

# HUNT FOR THE LION OF AFRICA

HOW ONE MAN CARRIED OUT HIS OWN PRIVATE WAR AGAINST THE GERMANS AND IT WOULD LEAD TO THE DESTRUCTION OF A PRIZED CRUISER

BY KELLY BELL

The captain and crew of the British freighter *Pegasus* never had a chance that night just before Christmas 1914. The sleek, unidentified warship came boiling out of nowhere, guns blazing and sent the hapless cargo carrier to the bottom. Unlike in the cases of her previous victims, however, this time the Imperial German Navy's commerce raider *Konigsberg* had assaulted a ship equipped with radio and the wireless operator managed to get off a distress call that was too late to save her, but alerted Allied forces that something deadly was prowling the Indian Ocean. It may have been the most monumental SOS in history.

The First World War was quick to spread to the colonies of the brawling European powers. The Imperial German Navy had seen the coming conflagration a full decade before the great blood-letting commenced, and made plans to twist a crimp into Britain's supply lifeline to its Asian possessions. The geography of German



On 1 April 1914, Fregattenkapitan Max Looff took command of the *Konigsberg*.

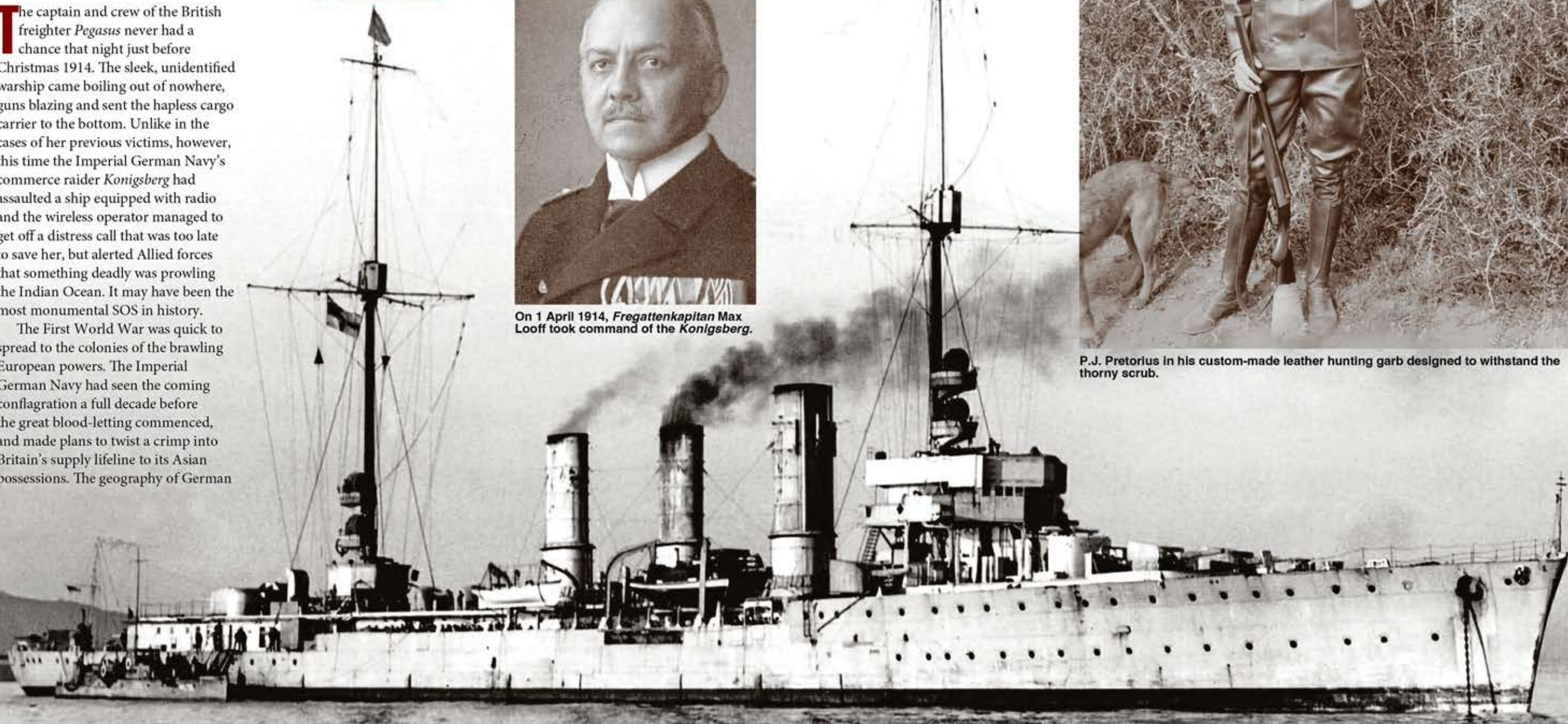
East Africa provided a splendid opportunity requiring minimal forces.

In 1904, German naval engineers had charted the Rufiji River and found it navigable for a fairly large ship to a distance of almost 20 miles upstream. This would make a splendid hideaway.

When the shooting started, the



P.J. Pretorius in his custom-made leather hunting garb designed to withstand the thorny scrub.



For East Africa, *Konigsberg* was a fearsome weapon for which the British had no equal in the area.