

**PAUL von LETTOW-VORBECK:
The Events and Times that Molded the Man**

SYNOPSIS

Scope:

This is a seven frame display exhibit depicting the life of the German General, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. The exhibit highlights the life of this extraordinary individual from his birth in Saarlouis in 1870 to his death in 1964. In addition to being a soldier he was an activist against the Nazi regime, an author, and a politician serving in the Reichstag. He is best known as the brilliant commander and master of guerilla tactics in German East Africa during WW I.

Development:

Every attempt has been made, through extensive research, to accurately depict events and details of Vorbeck's life. The exhibit provides a series of thematic vignettes referencing the times, places and events that influenced his life. Materials used for the exhibit include period items representing postal history or other philatelic material, post cards, photographs, news, book and periodical clippings, and other ephemera appropriate to the story. The materials chosen thematically relate to an event, time or place which influenced his life and in some cases there is a direct relation of material to Vorbeck. The exhibit is divided into four chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: 1870-1900, The Training of a Soldier – 24 pages

Birth in Saarlouis; Military Training; Early Military Experience - The Boxer Rebellion in China.

Chapter 2: 1901-1914, The Molding of a Commander – 28 pages

The Hottentot and Herero Rebellions - German Southwest Africa; Befriending of Jan Smuts; Command Assignments in Germany; Command in German Kamerun; German East Africa Command.

Chapter 3: 1915-1917, Vorbeck's Role in WW I – The German East Africa Front – 31 pages

Relevance of GEA; First Victory - the Battle of Taveta; Battle of Kilimanjaro; Battle of Jassin; Attacks on the British Railway; Salvage of the Königsberg; Coastal Watch; Resourcefulness; Importance of GEA Railways; Battles with Jan Smuts; Receiving the Pour le Mérite; Airship L-59; Evading the British and Allies; Flight to Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia.

Chapter 4: 1918-1964, Armistice and Return to Germany – 29 pages

Armistice; Return to Germany; New Adventures - Lettow Freikorps; German Inflation and Financial Ruin; Politics and Activism; Anti-Nazi Activist; Memorials; The Final Years; Epilog.

Important items are designated with **gray matting** and **bold font** while certified items are designated by the symbol ©.

Balance:

As noted above the chapters are fairly well balanced. The key to any display exhibit is to judiciously use non-philatelic material allowing the majority of the story to be carried by philatelic items. The APS judging manual does not give specific guidance other than not to overwhelm the philatelic aspects of the exhibit. Accordingly, out of 112 pages there are only 18 which have no philatelic material, 20 which are purely philatelic and the remaining 74 pages have both philatelic and ephemeral items on the same page.

Condition:

A large amount of the material for this exhibit came from war zones often in tropical climates. Accordingly covers, cards and other items will show the normal stains, foxing and abuse expected of such usage. However, wherever possible the best material has been included.

Rarity and Difficulty of Acquisition.

Much of the material, both philatelic and non-philatelic is difficult to find owing to the limited time periods of use and the limited quantities available. However, I have purposely tried to find not only important examples of the period, place or event but also rare items which are designated by gray matting.

The highlights of the exhibit appear on 23 of the 112 pages. They are as follows:

- F1, p 5: 1885 letter signed by Vorbeck
- F1, p16: Boxer rebellion cover with field post 5 (Tientsin) of the earliest known cancel (Sept. 2, 1900)
- F2, p3: Boxer rebellion card with field post 10 cancel (Kaiping). Only in use May 2-August 25, 1900. Rare.
- F2, p6: Boxer Rebellion field post money order, prepared but not used, ex-Friedemann.
- F2, p8: German Expeditionary Force (China) Medal.
- F2, p10: Cabinet photo of Vorbeck prior to leaving from GSWA
- F2, p12: Official weather report with RDS seal from Windhoek, GSWA
- F3, p5: Field post cover from Waterberg GSWA.
- F3, p6: Canvas backed field map with regimental seal GSWA
- F3, p14: Cabinet photo of Vorbeck with general Officers
- F3, p16: 1913 Nola cancel (Kamerun) on postal card. Rare cancel.
- F4, p2: Official RDS cover from Taveta with Imperial cache. Rare non-philatelic use during German occupation of British territory.
- F4, p6: Short paid cover to US with Mombassa cancel opened by censor under martial law, 1915.
- F4, p9: Various GR Mafia overprints ©. Rare
- F5, p3: Official RDS cover from Tabora, 1916.
- F5, p6: 1916 Tabora provisional wrapper made from magazine page, with pre-franked marking. Rare.
- F5, p8: Complete Wuga Provisional issue © including pairs of both typeset fonts. Rare.
- F5, p13: Jan Smuts autograph (1931)
- F6, p2: 1916 POW formula card from Mozambique to Germany with various markings. Rare.
- F6, p8: Autographed photos of Vorbeck and Herman Schnee entering Berlin 1919.
- F6, p9: Photo of Vorbeck being lauded in Berlin.
- F6, p12: Photo of Lettow-Vorbeck's Freikorps member with arm patch. Very rare.
- F7, p11: Vorbeck signed post card addressed to his literary agent, 1937.

Judging references:

Handbook of German Colonial cancels, in German. Ehemalige deutsche Kolonien und Auslandpostämter. Stempelkatalog, October 2003. Published by Bundes Deutscher Philatelisten. See www.kolonialmarken.de

The definitive text on German Colonial Philately, in English: The Stamps and Cancels of the German Colonies and the German Post Offices Abroad, Third Edition. By Albert Friedemann. Published by Panzer Hut Hobbies.

Von Lettow-Vorbeck: My Reminiscences of East Africa, in English. Published by The Naval & Military Press Ltd. ISBN 1-843429-50-0

Byron Farwell: The Great War in Africa 1914-1918. Publ. 1986 by W.W. Norton & Co.

Major J.R. Sibley: Tanganyikan Guerilla; East Africa Campaign 1914-18. Ballantine's Illustrated History of the Violent Century. Campaign Book No.20, 1971.