

Germany: First World War: German East Africa, General Lettow-Vorbeck

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Form: Circular

By: A. Hummel / L. Chr. Lauer/Nürnberg

Date: c1920

Ref: Laidlaw: 1069;

Variations:	Size	Metal	Mass	Value
	33.3 mm	Silver (0.99)	14.9 gm	\$220

Edge: Plain. Stamped: "SILBER 990".

Obverse: Bust of General Lettow-Vorbeck, right, in Schutztruppen uniform with slouch hat. Monogram: "AH" at lower right. Legend: "GENERALMAJOR v.LETTOW-VORBECK".

Reverse: Bareheaded soldier, chest exposed, standing front, head turned to right, legs apart straddling slouch hat. Right hand holds a flag standard. German imperial flag flying in the background. Across on right: "1914 / 1918". Signed: "L. LAUER NÜRNBERG" lower left, followed by: "AH" monogram. Legend round right rim: "DEUTSCHES HELDENTUM / OSTAFRIKA (German heroism in East Africa)". In the exergue: "GETREV IN DEN / TOD (true unto death)".

Notes: Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck (1870-1964) was a general in the Imperial German Army and the commander of the Schutztruppe (colonial troops) in German East Africa during the First World War. The number of his troops varied during the campaign but was never more than 14,000 (3,000 Germans and 11,000 African Askari). For four years he fought and held off a much larger force under General Jan Smuts of 300,000 South African, British, Belgian and Portuguese troops together with a large number of African Askari and carriers. Undefeated in the field, Lettow-Vorbeck was the only German commander to successfully invade imperial British soil during the war.

It is estimated that the death toll on both sides during the campaign was 450,000 and that most of these were Africans. The ensuing famine and disease (the flu epidemic) killed an estimated 200,000 others. To put this into perspective, the total death toll during the Boer War, including civilians, is estimated to be 100,000.

Although General Lettow-Vorbeck was a hero of Imperial Germany his conservative beliefs and anti-Nazi stand put him at loggerheads with Hitler. He became destitute during WW2 and when Jan Smuts learned of this after the War he arranged for Lettow-Vorbeck to receive a small pension.

The medallist was August Hummel (1862-1933).