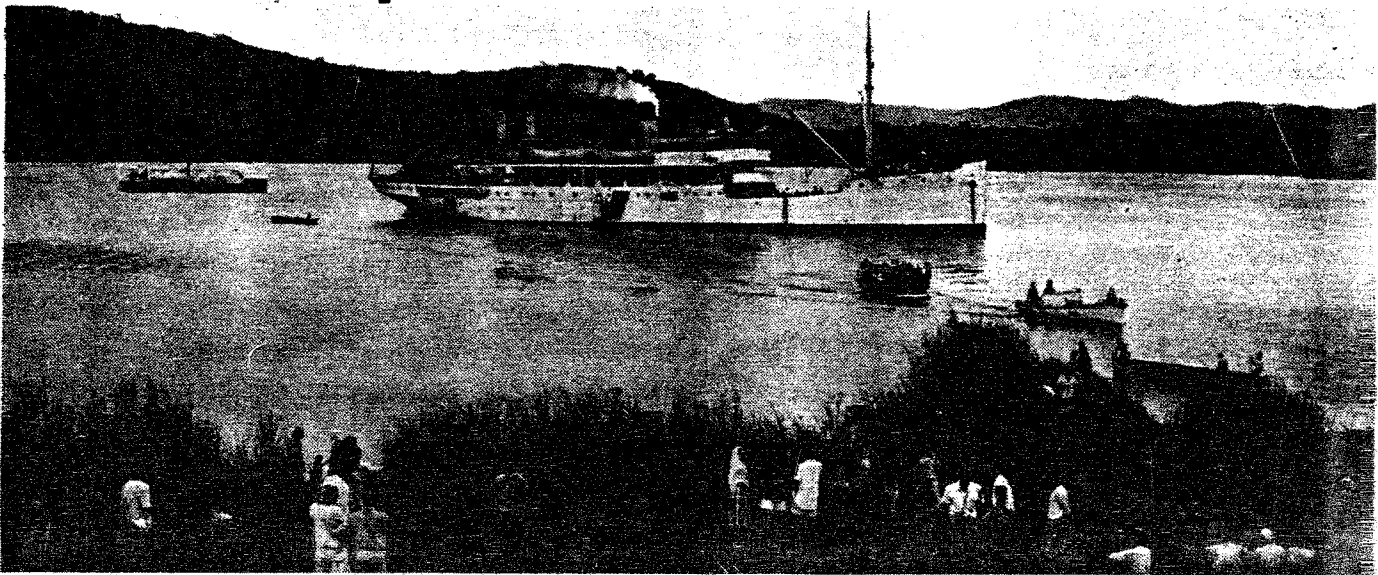


EX-warship's double life on African lake



The steamship Liemba on Lake Tanganyika. Originally named Graf von Gotzen, it was scuttled by the Germans in 1916 but salvaged by the British in 1924.

Floating den of smugglers

From NICHOLAS WOODSWORTH
DAR ES SALAAM — As any admirer of Humphrey Bogart will remember, Charlie Allnut in the film classic *The African Queen* is, deep down at least, made of the right stuff.

Drinker, smuggler, and all-round reprobate, he redeems himself in the last minutes of the film by blowing Imperial Germany's lake steamer Konigin Louise to smithereens, using his own boat as a torpedo.

By helping to end Germany's World War I expansionist designs in East Africa, he wins both the recognition of England and, more important, the heart of Katherine Hepburn.

During that war the Germans of colonial Tanganyika did indeed run a naval steamer — the 1,300-ton Graf von Gotzen — in Lake Tanganyika after transporting it plate by plate 1,200km inland from the coast.

But the Graf von Gotzen was not blown to bits like her fictional counterpart. Although she spent nearly a decade underwater after the Germans scuttled her during the war, she was refloated by the British in 1924.

Re-christened the Liemba, she continues to sail Lake Tanganyika today, and her career remains as swashbuckling as anything Bogey himself might have dreamed up.

Germans still use the Liemba as she plies the 675km of blue water that stretch northward from Zambia to Zaire and Rwanda in Central Africa.

Ideal opportunities

But the Liemba's four-inch gun has gone and its place on the upper deck has been taken by Land Rovers loaded with dried sausages and beer.

But carrying tourists and their vehicles up to gorilla country in the mountains of Rwanda is only a sideline. The Liemba is above all a floating den of smugglers, who successfully manage to break every import, excise and exchange control regulation in the region.

In principle the ship is there to connect isolated lakeside Tanzanian villages to the outside world. While it certainly provides this service, its stops at points near the frontiers of Zambia, Tanzania, Zaire and Burundi offer ideal opportunities for large-scale, cross-border smuggling.

Even to the practised eye nothing seems amiss as the Liemba pulls away from the customs shed at the port of Mpulungu in northern Zambia.

On the upper deck brawny, safari-hatted burghers from Stuttgart settle down to three days of beery Teutonic camaraderie. On the lower,

cheaper decks the scene is crowded and typically African.

The calm is broken about three hours after sunset, when the Liemba heaves to off Kasanga, the first Tanzanian lakeside village north of the Zambian border.

Suddenly from out of the dark the ship is surrounded by a score of large dug-outs. Their crews swarm up the sides of the ship and spill on to the deck like so many pirates.

400 percent profit

These are the smugglers of Mpulungu. Their boats are loaded with Zambian produce — maize meal, sacks of sugar, tins of cooking oil. Heavily-subsidised in Zambia, these goods can be sold for up to 400 percent profit over the borders.

Amidst much haggling and confusion, prices and unofficial rates are agreed on, deals on future shipments are hammered out and thick wads of local currency change hands.

The Liemba is no longer just a ship but a mobile market place and trading floor.

This is just the first stage in a long series of similar, well-organised trading operation, that take place up and down the lake and involve all four countries surrounding it.

With their earnings the Zambian smugglers will buy Tanzanian goods, sell them at home and re-invest the profits in further illegal Zambian shipments. Later in the trip the decks of the Liemba will be piled high with sacks of dried fish.

Fish bought in Tanzania will be sold in Burundi. The Burundi profits will then go to Zaire to buy illegally-mined gold for a quarter of its market value. The gold and other goods will cross over to Tanzania and eventually end up in the gold markets of the Middle East.

And in this entire cycle of transactions not a penny of import or customs duty will be paid.

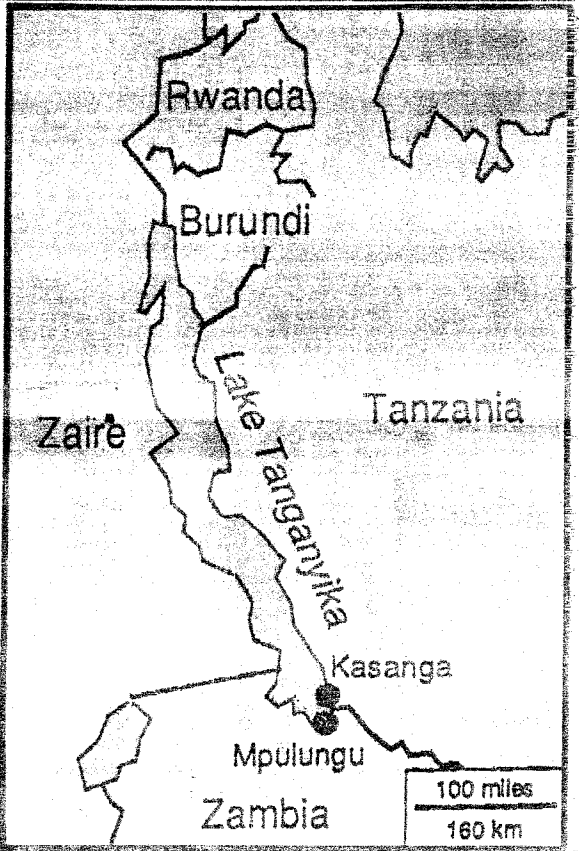
Stimulating trade

Government officials are obviously aware of such consistent and large-scale activity but are unwilling or unable to stop it.

A senior official of Danida, the Danish government aid organisation which subsidises the Liemba's operations, says: "Instead of waiting for non-existent jobs, these people are managing to feed themselves and getting essential goods to markets."

"Of course they're breaking the law — but they are also stimulating regional trade in a way that bureaucracy-bound governments here never have."

— *The Financial Times, London*



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