. While many were willing to continue to serve, they were no longer fighting to defend their homes but to help the British. To many, the difference was significant, and most askaris expected to be rewarded for their efforts on behalf of the empire. Information and education officers portrayed the war as a war for freedom or a conflict to ensure a better world. Few askaris took such statements at face value, but most believed that they had aided the British and that Britain would honor its obligations.

Askaris were aided in such beliefs by the propaganda disseminated by the EAC and SEAC to keep morale high and convince Africans that they were fighting for a worthy cause. Unit and brigade commanders held special parades where they praised members of units, and both Generals Slim and Fowkes acknowledged the important role 11 EA Division played during the advance into Burma. Such commendation influenced askaris' perception of self-worth, and led

some British officers to believe that many Africans held exaggerated views of their importance in the campaign.⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰Report on the Morale of British, Indian and Colonial troops of allied Land Forces, SEAC, May-July 1945. PRO WO 203/2268. For a more detailed example, see article on General Fowkes praising East African troops in the *Tanganyika Standard*, September 15, 1945.

Chapter 8

The Impact of the War at Home: 1939-1945

The Tanganyikan Government went about implementing wartime regulations and measures with a vigor unmatched in the territory since Cameron and his core of true believers set about sweeping away the vestiges of the German administrative system, and replacing it with indirect rule in the late 1920's. Strategically, Tanganyika was unimportant except as one stage of the road network leading from South Africa to Cairo. The Territory was designated part of the "lines of communication area" under the control of the EAC in Nairobi. With the front line being located to the north, on the Kenyan-Ethiopian border, Tanganyika's main contribution to the East African war effort was to construct the Great North Road running from Mbeya to Arusha, which was used to transport troops and supplies traveling from South Africa to Kenya. Having quickly dealt with the possibility of German "fifth column" activity, the Tanganyikan government turned to the dual tasks of reassuring the African population that fears of a German return was groundless, and making the administrative changes necessary for a transition from peace to war.

Among Tanganyika's small population of educated Africans, the declaration of hostilities came as no surprise, but in some more isolated rural areas the news was an unexpected shock. In most districts, African communities responded to the announcement that Britain was once again at War with Germany with concern and uncertainty. Examples of local panic were rare and even these quickly subsided when Africans observed the speed with which the authorities rounded up German settlers. In Songea, ex-police and KAR askaris turned out in large numbers to volunteer to serve as special constables and went to local German mission stations to obtain paroles. In Tunduru, the district officer sent runners to dispatch a special *Tangazo* (notice) to local Native Authorities

informing them of the start of the war and reminding them that, unlike the last war, the Germans had no askaris in Tanganyika and that the population had nothing to fear. Yet beneath the surface, many communities remained uneasy as can be seen in the following excerpt from the annual report of the district officer of Liwale for 1939.

No natives in the Territory have a greater dread of war than those of this district, and something far deeper than consternation and alarm was felt by the local population when it heard that war had broken out in Europe, and that Germany was once again the enemy. The barbarities of the Angoni wars, the refinements of cruelty practiced during the suppression of the Maji Maji rebellion, and the horrors of the decimation by disease in the Great War, are living memories for many in the district. Although in September the outward and visible signs were few, there were many whose hearts were troubled within them, and it was only a feeling of helplessness, which - while it did nothing to alleviate their fears - prevented them from showing what they felt.⁴¹¹

Occasionally, fears of a German return took more concrete forms, and the inhabitants of one isolated village in the Tunduru district slaughtered all their chickens to deny the invading Germans supplies.⁴¹² In Mtwara, people called the war "*Vita ya Mpakani*" (war of the borders) and, after rumors spread that the Germans would return, many fled to Mozambique and few came forward to volunteer for military service.⁴¹³ Another serious reaction took place in the Lupa area, where, out of 18,000 Africans employed as laborers in the gold mines, approximately 11,000 returned to their homes. However, fear quickly subsided and most workers soon returned to the diggings.⁴¹⁴ In Kigoma, the day after the

⁴¹¹Excerpt from Liwale DAR in: Southern Province Annual Report, 1939. TNA 170.

⁴¹²Excerpt from Tunduru DAR in: Southern Province Annual Report, 1939. TNA 170.

⁴¹³Interview #38.

⁴¹⁴Report of the Labour Inspectorate 1939 TNA 13/53 and *Report on the League of Nations on Tanganyika Territory* 1939 TNA.

war broke out, raiders crossed the border from neighboring Burundi to steal stock. The Masai likewise took advantage of the news, to mount cattle raids on the Sukuma.⁴¹⁵ In other areas Africans hurried to the shops to buy clothing and other items, remembering the shortages of imported goods during the First World War. Chiefs, members of Native Administrations, and others who owed their political or economic position to the British, quickly reaffirmed their loyalty to the government, and set up special funds to collect money for the war effort. In areas where German rule had been particularly harsh, small numbers of young men, often influenced by their elders, volunteered to serve in the KAR, declaring that they wanted to defeat the Germans so that they could never return to Tanganyika.⁴¹⁶

To ensure adequate numbers of recruits for the military and to coordinate recruiting with civilian employers, in May 1939, the Tanganyikan government established a Man Power Committee and appointed Sir William Lead to act as Director of Man Power. Once the war began, the Man Power Organization assumed responsibility for providing personnel for all branches of the military as well as essential industries run by civilians. Lead's job was not easy, and one of the first problems his organization faced was not how to convince Africans to join the colors - that would come later - but how to persuade Tanganyika's male European population not to join. British settlers and officials turned out *en mass* to enlist, and the administration was powerless to deny such requests, as much as it would have liked to. Settlers turned their plantations and businesses over to

⁴¹⁵Kigoma DAR 1939 TNA.

⁴¹⁶Interviews #40 and #31.

underlings, wives, or neighbors, and many of the miners who had been barely scraping by on the Lupa abandoned their claims, seeking employment in the armed forces. The Chairman of the Sisal Grower's Association sent a request to the Director of Man Power asking him to prevent white staff from sisal estates from volunteering for service with the KAR, but the Director of Man Power, supported by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, replied that he was powerless to intervene.⁴¹⁷

The impact of this exodus, especially when combined with the internment of much of the German population, was felt almost immediately, and officials worried that production of sisal, coffee and other cash crops needed for the war effort would suffer. The transfer of administrative officials to the military was just as pronounced. By 1941, 20 out of 120 administrative officials had joined the forces, at a time when enforcing wartime regulations was drastically increasing work for officials. Furthermore, the loss of staff to the military was unevenly distributed among departments, with the unfortunate result that many specialists, such as medical personnel, veterinarians, educators and engineers, volunteered or were seconded to the forces. The Medical Department was especially hard hit and had immediately to begin to curtail service due to a shortage of staff. Following the declaration of war, the territory mobilized a Field Ambulance Company, Motor Ambulance Convey and Casualty Clearing Station, necessitating the removal of eight medical officers and seven other European officers from peacetime duties. A further two medical officers, as well as large

⁴¹⁷Correspondence between E.F. Hitchcock Chairman of the Sisal Growers Association and Malcom Macdonald Secretary of State for the Colonies, October 6, 1939. TNA 27678

numbers of lower level staff, were seconded to the KAR for military duties, and the Deputy Director of Medical Services was required for duty at the headquarters of the Southern Brigade. The public suffered a further loss when eight out of the twenty-four German medical and dental practitioners in the territory were interned. Tanganyika could ill afford to lose so many members of the already small medical community. Even curtailing services and redistributing the remaining staff left three stations without medical officers, left the Southern province with only a single medical officer, and deprived the Northern province of its Senior Medical Officer. By the end of 1940, the situation had deteriorated even further and the Medical Department had 26 Europeans, one Asian and 154 Africans on active service with the military.⁴¹⁸

In the early days of the war, it was also not necessary to resort to conscription to obtain African recruits. The initial expansion of the KAR was small and involved the same process used during the First World War, where original battalions were split into two battalions, with each then being brought up to strength with new recruits. This process continued throughout the war. By the time hostilities ended, no less than five new battalions were formed by removing NCO's and more experienced soldiers from the nucleus of 6 KAR. Throughout the war, volunteers made up a high percentage, though by no means all, of the recruits for the KAR the AAPC and a few other combat units. Askaris in KAR battalions enjoyed the prestige of being front line soldiers, and civil and military authorities attempted, whenever possible, to continue to fill such units with willing

⁴¹⁸*Annual Report of the Medical Department, 1939 and Abridged Annual Report of the Medical Department 1940. TNA 11727.*

volunteers recruited from "martial tribes".⁴¹⁹ When the first call for African recruits went out shortly after the war began, military authorities had little trouble finding the 1,000 volunteers needed to bring 6 KAR up to strength and form a new battalion 2/6 K.A.R.

In addition to ensuring that military and civilian employers had adequate numbers of soldiers or laborers, Man Power Officers were also charged with controlling the numbers of African recruited from any area at a given time. and organizing medical examination procedures, transit camps and transport arrangements. According to guidelines drawn up by the Man Power Committee, ten percent of the adult male population of each district was the maximum percentage that could be recruited for both military and civil employment outside the district. To ensure that any one district did not become a favored recruiting ground, and also to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, military recruiting was carried out across the territory. Recruits were examined. and if found medically fit, were quarantined in recruit camps located in each district for a period of between fourteen to twenty-one days. The quarantine period was designed to prevent the spread of serious communicable diseases, particularly Cerebro-Spinal-Meningitis. While at the recruit camps potential soldiers were given a basic introduction to military life complete with physical exercises and elementary drill. Following quarantine, recruits from the Central, Eastern, Southern, Southern Highlands and Western Provinces were sent to Tanganyika's main depot at Dar es Salaam to be trained and serve with 6 KAR,

⁴¹⁹The military preferred to draw recruits from the Angoni, Hehe, Yao, Nyamwezi, Sukuma, Jaluo Kuria and Manyema. Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam to all PC's and DO's, October 14, 1939. TNA

while those from the Lake, Tanga and Northern Provinces were sent to Moshi for service with 2/6 KAR

Initially the government wanted to determine how many volunteers would be forthcoming from each district, so the maximum number of recruits allowed at each camp was limited to thirty. Most camps rapidly filled this quota and large numbers of disappointed volunteers had to be turned away. On November 20, 1939 most of the camps suspended acceptance of volunteers. while the remainder continued to take small numbers of recruits to serve as replacements. Substantial numbers of "suitable material anxious to enlist" remained available at Moshi, North Mara, Musoma, Tabora and Iringa. The district officer at Mara was an ex-KAR officer and. after filling his quota at the beginning of November,. still had 360 potential recruits on his waiting list, 50 of whom had already been found fit by the medical officer. Both government officials and military officers were pleased with the results of this first recruiting drive, particularly with what they viewed as a spontaneous African show of loyalty and support for the Government in response to the start of the war.⁴²⁰

Man Power officers took great pains, particularly during the early days of the war, to remind district officers and military recruiters to emphasize to recruits that they were enlisting as soldiers and would not be used as military laborers. In early November, when military officials required Company Gun Bearers for 6 KAR, the Director of Manpower sent out a circular to all provincial commissioners reminding them that "great importance is attached to the avoidance of the terms

"Wapagazi" or "Karria Kor." This was not only on account of their unfortunate associations in the memory of the African but also because the duties of Company Gun Bearers differ radically from those of ordinary transport portage. In addition to askari and gun bearers, the only other early manpower requirement for Tanganyika units was for drivers; this was initially filled by graduates of the Public Works Department training school in Dar es Salaam.⁴²¹

Early optimism that Tanganyika would have no trouble enlisting Africans for the armed forces collapsed when recruiting efforts experienced a sharp decline corresponding with the start of the Ethiopian campaign in June 1940. The dearth of recruits had little to do with Africans' unwillingness to enlist in the armed forces now that the conflict had become a shooting war. To the contrary, volunteers continued to come forward to join the ranks of the KAR and AAPC. Instead the decline in recruits was due to EAC's increasing need for military laborers instead of soldiers, a scarcity of military recruiting parties, and lack of preparation on the part of the administration to educate the population and drum up support for the recruiting campaign. Finally, many districts had begun to reach the point where the majority of the healthy young male population who wanted to join the armed forces had already done so, and those who remained had no desire to serve as military laborers. For all these reasons, the demand for recruits for the EAMLS quickly outstripped supply, and the Tanganyikan government, despite great reservations, had little choice but to resort to

⁴²⁰Director of Man Power to Provincial Commissioners, November 9, 1939 and Director of Man Power to Chief Secretary, District Recruit Camps, November 20, 1939 TNA 27427.

⁴²¹Director of Man Power to Provincial Commissioners, November 9, 1939 and Director of Man Power to Chief Secretary, December 11, 1939 TNA 27427.

conscription to meet monthly quotas. In addition to the requirements for the EAMLS, Tanganyika was also called on to contribute 2,100 laborers on short term contracts to the Kenya and Uganda Railways and Harbors. To ensure that recruiting for military laborers and the KAR did not overlap, and that there was no confusion as to which service a recruit was enlisting or being conscripted for, the government did not recruit for the services in "the same, or even closely contiguous territories." The shift from recruiting to conscription was accompanied by a transfer of the responsibility for meeting military manpower requirements from the military authorities to the administration. Under the new system, district officers became responsible for the myriad tasks involved in providing the military with laborers, including organizing conscription drives, running camps, medically inspecting large numbers of recruits and arranging transport for hundreds of conscripts each month.⁴²²

Conscription began in earnest in October 1940 and almost immediately encountered the fierce opposition the administration feared. Some of the resistance was due to poor preparation on the part of the administration, who introduced conscription with just over a months' notice, and who failed adequately to prepare African communities for the new requirements. More important however, conscription drives resulted in district officers calling on native authorities to provide suitable numbers of conscripts. Native authorities found themselves in an extremely difficult position, forced to choose between alienating their subjects or angering the government and possibly losing their

⁴²²Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam to all PC's, September 16, 1940 and Recruitment in Tanganyika of African Combatant and Non-Combatant Personnel for Military Service. TNA 27427

positions. Native authorities attempted to deal with this dilemma in a variety of ways, but efforts to maintain the trust and support of both sides usually failed and, in the end, most chiefs and headmen had little choice but to provide the requisite number of monthly conscripts.

Methods of recruiting and conscription varied greatly according to the time-period, district, resources available and even the individual in charge of selecting recruits. During interviews, some former askaris and civilians claimed that *Jumbes* in their areas were instructed to limit the number of recruits they took from each family, but others deny this, or state that if that if such requirements existed, they were not adhered to. Considering the pressure district officers and Native Authorities were under to provide recruits, it seems highly probable that niceties, such as the number of members from each family serving in the armed forces, would often be overlooked. In some cases, families tried to limit disruption to the family unit by selecting a candidate in advance who would agree to be conscripted should the need arise. One individual explained that his family chose him to go to the army because he was young, had not yet married and did not have children. Unfortunately, he was found unfit and, despite appeals from his family to the *Jumbe* and DC, his uncle, who had two small children, was conscripted.⁴²³ One possible reason for the indifference on the part of Native Authority and district officers to taking multiple people from a family, may have had less to do with callousness than with different ethnic groups' definition of a immediate family. One Chaga veteran stated that his father had

Vol. I.
⁴²³Interview #38.

fourteen wives and forty children, and three of his brothers served in the army.⁴²⁴ Similar ambiguities existed concerning the appropriate age range for recruits. Man Power circulars, attempting to take into account different ethnic groups' physical traits, did not list minimum or maximum ages for recruits, but merely stated that they should be able to perform arduous work for extended periods.⁴²⁵ Despite the lack of established guidelines, there is no record of large numbers of juveniles being conscripted and none of the veterans or civilian informants mentioned it being a problem. In a few cases, exactly the opposite occurred. One former askari recalled that recruiters twice turned down his request to join the army, because they thought he was too young, and he did not enlist until he was twenty years old.⁴²⁶ Unfortunately, neither official records nor interviews shed much light on the average age of askaris, and it is not known, for example, whether higher proportions of younger men served in combat units as opposed to military labor units. Comments in official correspondence as well as the accounts of veterans do, however, indicate that specialist technical units were filled predominantly with younger askaris enlisted directly out of school.⁴²⁷

While members of Native Administrations and district officials attempted to lessen the impact of conscription on communities and prevent social and

⁴²⁴Interview #3.

⁴²⁵For an example of recruiting guidelines, see: Physical Examination of Troops for EAMLS September 21, 1940. TNA 27427 Vol. I.

⁴²⁶Interview #2. Most of the former askari interviewed were enlisted or conscripted in the army when they were in their late teens or early twenties. One informant was recruited right out of school at age fifteen, but this was an exceptional case because he enlisted in 1933 in the pre-war KAR, and was specifically selected for signal training. Interview #13.

⁴²⁷Address by Lieutenant Colonel A. J. Knott September 30-October 1, 1942. CO 131/6 and interviews #36, #18, #19, #20 and #32. One askari who served as a signaler, described himself and the other men he served with as *vijana* (youths) saying that the majority of the askaris in his unit were very young.

economic disruption they clearly sanctioned the use of highly selective conscription to rid communities, at least temporarily, of individuals or elements they considered unproductive or disruptive. Native Authority and Administration officials attempted to use the threat of conscription to encourage increased production of food and cash crops, deter tax evasion and elicit contributions to war charities. In 1941, in Dar es Salaam, tax defaulters were detained and those found fit were conscripted for service with the EAMLS.⁴²⁸ In Ulanga District, the DC noted that "as far as possible, the less industrious cultivators are being conscripted."⁴²⁹

In addition to requiring support from members of native authorities, the Tanganyikan government also relied on religious leaders and educators to fill the ranks. The Director of Man Power and his subordinates turned to missions and mosques, seeking their help to popularize the war effort and extort their followers to join the forces. Many missionaries supported the war effort from the beginning, but the need for their assistance increased following the introduction of conscription, and they worked hard to alleviate mistakes made during the early months of the campaign. In December 1940, the Bishop of Masasi and other missionaries in the south met with officials and suggested a number of changes to the conscription machinery that would speed up the process of distributing family remittances, thus reducing Africans fears that, should they sign up, their families would not be adequately provided for.⁴³⁰

The support of missionaries and educators became increasingly important

⁴²⁸Uzaramo DAR 1941 TNA 3/XVI and Interview #14.

⁴²⁹Ulanga District DAR 1941 TNA 61/3/XVI.

as the war progressed, because the East Africa Command required ever greater numbers of educated recruits to serve in technical units. At a manpower conference held in Nairobi in 1942, Lieutenant Colonel A. J. Knott from EAC asked Man Power representatives from the East African governments to assist the army in finding adequate numbers of Africans who either possessed some technical ability or could be trained quickly. In his address Knott stressed the importance of obtaining educated recruits:

I do wish to make the point straight away that our needs for educated Africans are not only large, but extremely urgent and form a very vital part of our present recruiting demands. We want men for the Royal Corps of Signals, who must be at least of Standard VI in education, regimental signalers of only slightly lower standard, driver operators for armored car units, who must combine some of the most technical part of a signaler's training with the mechanical ability required to drive and maintain a vehicle, and medical recruits who must be sufficiently literate and intelligent to be capable of absorbing instruction in first aid, hygiene and so on. All of these have got to be found from what we fully realize is a very limited class indeed.⁴³¹

Responding to calls for educated or mechanically inclined recruits, Man Power officials turned to government and mission schools. Batches of new recruits were vetted at depots and training centers with the more educated being marked for service with technical units, despite the wish of some for a combat role. As with the fighting arms, the military preferred recruits for the technical services to be volunteers, but this was not always possible, and several former askaris who were recruited right out of school claimed that headmasters worked with district commissioners to put pressure on them or their families to compel them to join the forces. One veteran who served with the EAAMC said he initially refused, but

⁴³⁰Provincer Masasi to Director Man Power, December 27, 1940 TNA 27427 Vol. I.

then was forced when the DC brought pressure to bear on his family:

If you refuse you will be sacked from this school. My father was working on the Public Works Department. He would be sacked too and for that I was very sad. I told my father if I refused he would be sacked from his work. He said you have to think deeper, when I am sacked nobody will pay me and your mother and brothers will suffer a lot. You will go, my son, and god knows you will return, and I agreed.⁴³²

A number of ex-askaris who were recruited directly out of school also emphasized that their headmasters couched official requests for military service as coming directly from the King; therefore in their minds there was no way to refuse.⁴³³ Missionaries and educators in mission schools and seminaries also worked with military recruiters and encouraged their students to enlist although none of the former askaris interviewed mentioned the same level of coercion being used as in the case above.⁴³⁴ While many students were attracted to the idea of army life and enlisted voluntarily, others viewed a stint with the forces as impeding instead of helping their chances for further education and a promising future. In Moshi district, where during the war the military had no problem raising desired numbers of recruits, pleas aimed at the well educated Chagga for volunteers schooled up to Standard VI and VII fell on deaf ears.⁴³⁵ Man Power and military recruiters attempted to counter the lingering impression that military service was for the uneducated by stressing the skills Africans could learn in the army, but many students remained unconvinced. The administration went to

⁴³¹Address by Lieutenant Colonel A. J. Knott September 30-October 1, 1942 CO 131/6

⁴³²Interview #36.

⁴³³Interviews #18, #20 and #36.

⁴³⁴Interviews #20 and #32.

⁴³⁵Moshi DAR 1944 TNA.

great lengths to obtain educated recruits. One former askari recalled that one of his teachers served briefly with the armed forces, and then returned to the school in 1940 and established a special "army class," where 60 selected pupils were taught discipline, drill and basic military decorum.⁴³⁶

Resistance to conscription took many forms, including flight across Tanganyika's borders into Portuguese or Belgian territory or into the bush, wary avoidance of all official functions and administrative centers and, in isolated cases, mass demonstrations.⁴³⁷ In Bagamoyo District, which until the close of 1940 had been "barely touched" by the war, the district officer noted how quickly the population responded to the commencement of conscription.

The outstanding event of the year was the introduction of conscription of tribesmen who still retain very vivid recollections of the methods employed in collecting slaves, and of the more recent 1914-18 war, when all and sundry were impressed as porters. Some difficulty was experienced at first, when most of the male population took to the bush, but by means of Barazas and general contact with the natives, these gradually returned to their normal lives. For about a month the market at Bagamoyo was given a wide berth by natives who were afraid they would be impressed if they came near town, but subsequently, seeing that Government was not interfering with anyone going about his lawful occasions, confidence returned.⁴³⁸

In almost every district, early announcements concerning conscription were greeted with initial suspicion and concern, which gradually subsided as the first quotas were met. In the Buha sub-district of Kigoma however, the reaction was very different and despite the district officers' appeals for calm, almost the entire

⁴³⁶Interview #17.

⁴³⁷In a Memo on Methods of Recruitment, the Political Commissioner Southern Province wrote that he had reports that considerable numbers of Africans around Mikindani and Newala crossed into Portuguese Territory and that in general the population had for a short time abandoned cultivation and took to the bush. January 29, 1941. TNA 27427 Vol. I.

⁴³⁸Bagamoyo DAR. 1940 and 1941 TNA.

population fled into the bush. Opposition was so strong that local officials feared the region was on the brink of armed revolt and, with the approval of the Governor, the Provincial Commissioner ordered all conscription drives in Buha to cease immediately. Although efforts were made the following year to inform the population about the benefits of serving with the EAMLS and entice volunteers, the government wisely waited for two years before once again mounting a conscription drive in the area. Despite efforts to popularize military service, African support for the war effort in Buha remained all but nonexistent, with, in the words of the district officer, only a "handful of less primitive types" coming forward to seek jobs as drivers and dressers.⁴³⁹

In other districts, including Kahama district, recruiting proved easier, aided in part by the stories of KAR askaris returning home on leave and organized *barazas* (meetings), where NCO's explained the nature of EAMLS work and helped dispel any lingering fears that men were being recruited as carriers. Yet even here, despite a noticeable lack of resistance to conscription, there existed strong evidence that African support for the war effort was not as widespread as many officials imagined. Recording one episode in 1941 the district officer for Kahama noted:

Although recruits for the Army are obtainable from some areas without difficulty, the majority of the local Wanyamwezi were not keen on being conscripted for modern warfare, and their attitude was amusingly shown when a combatant soldier on leave from Abyssinia spent a night at the Nzega camp where there were some 30 recruits for the KAR. On the evening he arrived, there were sounds of rejoicing, and the recruits then marched around the station singing and cheering. The next morning, it transpired that the visitor had been relating his

⁴³⁹Buha Sub-district of Kigoma annual report in Kigoma DAR 1940-1941 TNA and PC Tabora to Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam TNA 27427 Vol. I.

experiences, explaining that the fighting in Abyssinia was over and that all the KAR had to do was peacefully occupy enemy territory and to lord it over its inhabitants.⁴⁴⁰

Such feelings, if anything, increased as the war dragged on, and the following year the Nzega division of the Kahama District reached the point where every adult male who wanted to join the armed forces had already enlisted. By the middle of the year, the required quotas could no longer be filled despite the native administration using great pressure to compel men to sign up. Young men resisted such efforts on the part of the native authorities by joining a forbidden dance organization known as the puba, where they began "aping the female sex by wearing female ornaments and clothes and by plaiting of the hair". Native authorities responded by declaring such behavior decadent and outlawing the puba, but this did not end resistance to conscription. Near the end of the year, when a mobile propaganda unit toured the district showing films, the district officer noted that the shows "although fairly well attended, would have been seen by far more natives had the fear of conscription after the performances not been present in the native minds".⁴⁴¹

Fear of military service was only one contributing factor that hindered the Tanganyikan government's attempts to supply soldiers and laborers to the armed forces. An even greater problem was the generally poor state of health of the African population. The rate of medical rejection of recruits varied by district from

⁴⁴⁰Kahama District DAR 1941 TNA.

⁴⁴¹Nzega Division of Kahama District in Kahama DAR 1942 TNA. In a circular on conscription, the Chief Secretary warned provincial commissioners that recruiting should not be left entirely in the hands of the Native Authorities and their subordinates, because "the feeble and unfit, who are unable to offer effective resistance, have been pressed into service while the more active and virile young men have been left." December 16, 1940. TNA 2427 Vol. I.

moderate to staggering, and as the war continued, the administration battled with the military authorities to lower standards for entry into the armed forces. During the first two years of the war, the number of recruits required remained small, but several district officers as well as members of the medical department voiced concerns about the poor physical condition of volunteers. The district officer at Bagamoyo noted: "The examination of recruits has shown in no uncertain manner the low state of health of the average African."⁴⁴² At the end of November 1940, the Director of Medical Services wrote from Kigoma that out of 1,500 men examined at Kasulu only 162 were fit enough to be conscripted for the EAMLS. In his opinion, the only explanation for such poor results was if the native authorities had deliberately sent forward the tribes' "unfits," but he went on to suggest a further inquiry by Government to determine if such low health standards were the norm.⁴⁴³ Unfortunately the situation in Kigoma was not an isolated occurrence, and the district officer of the Nzega Division of Kahama District, writing in 1942, commented on the same trend and raised the question if, in some of the less healthy districts, it would not make more sense to curtail conscription and concentrate on increasing agricultural production instead:

One outstanding result of conscription is the realization of the extremely poor physique of the average native. To obtain a monthly quota of, say 150 fit men, not less than 600 men must be brought long distances from their homes and examined by the medical authorities, owing to the large number of rejections which take place. This fact alone must cause considerable interruption and disorganization of tribal life and not be lost sight of when schemes for increased production are introduced.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴²Bagamoyo DAR 1941 TNA.

⁴⁴³Correspondence on Rejection of Kigoma Recruits on Medical Grounds 29th November 1940 TNA 2427 Vol. I.

⁴⁴⁴Nzega Division of the Kahama District DAR 1942 TNA.

In November 1941, the authorities in Dar es Salaam detained 2,400 men of military age for failure to pay tax. Out of this total, only 301 could be considered for military service and, of this small number, 207 failed the medical exam completely, while 91 were found fit for service subject to treatment. Thus out of 2,400 men only 97 were eventually conscripted.⁴⁴⁵ Medical rejection rates were particularly high among recruits from the Southern, Eastern and Western provinces, and in some districts up to 90 percent of all males examined by medical officers were found unfit for military service. In the four districts included in Sukumaland Bilharzia, rates in conscripts were approximately 90 percent in Maswa, 85 percent in Shinyanga and 50 to 60 percent in Mwanza and Kwimba.⁴⁴⁶

During medical examinations, potential recruits stripped naked and were carefully checked by a medical officer. Due to physical differences between tribal groups, Man Power officers found it impossible to set British Army standards of height, weight and chest measurements, so instead, medical officers were to: "satisfy themselves that these standards are not below the average for the tribe." All recruits also had their urine examined and were checked for flat feet, any sign of mental instability and emaciation. Recruits suffering from Bilharzia and Gonorrhoea could be enlisted if adequate facilities for treatment were available, but they could not be sent on to the depot until they had been passed as cured by a medical officer. Requirements for the EAMLS were not as stringent as those

⁴⁴⁵Uzaramo DAR 1941 TNA 3/XVI.

⁴⁴⁶Provincer Mwanza to Director of Man Power, October 6, 1941. TNA 2427 Vol. I.

for the KAR and recruits were accepted even if they had less than perfect vision or slight deafness.⁴⁴⁷

By the end of 1940, when military quotas for the territory rose to 1,000 men a month, many district officers had difficulty finding adequate numbers of healthy men. At the end of December 1940, the shortfall in recruits from the territory amounted to some 2,072.⁴⁴⁸ In 1943, when Tanganyika's manpower contribution increased to 4,000 a month, most district administrations found it all but impossible to meet the requirements despite increased propaganda, coercion and pressure on native authorities.

In addition to military recruits, Man Power officials were also responsible for ensuring adequate labor was available for the production of food crops and raw materials needed for the war effort. During the first two years of the war, the supply of labor exceeded demand and civilian employers had little trouble finding workers. The condition of Tanganyika's labor market may in part explain the popularity of military service and the government's lack of difficulty in finding the thousands of laborers needed to for the construction of the Great Northern Road and similar military projects. Other former laborers, tired of the low wages and poor working conditions prevalent on sisal plantations or the Lupa gold mines, turned to growing cash crops. This relaxed state of affairs for both laborers and employers ended abruptly in 1942, when sisal growers, the owners of rubber plantations and settlers in the north all demanded more labor. While the

⁴⁴⁷Director of Manpower to Assistant Directors of Manpower, September 25, 1940. TNA 2427 Vol. I.

⁴⁴⁸Director of Man Power to Chief Secretary of the Governor Conference, Nairobi, December 18, 1940, and Minutes of a Meeting at Government House January 9, 1941. TNA 2427 Vol. I.

government was initially loath to give in to settlers' demands, the Japanese successes in the East had cut Britain off from supplies of much needed war materials, thus increasing the demand for Tanganyika's sisal, pyrethrum, rubber and food crops. Under mounting pressure from vocal members of the settler community, the administration agreed to supply small numbers of conscripts to aid rubber and sisal producers at the end of 1942, but by 1943, the trickle had become a flood. Employers demanded ever greater numbers of conscripts, and the Tanganyikan Sisal Growers Association threatened that if their demands were not quickly met, essential production for the war effort would suffer. Fearing the threatened loss of production, the administration gave in to settler demands and the requests for conscripts continued to rise for the duration of the war.⁴⁴⁹

As with military conscription, the burden of rounding up adequate numbers of able bodied men fell primarily on the native authorities. Since labor conscription was every bit as unpopular as its military equivalent, and increasingly large numbers of Africans were already serving with the armed forces, chiefs often had to resort to ruses or outright impressment to fill required quotas. Resistance to conscription did not end once potential workers had been rounded up, and conscripts deserted at the first opportunity, staged slowdowns or even attempted to start strikes, calling for improved wages and working conditions. Such problems may have been exacerbated by native authorities and district officers using conscription as a tool to remove troublesome elements from local communities. In 1944, the district officer in Arusha reported sending 700 conscripts to work on European estates, "the great majority of them undesirable

⁴⁴⁹*Labour Report for Tanganyika 1943 and 1944* TNA.

semi-detribalized loafers who were without visible means of support."⁴⁵⁰ Frequently, authorities were doing little more than passing their problem on to another district, which was the case here, where most of the 700 undesirables deserted before or shortly after arrival at the plantations. The government established harsh penalties to check desertion, but many estates continued to have problems maintaining a steady labor force.

Desertion and lack of enthusiasm on the part of conscripts led to low productivity on many estates, but conditions were exacerbated by the poor health of many workers. Throughout the war, military standards for men recruited into the fighting arms remained high but were slightly relaxed for conscripts for the EAMLS. Military manpower demands however, trumped those of local producers, and settlers running sisal and rubber plantations found themselves stuck with whatever labor remained after military quotas had been met. Considering the problems Man Power officials had finding healthy men for the EAMLS, many of the laborers conscripted for essential war production must have been in a sorry state indeed. The situation was not improved by the fact that, following the introduction of conscription, many estates decided they no longer needed to try to attract workers on the labor market, and cut costs by providing laborers with substandard housing, poor rations and little to no medical care. District officers commented on the poor physical condition of labor recruits, especially when compared with men returning from service with the KAR or EAMLS.

The need to conscript men for civilian labor as well as the military caused

⁴⁵⁰Arusha DAR 1944. TNA 69/63/12.

administration officials to worry that the ability of communities to produce much needed foodstuffs was being sacrificed in order to produce cash crops essential to the war effort. Although limits were set on the number of laborers which could be recruited from each district, such estimates were at best haphazard. For the first two years of the conflict, most regions appeared to be either unaffected or surviving the economic changes resulting from the war. A few areas even underwent an economic boom during the war, stimulated by increasing prices for cash and food crops. Around Moshi, the Chagga described by the district officer as a people who "would do anything for money" not only continued to sell coffee but also increased cultivation of food crops on the slopes of Kilimanjaro.⁴⁵¹ District officers encouraged increased agricultural production but African producers were also responding to market forces. The military offered generous contracts for fresh fruits and vegetables and farmers living near military garrisons and recruit camps quickly responded to new economic opportunities. Pastoralists benefited from the army's demands for beef and the price for hides also increased during the war. The production of other crops varied depending on local climatic conditions and market forces but in several districts officials voiced concerns that Africans had abandoned subsistence farming in favor of growing food crops, including maize and rice, for sale. This trend meant that in some districts there was more money around than ever before but that food became extremely scarce. To counter threatened food shortages officials encouraged Africans to plant cassava because it was easy to grow and drought resistant.

The administration's concerns about adequate distribution of food

⁴⁵¹Moshi DAR 1943. TNA

supplies and a shift from subsistence to cash crops proved justified when the rains failed in 1942 and 1943. In 1942, rainfall over much of central Tanganyika proved inadequate, and by the end of the year in most of the Central and Lake provinces, as well as parts of Handeni and Ulanga, food supplies began to run low. The 1943, rains proved even worse and, with the exception of the Southern and Western provinces, most of the territory brought in reduced harvests. The failure of the rains, combined with the shift away from subsistence agriculture established during the first two years of the war, resulted in wide-spread food shortages and, in some cases, famine. The dispersal of much of the male population outside their home districts, either serving with the forces or as laborers, also helped reduced cultivation. In the past, the government had dealt with such shortages by importing food from outside the territory, but the absence of available shipping made this impossible and Kenya was dealing with its own shortages. In some areas, the administration's efforts to end shortages further exacerbated the crisis. In Nzega district, officials forcefully requisitioned food supplies to send them to areas already suffering famine, thereby stripping the district of its reserves. The result of this shortsighted policy was that, within a short time, Nzega itself required famine relief.⁴⁵² In Uzaramo district, inadequate rains followed by a series of poor harvests led to a similar shortage of foodstuffs.⁴⁵³ Even in districts where adequate stocks of food existed, the administration faced serious obstacles in transporting supplies to famine stricken areas. The siphoning off of government staff and equipment for the war effort

⁴⁵²Nzega DAR 1943. TNA

⁴⁵³Uzaramo DAR 1942-1944 TNA.

had left Tanganyika's railways, rolling stock, roads and trucks in a poor state of repair, and government transport deteriorated as the war progressed.

The drought prone Central province was the area most seriously affected by the famine, which lasted from 1941 until 1944. As early as 1942, the situation had become difficult enough that sometimes askaris from the AAPC and EAMLS declined to take their full leave "so eager were they to return to surroundings in which the provision of food and other amenities was a responsibility removed from their own hands."⁴⁵⁴ Perversely, many of the actions officials took trying to prevent or respond to the famine actually made local conditions worse. Attempting to force the Gogo to conserve their dwindling grain supplies, officials banned beer parties and limited the ability of individuals or communities from moving out of famine plagued areas. Both actions damaged communities, because beer parties were an important element in the cultivation process, and migration to more fertile areas was one way poorer Gogo had responded to food shortages in the past. In Dodoma district, the government established 13 famine camps where the destitute and starving worked on roads in exchange for food and housing. In Kondoa, 6 camps performed the same function. Although fatalities from starvation did not reach the same levels as during the 1919-1920 famine, the official death toll was 142 and many more probably died unreported or from disease. Only in 1944, with the return of plentiful rains did the famine come to an end.⁴⁵⁵

Although the Central province was the region most seriously affected,

⁴⁵⁴Dodoma DAR 1942 TNA.

⁴⁵⁵Dodoma DAR 1940-1944 TNA, Harris *Donkey's Gratitude*, pp. 101-108.

food shortages also occurred elsewhere, and the considerable cost involved in famine relief prompted the government to encourage further the cultivation of food crops through coercion and subsidies. The administration also slightly altered its earlier stand of meeting the requirements of military recruiting and conscripting labor for essential industries while production of food crops was of lesser importance. One reason for this earlier confidence, before the food shortages of 1942, was that some district and agricultural officers had confidently predicted that the absence of large numbers of men serving in the armed forces and as laborers would not have a significant impact on food production, because the bulk of the subsistence farming was carried out by women. What officials failed to take into account was that many of the dependents of service men received monthly family allowances that allowed them to buy their food instead of having to plant it. In Nzega district, chiefs had difficulty persuading the wives of details serving with the forces to cultivate, especially because chiefs received letters from husbands at the front stating that no compulsion should be put upon their wives by the Native Authorities.⁴⁵⁶ To ensure adequate numbers of men were available to plant crops, all labor recruiting, including military recruiting, was temporarily suspended during the planting season, which ran from February to April. Official efforts to control food supplies did not end with production and, in January 1943, the government used Defense Regulations to declare food crops "controlled produce" which had to be sold at set prices to officially licensed traders. In most regions, the regulations proved cumbersome and almost impossible to enforce. The officer in charge of the Uzaramo district gave a less

⁴⁵⁶Nzega Division of the Kaham District DAR 1943 TNA.

than glowing assessment of produce control, noting "All that can be said of the control in 1943 is that it proved useful in showing up the shortcomings of the system."⁴⁵⁷

The problems faced by government officials and members of native authorities did not end with famine relief or once adequate numbers of conscripts had been rounded up, judged medically fit and dispatched to the depot. District officers found their wartime skeleton staffs overwhelmed by additional war related duties, and although many of these tasks were passed on to native authorities, there was still a great deal to be done. Commenting on the new responsibilities of the native authorities, one district officer noted:

War, although something almost unreal and difficult to understand among the average uneducated natives, is reflected in the workings of every class and community in the district. A very heavy increase of work has been caused, particularly to the Native Authorities, as a direct result of the war. Conscription has proved in the main a difficult and unpleasant task but, at any rate during the latter part of the year, the Native Authorities have made sterling efforts to send their monthly quotas of men to the district office. But their tasks do not by any means end there. Deserters must be traced, caught and returned, deserters not only from the Nzega depot but also from the Tabora depot: members of the forces on leave frequently overstay their leave and have to be apprehended: hundreds of relatives of troops serving with the forces have to be traced in order that they can receive their family allotments from the District Office (this task is probably the most onerous as the numbers of dependents in the District is now very large indeed): lastly, countless letters from men serving with the forces requesting news of their relatives have to be dealt with, and petty cases settled.⁴⁵⁸

District officers also found it all but impossible to complete the numerous tasks assigned to them and, from 1942 on, many found their time increasingly occupied with enforcing price controls and ensuring a continuing supply of

⁴⁵⁷Uzaramo DAR 1943 TNA.

⁴⁵⁸Nzega Division of the Kahama District DAR 1942 TNA.

conscript labor as can be seen in the following comments from the district officer at Kigoma.

Native Administration has not had all the attention it deserves, owing to the considerable increase of work to be done, mainly as a result of the introduction of produce control and a tightening of price control; but nonetheless, the tone of the district feels better now than it did a year ago. Price and produce control in effect doubled the amount of detailed work to be tackled: to this must be added the steady flow of recruiting through the year, with special large calls for sisal conscripts at the beginning and again at the end of the year which have taxed the capacity of the central civil depot and increased the work involved in quarantine, examination and supervision of large numbers of recruits.⁴⁵⁹

Many district officers found the paperwork involved in complying with and attempting to enforce price controls on retail goods a Herculean task impossible to achieve.⁴⁶⁰ In some cases, the government set prices too low for traders to make a living and this, combined with the inability of officials to enforce the controls, led to a thriving black market. Despite official controls and a shortage of consumer goods, some traders, many of them Asians, made handsome profits during the war, leading to rising resentment among African consumers who accused them of price gouging and black-marketeering.

From the start of the war, the administration attempted to calm African fears and elicit popular support for the war. Compulsion was time-consuming, expensive, and ran the very real risk of eliciting a violent African response or damaging the legitimacy of Native Authorities. To avoid widespread panic or resistance shortly before the outbreak of the war, the government began plans to establish an Information Department that would be responsible for disseminating

⁴⁵⁹Kigoma DAR 1943. TNA

⁴⁶⁰Uzaramo DAR 1944. TNA

propaganda. The Information Department used a variety of means to keep the public informed about the course of the war including airing radio broadcasts at district offices and other public places, printing a weekly news sheet and outfitting a mobile propaganda unit that traveled the territory showing news broadcasts and films. District officers also encouraged askaris returning home on leave or discharge to share their experiences at small community gatherings or more formal *barazas*. Of these varied methods, the two most effective seem to have been the distribution of newspapers and word of mouth. Attempts to disseminate war news by radio failed in many districts when the Swahili language broadcasts from Nairobi were inaudible, or came in so garbled as to be unintelligible, and the mobile propaganda unit could only reach limited numbers.⁴⁶¹ The Information Department's weekly publication dealing with the war, *Habari za Vita* (news of the war) proved much more successful and some 15,000 copies were handed out around the territory. The Education Department published its own newspaper *Mambo Leo* (today's news) and the independent paper *Kwetu* and the Kenyan newspaper *Baraza* were also widely read.

Although the percentage of literate Tanganyikans remained small, newspapers passed from hand to hand and those who could read informed the illiterate about how the war was progressing. Information officers also used *Habari za Vita* to dispel rumors, counter Italian broadcasts in Swahili, and downplay Axis successes in the field. In 1939, for example, the newsheet refuted stories circulating in Tanga and Moshi that the recruitment of lorry drivers had been carried out to replace askaris killed fighting the Italians, and that

⁴⁶¹For one example of the poor quality of broadcasts from Nairobi, see Dodoma DAR 1942 TNA.

German internees were being released because "England realizes that she is losing the war" and wished to remain friends with Germany.⁴⁶² In addition to informing the African population about the war, the Information Department also used its powers to encourage support for production campaigns, contributions to voluntary war funds and compliance with price controls.

The dissemination of war news and propaganda however, had another serious and initially largely unforeseen consequence that involved British attempts to portray the war as a war for freedom. By describing the Germans and Italians as brutal aggressors bent on global domination, the administration inadvertently reminded the African population that they had already been conquered, colonized and were being denied many of the rights and freedoms they were supposed to fight for. Thus, amidst official exhortations to grow more crops and enlist in the armed forces, small numbers of Africans, particularly among the educated, became more aware of a wider world and began to question ever more strongly the legitimacy of British rule. In this environment, it is not surprising that Shaaban Robert, the well known Swahili poet, entitled his poem about the war *Utenzi wa vita vya Uhuru* (story of the war for freedom). Although it would take another decade before the calls for the end of British rule began to gain momentum, Tanganyika's small intellectual community, contrary to government hopes, would not soon forget the promises and slogans Information Officers made during the early desperate years of the war.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶²Information Officer to Chief Secretary October 31, 1939 and A. T. Lacey Chairman Information Committee, Nairobi to Information Officer, Dar es Salaam November 4, 1939. TNA 27436.

⁴⁶³On Tanganyika's "wartime intellectual awakening" see Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 376-380.

Despite efforts to publicize and popularize the war effort, few things allayed African fears about the course of the conflict and the fate of community members serving with the forces more effectively than the return of askaris and military laborers. Well fed, wearing their uniforms, with money in their pockets and carrying presents for family members or a bag of millet for a beer party, many askari returned home on leave in good health. Askaris who had recently been discharged were even better off, since they had survived the war entirely, and usually could look forward to spending a generous gratuity. While a tiny minority of Tanganyikans may have joined the armed forces to prevent a German return or were driven by patriotism and loyalty to the British regime, for most volunteers the motivation was economic, and their feelings about enlistment were pragmatic. Although the Tanganyikan government made much of the early lack of difficulty in securing recruits for the KAR, even this first batch of supposedly eager soldiers contained not a few young men delighted to have found good work, after the hard years of the 1930's. As one veteran said during his interview:

Before I joined the KAR, I was doing some small business selling things like khangas, cups, plates etc. I joined the KAR voluntarily. I went there myself and enlisted. I enlisted because I was seeing the soldiers with uniforms walking in the streets. Also they had money, so that is what sent me to enlist and join the KAR.⁴⁶⁴

Many of the askaris who enlisted cited military pay, benefits and especially the

⁴⁶⁴Interview #24. Such economic motivation was a far cry from the impression created by Information Officers, who played up African interest and support for the war and frequently portrayed all voluntary recruitment as "spontaneously forthcoming." For one example of such a description see *Tanganyika Standard*, April 30, 1940.

demeanor of returning askaris, as important factors convincing them that military life would not be so bad. The successful termination of the war in Ethiopia gave further impetus to those thinking about enlisting, because most of the askaris and military laborers who had served during the first two years of the war had survived and returned home either on leave or, for members of the EAMLS, after the termination of their 15 months of service. Although living conditions were rough and KAR units covered hundreds of miles, battle casualties had been light and few askaris returned home wounded or maimed. The administration had also been diligent in paying death gratuities and disability pensions, so the families of disabled or dead askaris were being provided for.⁴⁶⁵

Most of the former askaris interviewed joined the military seeking to improve their economic situation or to get a start in life. Others decided to enlist in the forces when their families fell on hard times or their parents could no longer pay their school fees, and the army was the most attractive option available.⁴⁶⁶ A few were influenced by martial ideals and wanted to prove themselves as soldiers. For many of the veterans interviewed however, the line between voluntary enlistment and conscription was blurred. When asked if they volunteered, most former askari instantly replied in the affirmative but follow-up questions often revealed mitigating circumstances and, not infrequently,

⁴⁶⁵Correspondence from Conference of EA Governors to Sir Arthur Dawe, Colonial Office on military casualties in East Africa, June 4, 1942. CO 980/93.

⁴⁶⁶Out of the askari interviewed, the following stated that they either joined the army to get a good job or to "start a better life" #16, #22, while economic hardship or the inability of their families to pay school fees was a major factor in enlisting from the following #25, #20.

pressure from native authority or government representatives.⁴⁶⁷ Many askaris were recruited out of school, and almost every veteran in this category states that their headmasters and teachers pressured them to sign up. Some teachers and administrative officials also encouraged their pupils to view the army as a way to further their education, and this also influenced some to pursue a military career.⁴⁶⁸ For other "volunteers," the reasons were more personal. Several askaris enlisted because family members or friends had joined the army, and they hoped to serve with them, or feared they would not be able to face their families if their relatives were killed and they had refused to go to war.⁴⁶⁹ What is almost entirely lacking from all the interviews is any evidence that askaris enlisted for ideological or patriotic reasons.

Despite numerous efforts mounted by the administration and native authorities, the majority of Tanganyika's population, when they thought of it at all, viewed the war more as a difficult period which had to be endured than as a crusade to be fought. Although cases did exist where young men joined the KAR fearing a German return to the territory, and native authorities gave generously to war funds without the prodding of zealous district officers, genuine examples of African popular support for the war are difficult to find. As one district officer wrote in 1941 in a surprisingly introspective report:

⁴⁶⁷Of the 37 former askari and military laborers interviewed for this study, 25 volunteered, 9 were conscripted and the remaining three voluntarily enlisted after having pressure put on themselves or their families by a government official. The askaris listed as volunteers include several individuals who entered the army because they felt they had few other economic options available. One former askari, for example, was in school when both his parents died suddenly, leaving him alone and destitute. In his words, he could either "join the army or starve."

⁴⁶⁸Interviews #28, #20, #36, #18, #22.

⁴⁶⁹Interview #19, #8.

I have always doubted whether the native of Mahenge took any real interest in the war. He may have done, but if that was the case, his interest has entirely evaporated. He does not understand the war, and has no desire to do so. He prefers us to the Germans, which is not saying much, but he experiences no feelings of patriotism, so that phrases such as "concrete evidence of the natives' loyalty to Government", which I have seen used regarding this division, are at best wishful thinking, at worst eye-wash. A man who does not even bother to grow sufficient food for himself is most unlikely to experience any strong feelings about a struggle of ideologies being waged in places he has never heard of, so that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I think that the correct answer to the question, "What does the Mahenge native think of the war?", is "Nothing". That being so, I do not intend to give the Native Authorities the sort of press "Write-up" for having given 220 to maintain the Grade B roads (as a War Contribution) or for having lent most of their surplus balance to Government. Because very few understand what this means, and the few who do, realize that the Native Authority has no option in matters such as these - they would not vote their money to keep up Grade B roads if they had to - that the whole scheme is, in fact, dictated by government who "gives" them their funds and who, likewise, takes them away. The question is one which comes under the omnibus heading "amri ya serikali", and there is thus no point in thinking whether you agree with it, or not.⁴⁷⁰

Such views of the war must have been widely held and in many districts manifested themselves in the celebrations, or lack thereof, following V-E and V-J day. Tanganyika's European community greeted the news that the war had ended at last with joy, and official ceremonies were held in Dar es Salaam and a number of other towns. Such exuberance however, was seldom seen in African communities with the major exception of Dodoma, where thousands of Wagogo celebrated V-J day by holding a huge *Ngoma*, dancing for several days and nights.⁴⁷¹ In Kigoma, V-E day was celebrated on May 9th and 11th with religious services, a parade of troops, police and school children, and the distribution of small amounts of available supplies of meat and other food. Estimates of local participation in the celebrations ranged from 3,000 to 4,000. V-J Day festivities were similarly well attended, even though they were delayed until after

⁴⁷⁰Mahenge Division of Ulanga District DAR 1941 TNA.

Ramadhan and were more subdued.⁴⁷² In other districts, the end of the war came and went eliciting little more response from district populations other than sincere hope that, now that the war had ended, family members would return home, prices would decline and consumer goods long absent in the territory would become available.

⁴⁷¹Harris, *Donkey's Gratitude*, pp.115-116.

⁴⁷²Kigoma District DAR, 1945. TNA 180.

Chapter 9

Demobilization

Where is my boat home?" men will say, throwing away their rifles, rubbing their hands hard and raving mad for the good news. Yes, they will be home soon and see their dear ones. But the air will feel no change. Gramophones, guitars, ukulele banjos, wireless broadcasts will replace the din of unnerving thunder and the roar of the guns and bombs and the drone of the planes. 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.⁴⁷³

Robert S, Kakembo

The combination of propaganda and comparatively high military wages opened a Pandora's box of expectations for demobilized askaris. Nor were such hopes for a better future confined to ex-soldiers. Civilians had also been paying attention to the statements Information Officers made during the "war for freedom." Both groups would be sorely disappointed. Former askaris and civilians discovered that the Tanganyika government was both unwilling and unable to make the sweeping political and economic changes that would drastically improve conditions for the majority of the African population. For many the end of the war meant a sharp decline in their economic fortunes. As demobilization proceeded apace the askaris came home, lucrative military contracts dried up, and Tanganyikans waited impatiently for the expected postwar recovery to begin.

From Soldiers to Civilians: the Process of Demobilization

At the urging of the Colonial Office, the Tanganyikan government raised the question of planning for demobilization at the provincial commissioners

⁴⁷³Robert S. Kakembo, *An African Soldier Speaks*, (EAC, 1944), p. 14.

conference in August 1943. Participants briefly discussed the logistics of demobilization but decided that little could be accomplished since the exact number of Africans who would be released from the army was unknown. Conference members did decide that every effort should be made to encourage former soldiers to invest any funds the military disbursed. To prevent the spread of disease, every effort must also be made to ensure that only healthy soldiers would be allowed to return home. When it came to the question of how to provide demobilized askaris with postwar employment, administration officials were adamant that every effort should be made to prevent returning askaris from being regarded as a class apart from the rest of the population.

The soldier should be discharged, re-absorbed into civil life, and then treated like anyone else. The administration has spent a good deal of effort in persuading Africans to believe that the man who stayed at home and did his job as a civilian if it were an essential one, was doing as much for the state as the man who enlisted in the forces.⁴⁷⁴

As part of this goal, provincial commissioners agreed that ex-servicemen's associations would continue to foster a sense of elitism among former askaris and should not be encouraged. If askaris formed themselves into such organizations voluntarily, the administration would not intervene. By the end of the conference, it had become apparent that the government intended to do remarkably little other than return Tanganyika as quickly as possible to the pre-war status quo. Officials did discuss the possibility of acquiring land for Africans, and some suggested seized enemy properties could be distributed. One PC pointed out that this would serve a dual purpose, "Not only would this make a

⁴⁷⁴Provincial Commissioners' Conference, August 23-37, 1943. PRO CO 968 79/4.

good deal of land available, but it would have the important psychological effect of remedying the injustice done to the natives of the territory by the former German Government by their wholesale alienation of land."⁴⁷⁵ Although there was some support for this suggestion, the governor pointed out that the decision would have to be made in London, and if enemy properties could not be used, it would be almost impossible to implement such a plan.

Almost nothing was done following this conference. Such lack of energy was not restricted to Tanganyika. Despite warnings from the Colonial Office, none of the East African governments adequately planned for demobilization. The result of this inaction was that the rapid end of the war against Japan found officials scrambling to prepare for the return of tens of thousands of askari. Scarce shipping, combined with competing demands to give priority to demobilizing British soldiers, limited the number of East Africans repatriated from India and Burma. It was easier to arrange the return of askaris serving throughout East Africa and the Middle East, and most AAPC units were rapidly disbanded in 1945. The EAC estimated that approximately 6,000 askaris would begin leaving the army every week, starting in August 1945. Despite the best efforts of the military to return soldiers to their homes quickly, most askari were demobilized in 1946.⁴⁷⁶ A handful of askaris, mainly those who were involved in the demobilization process or were recovering from wounds or illness, had to wait until 1947.

Demobilization was a lengthy and complicated process worked out in the

⁴⁷⁵Provincial Commissioners' Conference, August 23-37, 1943. PRO CO 968 79/4.

last year of the war primarily by Kenya's Principal Civil Dispersal Officer. The inter-territorial policy implemented many of the suggestions made by officials from the East African governments. For example, Tanganyikan provincial commissioners stressed their desire to have askaris receive their final army pay from the district officers who had been responsible for conscription, and this and other ideas, were incorporated into the final process. Askaris leaving the forces first traveled to dispersal centers where they were given their back pay and a Last Pay Certificate (LPC). Last Pay Certificates provided askaris with a final payment of 56 days pay based on the individuals' rate and a ration allowance for the same amount of time. Demobilized soldiers turned in their LPC's and received their final payments at the boma in their home district. Askaris who had served for at least six months were also given a clothing allowance of 40 shillings to purchase civilian garb. Military authorities permitted askaris to keep their basic uniform, including sandals, shorts, shirts, pullover and one blanket. Demobilized soldiers were also issued with a tin container designed to hold and preserve their discharge certificate. On the recommendation of medical officers, askaris recovering from wounds or sickness could retain their army great coats. Those suffering from foot deformities were allowed to keep their boots in lieu of sandals and were issued with three pairs of socks.⁴⁷⁷

Along with their LPC's, soldiers received a war gratuity based on their final rank and the length of time served. At the lowest end of the scale privates

⁴⁷⁶Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, p. 237. The Civil Aspects of Demobilization as Affecting Tanganyika. TNA 38509.

⁴⁷⁷Instructions for the Release of Africans. TNA 38509. Clothing Issues to Dischargees: African and Somali Personnel. TNA 29677.

received three and a half shillings per month of service while warrant officers first class received six shillings. Former members of the EAMLS were paid a reduced rate with privates getting only two shillings a month and warrant officers first class receiving four and a half shillings. To prevent askaris from squandering their gratuities and disrupting rural economies with an influx of cash, the funds were deposited in Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) accounts. According to regulations, only fifty shillings could be withdrawn each month from POSB accounts and many askaris bitterly resented government control over their funds.⁴⁷⁸ Officials justified the policy by arguing that they were acting in the best interest of former soldiers and their communities. Furthermore askaris could write to Dar es Salaam and request that they be allowed to withdraw additional amounts from their account, but few understood the process and many district commissioners did not volunteer the information.

Despite attempts to limit confusion, and assertions that a demobilization rate of some 6,000 askaris a month was not large, the process of returning 60,000 Tanganyikans to their homes was drawn out and cumbersome. The detailed instructions circulated to district commissioners describing the process was twenty-two pages long and included procedures for everything from paying gratuities to soldiers facing disciplinary action, to what to do if an askari lost his LPC. In addition to ensuring that the correct askari was being paid and that all relevant paperwork was properly filled out, district commissioners also had to arrange transport for hundreds of askaris. Most Tanganyikans were discharged in Nairobi and then traveled to their home districts by truck. A small number who

⁴⁷⁸EAC Instructions for the Release of Africans, June 12, 1945. TNA 38509.

were transported directly from overseas were processed in Dar es Salaam. Usually however, askaris coming from India and Burma disembarked in Mombassa and traveled to Nairobi, where they were discharged. Once askaris had met with the district commissioner, turned in their LPC's and collected their money and POSB books they returned home. The administration paid for porters to carry the kit of askaris who lived in rural areas from the boma to the men's homes. In addition to these duties, many returning askaris arrived home with affairs to settle. District officers were kept busy answering questions about missing or improperly disbursed family remittances or disputes over pay and gratuities.

The EAC wanted to demobilize askari as quickly as possible and encouraged both civil and military officials not to detain men in transit camps or at district headquarters, unless absolutely necessary. Consequently, askaris who had problems with their paperwork, disputes over the amount owed to them or had lost their LPCs, were occasionally paid part of the money owed them and then told to return in several weeks after their documents arrived by mail. Often such men went home and when they returned weeks or even months later to see whether their affairs were in order, discovered the records remained incomplete and that there was little the district commissioner was able to do. Many askaris did not understand how clerks calculated their period of service and rate of pay, and such misunderstanding often led to heated disputes over pay and the amount of gratuities. Several former askaris complained bitterly that they had been cheated out of a portion of their final pay. Even educated askaris had trouble understanding the procedure. In one veterans' pay book, there is a clearly written note in pencil stating the askari had not received his money when he turned in his LPC at the district office, due to a lack of adequate funds. Unfortunately, either the district commissioner or a clerk then stamped the book,

and when the askari submitted his claim for payment several weeks later he was told he had already been paid. Eventually the district commissioner agreed to submit his claim to the military. The former askari was later informed that since the pay book had been officially stamped and the copy of the LPC had already been sent to Nairobi, there was nothing that could be done.⁴⁷⁹ Other askaris fell prey to con men or corrupt clerks, who convinced them to turn over their LPC's, promising them that they could get them more money.

In an attempt to limit friction between returning veterans and civilians, askaris remained under military discipline until they arrived at their home districts. Officers were instructed to give lectures to their troops before they were discharged, reminding them that they would soon be civilians and that any special privileges they had enjoyed while in the army would end. Despite such admonitions askaris became irritated at how slowly demobilization proceeded and many walked away from transit camps and dispersal centers to make their own way home. When these men turned up later to collect their final pay and gratuities, some found themselves being arrested for desertion, and others were told that since they had no paper work it was impossible to collect their back wages.

Military and civil officials also had trouble maintaining discipline among discharges at transit camps. Just outside Arusha ill feelings between members

⁴⁷⁹Interview #36. This particular askari devoted a considerable amount of time to trying to obtain his pay. During the interview, he showed me correspondence from both the civil and military authorities explaining why he could not be paid as well as his pay book. The coming of independence in no way halted his efforts, and he still writes occasionally to both the British High Commission in Dar es Salaam and the Queen, requesting that someone look into his case. Furthermore this individual is well educated and has an excellent command of the English language. If the complexities of appealing such a case are beyond him, such a action would have

of the local community and askaris awaiting discharge led to two murders and a riot. In April 1946, the body of a KAR private was discovered outside the KAR camp and the evidence indicated he had been killed by local civilians. Several days later, a passerby was set upon by a group of askaris who beat him so badly that he later died of his wounds. Seeking revenge for the killing as well as for the theft of some stock, a large number of civilians armed with spears, shields, clubs and simes (short swords) began to advance on the KAR lines and a riot was only narrowly averted. Fearing further trouble, the district commissioner asked the military authorities to post a platoon of disciplined askaris under an experienced NCO at the camp to maintain discipline. The military complied with the request and the government agreed to pay community members 611 shillings to replace the stolen stock. This was the most serious disturbance that occurred, but fights also broke out at other transit camps where askaris went into nearby villages in search of liquor or women. Police officials noted that temporary shanty towns filled with gamblers, prostitutes and beer sellers who were eager to relieve askaris of their wages often grew up around military installations. Both civil and military officers agreed that the best way to prevent such occurrences was to demobilize askaris as quickly as possible and return them to their home communities.⁴⁸⁰

Opportunities and Problems Faced by Returning Servicemen

Even though askaris were prevented from withdrawing the full amount of their gratuities from POSB accounts, most returned home with considerable

been all but impossible for many illiterate askaris.

sums of money. Some askaris had devoted plenty of thought to what they wanted to do after the war. Many intended to use the money from their gratuities to set themselves up in business, buy land or stock, build a house or get married. Most discovered however, that their gratuities were not as large as they had at first believed, and that inflation and a continuing shortage of imported goods often meant that the money did not go as far as they expected. Civilians also came up with numerous ways, both illegal and legal, to separate ex-soldiers from their wealth. Relatives and friends pressured returning askaris to pay for lavish parties, and some ex-soldiers used their money to build new houses for their parents. Demobilized soldiers complained that families inflated bride price for ex-askaris, making unreasonable demands simply because askari were rich. Many former soldiers admit spending their money in a surprisingly short amount of time and often attributed this to the inadequacy of the original sum combined with high post war prices. One former askari laughed when asked about what he did with his final pay and gratuity, and said:

It is a joke. You couldn't have done anything important with such an amount of money. Twenty-five shillings. That was only enough to give some to your parents and relatives. Then after a few days you returned to your farm life without money. You will never find anyone who will tell you that he built a house with such a small amount of money!⁴⁸¹

Several askaris said they regretted going to war after they received their gratuities and began to understand that the government was not going to do

⁴⁸⁰Superintendent of Police, Northern Province to Commissioner of Police, April 11, 1946. District Commissioner Arusha to OC KAR Moshi, April 9, 1946 and Schedule of Claims in Connection with a disturbance at Arusha, April 9, 1946. TNA 34828

⁴⁸¹Interview #17.

anything further for them.⁴⁸²

While most askari remain bitter about the amount they were paid, several conceded that their poor spending habits also contributed to the rapidity with which they spent their money. When asked what he did with his gratuity, one askari regretfully noted that he spent the majority of his money on alcohol.⁴⁸³ Others had a difficult time changing their consumption habits, saying that they had become accustomed to wearing shoes, European style clothing, drinking tea and smoking cigarettes.⁴⁸⁴ Another askari who aspired to become a jazz musician used most of his gratuity to buy a saxophone.⁴⁸⁵ Others proceeded with their plans to start their post war lives and many married and began starting families shortly after leaving the army. One former askari who served in the EAAMC used the money from his gratuity to enroll in medical correspondence courses in the hopes of eventually becoming a doctor.⁴⁸⁶

Even askaris who lived frugally and attempted to invest their savings wisely had trouble prospering in Tanganyika's postwar economy. Ex-soldiers who wanted to set up small businesses had great difficulty breaking into existing markets, assembling capital and obtaining the necessary permits. Most found it impossible to compete with existing established concerns, most of which were run by Indians. Many former askaris wanted to open bars but the government, fearing a rise in alcohol-related crime, refused to increase the number of liquor licenses, and unlicensed establishments were shut down by the police. Men who

⁴⁸²Interview #16 and #25.

⁴⁸³Interview #10.

⁴⁸⁴Interviews #27, and #13.

⁴⁸⁵Interview #19 and Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 392.

applied for permits to work as drivers also discovered they could rarely obtain licenses. When askaris questioned why they could drive in the army for years but could not get jobs as drivers in Tanganyika, officials justified their refusal to grant permits by claiming that most askaris had learned to drive in convoys and the majority were not trained well enough to work as civilian drivers. Similarly when askaris applied for permits to own rifles or shotguns, most applications were automatically rejected on the grounds that most "native dwellings" were not adequately secure to ensure the safekeeping of firearms. Demobilized askaris often rejected such policies as blatant discrimination, pointing out that when the government had needed them to drive trucks and carry guns such problems had not existed. Many asserted that they had come to Britain's aid during the war and had returned home to find that they had fought for nothing.

Other askari appear to have had more realistic expectations and returned content, at least temporarily, to resume the same life that they had pre-war. In his annual report one district commissioner wrote about a returning soldier who remarked: "Before the war I cut sisal and now I think I will return home and cut sisal again." Small numbers of men remained in the KAR or, after a short period at home, re-enlisted. Others, continuing a pattern that began following the First World War, joined the Tanganyika Police.⁴⁸⁷ Large numbers of askaris from rural areas returned home, planted crops, bought stock and went back to the land.

It is difficult to determine how many ex-askaris publicly objected to the lack of opportunities for veterans. Demobilized soldiers proved no more

⁴⁸⁶Interview #20.

⁴⁸⁷Interview #42.

homogeneous or radical than those in the army. While a percentage of former askaris, particularly those who had had entered the army with high levels of education, expected the government to create opportunities and decried post-war conditions, others had doubted much would be done. Apathy, war weariness, and the dispersal of askaris across the territory may have also contributed to ex-soldiers' limited response to the lack of opportunities. Yet an even more significant factor may have been the policy of slowing paying out gratuities by using the post office savings banks. It is unclear whether this policy was deliberately designed with the intention of providing ex-soldiers with a cooling off period where they could readjust to civilian life, or if the main concern was, as often stated, to prevent inflation and keep soldiers from squandering their money. By slowly disbursing funds out of the POSB accounts each month, the administration bought itself approximately five or six months from the time most askaris were discharged until they had to worry about looking for work. During this six-month period, askaris would disperse and return to their homes, and this would begin the process of breaking down many of the loyalties ex-soldiers felt towards their comrades. Veterans quickly lost track of each other after they left their units. Even in districts containing large numbers of recently demobilized askaris, many veterans expressed little interest in forming veterans groups.

The administration planned on using this six-month period to begin setting up training programs and hoped that postwar development schemes would also be underway, although little was actually done. In a letter concerning the re-absorption of ex-soldiers written in February 1946, the Principal Civil Dispersal Officer for Tanganyika noted how important it was to keep veterans happy.

What is of prime importance is that the attitude of DC's to the returning soldiers should be one of sympathy and not one of apprehension. It is important that the soldier must not for one moment be allowed to feel that now the war is over he is not wanted and can just go back to the same life he led before. The soldier is at

present coming back in very good spirits and health, with plenty of money and anxious to see his family again. He will not want anything at the moment in the way of help and encouragement from the DC, but will expect and, I am sure, will receive a friendly welcome. In six months, however, he will begin to become restless, and it is then that we want to ensure that every possible means of absorbing him into the civilian pattern has not only been studied, but clearly laid down.⁴⁸⁸

Despite the tone set in the letter quoted above, in practice the administration's efforts not to allow veterans to establish themselves as a special class proved both continuous and effective. These efforts began even before the end of the war, when the newspapers circulating among the East African troops started to publish stories about the heavy damage Britain had suffered during the war and the need to rebuild. These stories stressed self-reliance and encouraged askaris to look to their own futures and not rely on the government. At the same time African soldiers were also frequently reminded of their position in their home communities, and that they should continue to respect and obey their chiefs. To reinforce this point, shortly before the end of the war, the civil and military authorities instructed askaris that all correspondence relating to litigation in the native courts had to be sent to the local Native Authorities. District commissioners would only deal with cases that fell outside the purview of the Native Authorities.⁴⁸⁹

Civil officials were equally determined that askari should be encouraged to abandon military dress and mannerisms as quickly as possible. Several district commissioners complained that when discharged, askaris returned home

⁴⁸⁸Letter on the Reabsorbition of Discharged Soldiers from the Acting Labour Commissioner, Director of Training and Principal Civil Dispersal Officer to Chief Secretary to the Government, February 5, 1946. TNA 38512.

⁴⁸⁹EAC GRO No. 271. January 28, 1944.

wearing what amounted to their full uniform, including slouch hats and boots. They pressured their superiors to consider asking the EAC to order all askari, even medical cases, to be discharged with sandals, because one askari in Musoma district used his boot as a weapon during a fight.⁴⁹⁰ Problems over former askaris and civilians wearing uniforms persisted into the 1950's. The East Africa Command, concerned that the King's uniform would be brought into disrepute if discharged soldiers continued to wear their uniforms until they became torn or shabby, ordered all regimental insignia and buttons be removed from dischargees' uniforms. The military authorities also approached the East African governments about the possibility of dyeing dischargees uniforms a dark brown so they would no longer resemble the khaki uniforms of serving soldiers. This idea was later found to be unfeasible because traders were importing large amounts of surplus military clothing from the United Kingdom, complete with buttons and insignia, and selling them to Africans.⁴⁹¹ Officials also argued against giving former askaris priority treatment when they applied for employment, asked to speak to district commissioners or sought medical treatment. The one exception to this policy was that district commissioners were instructed to present discharged askaris with campaign medals at suitably appropriate ceremonies. The military would have preferred all askaris receive medals from their officers, but this was not always possible, and thousands of

⁴⁹⁰Acting PC Lake Province to Chief Secretary, October 19, 1944. and EAC GRO 2982 Subject Clothing Issues to Dischargees: African and Somali Personnel. TNA 29677.

⁴⁹¹COC EAC to Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam, August 3, 1951 and GOC EAC to HQ Middle East Land Forces, August 7, 1951. TNA 29677.

medals had to be sent to askaris at their homes.⁴⁹²

Officials thought issues relating to postwar employment would be most likely to lead to a sense of grievance and frustration among former askaris. Wages in Tanganyika had remained at pre-war rates and members of the administration speculated that few askaris would be willing to work for so little having become accustomed to the more generous military rates of pay. Many in the administration voiced fears that when veterans discovered what was on offer in the private sector, they would turn to government for assistance.

Every attempt is being made by propaganda to disabuse soldiers of the idea that it is the duty of the Government to find work and to install in him the opposite idea, that it is his duty to his comity to make himself a useful member of this community by finding employment himself. I am, however, convinced that a high proportion of the soldiers who return from the Army will expect Government to find them work.⁴⁹³

The Africa Section of the British Legion published a monthly bulletin in Swahili and English filled with articles and stories, many written in the style of pseudo African fables, extolling the virtues of self-reliance and hard work and advising readers not to depend on the government. Below the title, the bulletin bore the motto "Service not Self."⁴⁹⁴ Some 10,000 of these bulletins were distributed throughout Tanganyika to former askaris free of charge. In addition to the Legion's Bulletin, the administration also subsidized similar publications.⁴⁹⁵

Some within the administration advised establishing a labor corps that would carry out post-war development, such as building roads, soil conservation

⁴⁹²In Newala District 770 service medals were distributed following the end of the war. Liebenow *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania*. p. 161.

⁴⁹³*Memorandum on the acceleration of African Demobilization*. TNA 38512.

⁴⁹⁴For a sample see British Legion African Section East Africa Bulletin, Vol. 3 No. 5 May 1951.

and other public works. The idea was for the organization to provide askaris with a gradual transition from military to civilian life. Critics of the proposal argued that, in addition to the question of how to finance such a scheme, most soldiers would first want to return to their families and only seek employment when the money from their gratuities ran out. Providing ex-askaris with such work would only temporarily avert the problem, not solve it, since veterans would then think that the government would continue to provide them with jobs. Some officials also pointed out that if employment in the labor corps was restricted to ex-soldiers, it would continue to set them apart from the rest of the population. The administration was particularly worried about how laborers who had remained in Tanganyika doing essential war work would react to such a scheme. Officials pointed out that, if such employment was made available to both groups, as many as 150,000 additional jobs would have to be created. In the end lack of resources precluded the administration from implementing even the most modest schemes for providing ex-askaris with jobs. Officials asserted that: "the fundamental position is that there will be plenty of employment available for all ex-servicemen in the Territory, e.g. in sisal, coffee and mining industries, if they will take it."⁴⁹⁶ Other than setting up a labor exchanges in Dar es Salaam, Tanga, Moshi, Iringa, Tukuyu and Lindi, where askaris looking for employment could register, little was done. In the first six months it was open, the labor exchange in Dar es Salaam registered 393 askaris and managed to find work for just over half of them. Further exchanges were planned for Arusha, Korogwe Morogoro

⁴⁹⁵President British Legion Kenya to Governor of Tanganyika, June 15, 1951 and Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam to President British Legion Kenya, July 13, 1951. TNA 38817.

and Dodoma, but setting up such facilities could not make up for the fact that there were few well paying jobs.⁴⁹⁷ Askaris who hoped to get work with the Public Works, Agriculture and Veterinary Departments, discovered that few positions were available. The Tanganyika Police and Prisons Service filled its vacancies with former askari, but this proved the exception instead of the rule. The majority of askaris discovered that being an ex-soldier did not always help them to find suitable employment.⁴⁹⁸

Most former askaris state that the government did little to help them find work. Several however, mention using their pay books to help them secure employment. It is impossible to say whether employers in the private sector were more inclined to hire former askari or not, based on requests to view pay books. Possession of a military pay book usually could be taken as proof that the individual had indeed served in the armed forces, but pay books also provided information to potential employers about applicants' skills, health and discipline. Before they were discharged, askaris had their pay books stamped or filled in by their commanding officer who, among other details, remarked on the askaris' military character. Individuals who resisted military discipline by committing petty offenses were labeled as disciplinary problems and their pay books bore the words "bad" or "indifferent" next to the line referring to military character. Askaris

⁴⁹⁶Notes of a meeting held in the Chief Secretary's Office. September 29, 1945. TNA 38512.

⁴⁹⁷While the Dar es Salaam exchange managed to place only 51 percent of the African soldiers who applied for employment its numbers were considerably better for Europeans. During the same period 189 Europeans registered of whom 112 were found employment and a further 14 were placed in contact with prospective employers. Numbers for Asians were roughly the same as for Africans with 82 applying for jobs, 18 being offered positions and 25 being provided with leads. Press Communiqué, February 1945. TAN 38512.

⁴⁹⁸Reabsorption of Discharged Soldiers. February 5, 1946. TNA 38512.

first learned how important their pay books were in the army, but the document continued to serve a purpose long after the war ended. Askaris charged with minor crimes would sometimes appear before district commissioners or judges holding their pay book and wearing medals to remind officials of their service to the crown. Surviving askaris continue to hold on to their pay books, hoping that the British government will provide them with pensions or grants in aid.⁴⁹⁹

The generally bleak employment picture for ex-askaris improved slightly, starting in the very late 1940's and in the early years of the 1950's, when many found jobs working on the groundnut scheme. Labor recruiters actively targeted former soldiers, and some askaris who had returned to their homes in rural areas traveled to Dar es Salaam or other towns to seek employment as drivers and laborers. However, by the mid-1950's many askaris, particularly those with low levels of education, had abandoned much hope that they would be able to use their wartime skills or experience to secure good employment. A few veterans rejoined the army, but the strength of the post-war KAR had shrunk and many askaris were considered too old for service. Even educated veterans, or those possessing useful skills, found themselves competing with younger better educated civilians. The administration was also less concerned about the possibilities of veterans uniting and fomenting serious unrest. This was demonstrated on a number of occasions when government departments announced plans to recruit former soldiers. When the Public Works Department

⁴⁹⁹Askaris attach great importance to these documents and while many veterans I spoke with had lost or sold their medals over the years almost all of them still had their pay books. Most of the slim red covered books are falling apart and veterans treat them with great care. One askari who agreed to show me his pay book had it wrapped in no less than seven zip-lock plastic bags to

considered hiring a number of former KAR NCOs to serve as road bosses administration officials argued that, despite such individuals' experience and service, the standard educational requirements should not be waived for ex-soldiers. Many of the older ex-NCO's possessed only minimal formal education and maintaining this requirement automatically precluded many of them from being hired. Even when administrators in the Public Works Department argued that most NCO's possessed the leadership skills needed in road bosses, there was no change in the requirements for the positions.⁵⁰⁰ Such actions meant that askaris' wartime experiences counted for little and indicated the administration was effectively abandoning the policy it had adopted at the end of the war, that "preference should be given to ex-servicemen in cases where applications for Government Employment are otherwise equally qualified and suitable".⁵⁰¹ Many KAR NCO's seemed to have had particular difficulty adjusting to civilian life and finding employment. By 1948, most officials considered demobilization to have been a success and, as several district commissioners had predicted, it was all but impossible to tell most former askaris from civilians.

Training and Development Programs

Even before demobilization the EAC and SEAC command made efforts to set up training programs, in part to keep askaris busy while they waited to be discharged. Soldiers stationed in East Africa occasionally received instruction on agricultural and building techniques and lectures on health and sanitation. Small

protect it from being damaged by water.

⁵⁰⁰Director of Public Works to Chief Secretary and Director of Establishments, Dar es Salaam, October 18, 1950. Director of Public Works to General Secretary British Legion, Dar es Salaam, October 18, 1950. and Director of Public Works to Director of Establishments, Dar es Salaam, December 19, 1950. TNA 26583 Vol. II.

numbers of askaris serving in Ceylon were trained as craftsmen and spent ten weeks learning the basic skills involved in metalwork, plumbing, engine repair and carpentry.⁵⁰² After the end of the war, the military authorities attempted to keep askaris stationed in India and Burma occupied by having units hold classes and providing speakers. Such opportunities were widely available, although reaction was mixed and most soldiers were far more interested in when they would be returning home.

While the Tanganyikan administration intended that the majority of demobilized soldiers would return to the land, a limited number of training and education programs was established to help small numbers of askaris adjust to civilian life. In almost every instance, such opportunities were only open to askaris who had served as tradesmen or technicians in the army. In late 1945, a training center for rural artisans was opened at the Royal Air Force Camp at Mgulani near Dar es Salaam and another facility in Morogoro held classes in clerical work, book-keeping, welfare work, sanitation and small retail trading. Each center could accommodate some 200 askaris who would spend between six and nine months completing courses. A few opportunities were also available for training as agricultural instructors. Admission requirements for applicants were extremely rigorous. For example, askaris who wished to become agricultural instructors were required to have a Standard VIII education or higher

⁵⁰¹Press Communiqué, February 1945. TAN 38512.

⁵⁰²*Tanganyika Standard*, November 14, 1944. TAN 30086.

and a good army character.⁵⁰³ While the initial demand for such courses appeared high, this quickly dropped, especially when askaris had a choice between remaining in programs or returning home. Most found the prospect of returning home after a long absence impossible to resist, while others felt that they had been living under military regulations for long enough. Some educated askaris who had received advanced technical training during the war also objected to the remedial nature of many of the courses offered. As one former member of the EAAMC commented, "Many of us were trained. We operated radios, knew Morse code. Myself I was an orderly. I gave sick soldiers medicine. I was well trained and spoke English. Why would I want to learn how to make bricks and do simple things."⁵⁰⁴

Most demobilized askaris were even more ambivalent towards the few attempts the administration made to set up social centers and clubs. Upon discharge, askaris were encouraged to join the African Section of the British Legion (ASBL). In exchange for a one-time membership fee of five shillings, all veterans received a membership badge that allowed them access to all ASBL facilities and functions. Immediately after the war these consisted of a club for European members and a small house in Kariakoo for African veterans. The club for Africans was poorly attended and consisted of little more than a bar and a reading room stocked with periodicals. Facilities improved greatly in 1952 when a large ASBL complex was erected, complete with offices, a canteen, recreation

⁵⁰³Ex-servicemen trained at Mgulani. TNA 33051. Press Communiqué, February 1945. TAN 38512. and "Ex-Soldiers Training Takes Practical Form" *Tanganyika Standard*, April 11, 1946 and "Progress of Ex-askari Training" *Tanganyika Standard*, July 22, 1947.

⁵⁰⁴Interview #19. Similar views were expressed by other veterans including #20, #32 and #1.

facilities and a hostel. The ASBL also organized a number of clubs at the district level, but Legion events became increasingly poorly attended in the years leading up to independence. The one area where the Tanganyikan branch of the ASBL proved somewhat effective was in lobbying the administration to provide work for small numbers of ex-askaris. Throughout the end of the 1940's and into the 1950's, the local head of the ASBL worked hard to keep informed about the welfare of veterans in rural areas and tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to pressure the administration to provide additional opportunities for former askaris. The ASBL also provided destitute veterans with small grants in aid, although demand far exceeded supply.

In addition to the efforts of the ASBL, the administration also explored the possibility of establishing clubs and welfare centers for demobilized soldiers. While some missionaries, members of the settler community and former KAR officers argued that it was important for ex-askaris to have their own separate clubs, this was contrary to the administration's policy of not treating soldiers as a special class. Instead, officials looked into purchasing or building halls or clubs which would be open to all male members of the public. The question of female participation in such organizations remained open and was often determined on a case-by-case basis. Most officials envisioned welfare centers as places where the more educated members of local communities would go to read, listen to the radio, take classes or hear lectures by guest speakers. Despite the ambitious plans drawn up and proposed by district officers, few of the welfare centers that were actually built amounted to much. This was mainly due to a lack of adequate funds and the indifference of most of the population to the activities available at the centers. The majority of demobilized askaris showed no more interest in the reading rooms and lectures promoted by such welfare centers than they did in the occasional rifle competitions and reunions hosted by local branches of the

Relations Between Askaris and Native Authorities

During the war, many officials feared that askaris would return home and become impatient or confrontational with members of the Native Administration. A series of incidents occurring between askaris on leave and local chiefs gave substance to such concerns. At the conference of Provincial Commissioners in 1945, officials raised the question of how to re-integrate returning askaris into their communities with minimum disruption. While several of the commissioners advocated convincing leaders of the Native Authorities to admit younger, more educated Africans, including ex-askari, to serve as advisors or sit on councils, other debated the wisdom of such schemes. The main objection was that these efforts would weaken the power of hereditary chiefs and could disrupt functioning Native Administrations and the system of indirect rule. The underlying question however, was not how to ensure harmonious relations between members of Native Authorities and the younger generation but should the entire political system be adapted to meet changing conditions. On this the provincial commissioners remained deeply divided and the policies enacted in different districts in the post-war period reflect these divisions.⁵⁰⁶

Once demobilization was underway however, most askari were re-

⁵⁰⁵On ideas to form an organization for ex-askaris see Mr. Bennett to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, January 12, 1944 and a memorandum on Reconstruction after the War and Demobilization by Mr. W. Wynn-Jones. For discussions on the administration's plans to set up such centers at the district level see PC Tabora to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, June 29, 1944. and PC Lindi Province to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, June 28, 1944. TAN 33007.

absorbed into their communities with little difficulty and the expected confrontations never occurred. Not only did few askari express disappointment and frustration with local Native Authorities, but in general, ex-soldiers also got along with other members of their communities. Most former askari remember their return home as a joyous occasion and assert that there were few problems other than occasional fights over women and disputes with individuals who had tried to take advantage of family members while they were away. Several veterans mentioned that some people in their communities were afraid of them, and soldiers sometimes took advantage of this to get their own way in minor disputes.⁵⁰⁷ Another veteran remembered that several former askaris beat up the *Jumbe* who had been in charge of conscription in the area, but after evening the score, every thing reverted to normal.⁵⁰⁸ At the local level, worry about how returning askari would behave quickly dissipated. As time passed and ex-soldiers spent their money, let their hair grow out and wore out their uniforms, they ceased to be recognizable as former soldiers and resumed their lives as civilians.⁵⁰⁹ A few attempted to retain their positions as veterans by adding their military rank to their names or carefully maintaining their uniforms and wearing them on special occasions, but such actions had little impact on the people

⁵⁰⁶*Memorandum on the Problem of Relations Between Native Authorities and the Younger African Generation*, Provincial Commissioner's Conference, 1945. For an excellent discussion on the debate involved in changing the structure of Native Administrations to incorporate younger more educated Africans, see: Confidential letter PC Tanga Province to Chief Secretary Dar es Salaam, January 10, 1946. TNA 33136.

⁵⁰⁷Interviews #16, #34, #37, #27 and #4.

⁵⁰⁸Interview #26.

⁵⁰⁹Interview #38 and #44.

around them.⁵¹⁰

In several districts, officials tried to forestall confrontations between returning soldiers and the Native Authorities by encouraging chiefs and native councils to listen to the experiences and advice of veterans, and in a few areas askaris were actually formally appointed to positions. In the Southern Province, where the Native Administration was run by *Liwalis* selected by the administration, the Provincial Commissioner advocated gradually filling posts with members of the "younger and more intelligent generation," including ex-askaris. In 1946, one former Warrant Officer was appointed as a *Liwali* in Masasi and plans were in place to absorb more demobilized askaris into the Native Administration as messengers, clerks, and *Jmbes*.⁵¹¹ In other areas, district commissioners working with the Native Authorities continued to hold the view that "it would be disastrous to attempt to influence the appointment of members of the educated younger generation to hereditary positions in tribal structures." Often the solution adopted in such areas was to encourage chiefs to surround themselves with educated advisors and village headmen from the ranks of the younger generation. One such district was Musoma, where the only minor concession Native Authorities made to returning soldiers was to delay several decisions over leadership until all demobilized soldiers had returned home.⁵¹² In general however, ex-askaris often proved far less threatening to the status quo

⁵¹⁰One man informed me that, for years, there was a man in his village outside of Moshi who had served in the KAR and was known to the entire community only as Sergeant Sam. Two of the veterans who came to the Tanzania Legion and Club meeting in Dar es Salaam in 1999 wore clothing resembling their old Second World War Uniforms, and another askari still has his original issue Australian style hat.

⁵¹¹PC Southern Province to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, February 19, 1946. TNA 33136.

than members of the intelligentsia, particularly teachers and civil servants. The administration's willingness to encourage Native Authorities to appoint former soldiers as headmen and advisors on tribal councils may, in some districts, have been a deliberate attempt to forestall more educated and energetic Africans from attaining positions of power. One district officer, referring to the actions of village headmen who had served in the army commented:

They still tend to line up in the front row of the Barraza and salute, as a separate body but I have noticed that after this demonstration they seem to have little to say. When their military clothing is finished the ex-askaris of this division will, I think, with a few exceptions, fade into their surroundings.⁵¹³

Provisions for Wounded and Disabled Soldiers

The demobilization and repatriation of sick, wounded and permanently disabled soldiers, was the responsibility of the Civil Director of Demobilization.⁵¹⁴ During the war the East African governments instructed the Army Medical Authorities not to discharge sick or injured askaris until they had been cured or rehabilitated to the fullest possible extent. The East African governments not only wanted to prevent the spread of contagious diseases, especially cerebro spinal meningitis and various forms of venereal disease, but also to ensure that askaris returned home in good health, thus defusing any claims that Africans had been mistreated or poorly cared for by the army. Despite the wisdom of such a policy, the EAC refused, stating that it lacked the bed space and medical staff to rehabilitate completely large numbers of injured and wounded askaris. Many soldiers contributed to the problem by requesting that they be discharged as

⁵¹²PC Lake Province to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, April 24, 1945.

⁵¹³Quoted in Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, p. 377.

quickly as possible, often refusing rehabilitation.

Permanently disabled soldiers were eligible to receive between one-third and one-fourth of their final rate of pay in a monthly pension, depending on the nature of their disability, along with a sizable gratuity for being wounded. In many cases however, the pensions were not granted for life but were temporary awards, and veterans had to apply to the Tanganyika Pensions Assessment Board at regular intervals to continue to receive their pensions. Veterans who stopped receiving their pensions could appeal their decision to the Pension Assessment Board and the appeal was then forwarded to the Pensions Appeal Tribunal in Nairobi for consideration. In some cases, Pension Assessment Boards required that applicants submit to the examination of a specialist to determine if a pension was still justified on medical grounds. A high percentage of appeals for pensions was rejected and very few awards were made permanent.⁵¹⁵

Seriously disabled men, judged incapable of working, were granted permanent pensions and exempted from paying hut and poll or poll tax. Disabled soldiers also received priority when enrolling in post-war training programs, regardless of their prior military specialization or army character, and some took courses at Mgulani. Most officials considered these arrangements adequate, even though ample evidence existed that permanently disabled wounded askaris would have considerable difficulties obtaining follow-up treatment at rural

⁵¹⁴Functions of the Civil Directorate of Demobilization and Duties of Civil Dispersal Officers, TNA 48509.

⁵¹⁵Minutes of a Meeting of a Committee to Review the Rates and Regulations in Relation to African "War Pensions" December 18, 1951. TNA 41818.

dispensaries, and the pension rates were inadequate for most disabled veterans to live on. The East African governments justified the low pension rates by arguing that veterans belonged to tribal and family units that would care for them when they returned home and provide for their basic needs. Such ideas persisted well into the 1950's, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In 1951 realizing that conditions had changed, a committee was established to review the regulations and rates of present and future African war pensions. When the issue of providing widows with pensions instead of gratuities was raised, several members of the committee objected to the idea, pointing out:

The payment of blood money is not compensatory, but ritual. In many tribes rites have to be performed in connection with a death and those rites frequently involve dancing and beer drinking; neither of these activities has the same meaning in African Society as they have in European Society. This is the origin of the misconception that "a gratuity is wrong because it is often blued." It is in fact often spent by the proper tribal authorities on proper death rites, the tribal authorities thereafter assuming responsibility for the dependents if any.

Any departure from this basis of assessment of death gratuities is going to have the most serious repercussion. Payment of pensions to the widows, for example, would naturally be interpreted by the tribal authorities as an assumption by an impersonal and distant "Government" of responsibilities which they formerly exercised. The tribal authorities would very likely wash their hands of the whole affair; and the plight of dependents would in many cases be pitiful.⁵¹⁶

By 1951, many civil and military officials must have certainly been aware of the plight of many disabled askaris who were supposedly being well cared for under such "tribal" systems. Furthermore, the concerns raised by the Tanganyikan and other East African governments in years surrounding the end of the war belied such claims. Under such a system, "detrribalized Africans," as defined by many officials, would have almost no support structure to rely on. Tanganyikan officials were also fully aware that there was not one dominant tribal model and

consequently, many government policies had to be tailored to fit local customs and circumstances. In one community, a disabled veteran or a war widow and her children might be well cared for through a variety of social mechanisms, but in others they could be abandoned as soon as their gratuity was spent. The fact that pensions were an inter-territorial matter administered from Nairobi meant that there was little that could be done in this regard. However, the continuing argument that nothing should be done to upset the status quo and diminish support for Native Administrations seems patently false, considering the actions the East African governments forced these same administrations to take during the Second World War.

In the military, askaris enjoyed a high standard of care, but this immediately declined when they were demobilized and returned to their homes. During the war the administration had considered some proposals for the construction of special wards in civil hospitals or for former soldiers to be given first priority for medical treatment. Both suggestions were rejected, and the Tanganyikan government made no special provisions for veterans to obtain medical care once they were demobilized. The only exception to this was the comparatively small number of veterans who had suffered serious wounds or injuries while in the service and who could continue to seek help from the EAC. Such individuals discovered, however, that the combination of financial restraints and bureaucratic obstacles often made getting assistance extremely difficult, if not impossible. The military's medical and clerical facilities, as well as the only

⁵¹⁶Minutes of a Meeting of a Committee to Review the Rates and Regulations in Relation to African "War Pensions" December 18, 1951. TNA 41818.

center for blind former servicemen, continued to be based in Nairobi. Soldiers who required further specialist therapy or rehabilitation had to first apply to receive treatment. If their request was granted, and there was space available, they had to arrange their own transport to and from Nairobi, although district commissioners often gave what assistance they could.

The plight of seriously disabled Tanganyikan veterans who required artificial limbs highlights many of the inadequacies of the system. In addition to pensions, all amputees were supposed to receive a set of artificial limbs free of charge. They could also apply to be transported to the Rehabilitation Center in Nairobi to have their limbs repaired or refitted if necessary, and these costs would likewise be fully covered. No mechanism however, existed to reimburse amputees for expenses incurred traveling to district headquarters or to pay local craftsmen for repairs to their artificial limbs. In 1949, several district commissioners, endeavoring to aid amputees either to repair their artificial limbs or to replace limbs that had broken, discovered that the Rehabilitation Center in Nairobi was doing almost nothing for Tanganyikan veterans. When the district commissioner of Singida sent a query about providing a prosthesis for a former askari in his district, he received the following reply from the Medical Officer in Charge of the rehabilitation center.

We already have in this Center more work than we can cope with, and we are not even able to give as much help as we would like to Kenya people alone. In addition to this, the officer in charge of our Limb Fitting department has just gone on leave to England. We are sorry, therefore, that we are not in a position to help Mr. Ibrahim Ali.⁵¹⁷

The district commissioner forwarded a copy of the letter to the Social Welfare Organizer in Dar es Salaam, stating that the reply "seemed hard" and inquiring what could be done. The investigation that followed revealed a deplorable state of affairs.

The Civil Director of Demobilization in Nairobi claimed that according to his records, the only outstanding cases from Tanganyika still requiring treatment were 13 askaris requiring prosthetic arms. However, this official statement was considerably at variance with the figures collected by the British Legion and district commissioners which showed that out of a total of 36 prosthetic arms and 36 prosthetic legs required, no less than 13 legs and 29 arms had yet to be supplied. Out of the limbs already issued, 5 legs and 2 arms required repair. district officers' responses to a circular on the subject also clearly showed that the pensions most disabled askari received were inadequate to live on, and that few were doing well either physically or emotionally. Some of the more serious comments on disabled askaris' general conditions included, "Difficult to manage on pension. Afraid wife will leave him. Given temporary grant, 11 shillings per month from Legion." or "Unemployed and disheartened. DC Recommends increase in pension and British Legion have authorized temporary grant." Not all the replies were so despondent, and one district commissioner mentioned a former askari who lost an arm who said he could farm just fine with one good arm. In general however, most of disabled askaris needed work and several clearly required more medical assistance and care than they had been

⁵¹⁷Medical Officer in Charge Rehabilitation Center, Nairobi to DC Singida, March 11, 1949. TNA 38512.

receiving.⁵¹⁸

When the Tanganyikan authorities requested an explanation for the sorry state of affairs from the Rehabilitation Center, they were informed that the delay was unavoidable, since the technical instructor, the only person who knew how to fit arms, was on temporary leave training in the United Kingdom. Despite efforts to find a replacement, none had been available and limbless askaris would just have to wait until his return. The Administrator for the East Africa High Commission advised that a circular be sent out to all district commissioners informing them of the problem and reassuring disabled askari that they "are not forgotten."⁵¹⁹ Neither the Social Welfare Organizer nor the secretary for the Tanganyika branch of the British Legion was mollified by this response. The Social Welfare Organizer commented:

Four years after the cessation of all fighting the Administration is still suggesting that the unfortunate individuals who have lost limbs in the war should be satisfied with our assurances that they are not forgotten, by the issue of a circular. I suggest that the treatment which our disabled African ex-soldiers have received is most unsatisfactory and if this side of demobilization and rehabilitation were to receive the least publicity outside East Africa there would be many unanswerable questions posed to us. The time for the issue of circulars is long past and I feel that we can only honorably discharge our obligations to these men by insisting that sufficient skilled technicians are obtained at once, if only for a short period to enable us to equip them with limbs.⁵²⁰

Although most ex-servicemen did eventually receive prosthetic limbs, former askaris continued to have problems obtaining medical care. Veterans also

⁵¹⁸Social Welfare Organizer, Dar es Salaam to The Secretary British Legion, Dar es Salaam, August 18, 1948. Details as to the condition of disabled veterans compiled from DC's responses to a circular can be found in Disabled Men (Ex-Service) in Receipt of Pension :Tanganyika. TNA 38512,

⁵¹⁹The Administrator East Africa High Commission to Social Welfare Organizer, Dar es Salaam. May 20, 1949. TNA 38512.

resented the fact that only simple prosthetic devices were issued to Africans. Most veterans who required artificial legs were given a simple peg or fully articulated leg made out of willow and wrapped in leather. Prosthetic arms were equally simple, consisting of a replacement limb made out of leather and ending in a simple hook or claw mechanism. Officials at the Rehabilitation center argued that these sturdy devices were better suited to the rough conditions most veterans lived in than more elaborate prosthesis, but the cost involved in fitting, maintaining and replacing more complex limbs was certainly a factor.⁵²¹ In many cases the fitting of artificial limbs did not greatly alleviate the hardship faced by disabled veterans and many became entirely dependent on family members for support.

The involvement of ex-soldiers in politics

One of the long-standing theories concerning African military service during the Second World War is that soldiers returned home from service overseas imbued with a new sense of nationalism and heightened expectations for political change. Some historians argued that African soldiers' experiences abroad made them question the inherent racism and inequality present in Colonial Africa and also convinced them that they could successfully change such conditions. The image of the African soldier as a collaborator or mercenary gave way to depictions of veterans questioning their role in the colonial hierarchy and becoming leaders in the struggle for independence. The Kenyan historian

⁵²⁰Social Welfare Organizer to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam. April 11, 1949. The General Secretary of the Tanganyika branch of the British Legion sent a similar letter to the Chief Secretary on August 26, 1948.

⁵²¹Medical Officer in Charge of Rehabilitation Center, Nairobi to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, March 22, 1948. TNA 38512.

Okete J. E. Shiroya argued that, although Kenyan veterans never succeeded in organizing themselves into a united group capable of advancing their demands, they none-the-less played an important role in the nationalist movement by spreading new ideas among non-veterans. Shiroya also argues that the Kenyan nationalists used military service itself and the experiences of Kenyan veterans to challenge British rule.⁵²² In the years immediately following independence, many scholars, basing their findings primarily on colonial documents, agreed with such ideas. Evidence from both the Gold Coast and French West Africa showed that colonial officials were certainly concerned about the political role returning soldiers would play in the colonies. These ideas were bolstered during the 1960's by the writings of political scientists who argued that, in the developing world, armies could serve as instruments of nation building, breaking down soldiers' regional or ethnic loyalties. Although such ideas found wide acceptance, few in-depth studies of African soldiers had yet been conducted. Works on the *Tirailleurs Senegalais* by Nancy Lawler and Myron Echenberg explored the role of soldiers in the independence movement in French West Africa, and both discovered that soldiers' participation in postwar politics was more complicated than previously thought. In East Africa, the same problem exists. As Tim Parsons aptly points out in his recent book on the KAR, "The fundamental problem with most of their conclusions is that former askaris were noticeably absent from East African nationalist movements."⁵²³ While Parson's work deals mainly with askaris from Kenya and Nyasaland, his observation is

⁵²²Okete J. E. Shiroya, "The Impact of World War II on Kenya: The Role of Ex-servicemen in Kenyan Nationalism," Ph.D. Dissertation Michigan State University, 1968, pp. 204-237.

equally sound for Tanganyika.

Although a few ex-askaris served in leadership positions in the Tanganyikan African National Union (TANU), as a class, soldiers did not join TANU in large numbers in the years leading up to independence. A small group of former askaris who had served in Burma, including James Mkande, Dossa Aziz, and two brothers, Abdulwahid and Ally Sykes, served in leadership positions in the forerunner to TANU, the Tanganyika African Association. These former soldiers joined with other well educated Africans, and between 1949 and 1951 protested the lack of opportunities for Africans in the civil service, poor access to education and the control that Tanganyika's small settler community exercised over the government. Yet after a brief burst of activity, the leadership of the Tanganyikan African Association passed to older leaders and by 1951 the momentum had been lost. The new president, Thomas Plantan, was also a former askari, but unlike members of the earlier group he was poorly educated and the association declined under his leadership until it was revived by Julius Nyerere in 1953.⁵²⁴ Although small numbers of ex-soldiers remained active in first the Tanganyikan African Association, and later in TANU, veterans are never noticeable as a sizable group.

There is a number of possible reasons why former askaris did not rally to the nationalist cause in greater numbers. By the 1950's, many of the younger leaders of the movement viewed ex-askaris as a conservative force. The new generation of leaders was better educated than the vast majority of former

⁵²³Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, pp. 255-256

⁵²⁴Iiffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 507-510.

askaris, even those who had served in the EAAEC and the EAAMC. Of the few ex-askaris who held leadership positions in the TAA, most had come from urban backgrounds and had entered the army with unusually high levels of education. Ally Sykes, for example, had served in the EAAEC as an education instructor and spoke excellent English before he was enlisted. Such individuals were the exception however, and despite the growing urban population, many former askaris continued to live in rural areas and viewed the leaders of the TAA and later TANU with either disinterest or suspicion. While many of the former askaris interviewed for this study remember TANU being active in rural, as well as urban areas, few say they were heavily involved in the movement for independence.⁵²⁵ One disgusted nationalist organizer commented on veterans in the 1950's, "They went into the army as illiterate and they remained 'empty-headed', forgetting everything but how to give a snappy salute and say '*Ndio Bwana*' (yes sir)."⁵²⁶ Furthermore some former askaris held government jobs and opposed any radical social or political changes. This is not meant to imply that they felt any great loyalty to the British Government, most did not, but they certainly feared that they might lose their jobs or see their status in the community decline if Tanganyika gained its independence. Government propaganda played on these fears, and some veterans felt that they might lose what little power they had as veterans if a new government came to power that owed them nothing. Both the TAA and TANU also expressed little interest in many of the issues most relevant to

⁵²⁵Interviews #6, #26 #1 and #22.

⁵²⁶Quoted in Iiffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 377. Another former askari who was also involved in the TAA and TANU made similar scathing comments about his former comrades. Interview #19.

veterans as a group, such as receiving recognition for their services in the form of increased opportunities and pensions.

Of the former askaris interviewed for this study, several who joined TANU in the years prior to independence had long-standing grievances relating to their wartime service. Others credit the war with awakening their desire to participate in the political process.

Also after the war we grew a political consciousness and realized that we could have our own government. Thus most of us were active participants in political issues, so I, with most of my comrades joined TANU to fight for independence under Julius Nyerere's leadership. I joined TANU in 1956. During that time I held different leadership positions at my party branch and now I am only a village advisor on different issues.⁵²⁷

Although several veterans agree that the war played an important role in expanding their horizons, few mention interaction with African-American servicemen or encounters with Indian nationalists as major influences that helped shape their political awareness. One former askari who served in India and Burma, and later played a role in the leadership of the TAA, categorically denies that Tanganyikan veterans were heavily influenced by the actions of Indian nationalists. According to this individual, it was the behavior of the British and the role askaris played in the defeat of the Italians and Japanese that caused ex-soldiers to consider themselves the equal of Europeans and fight for independence.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷Interview #23. Also interview #11.

⁵²⁸Interview #19.

Chapter 10

The Winds of Change

Bandera Ufuata Upepo
The flag follows the wind.
(Swahili Proverb)

Tanganyikan Military Policy in the Years Leading up to Independence:1945-1961

The internal security situation in East Africa rapidly changed in the years following the Second World War. During the inter war-period, officials and settlers had openly questioned the need to maintain the KAR, arguing that few internal security threats existed and those that did could be controlled by the police. By the late 1940's, conditions had changed and the military was no longer considered a rarely used, expensive luxury. The East African governments expressed growing concern about the activities of African nationalists and union organizers. In 1939, just before the outbreak of the war, one company of 6 KAR stationed in Tanga came to the aid of police to help end a strike by laborers. Trade unions continued to increase in power and membership throughout the post-war period, and officials also feared demobilized askaris with grievances against the government might foment unrest. In the latter stages of the war, provincial and district officials read soldiers' letters for signs of discontent, and gathered intelligence on African organizations, searching for any sign of communist influence. The East African governments attempted to deal with rising unrest by increasing the powers of police forces, mounting investigations, maintaining surveillance on African nationalists, and disseminating propaganda. KAR battalions continued to hold flag marches, recapture stolen stock and provide spectacle, but they also increasingly began to be viewed as another line of defense that could come to the aid of the civil power, supporting police units during strikes or other large scale disturbances.

While the primary mission of East Africa's military forces once again

reverted to providing internal security, the War Office increasingly began to consider using the KAR as an imperial reserve. The main impetus behind this shift in thinking was the forthcoming independence of India, combined with growing Arab nationalism in Egypt and conflict in Palestine. During the war, the British government had promised Indian nationalists independence in exchange for their support. War Office officials realized, however, that the loss of India would eliminate Britain's largest external reserve of military manpower and immediately began to look for suitable alternatives. To preserve the option of being able rapidly to expand the KAR for use abroad, the War Office retained command of the East African forces instead of letting them revert to local control. The KAR and its support units experienced massive reductions from their wartime level however, the force remained larger than its pre-war predecessor. The maintenance of KAR battalions was the responsibility of the East African governments but the War Office continued to pay for a centralized command structure as well as technical and supporting arms. Should East Africa be required to provide units to serve overseas, they could be quickly organized into brigades or a division and provided with support troops raised from the remaining cadre units. The East African governments supported these measures primarily for financial reasons.

The Tanganyikan component of the East African forces was marginal and the majority of support units and KAR battalions was concentrated in Kenya. As long as the Colonial and War Office continued to shoulder most of the cost for maintaining East African forces the Tanganyikan government was willing to support proposals that relied on the region for military manpower. In 1949, however, when War Office officials advocated that the East African governments pay a higher percentage of the cost for military forces, both the Tanganyikan and Ugandan governments refused. Facing a budget deficit, and with two of the three

East African governments declining to allocate adequate funds to maintain the military, the War Office had little choice but to make cuts in force levels. Technical and support units were either drastically reduced or eliminated as were a number of plans to improve conditions of service within the KAR. Pay scales remained frozen at 1946 levels and battalions had increasing difficulty finding recruits. The decline in the KAR's pay, benefits and prestige also meant that battalions had trouble retaining soldiers. Trained and experienced privates and NCO's often left the army, seeking better opportunities in government service or the private sector, and fewer recruits enlisted with plans to make the army a career. Several Tanganyikan askaris who served with 6 KAR following the war remarked that military service was no longer seen as a highly desirable form of employment, and those askaris who had options generally went elsewhere after one term in the army. In 1949, several askaris serving with 6 KAR who had technical skills, sought work with the groundnut scheme and in 1956, the Regimental Sergeant Major left the army after 16 years of service for a government job as a labor recruiter.⁵²⁹

The declining popularity of military service became particularly noticeable in recruiting. Throughout the 1950's, Tanganyikan battalions began to have difficulty finding adequate numbers of acceptable recruits. In 1951, efforts began to raise a new battalion, 26 KAR, to replace one of the Kenyan battalions sent to Malaya. The military authorities insisted on rigidly adhering to the pre-war standard of tribal composition in a Tanganyikan battalion, even going so far as to

⁵²⁹Interviews #33, #30.

enlist Gogo as sanitary orderlies.⁵³⁰ To the surprise of the military, the carefully planned recruiting itinerary failed to yield the expected results. This failure was particularly shocking because no ethnic group in a given area was expected to produce more than 80 volunteers. Even with the efforts of district commissioners and the chiefs of martial ethnic groups drumming up support for the effort, many districts barely made their quotas. In part this was due to distressingly high rates of rejection on medical grounds, but in many areas Africans were clearly no longer eager to join the KAR.⁵³¹ The greatest difficulty was experienced in the Southern province, where only a handful of Ngoni and Yao enlisted. Civil officials suggested making up the difference from other areas, particularly around Mwanza, where many Sukuma had volunteered. The Provincial Commissioner of the Southern Province was more forceful, pointing out that the military terms of service were no longer attractive compared to those offered by the sisal estates, and stated that nothing short of a full recruiting drive, complete with brass band, would procure the 80 men required by the army. In private correspondence, civil officials complained that the army remained mired in the past with its "Victorian standards," and desperately needed to alter its outlook. Even the governor weighed in on the matter and the Commander of 26 KAR received a letter from

⁵³⁰The official tribal composition of a Tanganyikan battalion was as follows: Hehe 20%, Sukuma 20%, Ngoni 15%, Kuria 15%, Yao 10%, Nyamwezi/Sumbwa 7.5% Fipa 2.5% unspecified at CO's discretion 10%. Brigader CO Southern Area to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, July 12, 1951. On the request for Gogo see CO 26 KAR to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, August 8, 1951. TNA 28209 Vol. I.

⁵³¹Out of the first 80 Nyamwezi volunteers sent to the depot at Dar es Salaam from Tabora only 2 were finally passed as medically fit. The DC Ufipa reported a similar problem complaining that all the recruits from his district were rejected on medical grounds. He told the military that he would not send any replacements until he was notified why the entire first batch of volunteers had proved unsuitable. Robin Hohnston to DC Tabora, October 3, 1951 and PC Western Province to Member for Local Government, Dar es Salaam, October 31, 1951. TNA 28209 Vol. I.

the Chief Secretary advising:

I am directed by the governor to inform you that his Excellency is very strongly of the opinion that with the great changes that are taking place in both the social and economic life of the people, the old tribal ratio does not mean what it meant in the past, and that in a few years time it will probably have little or no value.⁵³²

Despite such strongly worded suggestions, the commander of 26 KAR refused to budge and eventually the battalion obtained the required number of recruits. The difficulties experienced by both 6 and 26 KAR in enlisting recruits certainly indicate that the army was no longer considered a highly desirable occupation even for Africans from rural areas.

The declining prestige of service in the KAR was also visible in the ranks of Europeans. During the 1930's, many young officers had been attracted to African service not just because it provided them with opportunities for adventure but also because it helped advance their careers. During the inter-war years, Britain's army remained heavily occupied with colonial ventures and a stint "scallywag soldiering" in Africa was not seen as a detriment to one's military career. Conditions changed considerably following the Second World War. Service with colonial forces, such as the KAR, consisting primarily of infantry and lacking mechanized forces, air support and artillery was increasingly viewed as a liability for those hoping to achieve high rank. Following the war, the War Office experienced difficulty in finding adequate numbers of junior officers willing to serve with the KAR. A few of the individuals who "volunteered" turned out to be

⁵³²Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam to OC 26 KAR, October 18, 1951. TNA 28209
Vol. I.

the same kind of regimental rejects that had plagued the KAR during the two World Wars.⁵³³ One of the major problems was that, even among the ranks of capable junior officers seconded to the KAR, many did not speak Swahili and showed little interest beyond learning the bare minimum required. Civil officials blamed part of the failure of the military's attempt to recruit for 26 KAR in 1951 on the fact that only one of the new battalions' junior officers spoke Swahili.⁵³⁴ The upper echelons tended to be filled with older officers who had served with the KAR in the 1930's as lieutenants and captains and had returned to command battalions. The majority of these individuals were excellent officers who were committed to the welfare of their troops.

Yet even as conditions in the armed forces stagnated, both the local and imperial governments relied heavily on KAR battalions for garrison duties and operations. Imperial planners viewed the KAR as an ideal alternative to more expensive British army units and planned on using KAR battalions in counterinsurgency campaigns and police actions overseas. In the early 1950's Kenyan and Nyasaland battalions were sent to Malaya on a rotating basis to help put down an insurgency mounted by Communist guerrillas. To ensure adequate military forces remained in East Africa, both Kenya and Tanganyika raised one new KAR battalion. The KAR fought well in Malaya, and British commanders were exploring the possibility of deploying more East African troops to the region when the Mau Mau revolt broke out in Kenya. Tanganyikan askaris from 6 KAR were sent to Kenya and took part in forest patrols and other

⁵³³ Brigadier J. F. Macnab to General Dimoline, July 16, 1957. PRO CO 968/666.

⁵³⁴ Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam to PC Lindi, October 15, 1951. TNA 28209.

operations against Mau Mau guerrillas. The administration also took steps to prevent the revolt from spreading to Tanganyika. In addition to rounding up and detaining Kikuyu suspects working in the territory, officials in the north also constructed several camps, to prevent Mau Mau guerrillas from crossing the border.

The end of ongoing operations in Kenya in 1955 once again raised the question of who was going to pay for military forces in East Africa. Based on recent experiences with Mau Mau, British planners were confident that they could reduce force levels in East Africa and still retain control of the region. In the event of another insurgency, British troops and supporting aircraft could be flown in from Britain. Furthermore, an investigation by Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer into the role the colonies would play in imperial defense concluded that thermo-nuclear weapons had changed the underlying strategic situation. In the future the primary role of the colonies would be to provide their own security and regional defense instead of serving as an imperial reserve. This change in thinking meant that it would no longer be necessary to keep colonial forces under the control of the UK Army Council. The decision to turn control of local military units over to the East African governments was strengthened by the formation of the Central African Federation, which made the newly formed Central African Command responsible for the two Nyasaland KAR battalions and the Northern Rhodesian Rifles.⁵³⁵

While Tanganyika and Uganda agreed to War Office recommendations

⁵³⁵Parsons, *The African Rank and File*, pp. 40–41. Note on the Transfer of Responsibility for the Control and Administration of the East African Land Forces, May 16, 1957. PRO CO968/593.

that they take over the burden of paying for their internal security forces, both governments made it clear that they would seek either to abolish or greatly reduce the KAR, relying instead on police units. The Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring, having recently experienced an insurgency first hand, did not share his colleagues' optimistic view that police forces alone would be enough to keep the peace. Baring argued that the KAR should be adequately funded so that the force could remain at its present strength. Officials at the War Office agreed with Baring and pressured the Ugandan and Tanganyikan governments into accepting a regional defense organization. In 1957, the East African Land Forces Organization (EALFO) was formed and charged with overseeing all defense matters in East Africa.

No sooner had the EALFO been formed than the KAR underwent another round of reorganization and reduction. Most of the technical and support units that had been retained since the Second World War were either disbanded entirely or consolidated into smaller units. As with earlier reductions, the result of these changes was that even more support functions were centralized in Kenya including medical services, signals, workshops and the brigade headquarters. One Kenyan infantry battalion was disbanded and combined with the two Nyasaland battalions now part of the CAF; East African forces shrank to a total of five KAR battalions. The Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Edward Twining, managed to preserve 26 KAR by allowing the under-strength battalion to garrison Mauritius and thus be paid for through imperial funds.⁵³⁶ Further

⁵³⁶The garrison was withdrawn in June 1960. Memorandum by the GOC EA Command, November 27, 1959. PRO CO 968/595.

reductions occurred within the remaining battalions by cutting additional platoons added during the operations against Mau Mau. Funding for new arms, uniforms and equipment also dried, up contributing to low morale as askaris felt that they were not being given adequate support.

The result of these measures was that the East African governments did not possess adequate security forces to combat either a major counterinsurgency or a series of smaller disturbances taking place simultaneously in different territories. The EALFO had been predicated on the assumption that no serious opposition to British rule in East Africa existed that could not be controlled by local police forces backed by the KAR. In Tanganyika this quickly proved to be false. Not only did the government have to worry about the growing power of TANU and trade unions in urban areas such as Dar es Salaam, but unrest was also occurring in the country side. The speed with which the British position in East Africa disintegrated took everyone by surprise. In 1959, a mere two years after the formation of the EALFO, Tanganyika's Governor, Sir Richard Turnbull, informed the other East African governors that the territory's lack of security forces left him with no other option but to grant concessions to Tanganyikan nationalists.

Even as Britain's East African empire unraveled at the periphery efforts to check rising nationalism were dealt a fatal blow from the core. In 1959 Prime Minister Harold MacMillian made his famous "Winds of Change Speech," stating Britain's intention to grant independence quickly to its African colonies. Colonial officials had been studying how to prepare Africans for self rule and most advocated a slow process involving training Africans to take over the government. Although small numbers of Tanganyikans had been given low level jobs in the civil service and efforts had been stepped up to train Africans for more responsible positions, such plans were just beginning to be implemented in the

late 1950's. Rapidly changing events in East Africa destroyed any possibility of the British gradually turning control over to Tanganyikans. In 1959 Turnbull had mentioned the possibility of having to grant Tanganyika full independence in 1970 a year later the entire time table had been transformed and on December 9, 1961, Tanganyika became a fully independent nation.

The pace of political events took colonial military officials entirely by surprise. Like their counterparts in government, military officers had supported the idea of gradually preparing Africans for leadership roles. These plans envisioned a lengthy period of British rule, perhaps fifty years or more, before independence. Overnight, military officials found themselves facing the dual tasks of struggling to convince Julius Nyerere and the rest of TANU's leadership to throw their support behind a new organization similar to the EALFO and rapidly preparing Tanganyika's two KAR battalions for independence. Both efforts failed. The first failed because Tanganyika's new leadership was distrustful of forming a security arrangement with its neighbors which would be organized primarily by the British. The second failed because there was inadequate time adequately train to the officer corps of a new army.

Tanganyika's Military Policy in the Years Following Independence: 1961-1964

Like most other African states at independence, the Tanganyikan government inherited an army trained and indoctrinated by the former colonial power, in this case Britain. The force resembled far more closely the colonial military than the army of a newly independent sovereign nation. One reason for this was that Tanganyika's new leaders had an almost total lack of experience dealing with military matters. Tanganyika's first President, Julius Nyerere, had led a predominantly peaceful struggle for freedom. A lack of practical experience about how to run an army was compounded by the fact that during the colonial period a distinctly Tanganyikan army had not existed, nor had there been time to

form one in the frantic period leading up to independence.

In 1960, the East African Common Services Organization replaced the East African High Commission and the War Council in Britain took charge of the two Tanganyikan battalions until independence in 1961. After independence, the Tanganyikan component of the EALFO forces became the Tanganyikan Rifles under the command of the Military Forces Council of Tanganyika and the Commander-in-Chief, President Julius Nyerere. The Council consisted of the Vice-president, the Minister of External Affairs and Defense, the permanent secretary of External Affairs and Defense and the Commander of the Force, a British officer seconded to the Tanganyika Government.⁵³⁷

Shortly after Tanganyika attained its independence from Britain in 1961, a soldier dressed in the uniform of the Tanganyika Rifles placed the new nation's flag on the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro. This symbolic action demonstrated the end of British rule in Tanganyika and the formation of a new sovereign nation. Tanganyika's use of a soldier to carry out this function was ironic in view of the fact that initially, Tanganyikan leaders considered dispensing with a military altogether. At independence the Tanganyikan component of the KAR contained only three lower ranking African officers. British officers seconded to the Tanganyikan government continued to lead and train the new nation's 2,000

⁵³⁷ Harvey Glickman, *Impressions of Military Policy in Tanganyika (East Africa)*, (Rand Corporation, 1963), p. 9. For a description of the Tanganyika Rifles strength, including support units and vehicles, see: Memorandum by GOC East Africa. PRO CO 968/726.

soldiers, who remained equipped with obsolete equipment and weapons.⁵³⁸ This tiny force was grossly inadequate to meet Tanganyika's basic security requirements. Shortly before independence General Goodwin the General Officer Commanding East Africa, had recommended that all KAR battalions should be increased from three rifle companies to four, and that the under-strength 26 KAR should be increased by two companies. He argued that these increases were warranted, based on the size of the territories and the growing possibility of external threats from the Congo. At independence, the best defense force the new regime could hope to muster was a battalion and a half of infantry supported by a platoon of light mortars. Tanganyika's armed forces possessed no artillery, no anti-armor capability, no anti-aircraft, no armor, and no naval forces. Considering the chaotic situation in the Congo in 1961, the tensions in Rwanda and Burundi and the new government's dislike for the Portuguese presence in Mozambique, the Tanganyikan government's decision to attain independence with so scanty a force clearly demonstrates the strength of Nyerere's beliefs in Pan-Africanism and a peaceful future.⁵³⁹

The condition and future of the Tanganyikan army presented President Nyerere with a significant quandary. In the heady days following independence Nyerere seriously considered relying entirely on police forces to ensure Tanzania's security. In a speech given on August 5, 1961, Nyerere argued that

⁵³⁸Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, 1979, p. 573. For a detailed discussion on the requirements for promotion of non-commissioned African officers in the KAR before independence, see Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki And Blue: Military and Police In British Colonial Africa* (Athens, Ohio: 1989), pp. 247, 262-263.

⁵³⁹R. E. Goodwin GOC EA Command, The Future of the KAR, December 31, 1960 and W. B. L. Monson to Sir Richard Turnbull, March 3, 1961. PRO CO 968/724.

Africa's small poorly-equipped armies could only be used to attack other African states, to interfere in politics, or to suppress African populations. According to Nyerere, "All that we [Tanganyika] need within our national boundaries are sufficient forces for the purpose of maintaining law and order within those boundaries."⁵⁴⁰ Nyerere also felt that the scant resources of African nations should be used to improve the lives of their citizens and should not be wasted on military hardware and training that was of use only during war. He consequently asked the United States and other countries not to interfere in the affairs of African nations or profit by selling them munitions, pointing out that "If a country has money to spare in helping others it should spend it fighting poverty, illiteracy and disease."⁵⁴¹

Despite his personal ambivalence towards the military, Nyerere proved unwilling to disarm unilaterally and leave Tanganyika without any means of deterring aggressors or defending itself. He also remained convinced that Tanganyika's British trained army would remain loyal to the government after independence. In light of the mutiny in the neighboring Congo, Nyerere commented in 1960, "...these things cannot happen here. First we have a strong organization TANU...There is not the slightest chance that the forces of law and order in Tanganyika will mutiny."⁵⁴² Joseph Nyerere, the president's younger brother, argued that Tanganyika should consider relying on the United Nations

⁵³¹"The Second Scramble" speech delivered February 4, 1963. See Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity/Uhuru na Umoja: a selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65* (Dar es Salaam: 1967), pp. 204-208.

⁵⁴¹*New York Times* (New York), 16 July 1961.

⁵⁴²Elise Forbes Pachter "Contra-Coup: Civilian Control of the Military in Guinea, Tanzania, and Mozambique" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 20, 4 (1982), p. 596-597.

for protection.

President Nyerere considered a number of options to avoid the possibility of military interference in Tanganyika's domestic affairs while ensuring the nation's continued security. One approach was the formation of an East African Federation that would combine the armed forces of Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda under a unified command structure. However, even before independence, Tanganyika had tried to separate its defensive requirements from those of its neighbors. Unlike Kenya and Uganda, established as British colonies, Nyerere and other members of TANU pointed out that the League of Nations gave the Tanganyika territory to Britain to administer as a mandate after the First World War. From the 1920's until independence, Tanganyika's African leadership frequently argued that Tanganyika's defensive arrangements should be separated from Britain's other East African colonies.⁵⁴³

Arguments for continuing Tanganyika's military autonomy became even more forceful as the country moved toward independence. In 1957, during a legislative Council debate, Paul Bomani, who became Tanganyika's Minister of Finance after independence, pointed out that given Tanganyika's unique situation, he did not "see any reason why it should have military amalgamation with colonies and protectorates."⁵⁴⁴ The Tanganyikan government maintained its position on joint defense even after independence, despite the possible financial and security benefits that could be realized from such a union. In April 1960, a Kenyan member of the African Legislative Assembly asked the East Africa High

⁵⁴³Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, p. 250-251.

Commission to set up a navy. However, the Tanganyikan members of the assembly opposed the idea on the grounds that since Tanganyika would soon be independent, the commission's decision would not matter. Within a week of attaining independence, Tanganyika announced it was no longer considering the idea.⁵⁴⁵

Another post-independence option was to continue to rely on Britain for protection. Although Nyerere had adopted a nationalist stance long before independence, claiming that he did not want Tanganyika to rely on the British for either military supplies or training, his government made little effort and had no real opportunity, to alter the dependent relationship. Following independence the commander of the Tanganyika Rifles continued to be a British officer, and the force's equipment, weapons and organization all remained British. Until the end of 1962 Britain also paid two-thirds of Tanganyika's military budget of approximately five million Tanganyikan Shillings annually.⁵⁴⁶ The final proof that Nyerere's nationalism did not apply to the military was his approval of a relatively slow paced policy of Africanization for the army, which stressed the need for professional, well-trained African officers. In 1963, the British officers staffing the Tanganyika Rifles drew up a plan to complete Africanization of the officer corps by the end of 1964, including promoting at least three African officers to the rank of major. This proposal was still being considered by the Tanganyikan

⁵⁴⁴Ali A. Mazrui, "Anti-Militarism and Political Militancy in Tanzania," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* IX, 9, (1964), p. 223.

⁵⁴⁵On opposition to the Royal East African Navy see: Sir Richard Turnbull to W. B. L. Monson, Colonial Office, October 22, 1959. PRO CO 968/595.

⁵⁴⁶Okwudiba Nnoli, *Self Reliance and Foreign Policy in Tanzania* (New York: 1978), p.110.

government when the army mutinied in 1964.⁵⁴⁷

Independence thus brought few immediate changes to either the soldiers or officers serving in the Tanganyika Rifles or in the size or responsibilities of the force. The government lowered the minimum educational requirements for recruits but did not otherwise significantly alter recruiting methods. The army continued to enlist recruits by mounting recruiting safaris that would stop and hold *Barazas*, where NCO's or officers would explain the benefits of army life and sign up prospective soldiers. The tribal composition of recruits after independence was similar to that of the soldiers recruited for service in the KAR during the colonial period. In 1963, of the 280 Africans recruited from 38 different ethnic groups, 25% were Kuria and 25% were Hehe. All recruits had to be between 18 and 25 years old, and they signed up for a six-year enlistment.⁵⁴⁸

To move up through the ranks, soldiers had to pass a series of educational requirements. The education offered by the military did not change after independence and the curriculum remained composed of courses dealing with citizenship, hygiene and the history of the KAR's contribution to British campaigns in Ethiopia and Burma during World War Two. After independence African soldiers expected to get the opportunity to become officers and thought that the government's long-term goal was to Africanize the army. To facilitate this process, the Tanganyikan government increased the number of Africans on the selection board, which was traditionally composed entirely of British officers. Two African civil servants were appointed to serve on the board in addition to the

⁵⁴⁷ William Gutteridge, *The Military In African Politics* (London: 1969), p. 26-27.

⁵⁴⁸Glickman, "RAND Report" p. 9. also in Gutteridge, *The Military In African Politics* p. 25.

Chairman, Adam Sapi Mkwawa, but the other three members remained British. They included the secretary of the Military Council, who was a British expatriate, the British Commander of the Tanganyikan Rifles, and one other British officer.⁵⁴⁹

Twice a year the Selection Board accepted applications from secondary school graduates as well as candidates from the university. In the brief three-year-period between independence and the barracks revolt of 1964, the government made little effort to increase the numbers of Africans being trained as officers. Out of the 66 applications received in 1962, the Selection Board accepted only four, and in 1963, out of 43 applicants, found only three suitable officer candidates. The Selection Board also sought potential officers at a special school for a Junior Leaders Unit located in Kenya at Kahawa. The unit contained one hundred and fifty boys from Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda ranging in age from fifteen to adulthood. In March 1963, however, a group of students, including forty-six boys from Tanganyika, mutinied, complaining about the expatriates who ran the school. The protest stopped after the British Commander of the Tanganyika Rifles went to the school and talked to the students. School officials expelled eighty-three of the boys after the disturbances, but contrary to the advice of the Tanganyika Rifles Commander, the Tanganyikan and Kenyan governments did not court-martial the leaders of the protest. Not surprisingly none of the Tanganyikan students in the Junior Leaders Unit became officers.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹Glickman, "RAND Report" p. 10. It is certainly no coincidence that Adam Sapi Mkwawa was chairman of the board because he was not only the Speaker of the National Assembly but was also the Chief of the Hehe, one of the ethnic groups most heavily represented in the military.

⁵⁵⁰Gutteridge, *The Military In African Politics* p. 27.

Because of the slow rate of Africanization, the army failed to mirror the gains Africans were making in other areas after independence. In 1962, Africans comprised only 40% of the 63 Commissioned Officers over the rank of Warrant Officer. Ten Tanganyikan officers were training at the British military academy at Sandhurst, five were taking officers' courses at the Mons Officers Cadet School in Aldershot England, and one was completing his training at the Harrar Military Academy in Ethiopia. Yet, all officers over the rank of captain remained British, and only a single African had attained the rank of captain.⁵⁵¹ The reservations that Tanganyika's leadership, and President Nyerere, had about rapid Africanization were evidenced in 1964, when Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa refused to approve all the officer candidates nominated by the Minister of External Affairs and Defense. The Kenyan independence celebrations that took place in December 1963 also exacerbated rising tensions in the Tanganyika Rifles concerning the speed of promotion. During a parade in Nairobi, a Kenyan African lieutenant colonel marched at the head of his troops. Most Tanganyikan soldiers were aware that, despite Nyerere's rhetoric, Tanganyika's program of Africanizing the military was not keeping pace with that of its neighbors. Many soldiers were also unhappy with their wages and living conditions, neither of which had improved since the end of British rule.⁵⁵²

The 1964 Revolt and the End of the Last Vestiges of the KAR.

In the early morning hours of January 20, 1964, only two weeks after the rejection of the officer candidates, the officers of the First Battalion of the

⁵⁵¹Harvey Glickman, *Some Observations on the Army and Political Unrest in Tanganyika*. (Pittsburgh: 1964), pp. 37-40.

Tanganyika Rifles at the Colito Barracks outside Dar es Salaam awoke to the sound of a siren and bugle calls. When Company Sergeant Major Joseph Maselo dressed and went out he found B. Company already drawn up. When he went to the guardroom to see what was happening, a group of soldiers locked him in a cell with several other British and African officers. The mutineers, carrying rifles and sten guns, threatened to shoot them if they did not follow orders.⁵⁵³

Twenty soldiers and noncommissioned officers headed by Sergeant Francis Hingo Ilogi led the mutineers. After taking control of the barracks, the mutineers tried to force one of the African officers present to take command by placing the hat of the British battalion commander on his head and declaring him their leader. However, the officer however, did not appear to be up to the task, because he was absent from the negotiations that the mutineers' leaders later had with Oscar Kambona, and he seems to have played no significant role in the mutiny. Shortly after taking control of the barracks, Sergeant Ilogi held a meeting in the education center and told the mutineers present that the purpose of the mutiny was to remove the European officers and replace them with Tanganyikans. Ilogi then announced to the mutineers: "Today we have changed the army. From now on the English Language will not be used in the Tanganyika Rifles."⁵⁵⁴ Ilogi finished by reading a list of new promotions and the mutineers promised to serve and protect the president and obey his orders.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵²Gutteridge, *The Military In African Politics*, pp. 25-27.

⁵⁵³*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 6 May 1964.

⁵⁵⁴*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 5 May 1964.

⁵⁵⁵*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 6 May 1964.

Initially the mutiny appeared to be a coup d'état. The mutineers seized the telegraph office, radio station, transportation hubs, government buildings and other key points. They also set up road blocks on the city's main arteries thus preventing movement within and out of Dar es Salaam. The Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation, under the control of rebellious soldiers, announced that the new commander of the Tanganyika Rifles was Elijah Kavana and that the inhabitants of Dar es Salaam should remain calm. The mutineers, led by Sergeant Ilogi, reached State House at 2:30 A.M., but the president and other ministers, already alerted, had gone into hiding to escape capture.⁵⁵⁶ Unable to locate Nyerere, the mutineers met with the only minister they could find, the Minister for External Affairs and Defense, Oscar Kambona. The mutineers presented Kambona with a list of grievances that included conditions of service, the slow rate of promotion of Africans, and concerns over pay. They demanded that Kambona promise to remove the British officers and to increase the salary of a private from 105 shillings a month and rations to 260 shillings a month with rations.⁵⁵⁷

There was certainly some justification for the soldiers' grievances about pay. Most privates after a few years of service could expect to make only 136 shillings a month, while a Corporal received 212 shillings and a Sergeant 259 shillings. These amounts were not high, considering that most ordinary workers in the city of Dar es Salaam made between 180-220 shillings a

⁵⁵⁶Nyerere's decision to go into hiding instead of trying to negotiate with the instigators of the coup was certainly influenced by the murder of Sylvanus Olympio in Togo on January 13, 1963, and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo during similar army revolts.

⁵⁵⁷*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 21 January 1964.

month.⁵⁵⁸ While complaining about their pay, the mutineers assured Kambona that they only wanted to air their grievances and did not want to overthrow the government. At several times during the meeting, however, the mutineers spoke harshly to Kambona and even threatened to shoot him if he did not consider their demands. Despite tension during the discussion, the meeting ended on a positive note, and the mutineers agreed to release the British officers they were holding so they could be flown to safety to Nairobi. The mutineers also promised to return peacefully to their barracks. At the end of the first day of the mutiny, Oscar Kambona gave a radio announcement that briefly described what had happened at Colito barracks and asked the inhabitants of Dar es Salaam to stay calm.

The next day, soldiers detained government officials, police officers and members of TANU.⁵⁵⁹ A considerable amount of firing occurred both during the mutineers' initial seizure of the barracks and later, when they spread out to gain control of key sections of the town. As the population of Dar es Salaam began to realize that the government had gone into hiding and the police were no longer in control, riots started and mobs, capitalizing on the confusion, broke into and looted shops. In the Bazaar and in the Magomeni and Kariakoo sections of the

⁵⁵⁸Glickman, "RAND Report" p. 11. Although Glickman points out that the soldier's pay "does not seem high, compared to semi-skilled work outside," he makes the point that the soldiers also received additional benefits such as free room and board and medical attention. Married soldiers, after a year of service, could also live with their wives on military bases and were not charged extra for utilities, rent, education or the use of medical services.

⁵⁵⁹*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 6 May 1964. One of the detainees was the Assistant Superintendent of Police who, deciding discretion was the better part of valor, tried to avoid being detained by telling the mutineers he was a customs agent. When the soldiers searched his car they found some files from work stamped with emblem of his office and detained him for a short time. Incidents such as this demonstrate that the mutineers realized the police and other groups could pose a danger to them but did not really know what to do about them.

city, areas dominated by Arab and Asian businesses, mob violence and the often random firing of police and soldiers resulted in the death of seventeen people. In other parts of the city, the mutiny did not result in any serious disturbances.

On January 22nd Nyerere came out of hiding, and in a radio broadcast asked the population to remain calm. To prevent the outbreak of further looting or rioting, the police had well-armed units patrolling the streets, but many offices and shops remained closed. By late afternoon, most of the mutineers had returned to Colito barracks, but many, at the request of government officials, agreed to aid the police in maintaining order in the city.⁵⁶⁰ The mutineers' decision to give up control of the Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation and to permit Nyerere's speech clearly indicates that, at least in the early stages of the mutiny, they were not attempting to overthrow the government.

On January 23rd Nyerere toured the city for three and a half hours and helped restore calm and the people's confidence in the government. However, negotiations with the mutineers remained deadlocked. Nyerere, in a speech given after the mutiny, noted about this time-period: "Indiscipline mounted, and the discussions about pay and conditions were in danger of becoming analogous to the discussion between a blackmailer and his victim."⁵⁶¹ The Tanganyikan government could not move militarily against the mutineers because it had no remaining military forces available. On the second day of the mutiny, troops of Tanganyika's only remaining army unit, the Second Battalion of the Tanganyika

⁵⁶⁰ *Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 22 January 1964.

⁵⁶¹ "O.A.U. Emergency Meeting of Foreign Ministers"-speech delivered on February 12, 1964 in Dar es Salaam see Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity / Uhuru na Umoja: a selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65* (Dar es Salaam: 1967), p. 287.

rifles, joined the revolt at their base at Tabora. The government agreed to the Tabora mutineers' demands to remove their British officers and appointed Captain M.F.H. Sarskikya commander of the Second Battalion.⁵⁶² A company of the Second Battalion stationed at Nachingwea also mutinied. The second set of revolts left the government of Tanganyika without any forces at its disposal, except for police units. Although the police force refused to join the mutiny, they lacked the numbers and weapons to move against the mutineers.⁵⁶³

By January 24th life slowly returned to normal in Dar es Salaam, and the port and airport, as well as schools and businesses, began to reopen. News then reached the capital that a group of frustrated political opportunists planned to meet in Morogoro to discuss using the mutiny to gain power. Some influential trade union leaders also took advantage of the government's disarray to insist on wage increases. Nyerere realized that if the mutineers combined forces with another group with political aspirations, his government might never regain control. The rank and file of the mutineers also began to show signs that they might even refuse to obey their chosen leaders.⁵⁶⁴

Nyerere had wanted to avoid having to ask for foreign intervention, but, with the situation steadily worsening, he had few options available. Initially he

⁵⁶²*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 22 January 1964.

⁵⁶³*Tanganyika Standard*, (Dar es Salaam), 19 January 1964.

hoped to obtain military assistance from either Uganda or Kenya to put down the revolt. However, on January 22nd and 23rd the discontent in the Tanganyikan military had spread to the armed forces of these two nations and both had already requested and received British troops to keep their armies in line. Much to Nyerere's disgust he had no choice but to send a request through diplomatic channels asking for British military assistance.⁵⁶⁵

When the mutiny began, the British Admiralty sent the aircraft carrier Centaur to join the destroyer escort H.M.S. Cambrian already stationed in the harbor of Dar es Salaam. The War Office also ordered the second Battalion of the Scots Guards dispatched to Kenya.⁵⁶⁶ On the morning of January 25, responding to the Tanganyikan request for aid, the British government disembarked 1,400 Royal Marine commandos from H.M.S. Centaur. While the British warship Cambrian fired a barrage of blank shells to panic the mutineers and keep their heads down, the commandos used helicopters to land at Colito barracks. In under an hour the commandos quickly disarmed the approximately 800 mutineers in and around the barracks. They then flew inland to Tabora and Nachingwea and forced the mutineers of the Second Battalion to surrender. The

⁵⁶⁴Gutteridge, *The Military In African Politics* p. 30-31. Although almost every account of the mutiny mentions the fact that a group of political dissidents was gathering at Morogoro, the only evidence I have found concerning these clandestine meetings is in Nyerere's speeches, especially the address he gave at a Special Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of African Unity on 12 February 1964 in Dar es Salaam. Although Nyerere said that "dissident civilians began conspiring with the ring-leaders of the mutiny, encouraging further illegal action for the purpose of causing more disorder in the country," after the first two days of the mutiny the mutineers had actually helped the government restore order. It is certainly possible that Nyerere was exaggerating the threat to justify the government's actions against political rivals after the mutiny.

⁵⁶⁵Kenneth Grundy, *Conflicting Images of the Military in Africa* (Nairobi: 1968), pp. 28-29. See also *Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 22 January 1964.

⁵⁶⁶*The Times* (London), 21 January 1964.

British put down the mutiny using minimal force. During the entire operation the commandos suffered no casualties and only three Tanganyikan soldiers died.⁵⁶⁷

At the end of February, the Tanganyikan assembly passed an indemnity act to legalize and legitimize the steps the government took to quell the mutiny. In May, the government set up a special court to try the nineteen leaders of the mutiny because the Tanganyikan army lacked officers with sufficient seniority to hold a court martial. The court consisted of the Chief Justice and two army officers. The trial was open to members of the public and the mutineers could retain civilian advocates to defend them.⁵⁶⁸ The mutineers said little on their own behalf except to reiterate their earlier grievances about the lack of promotion and pay. One of the defendants, a corporal Beltazar, told members of the court that the soldiers only wanted the government to consider their complaints about salaries and living and working conditions. He said that on numerous occasions over the course of many months, the soldiers had tried to discuss these problems with their British officers without receiving satisfaction. He justified the revolt by saying that there was no reply to their inquiries, and that "We did not want to do this secretly, we wanted to do it in the open and before the government minister who was responsible for the army."⁵⁶⁹ Beltazar also told the court that the soldiers were very aware that the government had Africanized the police force and wanted African officers to run the army. When it came time for

⁵⁶⁷William Redman Duggan and John R. Civile, *Tanzania and Nyerere: A Study of Ujamaa and Nationhood* (New York: 1976), pp. 80-81.

⁵⁶⁸*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 21 February 1964. During the debate to set up a special Military court to try the mutineers, several members of the National Assembly argued vehemently that the rebellious soldiers should not be allowed to have civilian advocates to defend them.

Sergeant Ilogi to defend his actions, he argued, as did many of his fellow conspirators, that the troops of the First Battalion chose him, and that he did his best to keep his comrades under control and not have them "make trouble."⁵⁷⁰ Although eighteen of the nineteen mutineers gave statements defending their actions this portion of the trial lasted less than an hour.

The soldiers' statements on their own behalf failed to help them. On Tuesday, May 12, 1964, the military court sentenced fourteen of the mutineers to prison terms. The court found the other five defendants "Not guilty of any offense." Sergeant Ilogi, considered the ringleader of the mutiny, received the most severe sentence of fifteen years in prison. Ten other mutineers were given ten-year prison terms, and the judges sentenced three others to five years. The prosecution protested the leniency of the sentences and argued that the mutineers deserved the death sentence due to the severity of their crime and the deaths that occurred during the mutiny.⁵⁷¹ When the court announced the mutineers' sentences, there was a great deal of public criticism that in many cases looters had received more severe sentences than many of the ringleaders of the mutiny. On May 13th Nyerere issued a statement to the press agreeing that; "...the penalties imposed by decision of the High Court Judge and the two Army Officers bore no relation to the seriousness of the offenses and the damage which was done to our country." The president went on to say however, that to alter the decision of the court would violate the rule of law just as the

⁵⁶⁹*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 8 May 1964.

⁵⁷⁰Ibid

⁵⁷¹*Tanganyika Standard*, 12 May 1964.

mutineers had done and therefore the sentences would remain unchanged.⁵⁷²

The 1964 mutiny left the government of Tanganyika no other option but fundamentally to change the military. The government dismissed almost all of the askaris serving in the Tanganyika Rifles at the time of the mutiny. Only five British officers were retained to serve as advisors, until they had either trained a few African officers or the government made other training arrangements. The few Tanganyikan soldiers and officers who remained to build a new army were those who had proved their loyalty to the regime during the mutiny and a number of junior officers in the process of being trained overseas. Among this latter group were several soldiers who, shortly after the mutiny, received their commissions but did not attain positions of importance in the new force. One of these officers, S. F. Mbilizi, received his commission at the Mons Officers Cadet School in Aldershot, England, in early 1964. Mbilizi had been a soldier for twenty years and was one of the most senior soldiers in the pre-mutiny Tanganyika rifles. However, the brief newspaper story covering his return to Tanganyika while it referred to "service in a new role" made no mention of what position he would hold, and there is no indication that he or any other long-serving officer returning from training abroad received rapid promotion.⁵⁷³

On January 29th, just days after the mutiny ended, the Tanganyikan government swore in M.F.H. Sarakikya as commander of the new Tanganyikan army. Sarakikya, who would hold the rank of Acting Brigadier, had been a

⁵⁷²"Comment on the Mutineers' Sentences"-speech delivered on May 13, 1964 in Dar es Salaam. see Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity / Uhuru na Umoja: a selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65* (Dar es Salaam: 1967), pp. 298-299.

⁵⁷³*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 18 February 1964.

captain before he became commander of the Second Battalion at Tabora during the mutiny. Sarakikya joined the KAR. in 1959, went to Sandhurst and received his commission in 1961. The second in command of the new army would be Major Elisha Kavana, who received his education at Tabora and later attended Makerere University where he received a B.S. with special honors in mathematics. In 1962, he entered Mons and received his commission in 1963. The desire of the Tanganyikan government for the new army's leadership to be influenced as little as possible by service in the KAR was certainly one of the major reasons they chose two extremely young officers to command Tanganyika's military. Srarkikya was only twenty-nine years old when he became commander of the new army, and Kavana was only twenty-six. Another factor that may have influenced the government's decision may have been that the older generation of soldiers, like Mbilizi, who had served in the army for many years, were not as well educated as the younger generation of soldiers. The British criteria for a good African officer differed substantially from what the Tanganyikan government required. In the years leading up to independence, the KAR had produced very few soldiers with the experience and education necessary to hold high rank and many of those promoted had been long serving NCO's.⁵⁷⁴

The demobilization of most of the officers and the rank and file of the

⁵⁷⁴One of the best-known examples of what the British considered a good NCO was Idi Amin who had served as a Sergeant in a Ugandan battalion of the KAR. British officers admired Amin's strength and prowess as a boxer as well as his loyalty. In the years leading up to Ugandan independence Amin was steadily promoted despite the fact that he was functionally illiterate and had been suspected of torturing suspects during Mau Mau. When independence arrived Amin was one of the highest-ranking soldiers in the Ugandan army and became head of the Ugandan armed forces even though he was clearly completely unqualified for the job. Samuel Decalo,

Tanganyika Rifles, combined with the re-embarkation, in early April, of the British forces that had remained to maintain law and order, resulted in the country being left without any military forces. As a temporary defensive measure on April 9, 1964, the government borrowed a battalion of infantry from Nigeria. The Nigerians remained in Tanganyika for almost six months until the government had recruited and trained the beginnings of a new army. Nyerere's government also took steps to ensure the continued loyalty of the police and prison service. On February 21, 1964, the National Assembly passed two bills making mutiny by members of the police or prison service an offense punishable by death.⁵⁷⁵ Nyerere, however, realized that these were just stop-gap measures and that the country needed a permanent military to defend itself from external threats.⁵⁷⁶

After the mutiny, Tanganyika's leadership decided that they did not want a politically neutral army constructed along British lines, but a military that would remain loyal to the government and TANU. As the president stated after the suppression of the 1964 mutiny, "No popular Government can tolerate any army which disobeys its instructions. An army which does not obey the laws and orders of the peoples Government is not an army of that country."⁵⁷⁷ On Wednesday, May 13, 1964, the day after the sentencing of the leaders of the mutiny, President Nyerere outlined to the national assembly a five-year program for development. The majority of the president's speech dealt with the role of

Psychoses of Power: African Personal Dictatorships (London: 1989), pp. 95-96.

⁵⁷⁵*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 22 February 1964.

⁵⁷⁶O.A.U. Emergency Meeting of Foreign Ministers" speech delivered on February 12, 1964 in Dar es Salaam. see Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity / Uhuru na Umoja: a selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65* (Dar es Salaam: 1967), pp. 288-290.

⁵⁷⁷*Ibid*, p. 289.

agriculture and infrastructure, but he also briefly mentioned the role of the army. He argued that the new army being built would be a part of the nation, and; "...its soldiers will be able and willing to wield a hoe or a rifle according to the needs of the movement as determined by the people's government." To lessen the danger that the formation of a new army would pose to the government, Nyerere called on the TANU Youth League to furnish the core of a new Tanganyikan army and to serve as a force to counterbalance the power of the military.⁵⁷⁸

At the end of February the government mounted recruiting campaigns. When the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Home Affairs went to Tabora on a recruiting drive, approximately 6,000 men volunteered for military service. At a similar drive mounted in Moshi, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Vice President's Office talked to over 700 members of the TANU Youth League about joining the army. In both areas the recruiters were not expecting such a heavy turn out. According to the plans for the new army, each district in the country would provide only fifty recruits, so the majority of the volunteers went away disappointed. Members of the recruiting board were also surprised because some of the volunteers were people who had no chance of entering the army because of their advanced age.⁵⁷⁹

Although the new Tanganyikan army retained the British rank structure and methods of training, the officers trained recruits to be citizen soldiers instead of apolitical military professionals. To ensure that recruits and soldiers continued their political education and party indoctrination, in November 1964 Nyerere

⁵⁷⁸*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 13 May 1964.

⁵⁷⁹*Tanganyika Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 29 February 1964.

appointed a civilian, Delemani J. Kitunda, to act as commissar of the armed forces and assigned political commissars to every battalion to politically educate the rank and file. Nyerere also almost immediately attempted to diversify Tanganyika's training arrangements by accepting a small Chinese contingent of technical troops and advisors. In August 1964, when asked about the risks involved in approving a Chinese military mission, Nyerere pointed out:

The army that proved itself disloyal to my Government was not one that was trained by the Chinese. There is always some element of risk about having an army at all in a developing country, but since you can't do without an army in these times the task is to ensure that the officers and men are integrated into the government and party so that they become no more of a risk than say the health service.⁵⁸⁰

To be certain that the army remained contented, the government substantially improved conditions, and some soldiers' salaries increased by over 100%. Under the new pay scales, the salary of a rifleman increased from 108 shillings to 265 shillings a month.⁵⁸¹

By the time the first group of soldiers in the new Tanganyikan Army completed its training on September 1, 1964, Tanganyika had started to build a military with a strong sense of national identity. To reflect its new role, the government renamed the army the Tanzanian People's Defense Force (TPDF). Following the suppression of the 1964 revolt, the Tanganyikan government successfully discarded the last remaining vestiges of the old colonial military. The discredited British model of an army being politically neutral was abandoned

⁵⁸⁰*The Observer*, 30 August 1964. see also Martin Baily, "Tanzania and China," in *African Affairs* 72, No. 294 (January 1975), p. 44.

⁵⁸¹Nnoli. p. 110-111.

and the government concentrated on developing a military integrated into the nation's political and governmental structure.

Although the 1964 mutiny is often referred to as a coup d'état or a pay strike, neither definition is entirely accurate. Instead, the mutiny should probably be viewed as the final act of resistance mounted by Tanganyika's colonial era soldiers to secure rewards and rights long denied them by both the colonial and post independence-governments. During the colonial period, British officers and administrators had carefully monitored discontent within the ranks of the KAR and, when necessary, had reached agreements with striking soldiers. The problem the Tanganyikan government and the British officers in charge of the force faced following independence was their inability to accommodate dissatisfied askaris. The Tanganyika Rifles remained a remnant of the colonial era but Tanganyika's financial difficulties precluded the government from granting the pay raises and improved living standards askaris had enjoyed for most of the colonial period. When repeated requests to both their officers and representatives from the government failed to gain either results or assurances the askari mutinied.

The barracks revolt went far beyond demands to improve conditions of service. The leaders of the mutineers also protested the slow pace of Africanisation within the Tanganyika Rifles; the mutiny reflected askaris' rising aspirations for progress and equality. In the three years following independence, the army failed to match the rapid advancement that was transforming other branches of government. Everywhere Africans were being promoted to top jobs in government service, everywhere, that is, except in the army. Tanganyika's new leadership realized that most askaris had long resented the officer corps of the armed forces being restricted to Whites, but they insisted on pursuing Africanisation of the armed forces gradually. From the president down,

Tanganyika's new leaders were convinced the army would remain loyal. They failed to comprehend that independence itself, and the rhetoric accompanying the event, had subtly but decisively altered many askaris' perception of their mission. The askaris in the Tanganyikan Rifles did not view themselves as remnants of the colonial order carried over to the present for fiscal and practical reasons. The more educated younger NCO's and Warrant Officers in particular became increasingly restless with the slow pace of reform. They were the soldiers of a new independent African nation and they wanted to have the opportunity, if not to serve as leaders themselves, then minimally to be led by other Africans. Unlike the KAR, in 1964 the Tanganyikan government could neither accommodate askaris' requests for improved conditions of service nor appreciate the dangers involved in slowly Africanizing the army. The result of the ensuing breakdown in communication and failure to appreciate the depth of askaris' grievances was the 1964 mutiny.

Epilogue

Tanganyikan African Veterans Today: The Continuing Fight For Resources and Recognition

In Dar es Salaam, just off busy Morogoro road, hidden behind a screen of buildings, is the Tanzania Legion and Club. The Club is housed in a small part of the former headquarters of the Tanganyika branch of the British Legion African Section; a sprawling two-storied building built around two sizable courtyards. Jutting out from the main structure is a large event hall. In 1999, a large sign on the front of the hall identified the complex as the Tanzania Legion and Club for Veterans of the Second World War. In the summer of 2000, the sign had disappeared leaving only a dark rectangle on the building's face. Currently above the doors of the foyer there is a sign announcing that the complex houses an organization working with street children. There is nothing to indicate the building is also the national administrative headquarters of Tanzania's only organization for colonial era veterans.

The club was completed in 1952, and if you walk into the entry way, high up on the wall you can see a weathered bronze plaque commemorating the opening of the Legion by the then Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Edward Twinning. Mounted on another wall is a glass case containing faded and curled photos showing veterans participating in remembrance day celebrations and club events, most of which took place in years past. The foyer contains a pool table and it, and the adjoining courtyard, are usually filled with street children participating in activities run by the NGO housed in offices on the second floor. Occasionally veterans come and go, exchanging news, and checking if any progress has been made in the ongoing quest for pensions.

Throughout the complex further evidence can be found of the building's original purpose. In the large room where the leaders of the Legion occasionally

meet, there is a wall safe bearing an inscription explaining that this particular model, the Askari, was specifically designed and built for the Legion. In addition to the hall that juts out from the front of the complex, the club consists of two squares surrounded by long narrow buildings. Along the front side, the structure is two stories high and contains the entry-way, large meeting room and offices. The two courtyards are roughly the same size. One is covered with concrete and contains a cement stage and a number of thatched *bandas* that provide shelter from the sun and rain. The other is unpaved and filled with growth, although some stalks of maize and a few papaya trees provide evidence that at one time the plot was cultivated. The rooms surrounding this courtyard used to be part of the Legion-run hostel and, while one veteran continues to live here, the place is usually deserted. Alongside the original building is a newer structure that housed a dispensary. This building also bears a plaque announcing to the reader that the dispensary was opened by the president of Tanzania, Ali Hassan Mwinyi on May 5, 1993. According to local veterans the dispensary has been closed for a number of years. Although the hall is being refurbished with a new roof, with the exception of the administrative offices of the Club and the portion of the compound being used by the program for street children the building is run down.

Dar es Salaam's original British Legion Africa Section club for African ex-servicemen was established after the Second World War in a rented house in Kariakoo. Although the building was centrally located, it was too small and the Legion soon moved to another location near Manyema Mosque. Construction on the larger legion complex began in 1951, and the building was opened the following year. The new British Legion African Center was intended to serve the needs of African veterans. Although Europeans continued to play an active role in the administration and financial affairs of the club, former askaris were in

charge of day to day affairs. European members of the British and Colonial forces had their own club on Ohio street behind the British Council. In its heyday the club presented a very different aspect, and veterans came to dance, drink and participate in other club functions. The Legion's officers also provided some financial assistance to destitute veterans and coordinated veterans' affairs for the entire territory out of the building.⁵⁸²

By design or chance, the construction of the club roughly coincided with Tanganyika's ill-fated ground nut scheme and a number of veterans claim that the club was deliberately built with the aim of luring veterans to Dar es Salaam where they could be recruited as laborers or technicians. No corroboration for this theory exists in the Tanzania National Archives but there is almost no documentation on the construction or operation of the Legion, other than a single file containing minutes from Legion meetings, which remains closed to the public, and another file with some building plans.⁵⁸³ The theory, however, is by no means far-fetched, since labor recruiters working for the ground nut scheme did make an effort to recruit former askaris and several ex-KAR officers worked on the project. Furthermore, one veteran who worked for the scheme, first in Kongwa and later at the headquarters in Dar es Salaam, claimed that when African workers came to Dar es Salaam they would stay at the hostel attached to the Legion Center.

Veterans who regularly attended Legion functions during the late 1950's describe the club as clean and well run. The center existed for veterans and was

⁵⁸²Interview #34.

run by veterans. It was, and remains, one of the few tangible monuments to their contribution in the Second World War and those veterans involved with the club took pride in it.⁵⁸⁴ One former askari, recalling what the Legion was like before and immediately after independence, said: "We had a canteen and could eat food. There was beer at a cheap price. The building was clean and we had flags. Look at it now. Where are the flags? This club is nothing and we have nothing."⁵⁸⁵ Not all veterans' memories of the legion are so positive and several mentioned that tensions existed between askaris who served in the Second World War and those who joined the KAR in the remaining years of British rule. The older generation of veterans was determined to hold on to the club's leadership positions and defined the club as an organization for Second World War ex-soldiers, instead of for all former colonial soldiers.

Shortly after independence both the club complex and the organization were renamed the Tanganyika Legion and Club; this was later revised to the Tanzania Legion and Club. In the years following the end of British rule, both the Club and the Legion fell on hard times. The club continued to operate, sustained by small grants from the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League (BCEL).⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³Tentative building plans and questions about how to acquire land for the project are located in: Dar es Salaam Hostel for African Members of the British Legion. TNA 38518.

⁵⁸⁴ In addition to the Club there are two other sites in Dar es Salaam that honor Tanganyikans who served in the British forces; the Askari Monument and the Imperial and Commonwealth War Graves. I was surprised to discover that the majority of former askari I spoke with displayed no real attachment for either of these memorials. When asked about their ambivalence they replied that both sites were dedicated to askaris who had fought in the First World War and that the Club was built to commemorate their service and sacrifices during the Second World War.

⁵⁸⁵Interview #28

⁵⁸⁶The British Commonwealth Ex-Services League was established in 1921 to provide for the well being of colonial era military veterans residing in British Commonwealth countries. When the British Legion Africa Section closed down following independence, the BCEL took over responsibility for ensuring that appropriate care and facilities existed for commonwealth veterans.

The funds available proved adequate to pay for the Legion's administrative costs and keep the building open but were insufficient to allow the organization to provide much aid to Tanganyika's needy and destitute veterans. Sadly the Legion's financial difficulties were compounded by mismanagement and corruption. For years, the head of the Legion was a former KAR sergeant who, according to veterans, ran the club like his private fiefdom. During his tenure an estimated 40,000 British pounds sent to the organization from the BCEL disappeared. When BCEL officials discovered irregularities in the club's finances and questioned him as to how the money had been spent he claimed it had been used to lift a curse on the Legion complex. Such explanations did not satisfy either officials at the BCEL or angry veterans and he was forced to step down, which created a power vacuum in the organization. Allegations and evidence of additional missing funds and the continuing decline of the organization led to schisms in the veterans' ranks, with different factions vying for control of the club's dwindling assets. In an attempt to restore the credibility of the Legion, reorganize its shattered finances, and provide for the future, representatives from the BCEL encouraged the club's leadership to establish contacts with former members of the Tanzania People's Defense Force (TPDF).

Following the recommendations of the BCEL, the club's leaders hired a former TPDF Captain, Shadrack Kavalambi, to serve as the Legion's General Secretary, and put him in charge of the club's finances. The new General Secretary proved to be a dynamic and charismatic leader who quickly earned the trust of both Legion members and officials at the BCEL. Under his leadership the Legion experienced a slight revival and initiated a number of efforts to improve the lot of colonial era veterans. A major drive was mounted to register former soldiers, and the Legion planned on purchasing a number of farms in rural areas where destitute ex-askaris could live out their final days in dignity with their basic

needs provided for. To address the problems of veterans living in rural areas, the organization worked to reopen branches, many of which were administered, like the headquarters in Dar es Salaam, by a younger former member of the TPDF implementing decisions made by a group of older ex-askaris. Articles were run in newspapers encouraging Second World War veterans to contact the club nearest their homes so that the organization could compile accurate statistics on the number and financial needs of surviving veterans. In December 1998, another article was run announcing that, according to the head of the Tanzania Legion and Club, all registered ex-askaris would receive a monthly pension of 8,000 Tanzania Shillings from the BCEL.⁵⁸⁷ Such publicity was certainly effective, and not only did veterans who had registered with the former British Legion years before reestablish their ties to the organization, but many veterans who had never been members also signed up with the hope of obtaining pensions.

In January 1999, the BCEL provided the Legion with funds intended to help impoverished askaris and pay for the maintenance and administrative costs for the club.⁵⁸⁸ What then happened to the money has been hotly debated ever since. According to Kavalambi, the money was deposited in the Legion's bank account where it was supposed to remain until a meeting could be held when all the sub-branches would send their representatives. Each branch would discuss

⁵⁸⁷"Askari Vita Kuu Kulipwa 8,000 Kila Mwezi" *Majira* December 17, 1998.

the conditions of veterans in their area and put forth appeals for funds. Unfortunately in April, before the proposed meeting could be organized, the Greenland Bank, where the Legion's account was located, closed. After repeated demands as to the whereabouts of the missing funds, the Legion's Chairman turned the matter over to the police, stating that Kavalambi had removed some 27 million Tanzania Shillings from the Legion's account and placed it in his personal account, using the closing of the bank to hide the embezzlement. The leadership also appealed for assistance to the organization's patron, President Benjamin Mkapa, and the head of the TPDF General Robert Mbona. The police questioned the General Secretary about the missing money and in June the BCEL announced it was suspending all grants to the Legion until the missing funds had been accounted for.⁵⁸⁹ In his defense, Kavalambi denied that the money was in his personal account, claiming that a dissatisfied faction of the Legion's leadership was using the fact that his name was on the account to blame him for the bank failure and that the money was gone. In August, the Legion held a meeting, but the approximately 100 veterans who came from all over Tanzania left empty-handed, since the bank had permanently closed and the BCEL refused to send additional funds. Many representatives were justifiably furious. After waiting years for pensions and having their expectations raised, they had arrived in Dar es Salaam only to discover that there was no money. To

⁵⁸⁸There is a good deal of discrepancy here in accounts. According to Kavalambi some of the money sent by the BCEL was earmarked to pay for the organizations' electrical bills and taxes. According the representative of the BCEL whom I spoke with, the money was only to be used to help needy former soldiers. Another veteran interviewed stated that, in 1990 when the commonwealth General Secretary visited the club, he paid the water and power bills for the building. Interview #7.

add insult to injury, because of the continuing legal trouble, and uncertainty over the bank closing, they would not even be able to inform veterans in their communities when the promised stipends might be available.

Despite the ongoing police investigation, demands from the BCEL to provide information as to the whereabouts of the missing funds, and the increasing anger of local veterans, Kavalambi managed to hold on to his position until December 1999, when he was finally ousted. Even then, he refused to leave his office and resisted turning over financial records to the club's leadership. Fed up with the entire situation, a group of veterans marched into his office and, after a brief scuffle, physically ejected him from the building, a process, which resulted in the former General Secretary suffering a concussion and a broken leg.

This was by no means the end of the entire sordid affair. In June 2000, the Legion's leaders announced that unless Kavalambi accounted for the money he had allegedly embezzled, they would take him to court. For his part, Kavalambi threatened a counter-suit claiming that the club's leaders had improperly removed him as General Secretary, violating the organization's constitution, and that he had suffered serious bodily harm when they had thrown him out of the building. The *Guardian* newspaper ran a story on the Legion's financial and legal difficulties that was accompanied by a cartoon showing a cloud of dust and flailing fists in front of the club, bearing the caption "The war is

⁵⁸⁹"Police ask War Veterans to Suspend Kavalambi" *Observer* August 8, 1999.

not over."⁵⁹⁰ Fortunately, it appears that veterans will not have to wait until the court cases are settled before some funds become available, since the BCEL agreed that, provided the Legion passed a successful audit, they would resume grants to the organization.⁵⁹¹

One consequence of the recent publicity surrounding the mismanagement at the Legion is that many ex-soldiers, who over the years had become increasingly convinced that the organization was not looking after their interests, are now deeply distrustful of any leadership. While such a reaction is certainly justified, in the long term this will almost certainly result in increasing difficulties for Tanzania's aged veterans. One of the reasons the BCEL supposedly encouraged the Legion to hire Kavalambi was to elevate someone to a leadership position who understood how to manage the organization's limited funds. A secondary motive was to create ties between Tanzania's colonial era veterans and members of the TPDF, perhaps with the long-term goal of having the Government of Tanzania take over the organization. Kavalambi's alleged embezzlement has increased the distrust and antagonism of many Second World War veterans towards both the small numbers of younger former KAR members from the 1950's and retired TPDF personnel. Following Kavalambi's dismissal, the Legion's leadership engaged the services of another former TPDF soldier, once again to serve as secretary, but he was soon dismissed. The final result of the club's recent travails may be an organization that is more faction-

⁵⁹⁰"Legion Leaders to Sort Thing Out in Court" *Guardian* June 14, 2000 and conversation with Shardack Kavalambi June 10, 2000.

⁵⁹¹Phone interview with Brian Nicholson from the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League June 22, 2000.

riven than ever, and consequently less able to effectively provide much needed assistance to its members.

Many former askaris are angry at the leadership of the Legion, but they also expressed disgust for the way both the British and Tanzanian governments have handled veterans' affairs in the last three decades. While they feel betrayed by the British, they also argue that the Tanzanian government should have been more proactive and supported veterans in their battle for pensions. Many veterans also feel that their sacrifices have been forgotten by most Tanzanians or eclipsed by those of members of the TPDF who fought in the 1979 war against Uganda.

Almost all former askaris feel that they should be compensated in the same fashion as British veterans who fought in the Second World War. Most adamantly refuse to believe that British soldiers had to serve for twenty-two years before receiving a pension. Even the few who accept this argument however, remember that during the war British soldiers received higher wages. Tanganyikan veterans also point out that British veterans received, and continue to receive, social services and forms of assistance unavailable to African ex-soldiers including medical care, help covering their funeral costs and aid from philanthropic organizations. Such recriminations are understandable especially since many askaris were conscripted against their will and had no interest in being professional soldiers. Even veterans who admit they volunteered and are proud of their military performance believe the British used and then discarded them, failing to live up to their obligations and responsibilities. Despite belated British attempts starting in 1945 to stress how much damage Britain suffered during the Second World War and the need to take care of many veterans, most askaris failed to see why this should affect what the British government should do for them. Most still hold this view. As one veteran angrily commented, "We

fought for the British Government so it was their duty to see that we were treated fairly, but they did nothing."⁵⁹²

The official British position is that all government and military installations, as well as any funds budgeted for veterans' affairs, were turned over to the Tanganyikan government at independence. Tanzanian veterans in distress who go to the British High Commission are encouraged to contact the Tanzanian Legion, the local representative of the BCEL. Officials at the British High Commission are quick to point out that the BCEL is a private organization, not affiliated with the British Government.⁵⁹³ While officials at the BCEL are genuinely sympathetic to the plight of Tanzania's colonial era veterans, they point out there are also thousands of other commonwealth and British veterans in similar circumstances, and the resources simply do not exist to provide adequate support to all. Currently African veterans in need of assistance can apply to the BCEL for temporary aid. The maximum amount paid out to African veterans under most circumstances is sixty British pounds. In 1999, the TLC was paying a few veterans out of these funds at the rate of 5,000 Tanzanian Shillings a month and calling the awards pensions. Such small amounts of money did little to mollify frustrated veterans, especially when their so-called pensions ceased after two or three months. Referring to the inadequate sum one veteran asked:

One thing which is really amazing is that these men are going to pay us 5,000 Shillings a month. What is that? It's not like getting anything for the old men like us some of whom do not even have houses. What are they going to do with such

⁵⁹²Interview #17.

⁵⁹³Brief interview with a member of staff at the British High Commission at Dar es Salaam, June 14, 2000.

sums of money when nowadays everything is money. I really can not understand this Queen.⁵⁹⁴

Despite the grim prevailing conditions, many Tanganyikan veterans stubbornly cling to the hope that the British government will remember their sacrifices and deliver long-awaited pensions. In June 2000, I interviewed a former Regimental Sergeant Major from 6 KAR. He sat on his bed and slowly described his sixteen years of service with in the KAR. When he finished, he began to talk about his medical problems, the cost of treatment, the substandard care he was receiving and how he was a burden to his family. Then echoing the hopes of many of the old soldiers that I spoke with, he said:

Go to the British High Commission. The British Embassy. They know me. I served in KAR for sixteen years. I fought in the war. I fought Mau Mau in Kenya. I was a good soldier. I have no teeth. My family has to mash my food so I can eat it. I am old and sick. Tell them that I am ready to go to England for treatment like Nyerere. Tell them that I am ready. They will remember me.⁵⁹⁵

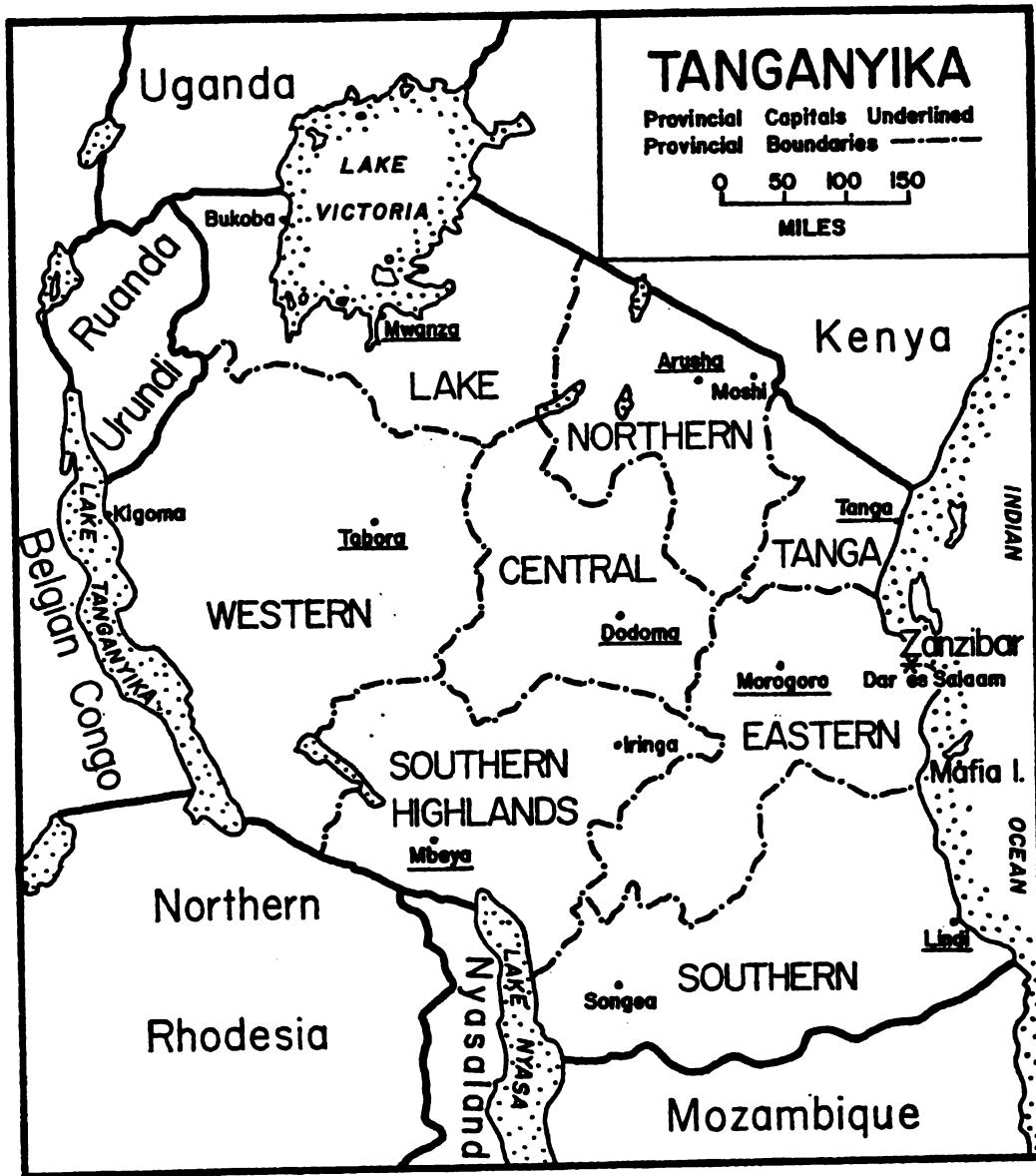
Sadly this is not the case, and as a group the colonial era veterans have been largely forgotten by all but their immediate family and friends. Their ranks are rapidly thinning and the “younger” members are now in their late 70’s. The leaders of the TLC claim that there are approximately 4,000 Second World War veterans throughout the country but this is probably little more than speculation. It is highly doubtful that much will be done to alleviate the distress of the most needy veterans. Even if the British Government changed its position on

⁵⁹⁴Interview #25. In summer of 1999 the Tanzanian Shilling was falling. In July-August the exchange rate was approximately 780 Tanzanian Shillings for one US dollar.

⁵⁹⁵Interview #33. On October 14, 1999 the former Prime Minister of Tanzania Julius Nyerere died while receiving treatment in a British hospital.

pensions, neither the BCEL nor the TLC has the resources to disburse aid effectively to Tanzania's scattered population of veterans. In the end it appears that the policies put in place by the colonial government more than six decades ago have succeeded. Tanganyika's veterans never managed to establish themselves as a special class. Now in their final years Tanzanian veterans find themselves fighting a losing battle for recognition and resources in a world that has all but forgotten the small part they played in the "War for Freedom."⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁶ Admittedly this is a grim assessment of current conditions. However, it appears highly unlikely that any substantial assistance will be given to Tanzania's dwindling numbers of colonial era askaris. According to the person I spoke with at the British High Commission in 2000, the British Government had no intention of altering its position on pensions for African soldiers. The official from the BCEL was just as candid about the limitations of his organization. Even if additional funds became available the BCEL has no way to ensure that the money would actually be disbursed to veterans. Such a task is clearly beyond the resources of the TLC even if the organizations internal difficulties could be overcome. Furthermore it is doubtful that grants of cash would alleviate many veterans problems. According to several of the men I spoke with their most urgent requirements were for decent living quarters, regular meals and access to health care. It will take considerably more than small grants of money to provide such services and ensure that they exist for the benefits of veterans.



Map from Robert Heussler, *British Tanganyika*

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions for Ex-Askaris

I. General Questions

Date of birth?
Place of birth?
Ethnic group?
Religion?
Current place of residence?

II. Life Before Military Service

Where did you live before you served in the military?
What did you do before you served in the military?
What was the status of your family in the community?
Did you receive any formal education prior to your military service?
Did your father or any other members of your family serve in the military?

III. Military Service

When were you recruited/conscripted?
How old were you when you were recruited/conscripted?
Where were you recruited/conscripted?
Why did you volunteer for military service?
Did any other members of your family serve in the military?
Where were you trained?
Did you learn a trade or receive further education while serving in the military?
What unit/units were you in?
What was army life like (rations, clothing, opportunities for recreation etc.)?
Where did you serve?
Describe relations between officers, NCO's and askaris?
What were relations like between askaris from different ethnic groups or regions?
Describe daily life in the military?
While in the military did you maintain contact with your family?
Did you go on leave and if so where and for how long?
How much were you paid?
Were you ever wounded or hospitalized?
Were you promoted and if so to what rank?
Were you ever decorated?
What was military discipline like?
What were your impressions of the war?
Why was the askari fighting?

IV. Demobilization and Return to Civilian life.

When were you demobilized?
How long did it take to get home?
Did you receive your gratuity?
Did you join the British Legion?
What did you do when you returned home?
Did you have any trouble readapting to civilian life?
What opportunities existed for askaris after the war?

**Do you think you were well treated by the British government after the war?
Were you politically active in the years leading up to independence?
What have you done since you left the military?
Have you maintained contact with other askaris you served with?
Are you currently a member of the Tanzania Legion and Club?
Did service in the army change your life?**

Appendix B: Askari Interviews

	Unit	Ethnic Group	Location/ District	Religion	Dates of Service	Rank	Enlistment
1	EAEME	Mpare	Kilimanjaro/ Same	Muslim	1942-1947	PTE.	V
2	EAEME	Msukuma	Mwanza/Magu	A.I.C.T.	1943-1963	SGT.	C
3	6 KAR	Mchaga	Kilimanjaro	Roman Catholic	1941-1946	PTE.	V
4	46 KAR		Mpanda	Muslim	1939-1951	WOPC.	V
5	41 GT CO.	Mluguru	Morogoro/Muuha	Muslim	1939-1946	PTE.	C
6	2 KAR	Mzaramo	Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1942-1946	PTE.	C
7	EAA	Mzira	Manyoni/Singida	Muslim	1942-1946	PTE.	C
8	6 KAR	Mzaramo	Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1939-1947	PTE.	V
9	EAAMC	Mpare	Same/ Kilimanjaro	Lutheran		PTE.	V
10	EACMP	Mpare	Same/ Kilimanjaro	Muslim	1942-1945	PTE.	V
11	EAAMC	Mziba	Bukoba/Kagera	Muslim	1943-1946	PTE.	V
12	EAAMC	Mluguru	Morogoro	Roman Catholic	1940-1947	PTE.	C
13	6 KAR	Msukuma	Shinyanga	Roman Catholic	1933-1947	LCPL	V
14	EAMLS	Mzaramo	Changanikeni/ Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1940-1946	PTE.	C
15	46 KAR	Mnyagatwa	Tanga	Muslim	1941-1946	WOPC.	V
16	AAPC/ 6 KAR		Mwanza		1939-1946/ 1949-1956	PTE.	V
17	EASC		Tanga	Muslim	1940-1945	PTE.	V/C
18	EAAEC	Mnyakyusa	Mbeya	Lutheran	1942-1945	PTE.	V/C
19	EAAEC	Zulu	Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1942-1946	PTE.	V
20	EAAMC	Mukerewe	Mwanza/ Ukerewe	Catholic	1943-1946	Medical Orderly.	V
21		Mnyamwezi	Mwanza	African Inland Church		CPL	V
22	Driver GT CO.	Mnyamwezi	Tabora	Morevian	1939-1945	PTE.	V
23	442 GT CO	Msambaa	Lushoto/Tanga	Christian	1941-1945	PTE.	C
24	AAPC	Mrufiji	Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1939-1946	SGT.	V
25	46 KAR		Musoma/Mara		1942-1947	PTE.	V
26	EASC	Mpare	Kilimanjaro/ Same	Christian	1943-1947	PTE.	V
27	EAE	Mpare	Kilimanjaro/ Same	Christian	1942-1947	PTE.	V
28	1/6 KAR	Mkabwa	Musoma/Mara	Roman Catholic	1943-1946	PTE.	V
29	AAPC	Nyamwezi	Tabora	Roman Catholic	1942-1945	PTE.	C
30	6 KAR	Mzaramo	Dar es Salaam		1941-1953	PTE.	C
31	6 KAR	Msambaa	Tanga	Anglican	1940-1945	SGT.	V
32	EAAMC	Msukuma	Mwanza/Kwimba	Catholic	1943-1946	Medical Orderly	V
33	6 KAR		Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1939-1956	RSM.	V
34	3/6 KAR	Mfipa	Namanyere	Muslim	1940-1945	WOPC.	V
35	6 KAR	Ngoni	Songea	Christian	1939-1947	PTE.	V
36	EEAEC	Nyakusa	Mbeya	Christian	1943-1946	PTE.	V/C
37	6 KAR	Mzramo	Dar es Salaam	Muslim	1940-1946	PTE.	V

Appendix C: Civilian Interviews

	OCCUPATION	ETHNIC GROUP	LOCATION/DISTRICT	RELIGION
38	Civilian/DC's Driver	Makonde	Liwale/Mtwara	Muslim
39	Civilian	Ngoni	Songea	Christian
40	Civilian	Mhehe	Iringa	Catholic
41	Civilian	Mrugulu	Bagamoyo	Muslim
42	Civilian/Police	Mmanyema	Tabora	Muslim
43	Civilian	Mzaramo	Dar es Salaam	Muslim
44	Civilian	Mzaramo	Dar es Salaam	Muslim
45	Civilian/Child		Dar es Salaam	Muslim

Appendix D: Abbreviations

AAPC	AFRICAN AUXILIARY PIONEER CORPS
ASBL	AFRICAN SECTION OF THE BRITISH LEGION
CAA	CENTRAL AFRICAN COMMAND
C in C	COMMANDER IN CHIEF
CO	COLONIAL OFFICE
CPL	CORPORAL
DC	DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
DO	DISTRICT OFFICER
EA	EAST AFRICA
EAA	EAST AFRICA ARTILLERY
EAaec	EAST AFRICA ARMY EDUCATION CORPS
EAASC	EAST AFRICA ARMY SERVICE CORPS
EAC	EAST AFRICA COMMAND
EACMP	EAST AFRICA CORPS OF MILITARY POLICE
EAE	EAST AFRICA ENGINEERS
EAEME	EAST AFRICA ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS
EALFO	EAST AFRICA LAND FORCES ORGANIZATION
EAMLS	EAST AFRICA MILITARY LABOR SERVICE
GEA	GERMAN EAST AFRICA
GOC	GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING
GRO	GENERAL ROUTINE ORDER
IBEAC	IMPERIAL BRITISH EAST AFRICA COMPANY
IWM	IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM
KAR	KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES
LCPL	LANCE CORPORAL
LPC	LAST PAY CERTIFICATE
MO	MEDICAL OFFICER
NCO	NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER
ODRP	OXFORD DEVELOPMENT RECORDS PROJECT
PC	PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER
PSOB	POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK
POW	PRISONER OF WAR
PRO	PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE
RHL	RHODES HOUSE LIBRARY, OXFORD
RWAFF	ROYAL WEST AFRICAN FRONTIER FORCE
S & T	SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT
SEAC	SOUTHEAST ASIA COMMAND
SGT	SERGEANT
TAA	TANGANYIKA AFRICAN ASSOCIATION
TANU	TANGANYIKA AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION
TLC	TANGANYIKA/TANZANIA LEGION AND CLUB
TNA	TANZANIA NATIONAL ARCHIVE
VD	VENEREAL DISEASE
WO	WAR OFFICE
WOPC	WARRANT OFFICER PLATOON COMMANDER

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Public Record Office, Kew

The following Colonial Office and War Office series were used. I have not listed all the file numbers since this information is available in the citations.

CO 820
CO 968
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WO 95
WO 106
WO 203
WO 222

Imperial War Museum, London

The Library of the Imperial War Museum in London holds a variety of documents relevant to this study including:

Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, war diaries, 1914-1918, four volumes of typescript translated into English.

Pitt, J. 81/1/1

Wilkinson, J. S. 88/56/1

Miscellaneous 584. Report by Brigadier R. F. Johnstone on the operations of 22 EA Infantry Brigade from March 15, 1945 to May 1945.

Miscellaneous 679. Report concerning the anxiety of the British population in Tanganyika about the future of the Territory dated November 1938.

In addition to the documents located in the main library the Imperial War Museum's Department of Sound Records contains a number of recorded interviews with former British officers who served in the KAR and RWAFF. The majority of these interviews are available in both transcript and tape form. The archive also has two tape recordings of KAR songs and marches from the Second World War.

Biggs, M. W. 4419/06
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Thorn, Philip Arthur 6912/04
Wiffen, Arthur Edward 3959/2
Yeldham, R. E. S. 3960/05
Military Marches of the KAR 17366/2
Songs of the KAR from the Second World War 17367/1

Rhodes House Library, Oxford University

Rhodes House Library contains a valuable collection of private papers relating to the British Empire. The accounts of many military officers and officials from the colonial era have been preserved in the Oxford Development Records Project and a number of these memoirs, as well as accompanying maps,

sketches and photographs, were used for this project. The following written deposits were used and are located at Mss. Afr.s. 1715.

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Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam

Some two hundred secretariat, provincial and district files were examined during the course of this study. I am grateful to the Government of Tanzania for allowing me to examine these materials. I have not attempted to list all the file numbers consulted since full citations complete with file numbers, where applicable, appear in the text. The District Annual Reports proved an important source of information and I consulted the majority of existing reports. Many of the reports from the 1920's and 1930's remain in file form but others from the 1940's have been combined, bound and are available in the reading room. Throughout the text these bound reports, as well as a handful of similar departmental reports, are cited by listing the title and year of the report followed by TNA. The majority of files used came from the following series:

X-Military
W-World War Two
V-Native Affairs
J-Medical and Sanitation
E-Legal and Legislation
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