



Chief Kasina in ceremonial uniform at the ceremony at which he was presented with the Union Jack.

## THE LIFE-STORY OF A KENYA CHIEF

*The Life of Chief Kasina Ndoor*

*as told to*

J. B. CARSON

*A former District Officer of  
Kitui District, Ukamba, Kenya*



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## FOREWORD

by the

CHIEF NATIVE COMMISSIONER

THIS account of Chief Kasina's memories of his life will be of great interest to his own people, and is a commentary from one who has played a great part, as a leader of his people, in their affairs through the years of the development of Kenya under British rule.

I first knew Kasina when I was a young District Officer in Kitui District, where his advice, energy and knowledge of his people were invaluable to me. As a young soldier he had served as an orderly to my uncle, Major-General Sir Edward Northey, with whom he exchanged many messages through me. To those of us who have had the good fortune to know him well, Kasina has become a symbol of the fortitude, courage, good humour and good manners which are characteristic of the Kamba people, with their growing tradition of service to the Crown, particularly in the Armed Forces.

In paying tribute to Kasina, I hope this record of his reminiscences will serve to remind the Kamba people of his example in the future.

E. H. WINDLEY

## INTRODUCTION

THIS is the story of a Kamba Chief who has achieved distinction both as a soldier and a civilian. His life has been exciting, varied, tragic and yet triumphant. From what he tells us we can trace the story of a fighting man who was not only able to get the better of his enemies, as a good soldier should, but who was also able, by sheer will-power, to overcome sudden personal tragedy.

One of the most remarkable things about this man is the affection he has inspired, not least among the European officers who have worked with him. This is demonstrated by the great sympathy which he received in 1953, after his tragic mutilation, from numbers of officers from all parts of East Africa and even from overseas.

Kasina is a chief whose father was himself a chief in the days before the Europeans came to Kenya. In his personal recollections of the early days Kasina, a leading Chief of the Wakamba of Kitui, has much of interest to tell. One of the outstanding features of his story concerns the success with which he overcame his physical disabilities; an achievement which has added greatly to his influence within his own location.

For the information of those who do not know the Wakamba and their country, this Bantu tribe is divided into two sections—those who live in Machakos district of the Southern Province of Kenya and those of Kitui District. The former is the smaller and more closely populated area, whereas Kitui District contains many miles of arid bush, some fertile valleys and plains, many rugged hills and, on a hillside, a very charming wooded boma which gives its name, Kitui, to the district.

The Wakamba of Kitui inhabit a vast area, living in scat-

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tered huts on plains at an altitude of 3,500 feet. Much of their country is broken up by sharp outcrops of rock and steep hillsides. In the early nineties Mr. C. W. Hobley described the north of Kitui district in these words:

"Ngomeni, in Swahili, means 'the place of the fortress', and it is aptly named, for the hill towers some 500 feet above the plain, like a gigantic mediæval castle. It is a block mountain, composed of hard metamorphic rock, and its precipitous sides betoken fault scarps of no great age. In shape, it resembles Kasigau Mountain, which is about 100 miles inland from Mombasa and practically due south of Ngomeni. The same effects can be seen in a vast stretch of country, from Tanaland to the Usambara Mountains, in Tanganyika Territory."

The same writer corroborates Kasina's personal story regarding the state of intertribal warfare which raged throughout the country at that time:

"While camped on the Tsavo River, the usual party of mail runners passed bearing the up-country mail. A few days later the remnants of this band returned to my camp, reporting that they had been attacked by a Masai raiding party at Mito Andei, several men being killed and others wounded. They had the bad luck to run into an impi which was probably on its way from Laitokitok to raid the southern Kamba or maybe the Giriama. These savages were out primarily to raid cattle, but no bloodshed came amiss, so they attacked the well-nigh defenceless porters, although they had nothing to gain thereby. This incident is a good example of the uncertainty of African travel in those times. . . . It is interesting to contemplate what would probably have happened in this country if European intervention had not

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occurred when it did. As far as one can judge, the inroads of the Masai would have increased until most of the agricultural tribes in this land were decimated. The Masai never, however, occupied the country they attacked, they swept a track of territory clear of livestock, and slaughtered every human being they could catch, but always retired to their picked grazing grounds in the highlands. If they had occupied the tribal lands they raided, there would have been no hope for the wretched cultivators."

There is much quite good agricultural land in the plains beyond the rugged Ikoo Valley, which was overlooked by Kasina's first home, a natural fortress from which the Kamba bowmen repelled the spear-carrying Masai impis.

Kasina himself farms nearly six hundred acres, practising modern agricultural methods. He uses a tractor and is a great believer in the use of manure and rotation of crops. One of his sons, who was taught farming methods at the Jeanes School, is his farm manager. Other sons are headmen and schoolmasters. Altogether he has twenty sons and ten daughters, two of whom are to take up teaching the women of the district, instructing them how to live better lives and make good homes.

In his long life Kasina has met many famous people, including illustrious soldiers and members of the Royal Family. He was presented to Princess Margaret on her recent visit to Kenya, and to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1953. He saw King George VI and the Queen Mother, as Duke and Duchess of York, and in 1928 he met Edward VIII, then Prince of Wales. At the 1954 Kitui Show he spoke with General Sir John Harding and Colonel the Rt. Hon. Oliver Lyttelton, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. He was visited in hospital by General Sir George Erskine, Commander-in-Chief, East Africa.

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Despite the adversity caused by the murderous attack on him, he shows no traces of self-pity, and since then, indeed, by his drive and application, he has won the Location Cup of the District for Migwani, thus turning defeat into victory. He has also shown that he is magnanimous, for though his assailant is in prison, Kasina is paying for the education of his two sons.

Kasina's life provides a revealing commentary on the history of the British occupation of Kenya, with which it is contemporary.

As a boy, he lived in an atmosphere of continual tribal warfare—Wakamba fighting against Wakamba, Wakikuyu and of course Masai. He relates how the Wakamba welcomed the first foreign troops (an Indian regiment) they ever met, since they brought to the country something quite new—peace instead of war. Kasina remembers the first District Commissioner in Kitui ('Maji Moto' Lane), how schools soon were begun, his friendship with Mr. (later Sir Charles) Dundas and other officers. He recalls, too, how he came to join the Army, which was to become the dominant force in his life, not as a means for destruction, but as a society in which he learned the lessons of discipline, training and tradition.

Peace was the first result of the coming of civilized government to East Africa. This was followed not only by elementary education but by alleviation of the horrors of life in those times; for example, famine and pestilence both of which had struck hard at the Wakamba in 1898. Indeed, freedom from fear, want, pestilence and ignorance followed as a result of the advent of the British Government.

The picture of Kasina which we have today is of an elderly chief, full of years and of honour. In addition to the numerous administrative duties imposed on him by his present position, he spends his time nowadays arranging for routine inoculations of his location's cattle against the once dreaded

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rinderpest, watching his own people build dams and his sons harvesting large food crops by modern mechanical means.

It is a series of strange contrasts which Kasina gives us: the early story of his mother and himself being taken prisoner by raiding tribesmen in a country without roads or government, a country where even knowledge of the wheel was not known. Against this is set the latest picture of himself, being driven in his own car by his son to meet Wakamba in the neighbouring district of Machakos, now part of an integrated province which actually includes the present districts of the Masai who, within Kasina's lifetime, sent raiding parties against the Wakamba.

Sixty years is a very short span of history, yet it is doubtful if a greater transformation has taken place in the general pattern of life of the people of any country than has happened in East Africa since the turn of the century.



## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS IN KITUI

TO write the story of my life in the Army and as a Chief is no easy matter. Luckily I have a fairly good memory for the many people I have met and the places I have visited. I can remember most of the events which took place since I was a youth, and even a little of my childhood which was spent in the days before the Europeans came to this country. Looking back, it was indeed a strange sort of world in those days, very different from the one in which I live now.

Today, for example, I went to show a friend of mine, who was once a District Officer here, the place where I was captured with my mother and the fortress above the river where we lived. I also saw, not far away, a group of my people building a dam. They had chosen the site and were building the dam voluntarily; the work would take two months. Yesterday I saw a completed dam built by the Government for my people, and which, I am told, holds many millions of gallons of water.

Today we live in peace and we are free from the dangers of starvation and drought. There are roads and dams throughout the district. Many people live in brick houses and own lorries and cars. It is certainly a very different world from the one I can remember. . . .

I can remember the first tax here, which was one rupee a head. Now I collect 33 shillings per person and have no difficulty at all in collecting it, for we have learnt how to market our cattle and our crops and how to live better.

I am not quite sure of the date of my birth. In Ukamba we date things from the years of famines, and I know that I was about ten years old at the time of the greatest of famines—the

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Nzaa wa Ngomanisye of 1898. At the time I was born my uncle, Nzambu, was our Chief in Migwani, which is the location of which I am Chief today. The place where I was born was called Ndunguni, so called because it was a fort against the Masai raids. It was built of trees called Ndungu, and it was the place where the leaders of the Wakamba (Athiani) lived.

It was during this famine I have mentioned that our village was attacked by Kikuyu from Fort Hall and some Wakamba of the Machakos under the leadership of Mwatu Ngoma. The Wakamba had some guns from Mombasa. There was a big fight, in which my mother and I were captured and taken away. A rescue party freed us, and Mwatu Ngoma was taken prisoner but his people fled. My rescuers were surprised to find Mwatu was a Mkamba, not a Kikuyu, and for that reason his life was spared. Mwatu sent a message to the Machakos people to send cattle both to pay blood money for the person who was killed during the battle, by name Mwathi Nduli, and to pay ransom for his own release. A sum for final settlement was reached, and Mwatu was released.

In those days life was a series of raids and counter raids, nothing more nor less. There was continual strife among the Wakamba themselves, and occasional raids by the Masai and the Kikuyu, both of which tribes used spears, while we used poisoned arrows and drove them back from our rocky forts. The Masai generally only raided for cattle, but the Kikuyu took away women as well.

Our food was mostly millet and milk, but I remember we ate maize also. There were red potatoes too, and a kind of banana. Famine was a terrible thing and seemed to be always near us. The Nzaa wa Ngomanisye was so called because it was everywhere, which is what ngomanisye means.

It was about this time I saw my first European. He was the first District Commissioner at Kitui, Mr. Lane, whom we called

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'Maji Moto'. He was not the only European in the district, for there were German missionaries at Mulango near Kitui and also at Ikutha and Mivukone. I remember I thought they looked very strange with their red skins, and we used to call them *nyama yangu*, since their colour was like that of a goat when you have taken off its skin.

Mr. Lane had Indian soldiers with him, as well as an Indian cook called Mahomed. His sergeant stayed on, took a plot of land and married a Meru wife; his children are still in Migwani today. These Indian soldiers were quite different from all other warriors we had known. They did not come to make war on us, but instead they brought us peace, which was something quite new in our lives.

In due course an occasion arose when the District Commissioner had to take disciplinary action against some chiefs, and the action he took was rather unusual.

What happened was this. After the great famine some Wakamba went into Kikuyu country to try to get back some women and cattle they had sent there. They made several raids, of which a few were successful, others were not. When the District Commissioner, Mr. Tate, known as Bwana Kongoni, heard of these raids he tried to stop them. He called a *baraza* (conference), but considerable difference of opinion remained and when an Indian soldier was sent to arrest a Chief, Mbathu wa Nzila, he was killed. As a punishment the Wakamba were ordered to make the road from Kitui to Migwani, and two companies of Masai were sent to deal with those who resisted. The Masai defeated the Wakamba, who capitulated and killed their own Chief, Mulatia.

I well remember Mr. Tate arriving for the negotiations, riding on a mule. He must be the last District Commissioner who employed Masai warriors against the Wakamba. Nowadays the Wakamba provide the men for the Police and the Army.



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I remember an order for young people to attend school being sent by the District Commissioner to chiefs. My father was very pleased, but not so my mother. I was sent to the Kitui boma, but very soon an untrue rumour went around that the children had been taken under false pretences and that they were really to be sent by the British as slaves for the Portuguese. My mother lost little time in getting me home again, and thus my school career ended after one month.

Poll tax was collected by the early District Commissioners, and was paid in the form of skins, or a goat or sheep, though later it was fixed at one rupee a head. By the time I grew up and started to pay taxes myself, the poll-tax rate was three rupees a head.

As a young man I was quite well known locally because I was the local leader of our *ngoma* (dance). It is curious to think that being the leader of the local dance led me eventually to a career in the Army and many other important events in my life.

## CHAPTER 2

### SERVICE IN THE K.A.R.

THE District Commissioner of Kitui in 1914 was Mr. Scholefield, who is chiefly remembered as a great hunter. He also started a tree nursery.

Mr. Scholefield was responsible for recruiting both askari and Carrier Corps in the First World War. It so happened that among the young Wakamba recruits at Thika some trouble broke out, and reports reached Kitui boma that the youths were dissatisfied. The District Commissioner was asked if he knew of anyone who would have influence with them, and because I was a prominent person, as local leader of the *ngoma*, Mr. Scholefield chose me to go to Thika to see what I could do. I made my way there and reasoned with the young askari recruits. At Thika I met a Major Montgomery, who spoke Kamba fluently, and we got on well.

I watched the drill and the life at the depot and became very interested. It did not take long for Major Montgomery to persuade me to join up, and in this way I became a soldier, a career which lasted for the next ten years of my life. Major Montgomery, incidentally, survived the war and settled in Ukamba in the Yatta plains, where he became a Mohammedan and married a Bajun girl. He lived there until his death, being always a good friend to me and to the Wakamba.

I found life in the Army puzzling at first, but I think I took to it quite well, and I was certainly very keen. We wore black puttees, khaki shorts and a black vest. We were fed on rice, flour and meat, and sugar, milk and dates. My first surprises were seeing milk coming out of a tin and using soap for the first time! We went on long marches and carried heavy

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loads. We had plenty of drill, and we learned how to handle rifles and Lewis guns.

There were five companies, each of which was made up of four platoons, and there were twenty-five porters attached to a platoon. We were not taken about in jeeps and Bren-gun carriers in those days! 'A' Company consisted of Wakamba and Havash; 'B' Company was exclusively Nubians from the Sudan; 'C' Company was composed of Nandi; 'D' Company of Swahilis; and 'E' Company of Luo.

The war against the Germans took me far from home, and was, for me, exciting and interesting, although at times quite dangerous. I made some good friends among fellow Askari and also among my officers. Indeed, I have always been on good terms with officers of the Administration and the Army, and have been very lucky, perhaps, in those I have met, for I owe much to them for what they have taught me.

One of the most interesting of my friends was Mr. Charles Dundas, whom I knew as a District Officer, a District Commissioner and a soldier; I even met him later as a Governor. I first met him in 1908 when I used to carry some of his loads when, as a D.O. in Kitui district, he was doing some survey work. Later, when he came back as the District Commissioner, he remembered me and gave me a job as a headman in charge of safari parties. In the King's African Rifles, when I was a Lance-Corporal and he was a Captain, we met at Voi and I was taken on as his orderly.

Mr. Dundas was a Political Liaison Officer and finally became a Major. I remember that he was a tall man who loved to walk great distances and climb all the hills around him; rather like another District Officer named Mr. Kelly, whom I worked under a few years ago. Mr. Dundas, though a disciplinarian, had a kindly nature; he knew no fear and was well liked. A number of children in Ukamba are called after him, for he was well respected among the people.

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I travelled far afield in that campaign, starting in Kisii, then to Bukoba on Lake Victoria. From there I returned to Nairobi, and then went to Magadi soda lake, Longido, and on to Voi where, as I have said, I met Mr. Dundas. From Voi we moved to Maktau, Serengeti, Mombo, Lushoto, where I met the Wakamba of Tanganyika, and on to Korogwe, Tanga, Bagamoyo, Dar-es-Salaam, Morogoro, Dodoma and Tabora. We also travelled to Singida, Ujiji, back to Dar-es-Salaam and crossed the Ruvuma River into Mozambique. These journeys were all on foot and took roughly three years. At the end of the war, in 1917, when I was in Tabora, I was promoted to Sergeant.

At that time I was in the 3rd King's African Rifles, but I was soon transferred to the 6th K.A.R., who were sent up to Jubaland. This battalion was almost exclusively composed of captured German askari. We went up to Kismayu by sea from Dar-es-Salaam, an alarming experience for most of the askari. Many were sick, including myself, although it was not the first time I had been in a ship, for in 1915 I had travelled from Kisumu to Bukoba.

We were all very glad to see Kismayu, but we were soon disappointed at the flatness and the dryness of the country, which we grew to dislike very much. It was very hot, and while our baggage was carried mostly by camels and mules, water was scarce and we had long distances to march. Water indeed was always a problem. We always carried two water-bottles, and if we had not the necessary water to mix with our *posho*, we got no *uji*.

Jubaland was a hard two and a half years campaigning. I became a Sergeant-Major in Juba in 1920, and we moved off to the Northern Frontier after the campaign was over. I served in Moyale, Lodwar and Wajir, where I became Regimental Sergeant-Major.

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In 1924 when I received a wire at Wajir saying my father had died suddenly, I resigned from the Army and returned to my home in Migwani. The District Commissioner wanted to make me Chief, like my father, but the people said I was too young and unmarried. So I became a headman in 1925, and it was not until May 12th, 1927, I became Chief, having by then married my wife Mary, who is with me still.

Those Army days were certainly hard, but they were full of adventure and interest, and best of all was their comradeship. I suppose I had a good deal of luck. The worst fight we were in was at Taveta, where we lost 22 officers and 200 askari. General Smuts came up specially to see us at Taveta, while we were burying our dead. I well remember seeing him, a grizzled, bearded man, the *Bwana Mkubwa* of the whole campaign.

In 1917, at the end of the East African campaign of the First World War, I left my friend Mr. Dundas as a Major. I saw him again, however, this time in the Second World War. On my return from my Middle East safari I arrived by air from Khartoum in Uganda on March 7th, 1943, and the Governor was Sir Charles Dundas, and we spent a long time together recalling events of a war so very different from the one we were now fighting. It seemed a long time since we were soldiers together in the Tanganyika bush.

## CHAPTER 3

### WORK AS A CHIEF IN PEACE AND IN WAR

It was Bwana Kiberenge (Mr. Crewe-Read) who appointed me a headman in 1925, and two years later, the D.C., Mr. Davenport, made me a Chief. This was after I married; my appointment was also duly approved by the Elders of the location. In 1930 I was given my Chief's staff by the D.C., Commander Mackay, and this I value very much and still have with me today.

In particular I remember also Mr. Fazan, one of the first District Officers to interest himself in building dams, which were greatly needed in the district. In 1927 we made a dam together in my location, which is still being used today and has been most valuable.

In those days the work of the administration consisted mainly of collecting taxes and keeping the peace. There was very little money and there was a shortage of officers. If they were not actually years of famine, the thirties were certainly not years of plenty, and by 1936 the Wakamba had had a succession of bad years, bringing hunger with them. Water shortage was a severe problem, and the Government could do little to alleviate the hardship which this brought because, in those days, there were no funds available such as those now at the disposal of the present Development and Reconstruction Authority and the African Land Development Organization. For example, though we had one Agricultural Officer in Kitui in 1938, any progress in agriculture was very limited, since his staff was small and his instructors were paid by the Local Native Council, whose funds were also very limited. We only had two District Officers, and although they were on safari a great deal, much

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of their work consisted in giving exemptions from tax in the many cases of poverty in the district.

A great deal of erosion was brought about by the lack of control over the grazing lands, which in consequence had to try to support too many cattle. In those days the Yatta plains were not utilized as grazing grounds with watering-points as they are today; they were enormous stretches of dry bush, inhabited largely by lions. Even in those days the roads were few, and a good deal of safari was done on foot and District Officers tramped many miles.

In 1938 the D.C. was Mr. Pedraza who devoted himself to the construction of the Zombe road, and in that year presented me with the King's Medal for Chiefs. The actual medal was stolen from me in Nairobi, together with everything else I possessed, at the beginning of the Second World War. Not only did I lose this medal, but my war ribbons and £50 in cash were taken from me. As a result, the King's Medal which I have today is a solid silver George V one with a silver chain.

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, I began to train all the ex-soldiers of my location so that they could be ready to join the Army at any time. I called upon three ex-Sergeant-Majors to help me, and together we trained many askari in Migwani location so that, when the recruiting officers of the K.A.R. came, they found many recruits ready for enlistment. Altogether we recruited half a battalion, and of course the three ex-Sergeant-Majors joined up at once.

In 1942 I made a journey to see Wakamba in the various depots at Gilgil, Mombasa, Nanyuki and Jinja. Since I myself had served in the Army, I knew something of the men's needs, and I thought that they should be supplied with food, meat and tobacco, and that their people at home should be encouraged to write letters to them. It seemed to me it was necessary that the people at home should increase food production in the

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*shambas* (plantations) in order to supply the men in the field. With these ideas in mind, I formed a committee in Migwani, and appointed eleven Elders chosen for their knowledge and experience. I kept the D.C. informed and asked him to register this committee, and he approved it on September 19th, 1939.

The D.C. was Major B. W. Bond who, during the Munich scare in 1938, had told me that it would be up to me to hold the hills around Mwingi with my bowmen and to repel the Italians advancing from the north. What a chance we would have had! Luckily the Italians did not invade in that year, and during the war proper, in 1940, the K.A.R. fought very successfully on the Northern Frontier, giving the Italians the impression we had very many more men than we actually had.

With the help of my committee, the Migwani Location, without any objection, offered cattle for meat for the askari, although in other locations there was a considerable amount of grumbling in the early stages. In Migwani increased agricultural production was encouraged and the location cultivated locational *shambas*. Much food was obtained from these, which was given to people who were short of it; in particular, it was distributed among the families whose menfolk were in the Forces. So well did we manage with agricultural production that in 1941, when there was famine in the south of the district, the Migwani Committee Council was able to help the famine-stricken areas with food from the locational *shambas*. The D.C. allowed the African District Council lorries to carry the food, and in December we sent seventy bags as a gift. Two years later, when there was famine in the north, the same thing happened; again we asked the D.C. to let us have a lorry, and in May of that year we sent 250 bags of food—cassava, maize and beans—to the northern locations. The money from the sale of this food was deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank.



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In 1944 we were invaded by locusts, and in 1945, when the askari were returning home from the Army, there was again considerable famine in the district, which became more serious by 1946. We then utilized the money we had got from former sales, which by this time had of course accumulated considerable interest, to buy food for Migwani Location.

## CHAPTER 4

### MIDDLE EAST SAFARI

I WAS very anxious to do my best in every way for the war, and was fortunate enough, in 1943, to be appointed, together with a Chief from Nyanza, as an official visitor to visit the East African troops in the Middle East.

This visit was certainly one of the strangest journeys I have ever made, and it was a very different sort of journey from the one I had made in the first war from Dar-es-Salaam to Kisumu, for it must be remembered that it took place in the middle of a war which was on a very much larger scale than anything I had ever experienced in the First World War.

Together with Chief Amoth, we travelled on a warship to Suez, where we arrived early in February at the entrance to the Suez Canal. On the day after arrival we attended church at Suez and visited the general hospital. We went to Ismailia and Kantara, and had talks with soldiers until midnight; and on February 11th we visited the Pioneer Corps Base Depot and met the Officer-in-Charge, Lieut.-Colonel Richmond. On February 12th, 1943, we arrived in Cairo and lunched at Mena. The next day we saw a large number of persons, including Brigadier Mills, Director of Pioneers and Labour; Brigadier McCandish, Director of Organization; Major-General Moorhead, Deputy Adjutant-General, and Lieut.-General Lindsell. We then moved on to Alexandria, and after attending a cinema show we spent the night at the Hotel Cecil. Our really big safari then began.

This safari took us from Alexandria to El Alamein, Derna, Mersa Matruh, Buq-Buq, and thence to Tobruk, where we were met by Lieut.-Colonel Latham of 69 Group. Here we stayed several days, and saw the work at the end of the railway



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line. The Area Commander gave me a Nazi steel helmet, which I have today. We also visited Sidi Barani and Sollum, and then returned via El Alamein to Alexandria, where we spent the night in the Hotel Cecil and, I remember, went to see a cinema show called 'How Green was My Valley'.

We then went up to the leave camp at Ismailia and, passing through the Sinai Desert, took a meal with 1826 Company near Gaza in Palestine. Then we spent the night at Haifa, and we went on to see a factory where clothes were being made.

It was at Haifa I played darts for the first time in my life. We did some sightseeing, and went to Nazareth, Jacob's Well, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Gethsemane. We slept at Talbot House, run by Toc H, and had tea in the office of the High Commissioner of Jerusalem. We also visited 1833 and 1815 Companies again, and the field-punishment centre. Continuing our sightseeing, we visited Via Dolorosa, and ended up in Cairo at Shepherd's Hotel.

It was March 6th when we finally left the Middle East, and made our way, this time by air, to Khartoum. From there we flew to Port Bell and went to visit the Kabaka of Buganda. We saw the cemetery of Mutesa, and on the 11th the Kabaka gave us a car in which we travelled to Kisumu, ending our journey by going by train to Nairobi, where, on our arrival on March 13th, we gave a broadcast from the offices of the Kenya Information Service.

I enjoyed the journey by air from Khartoum in a huge airliner, but I must confess I was not so happy when, during our travels, I had had to fly from Mersa Matruh by air to Malta. Flying above the sea was rather terrifying, and I was very glad to see the land.

Altogether it was a very remarkable safari, and we found the askari in good heart; and I think our journey did some good, establishing as it did contact for the askari with their homes.

## MIDDLE EAST SAFARI

To me it seemed a very wonderful thing to be transported around as we were, in the middle of a big campaign; for nothing like this could have happened in what I might term 'my war'; that is to say, the war of 1914-18. In that war, and up to the time I left the Army, I travelled always on foot; there was no mechanized transport at all, and Africa, of course, was no smaller then than it is today. This advance in methods of transport seems to me to provide the most outstanding difference between the First and the Second World Wars.

Other differences were the tremendous changes, not only in equipment but also in clothing, feeding and wages. In 1914 as a Lance-Corporal I received 20 rupees a month but in 1943 a private was getting something like 120 shillings pay a month. In addition, he was fed elaborately, and was provided with clothes, bed, blankets, shoe polish, cigarettes and other things; not to mention electric light and mechanical transport. When I saw for the first time what an Army private has today I asked, "What are you, a soldier?"

In the 1914 campaign in East Africa each man had to carry two bottles of water. We had to walk everywhere and our loads were 60 lb. each. Each askari had to carry 150 rounds, a panga, a bayonet, a rifle, iron rations and some medicine. Disobedience of certain orders resulted in twenty-five strokes of the *kiboko*, and of course there were always plenty of fatigues. But among the askari that I saw in the Middle East, there appeared to be no flogging, no fatigues and very little route marching. Electricity in camps was customary, whereas lighting of any sort was always a major difficulty in the 1914 campaign. There were, of course, many new weapons, including tanks, Bren guns, mortars and, above all, aircraft.

I was glad to get back and to report on my journeys to the people of Kenya, not only through broadcasting but in my own district in a series of barazas.

## CHAPTER 5

### AFTER THE WAR

AFTER the war we, in Kitui district, were faced with the same problem as the rest of Kenya—resettlement of returning soldiers. This involved a great deal of work for me as a Chief, and was no easy task, for there was a great deal of difference in the returning soldier after the East African campaign of 1914 and the returning soldier of 1945.

At the end of the First World War the Wakamba askari had not been out of East Africa. They had had a wretched and a gruelling war, and they were only too happy to get back home, when they settled down at once in their old ways and were only too happy to be with their families again. But the ex-askari in 1945 was a very different proposition. To begin with he had travelled a very long way and seen many strange countries and many strange people. He had acquired many curious ideas and some bad habits, particularly in India and Burma. He had had contact with Egyptians, Basutos, Cape Coloureds, Indians and Burmese, and the collective impression was often a very queer one. For example, the Indian soldiers seemed to talk about little else than self-government, which tended to upset the African askari's ideas not only on government but also on religion.

The result of all this was a general tendency not to obey orders, nor, indeed, to accept any authority at all. A number of societies, and in particular the Migwani Youth Movement, were formed by ex-soldiers, which created a great deal of trouble for me within the location. The new Kenya African Union, a so-called Study Union, also received considerable support in Migwani and acquired a large number of members

### AFTER THE WAR

in my location. Nearly all the local teachers became members of K.A.U., but not many ex-askari.

I thought it best to concentrate on supporting the Government policy of getting askari to build better homes and improve their agricultural methods. Fortunately, after the war there was a considerable amount of money for development, and together with the D.C. we set about a campaign for dam building. You will remember that one of the first dams in the district was, in fact, built in my location by myself and Mr. Fazan in 1927.

Our D.C., Mr. Kelly, contributed really valuable help to the district in this work of dam building; he not only showed us how to do the work but explained why we should do it, and started a system of building so many dams per year throughout the district. He was so successful that teams have been trained which are now able to carry out the construction of dams on their own, and, in fact, they are now doing this in my location.

A large number of ex-askari were anxious to engage in trade, and we have organized trading centres with shops all neatly built, often of burnt brick; we also have regulated markets. Trade has expanded enormously with the marketing of cattle; there are good profits from the sale of hides and skins, which we have learnt to treat correctly by shade-drying in *bandas* (sheds). The old crop of cotton, which in 1938 we used to rely on so much, has been given up altogether, and we go in for maize, beans, millet and castor-oil seed, as well as potatoes, peas and bananas.

In 1949 I was asked to do a safari to Somaliland to visit Wakamba askari, who were expressing dissatisfaction with their conditions. I travelled by road, and carried out inspections in divisions at Mogadishu, Muduga and Upper Juba. There was as many as 135 askari in one large detachment. Altogether I saw about 300. The points they raised and requested me to

submit to the Somalia authorities at Mogadishu were, firstly, the question of leave, which, they said was often delayed on grounds of public interest for up to two years, and then, when they actually went on leave, they were only granted fourteen days. They requested me to approach the authorities that they should have a regular fourteen days every year.

The second point they made was about money. Their salaries were being paid to them in full, and were frittered away in Somalia and sometimes, of course, were stolen. What they wished was a return to the old system whereby they were paid up to 15 shillings a month, the balance being kept by the paymaster, who would give them a letter when they went on leave authorizing them to collect all moneys due to them at their D.C.'s office. Another request was for an issue of two blankets instead of one, and they also asked that they should be issued with boot and metal polish free, since at present they were being obliged to buy these themselves. Further, they asked me to order for them from the D.C., Kitui, a monthly paper called the *Kitui News*.

I spent about a fortnight on this tour, and was pleased to have the opportunity of seeing the askari. Before returning in the middle of September, I submitted a report to the Commissioner of the Somalia Police at Mogadishu.

## JOURNEY TO ENGLAND

IN 1952 I was awarded the British Empire Medal. It came to me in a red leather case, stamped 'E.R. II 1953', and was forwarded from 10, Downing Street, with the Prime Minister's seal in a letter of December 16th, 1952.

In that year I was invited to Government House in Nairobi to meet Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. I had seen members of the Royal Family before, as I had been in a guard of honour in 1924 when the Duke and Duchess of York visited Kenya, and I also saw Edward VIII, as he was to become, when he visited here in 1928.

I was therefore particularly pleased when I was asked to go to see the Coronation of Princess Elizabeth as Queen. We left Nairobi by air on May 27th, 1953, and travelled via Entebbe, Khartoum, Malta and Nice, and arrived on the 29th in England, where I was met at the airport by my former D.C., Mr. Kelly, and his wife. We then went by car to a country vicarage some ninety miles away, where I was welcomed by the Rev. P. A. Unwin and his wife. Mr. Unwin, who was once a C.M.S. missionary in Uganda and had been a Chaplain in the K.A.R. during the war, told me how glad he was to have the opportunity of returning some of the hospitality of which he had received so much when he was in Africa.

Next day I awoke to the sound of many birds singing in the garden, and at two o'clock we went by car through many wheat-fields and pastures where cattle and sheep were grazing. We passed Stonehenge, and saw the huge stones put there by people very many years ago, long before the birth of Christ. We also



## THE LIFE-STORY OF A KENYA CHIEF

saw some huge graves, like those of the Wagalla. It all reminded me of what I had seen in Egypt.

We had tea at Devizes, and I noticed that all the villages of England seemed full of very attractive houses, about 200 years old or more. The builders of former days built their houses in two storeys, in very neat brick-work. Some of the houses are even from 400 to 800 years old, and the old churches in particular are very beautiful.

On May 31st we set out for London, together with Mrs. Unwin and her two daughters. We arrived at Hyde Park Corner, where two gates open on to a huge park and here we met Mr. Unwin and had a picnic under the trees. We then walked past Buckingham Palace, and on to Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and Trafalgar Square, with its fountains and the huge column with the statue of Lord Nelson at the top of it. We crossed Waterloo Bridge and went to Waterloo Station, where I went with Mr. Kelly on the Underground Railway to see what it was like. I was amazed at the moving staircases and everything we saw under the ground, and I heard how valuable these underground tunnels were during the war, when they gave shelter to people during air raids. We had tea at the station, and I met Dr. Bennett of the Medical Missionary Association, who looks after English students destined to go abroad for medical missionary work with the Church Missionary Society.

On June 1st we went to East Africa House, where there is a club for people of every race from East Africa. East Africa House itself consists of two old houses joined together, and is very attractive. We then went to Kensington Gardens to meet our askari who were due to take part in the Coronation Parade, and afterwards we went to drink coffee and to look at the hundreds of motor-cars as they passed along Bayswater Road, which, in my imagination, seemed like cattle going to water!

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In the afternoon I was taken by Mr. and Mrs. Kelly to a very well-known shop in Regent Street, where I bought a valuable silver cup as a prize for sports in Kitui district. Afterwards I returned to East Africa House to eat with friends from Kenya, who included Chief David of Machakos, Chief Ignatio of Fort Hall and a schoolmaster, Gerald Owino of Kisumu. At the askari's camp, where I slept that night, I met Major Goldsworthy who was in the 6th K.A.R. and First Pioneer Corps in both wars, together with seven N.C.O.s from Kitui and nine from Machakos.

On the morning of June 2nd I set out at eleven o'clock, and walked with Mr. and Mrs. Kelly to Hyde Park, where there was a tremendous collection of people, many of whom had slept out in the open and had been soaked by the rain. Police were controlling the huge crowds. It was cold and it rained hard; we ate where we sat and we got coffee and tea from near by. Everywhere there were hundreds of people, who seemed to take no notice at all of the rain.

My neighbour in the stand was a European of the Police Reserve in Tanganyika whom I had met in Tobruk in 1943, and he explained everything to me in Swahili. Our chairs looked on to a section of Hyde Park, and the parade was to pass on the road below us.

We heard the whole commentary on the wireless, and by the same means we followed the progress of the service in Westminster Abbey, standing while 'God Save the Queen' was played. At the moment when the Queen was crowned guns near by and also at the Tower of London fired a salute. Our askari of the K.A.R. marched splendidly, together with soldiers from West Africa behind a band of Gurkhas, playing Scotch bagpipes. After these came regiments from every part of the Empire, each one with its own band. Canadian Mounted Police were there, mounted on horseback and wearing red

jackets. Then came the companies of women, marching smartly, and followed by the Grenadier Guards, whose smartness was a sight I shall not forget. After all these came carriages carrying the Prime Ministers of different countries, including Sir Winston Churchill, Nehru and Malan. The Queen of Tonga was in one of the carriages; she attracted a great deal of attention from everybody.

There were Army Field-Marschals, Admirals and Air Marshals, all on horses, and I picked out Field-Marshal Montgomery with all his decorations. At the end of this procession came the Horse Guards, and in the Golden Coach, which is about 200 years old, was the Queen with the Duke of Edinburgh.

By a stroke of bad luck, at that very moment, as they passed by us, the rain came down. The parade went on to Buckingham Palace and we tried to return to our hotel, but we were delayed by the immense crowd of people and only succeeded in getting home after a very long time.

Mr. and Mrs. Kelly and her mother, Mrs. Rutherford, Dr. Johnson and myself, dined at the Norfolk Hotel, near Paddington Station, and celebrated the day with wine. After dinner we went by car to Lambeth Bridge and saw the fireworks, which were like thousands of coloured stars, and then slowly crawled along to Chelsea Bridge, getting home at midnight. Next day we spent sightseeing in London, with all its streets gaily decorated, and we came to the great Cathedral of St. Paul's, and went inside and climbed up into the gallery and looked at London. We saw a good deal of the bomb damage and afterwards went to the Tower of London, and on the way we saw the Queen, going to another part of the city, being greeted by huge crowds of people.

The Tower of London is about 900 years old and is very strongly built. Inside we saw ancient weapons of every sort, such as spears, muskets and crossbows, together with armour of

chain-mail. After tea we stood outside Buckingham Palace in the evening and joined the thousands and thousands of people who were crowding the floodlit palace to greet the Queen, who came smiling out on to the balcony. I thought the road leading to the Palace, called the Mall, was the finest of all I saw.

On June 4th I bought some clothes and we returned home, about ninety miles away. Next day we went to Exeter, and saw how houses have been successfully reconstructed after the bomb damage of the war. We ate at a very smart hotel indeed called the Royal Clarence, and saw the beautiful Exeter Cathedral which is about 800 years old. At the farm of Mrs. Rutherford's sister we saw Guernsey cattle each of which gives four and a half gallons of milk, or twenty-seven bottles, a day. There was also a young bull which had been bought for £150. All the cattle sleep on straw, and we saw them milked by machinery. There was one young girl there learning farm work—one of those girls who are called land-girls.

We also saw lots of pigs. A good sow 'in pig', I was told, costs £50 and produces a litter from ten to twenty-two, which can be sold after seven or eight months at prices of £20 to £25 each. The area of the whole farm was sixty acres.

We went to fetch Mr. Kelly's children next day, a glorious day of sunshine with the country looking wonderful. We passed through such towns as Andover, Newbury, Reading, Marlow and Princes Risborough. In the evening I went for a walk with Mr. Kelly over the Downs, where we saw lots of rabbits and hares. Everywhere there were stacks of hay, which is food for the cattle during the winter. Many of the fields were now planted with wheat and also with food for sheep. The sheep had wonderful wool and were paddocked in small half-acre blocks which were moved from time to time so that the sheep got plenty of food and at the same time thoroughly manured each paddock as they moved around.



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One day we went to Oxford, a city with a University. There are about twenty universities in England, I understand, of which Exeter is one. Oxford and Cambridge each being about 800 years old are the oldest and most famous ones. At both of these each college has its own church and dining hall and rooms for students and dons and beautiful gardens. In Oxford there are twenty-two men's colleges and six for women. We visited Somerville, St. John's, Jesus, Lincoln, Oriel, Magdalen, Christ Church and others. Christ Church is very big indeed, and since both Mr. Kelly and Mr. Pinney were students there, we spent some time in it. I thought Oxford with its trees and gardens and lawns a very lovely place indeed. Near Oxford we visited Harwell, which is where work is done on such things as the Atom Bomb.

I had seen many wonderful and interesting things, but with many regrets my safari in England was at an end.

## CHAPTER 7

### DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

THE Emergency in Kenya was declared in October 1952, and in November two Kamba askari were sent from Kiambu by the Mau Mau to kill me.

Before this, however, I had received two letters threatening my life; inside one of these letters there was a 10-shilling note and the words 'Use this money for the last time'.

The two askaris who had been told to kill me came to my house one evening; I was not at home, and they asked where I was. The people at home, being naturally suspicious, did not tell the askari where I had gone, but one of my relatives ran to me at Migwani and told me about them. It was dark, about eight o'clock at night, but without losing any time I went to Kitui and informed the District Commissioner, Mr. Birkett, and the District Officer, Mr. Browning. We all returned together with some armed askari, and when we reached my home, we found that my visitors had gone to Mwingi, so we followed them there and found them sleeping in an hotel. When we seized them, we found they were in possession of two guns and nine rounds of ammunition.

After this occurrence the D.C. gave me three askari as a bodyguard, who looked after me until I went to England in May. When I came back, however, they did not rejoin me in my safaris around the district whilst I was telling the people all about my tour in the United Kingdom. I can only suppose now that when my enemies saw that I had no bodyguard they again made a plot to kill me.

I was attacked on the morning of September 22nd, 1953, by a group of men who cut off both my hands with pangas. I

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was rushed into hospital at Kitui, and I undoubtedly owe my life to the action of Dr. Carswell and his wife. It was most distressing and very frightening, but I made a complete recovery and was able to return home on November 14th, less than two months after the attack. What comforted me most was the great number of visitors who came to see me and the large number of letters which I received. District Commissioners, like Commander Mackay, now in Turkana, who had been with me as far back as 1930, wrote me letters of sympathy. A District Officer now in the West Indies, Mr. Thorp, who had been in Kitui District in 1935, sent me money. Another of the many letters of sympathy I got was from Captain J. H. Clive who, since he himself has only one arm, was able to sympathise, as you can appreciate. I had many visitors to the hospital, including General Erskine, Commander-in-Chief, East Africa, who asked me what I would like as a mark of appreciation from him. I said I would like to have a Union Jack to fly over my house, and he said: "Very well, I will see that you get it as soon as you have recovered."

Whilst I was in bed, I sent messages to my comrades in Migwani, and they turned out a parade of 200 ex-askari, many of them N.C.O.s, in the General's honour when he visited Migwani location.

The Wakamba of Kitui had been really generous in subscribing 14,000 shillings to enable me to go to England for the Coronation. Luckily I had not used it all, and it was suggested by the Chiefs and the D.C. that artificial hands be bought for me from the United States with the unspent balance. This was done, and now I have these hands which were sent to me from America.

Meanwhile the fight against Mau Mau continued and spread into Kitui District, so as soon as I left hospital I continued my work against it both inside and outside the district.



The flag held by the District Commissioner, Kitui.

## THE LIFE-STORY OF A KENYA CHIEF

Although it seemed that the forces of Mau Mau, or at any rate enemies of mine who were using the Mau Mau rebellion as a pretext, seemed to have scored over me, I was determined they should not get away with it. Very soon after I left hospital I went to Ngong, which had recently been made the headquarters of the new Southern Province uniting the districts of the Masai and the Wakamba. At the big baraza held there I met General Hinde, who had come from England to help to conduct the fight against Mau Mau. In the same year we formed the Akamba Association of Kitui, Machakos, Nairobi and Mombasa, and I was chosen as President of this Association. During the next two years many meetings were held wherever Wakamba lived in order to form a unity of Wakamba against Mau Mau subversion.

General Erskine, true to his promise, did not forget about my Union Jack. It was a big occasion for me when he sent Captain Grey, together with twenty-five K.A.R. askari, to make a presentation to me at Kitui. More than 4,000 people attended the impressive ceremony, which was held in the Boma. There was a Police band, a parade of Tribal Police and a unit of the Home Guard. I was formally presented with a Union Jack, which today flies outside my house.

In 1954 there was a huge show held at Kitui, where I met the Secretary of State, Colonel the Rt. Hon. Oliver Lyttelton, together with General Sir John Harding. I made a speech on behalf of the Wakamba and a Masai Chief also spoke.

In July of the same year I visited the Kikuyu Reserves to see the Wakamba Security Forces, and in the following year I was asked, as President of the Akamba Association, to join a party visiting Moshu, in an effort to deter the Wakamba of Tanganyika from joining Mau Mau. There were six of us, four Chiefs from Machakos District and Chief Matuku and myself from Kitui District. When we arrived at the District Office,

## DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

Moshi, we met the Senior Chief, Mangi Mkuu of the Chagga Council. We spent several days in visiting numerous places in the neighbourhood, and went on to Tanga and Arusha, meeting and talking with Wakamba everywhere we went. I think that a good deal of mutual understanding was created among Wakamba by this visit into Tanganyika, and certainly there was no bad outbreak of Mau Mau in the Northern Province of that territory. I think, therefore, that I can claim the visit was successful, and we certainly did our best to make it so.

Migwani Location has not ceased to progress since my accession in 1953. We have annual competitions, and in 1954 Migwani Location, in the Kasina Cup Competition, won the first prize of 3,000 shillings in competition with all locations in Kitui District. In 1955, and again in 1956, it won the second prize of 2,000 shillings.

In Migwani there is now a small boma in the sub-location of Mwingi where a European District Officer and Agricultural



Chief Kasina superintends the building of Migwani School.

#### THE LIFE-STORY OF A KENYA CHIEF

Officer live. This reminds me that the corrugated-iron sheets which were used to build the District Officer's house have quite a story attached to them, which goes back to 1913. In that year, when of course there were no lorries or any other form of transport, I was asked by the D.C. to go to Thika to collect these actual sheets of corrugated-iron. We took this corrugated-iron to Mivukoni to build a house for the D.C. at Musosya. In 1927 these same sheets were taken from Mivukoni to build a school. Now they have again been used for the District Officer's house at Mwingi in Migwani Location.

It is now over three and a half years since I lost my hands, but I think I can say there has been progress in Migwani and that we continue to go forward. I bear no particular malice towards the misguided people who injured me. The man who mutilated me is in jail. He has two sons at an intermediate school in Kitui, and for the last two years I have paid their school fees. I also provide for his wife if she is in need.

Last year I was happy to be among those who were presented to Princess Margaret, and I gave her a painted *kibuyu* (gourd) on behalf of the Wakamba, at a big baraza at Machakos. This year I was lucky enough to be one of the Kenya civilians who were honoured by a Mention in Dispatches for their work during the Emergency. I am glad to think that the dark days of the Mau Mau rebellion are now behind us and that we may continue to live without fear. There are still of course many bad people who wish to cause trouble; that is inevitable. But I hope to be able to continue to lead the people of Migwani and the Wakamba of Kitui District in the paths of peaceful prosperity and better living, with education for them all. I know the district has a good Police and Army record, and I hope this will continue. We have many friends among the officers of the Army, Police and Administration, and I trust we shall keep the connection always.



Machakos, October 20th, 1956. Chief Kasina is presented to H.R.H. Princess Margaret.



#### THE LIFE-STORY OF A KENYA CHIEF

Perhaps that piece of the lion I killed when I was a young man has brought me luck, after all! When I killed a lion with an arrow in my youth, the lion coughed up a small piece of gut as it died, a thing which all lions are said to do. The people with me seized this, and said it would bring me great luck and prosperity if I kept it as a talisman.

I now have a good farm of over 500 acres, and sons to help me with it. One of my sons has given up his work in the Police to come and drive me about in my Land Rover. I have daughters at home and at school, eleven grandchildren and an honourable position in the Government. In spite of my misadventure, therefore, perhaps that lion has really brought me good luck. I certainly survived one war which killed a great many askari of this country, and I have survived the loss of my hands.

I have kept the talisman all these years and I have, I think, as was prophesied, had the luck of the lion.