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THE LABOUR SHORTAGE IN 1930s KILIMANJARO AND THE SUBSEQUENT EMPLOYMENT OF CHILD LABOUR

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The colonial state in British Tanganyika seems to have been faced with a perennial dilemma; the dilemma of proletarianization versus peasantization. The establishment of the mining and plantation sector in colonial Tanganyika was a pointer to the proletarianization of rural life. Yet the weakness of this sector coupled with the status of Tanganyika as a trusteeship territory under the ultimate tutelage of the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations Organization, it has been alleged, acted as a boom to peasant agriculture. Indirect rule, it seems, was encouraged in not only the political spheres but also the economic arena.¹ But if plantation and peasant agriculture forced the colonial state into a quandary over the question of labour, it also needs to be emphasized that the state was an employer of labour. The competition for labour was therefore not merely between settler and peasant agriculture, a situation which might have forced the state to acquire the role of an empire, but also between these and the state. This was particularly true in the public works department.²

The peasantry might have refused to part with their labour because they were 'sons of the soil'³. But the rise of the rich peasantry also entailed the employment of the poor peasants, a fact which precluded them from working in other areas of the economy, for example the plantation system. This condition called forth the intervention of the state, but it too partook a share of this labour. In Kilimanjaro where plantation system existed side by side with peasant agriculture, a situation of this kind arose. This crisis was eventually solved by resorting to the employment of child labour. This essay is intended to discuss the conditions which led into the decision. It starts with a theoretical discussion only because it is becoming the more necessary to reveal the polemics within which intellectual discussions are conducted and so offer a theoretical explanation to the 'empirical matter' being marshalled in support of a debate or otherwise.

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1. CHILD LABOUR AS A FORM OF DEPRESSING WAGES.

Since producers in precapitalist social formations controlled their own means of production, the question of economic coercion emanating from the ownership of means of production placed a special premium on human labour. In the absence of dominant relations of exchange, to control this labour entailed coercion or the threat of it, a condition which was mediated by all kinds of paternalistic ideas. Here then parasitism ruled and the expropriator had neither the urge to control nor invest in the means of production for, short of using violence, he was assured of his share of the next harvest, or calf, as the representative of god on earth, or as the greatest magician of them all.⁴

Parcellization of production coupled with segmentation of appropriation and political power were some of the main features dominant in these kinds of social formations. Here the unit of production whose reproduction was ensured by the kinship system was the family household.⁵ Each household, however socially depressed, had some right to land which was guaranteed by tradition. To the early Romans land:

... was one of a number of items which made up the family or clan under the authority of the pater familias. The family was sovereign, later a subsovereignty - defined in socio-political terms; that is interactions of its members with members of other families occurred through the agency of the pater familias, these interactions frequently involved decisions to use or augment power.

Such made land an aspect of rulership, and hence the dictum "Land is to rule".⁶

Production was mainly for consumption rather than exchange.

Where there was exchange, it was largely for the purpose of consumption. Exchange of goods to obtain luxuries was reserved to the aristocracy.⁷ The self-sufficiency of pre-modern households which was also to be found at the level of a whole economic system was reinforced by the unity of agriculture and crafts.⁸ What was said about European manufactures by one Chinese Emperor during the initial stages of capitalist penetration of the celestial empire was true of many other precapitalist social formations.

Strange and costly objects (he said) do not interest me. As your ambassador can see

for himself we possess all things. I set no value on strange objects and ingenious and have no use for your country's manufactures.⁹

Capital had to divorce agriculture from manufacture and dispossess producers of their means of production before it could fatten on their surplus labour by forcing them to sell their labour power.

This process which started in Europe, and more specifically in Britain, found its way into the rest of the world. In the latter case the process was in some areas partial in others somewhat complete, and in yet other places disastrous. Such was the manifestation of the law of uneven and combined development. Globalization of capital was realized simultaneously with its concentration, primitive accumulation with capital accumulation, and so forth.¹⁰

In England the prehistory of capitalism began with the enclosure system, when sheep began to enrich men. Such was the "expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil, from the means of subsistence and from the means of labour".¹¹ Deprived of their means of subsistence, even the right to hunt rabbits in the estates of the gentry, the poor resorted to robbery, theft and murder, or drifted into towns where the process was escalated.¹²

Initially, employment in towns was hard to come by, and conditions harsh. Working for wages was avoided, and so workhouses were established.¹³ As for those who escaped this kind of noose which was being tightened around their necks, there was the "bloody legislation against the expropriated" which began under Henry VII and continued by his successor.

... during his reign, hanged 30,000 mendicants, who had no means of livelihood. The most repressive laws have been employed against beggars throughout history, without any results. According to an English law of 1531, any person found begging without a licence was whipped. As this brutal law had little effect in reducing the number of beggars, the law was made more strict in 1549, and a person found wandering without employment was branded with the letter "V" for vagabond, and compelled to be a slave to his captor for two years. For a further offence of wandering, he was branded with "S" for slave; and was enslaved for life. If he attempted to escape, he was liable to be punished with death.¹⁴

Notwithstanding the many treatise which have been written about

development from Adam Smith's Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations, to Gunnar Myrdal's "Asian Drama", and even more so the bulk of scholarly monographs on the notion of development of underdevelopment, the world does not seem to have changed much as far as the so-called "fourth world" is concerned.¹⁵

To be sure, the poor of backward capitalist social formations are no longer whipped to death that often.¹⁶ But many are being forced by circumstances to commit suicide. With chances of selling their labour power so dim, others have resorted to selling their blood. "An estimated 40,000 Indians", it has been observed, "live by selling blood in the big cities".¹⁷ Perhaps conditions in Africa are not so desperate. Indeed it has been argued that with so much land available, every African should be able to find work of one kind or another. But most of the land looks barren, and the means of production backward.

It is not intended here to go into the merits and demerits of such assertions, but it might be salutary to note that the beggar problem is not new. But if it is an inheritance from the past, its continued existence has been reproduced by modern conditions.¹⁸ To men of property the beggar problem would not have been a matter for concern had it not been that it is associated with the issue of crime. Empirical studies have also shown that both problems are related to an even bigger one: the issue of population migration to towns. Initially this issue was discussed within the framework of detribalization and mission to civilize; now the problem of development seems to have taken over, although somewhat momentarily as the question of underdevelopment appears to be still with us.¹⁹

Yet the manner in which the problem of poverty, rural and urban, has been dealt with remains unsatisfactory; so too are minor issues like those of beggars with which it is related. Explanations to this problem have normally been tautological. Small wonder then that the poor have been blamed for their poverty. Indeed some men of authority have gone as far as calling them exploiters. The crux of the matter, however, is whether they have been given the chance of work.²⁰

Nevertheless the question of beggars or "loiterers" as it is known in Tanzania is not restricted to adults. Many children have also been sucked into this problem.²¹ One observer who has confirmed this has remarked:

By the Ministry of Health (of the Government of

Tanzania's) definition, one is a child until the age of fifteen. From what I have seen of the street boys, many of them are below fifteen. So they are children and entitled to children's services of any nature. Many of these children have left their villages on their own. They do the petty trading for adults in the city. According to some of the Sunday News IYC interviews, these children are paid an average of 80/= a month. They are provided with some "sleeping place". Some of these children live with their parents. Again, the IYC interviews showed that many were living with their mothers only. So the little boys play the role of their missing fathers in supporting their town dwelling mothers and sisters. (22)

Two points are worth emphasizing at this juncture: that the children who dwell in towns are not only loiterers, but that there are others who sell their labour by performing petty jobs as hawkers vending various kinds of goods. The latter is intertwined with two other points: that these children belong to patriarchs and matriarchs of lower income groups of people, and that they undertake such jobs to supplement incomes of their parents, whether they live in rural areas or are urbanites. Some of these children are primary school leavers, but there are others who have never had the chance of formal education at all. This, moreover, is only the tip of the iceberg, for as well as these kinds of jobs which are performed by children, many households in urban areas employ children as domestic servants.²³

But child labour is not restricted to towns. In 1977 the attention of the Tanzanian party and government machinery was drawn to the plight of children in the country's Southern Highlands. This was the more embarrassing as Tanzania had then declared the intention to introduce Universal Primary Education for all children of school age. In September of that year, the Daily News published a number of articles showing that rather than attending school, many children from Njombe district were leaving their homes to work in tobacco plantations in Iringa. This being the case, on 24 September 1977 it was reported that "the hiring of child labour on capitalist plantations in Iringa" had been "entered on the agenda of the first CCM Regional Executive Committee meeting" for discussion the following day.²⁴ By then "more than 250 under-age children labouring in capitalist-owned tobacco estates" and arrangements were "being made to return the children to their homes" in Njombe.²⁵

Whether the campaign to repatriate the "child labourers" to their homes succeeded is another matter. However, the Commissioner for labour, Ndugu Saidi Makutika, was forced to spell out the law governing child labour. "Hiring children below fifteen", he said "is a criminal offence in Tanzania punishable by fine or imprisonment or both".²⁶

He explained that only children aged between fifteen and eighteen were allowed to work. These, however, must be hired on a daily basis. These children, he said, must return to their parents or guardians at the end of the working day. Such children, when working on farms, must be paid 9/- a day.

According to Section 4 of Act No. 5 of 1969, designed to check the recruitment of minors, any employer or his agent hiring child labour can be prosecuted. When convicted, the offender can be sentenced to a fine not exceeding 5,000/- or jailed up to one year or both.²⁷

Such is the attempt to prevent the disease, cosmetic or otherwise.

"One... indicator, and a particularly important one", observed Lenin on the question of child labour, "is the extent which child labour is employed. The more child labour is exploited", he went on to say, "the worse, undoubtedly, is the position of the worker, and the harder his life".²⁸ The problem of child labour in the case of the industrialization of Britain was dealt with admirably by Engels, amongst other contemporary observers.²⁹ Then children were used to pull down wages of adult workers since they were paid so little. Now the use of minority groups from backward capitalist economies has been found more appropriate.³⁰

The usefulness of keeping down wages by employing child labour was found lucrative not merely during the initial stages of capitalist industrialization. Its use in the interest of securing superprofits by capital is still fashionable. Nor is this restricted to the modern period in backward capitalist social formations either. Rather it was very much in use with the commencement of the institutionalization

of productive capital in colonial social formation like Tanganyika. This will be illustrated with the aid of the Kilimanjaro agricultural industry, particularly settler agriculture.

2. THE KILIMANJARO AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND THE QUESTION OF LABOUR.

Two types of commercial agriculture were in competition in colonial Tanganyika: peasant and settler. Such competition, however, has its history. Initially Germans who were the first European colonizers of Tanganyika encouraged settler agriculture. The very fact that Germans wanted to make Tanganyika the brightest jewel in their imperial system was accompanied by a lot of capital investment.³¹ Plantation agriculture was largely concentrated in the North Eastern circuit, along the Central Railway Line, and around Kilwa. The Maji Maji Rebellion of 1905, however, checked the overemphasis in settler agriculture. Following the Dernburg reforms, peasant agriculture was encouraged in various areas of German Tanganyika.³²

Among areas where settler agriculture continued to be influential, though, were Eastern Usambara and Kilimanjaro. In both areas, coffee was the main plantation crop. In Kilimanjaro settler agriculture was largely concentrated in what came to be called the Hai Division, especially in Uru, Kibosho, Machame and Kibong'oto. The end of the First World War saw the demise of German administration in Tanganyika and the institution of British colonial rule under the auspices of the League of Nations, and subsequently the United Nations. Many settler estates in Kilimanjaro were labelled enemy property since they belonged to German nationals. They were placed under the Governor who was charged with the responsibility of overseeing their being auctioned to interested parties or their distribution to the local populace where overcrowding seemed a threat especially in Uru, Kibosho and Marangu.

It has been said that the British in Tanganyika, especially Governors like Byatt were very much against the permanent establishment of a settlerdom in the territory. Indeed, subjectively, Byatt was against settlers. But this attitude was engendered by the fact that as a Mandate Territory, British Tanganyika had to make her doors open to settlers of all kinds of European nationalities, includ-

ing Germans who were the arch-enemies of John Bull.³³ Thus to ensure that Germans were denied this chance, the influx of settlers into Tanganyika was discouraged. Nevertheless, especially in the 1930s, Germans tried very hard to regain the colonies they lost during the First World War, particularly Tanganyika.³⁴

However, as has already been stated, alienation of Land to settler communities in Kilimanjaro was started by Germans. This process was carried out "without regard for the future needs of the local tribes... as early as 1885-1894".³⁵ Warnings were sounded and local resistances staged, but they "went unheeded and an 'iron ring' of alienated land was hanged round the native lands on the mountain. This was the position when British administration became established after...1916". Although it soon became apparent that "native reserves" were being congested and that outlets would not be found, and despite the apparent British government hostility towards settler establishments in Tanganyika, another "iron ring" was hanged upon Kilimanjaro.³⁶ Meanwhile peasant commercial agriculture was also encouraged. Although settlers under their organization which was called the Kilimanjaro Planters Association protested against this, Dundas is said to have told them that the "price of coffee is not determined by colour".³⁷

The friction between settlers and Kilimanjaro peasants over Commercial cultivation of coffee eventually erupted into the so-called "Moshi incident" of the late 1920s.³⁸ This incident was exacerbated by the "Joseph Merinyo case" in which the President of the Kilimanjaro Native Planters Association was accused of embezzlement and imprisoned.³⁹ The settler community seized upon this as the occasion to break KNPA and to abolish peasant commercial agriculture. While the colonial administration agreed to the first idea, they resisted the second.⁴⁰

KNPA was abolished in 1931. Although there were rumours that it should be replaced by an European mercantile company which, it was hoped, would have acted more responsibly in the purchase and sale of "Kilimanjaro Native Coffee" than KNPA, the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union was formed in its place. This began the first example of new types of the cooperative movement which was subsequently to dominate the purchase of crops for the overseas market

in Tanganyika and which were charged with the duty to collect produce from the peasant communities in the territory more effectively. ⁴¹

At stake in the competition between settler and peasant commercial agriculture in Kilimanjaro was the question of labour. The creation of the plantation system in Kilimanjaro presupposed the existence of a migrant labour force to work in the coffee estates. The encouragement of Chagga peasant agriculture meant that not much of this force was to be available from peasant households in Kilimanjaro. Peasants would rather work in their own plots of land than submit to the humiliation of being treated as Manamba by Europeans in their estates. This was particularly so with the divisions of Hai and Vunjo where peasant commercial agriculture was introduced fairly early.

Moreover working on estates was rigorous employment, the payment a mere pittance, and interference with leisure time immense. ⁴² The few Chagga migrants who worked on the settler estates came from Eastern Kilimanjaro, now Rombo district, where commercial agriculture was introduced rather lately. But even this area was not to be a labour reserve of Kilimanjaro for long. The humiliating life of Manambas forced the Warombo to seek work as domestic servants in Moshi and Mombasa as opposed to working on the coffee estates of Kilimanjaro. ⁴³

Chagga labour which was required to work on settler plantations was getting scarce. But at the very time that this was happening, settlers decided to reduce wages to what was considered as a ridiculously low level. "To obtain labour in Moshi" and subsequently Arusha, was becoming "exceedingly difficult". Labour, the Moshi Chamber of Commerce complained in February 1928, was becoming scarce, and while "a short while ago casual labour could be obtained for 1/- per day, now the rate has increased, and at the present time this class of labour demands 4/- per boy/truck". The seriousness of the matter also lay in the fact that it took three hours to load a truck.

The demand for labour in Kilimanjaro came from four sources: the plantations, the rich peasantry, Moshi town, and the government. In Moshi town itself labour was needed in not only the domestic service, but also by the town council "to do such tasks as road repairs, grass cutting, wood cutting, repairs on police and prison staff huts and

public utility work".⁴⁴ But not many people were prepared to work for the Public Works Department if they could be offered an alternative. This was so because the labourers were forced to live in filthy "little huts of most primitive design, so small that they could only be entered by crawling, quite inadequate to keep out rain, and unsuitable even for brief occupation". Thus by the end of the 1920s, a large portion of the Chagga who worked in such conditions had ceased to do so. Labour had to be drawn in from other districts. Thus many of those who worked on the estates and in the public works soon turned out to be the Wanyamwezi, Wasukuma, Wapare and Wanyiramba. The Makonde came in later.⁴⁵ Settlers in Moshi "sent Headmen along the Moshi-Arusha-Babati road to recruit labour coming down".⁴⁶ Even so the competition for labour did not cease. Settlers tried to turn to the Chagga again in the 1930s, but in the whole of 1931 only eleven labourers were recruited.⁴⁷ The situation looked desperate; the more so since, as the District Commissioner of Moshi was to write to his superior, the Provincial Commissioner in Arusha, in 1939:

"I have been informed by several coffee estate owners that as much as they would like to absorb labour (from other districts), it is arriving at a time of the year when activities on estates are almost negligible."

Thus while there was no labour which was forthcoming from Kilimanjaro itself, then one which arrived from other districts came at a time when it could not be utilized. It seems that the settlers had to turn to Kilimanjaro again for an alternative source of labour.

In 1934 it was reported that there was a general shortage of labour for coffee and maize plantations in Moshi. Not only was labour not forthcoming from the Chagga,⁴⁸ but that the emerging Chagga Kulaks were competing with European planters for labour from other ethnic communities like the Wanyiramba and Wapare. Their terms too looked better. In 1933 the District Commissioner of Moshi wrote to the Senior Provincial Commissioner thus:

"As I have stated repeatedly no-government labour is being paid at the rate of 1/50 with posho and additional inducements. The Chagga themselves pay 1/50 with posho and up to two shillings without posho for casual labour on their shambas. The Moshi Native Coffee Board

and the KNCU have found it necessary to pay a wage in keeping with local conditions and demands by Government continues to lag behind".⁴⁹

If the government was lagging behind in this venture, it was even more so with the settler community. Thus the Kilimanjaro Planters Association urged the Tanganyika colonial government to enact a law that would oblige labourers "to work so many months out of the year" on estates irrespective of what they were paid.⁵⁰

The government seemed to be in agreement with this suggestion for it was remarked:

"In localities in which the native cannot grow economic crops owing to lack of transport facilities, Administrative Officers can best serve the state by exhorting the natives, through their chiefs, to adopt some form of active work, pointing out that situated as they are they can only do so profitably by engaging to work for the Government or on the farms which were seeking their labour".(51)

But this was intended to be a long term measure. In the meantime the settler community found a solution in the employment of child labour. Hence the provincial commissioner on 8 March 1930 wrote to the Chief Secretary in Dar es Salaam that child labour was becoming dominant in coffee plantations, especially during the picking season.

"This (he said) is a noteworthy feature of Wachagga throughout the district, and there is no doubt that these Chagga children do good and thorough work. One reliable planter (Major Bellair) has informed me that he prefers these children to full grown men for many types of work".(52)

Indeed it could not have been otherwise since the children were paid very low wages, and the settlers did not have to worry about their accommodation or rations as they returned to their parents in the evening and ate bananas and the like for their lunch from the estates during the day.

The children who submitted to this kind of labour largely came from the poor families. One important feature of poor families, it should be underlined, is the failure to reproduce themselves. This is particularly so with the poor peasantry. One important feature of the peasant today, as Engels observed with regard to the German and

French Peasantries, is that he has lost much of his productive capacity. "Formerly he and his family produced, from raw material he had made himself, the greater part of the industrial products that he needed; the rest of what he required was supplied by village neighbours who plied a trade in addition to farming and were paid mostly in articles of exchange or in reciprocal services". The family, and even more so the village, as has already been indicated was self-sufficient, and "produced almost everything it needed". It was what has been termed a natural economy "almost unalloyed; almost no money was necessary". Capitalist penetration put a stop at this. But if, as in the case of Kilimanjaro, parents had chosen to go to work in towns, the children were forced to work near home and so help their mothers with some of the domestic chores as well.

Employment of children on estates became fashionable in 1930s Kilimanjaro because it was cheap, and the labour easier to control. That it was a pronounced form of labour was shown by the number of complaints by primary school teachers of children who played truant. The demand of this kind of labour was not merely restricted to estates. Rather soon rich peasants also entered the market. Out of this arose a great deal of friction between this type of peasantry and the settlers, particularly in Western Kilimanjaro. However to encourage children to come to work in the estates rather than to sell their labour to rich peasants, the settlers bribed their parents by allowing them "to collect wood from and graze on their estates". The elders of Machame and their Chief, Shangali, were enticed to acquiesce in this, and initially they agreed. But it soon transpired to the settler community that the Chief of Machame "appears to us to endeavour to secure for his men a privilege in our estates, by using the weapon of the strike, which has proved elsewhere to be very harmful to both employers and workmen". He also "ordered his people not to come to work", and "out of over 150 labourers under Kipande with us, not one has come to work".⁵³ This was so because the Chief was also under pressure from the kulak community of his Chiefdom who were equally interested in this kind of labour.

Thus while the settler community tried to look for new sources of labour, the emerging kulak class in Kilimanjaro, which also employed labour, soon caught up with them. This made labour a perennial problem

in Kilimanjaro. Labourers were more attracted to working in farms owned by kulaks because the treatment was better. In most cases casual labourers returned to their own homes in the evening. Where this was not so they were lodged, possibly in the same house with their employers and ate the same kind of food. Exploitation of labour was not all that crude among the kulaks.

As for the settler community though this was different. The situation was also exacerbated by the regimentation of labour employed on the estates, especially the Mnyapara system. As with African government employees, plantation labourers were lodged in hovels.⁵⁴ Such conditions kept many labourers out of plantation employment and made the scarcity of labour on the estates a perennial problem.

3. THE BROADER CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM OF CHILD LABOUR

This essay has attempted in a very brief outline to examine the question of child labour in Tanzania. Within this broader framework has been situated the issue of child labour in 1930s Kilimanjaro. With the rise of the clarion call for Universal Primary Education though, the question of child labour has come into a head-on collision with the issue of education for the children of school age. Parents are required by law to send their children to schools for the required period of education which lasts for seven years. During this time children are required to complete their primary education which is supposed to prepare them for their future life as adults of the Tanzanian post-colonial society. Should children play truant during this period, their parents may be penalized by the law. If they look for employment during the years they are required to attend classes, their employers and their parents might be punished if the long arm of the law catches up with them. Yet why should children seek employment at a time when they are required to go to school? Who is responsible for this?

Normally it is assumed that the child is not responsible for himself since he is not yet an adult. Employers of child labour and parents are considered responsible for the child's welfare. But to end the debate at this juncture is to subjectify the whole issue. A search for the material conditions which have given rise to this situation seems a more plausible course to adopt.⁵⁵

It was pointed out at the very outset that precolonial economies were self-sufficient in many respects. Production was largely for local consumption, and exchange of goods was intended to supplement this. For this reason exchange was peripheral. This phenomenon was reflected at the level of the household. Division of labour was restricted to this unit, and normally followed the criteria of age and sex. Colonial rule which heralded the intensification of capital penetration changed this situation. Local economies were disarticulated and simultaneously articulated under imperialist hegemony. Taxes, penetration of market forces, coercion, and the like, were intended to fulfil this aim. The peasant household was brought under greater control of capital and made increasingly dependent on it for the reproduction of the household.⁵⁶

While capital sought to extract the surplus labour of colonial peasantries and workers, it did not enter into the actual labour process. Here then occurred the formal subsumption of labour power by capital by which capital established its control by accepting the existing process of production as was found extant. The colonial state has had a big role to play in a situation of this kind, given the peculiar condition which capital assumed. In the plantation system, notwithstanding the apparent control of the labour process by capital, the position of labourers was not any better.⁵⁷ The search for super-profits seemed the dominant enterprise.⁵⁸ Thus it has been remarked:

"In the workings of colonial exploitation, i. e. each time a capitalist state dominates other populations, the process that Marx described as the primitive accumulation of capital. This is achieved by running an economy of despoliation, on the one hand exhausting the soil and/or other raw materials, and on the other over-exploiting of the rural population".⁵⁹

Colonial profits "stem from a transfer of labour value to capitalism through the maintenance of self-sustaining domestic agriculture".⁶⁰ It is also within this sector that the "production and reproduction of colonial labour power takes place". Here the work of women in particular becomes of seminal importance as they, more than men, are involved in the cultivation and preparation of food, coupled with general domestic work.⁶¹ Preservation of domestic or subsistence agriculture was stressed time and again during the colonial era. The

sale of land was prohibited. In Kilimanjaro colonial officials are reported to have said that they were not interested in creating a capitalist class out of the peasantry. Such a class, nevertheless, emerged.⁶²

There comes a time though that the subsistence economy also enters the sphere of capitalist production. As soon as this happens, this sector "reveals its low productivity and collapses into bankruptcy". Thus emerged landless labourers whose constitution, maintenance and reproduction depend solely on the sale of their labour power. In this situation not only the labour of the husband and wife is drawn to the market, but also that of the children. Where the possibility of selling their labour is dim, the landless labourers migrate to towns and become beggars.⁶³

This process though is a gradual one. In Kilimanjaro it was engendered by the alienation of land to missionaries and European settlers, and the creation of forest reserves. The emergence of a class of kulaks following the institution of peasant commercial agriculture touched off land-grabbing by this class. Common land where all had enjoyed usufruct, land where middle and poor peasantries had grazed their cattle, fetched timber, firewood, turf, and the like, disappeared.⁶⁴ The common land had been of particular importance to children for here is where they grazed cattle. Thus children got occupied in that way and did something useful to their families. With its disappearance cattle could no longer be kept, or if at all they had to be stall-fed. This work though devolved to women. The children, especially boys were now free to sell their labour to settlers and rich peasants and thus helped the poor peasant households reproduce themselves. The school system seems to have displaced this with a view to making labour ultimately more lucrative for capitalist exploitation.⁶⁵

Two forces at play in this process are worth mentioning: the impoverishment of peasant households which lay the conditions for the availability of child labour, and abundance job opportunities on estates and towns. The emergence of child labour under capitalist exploitation in 1930s Kilimanjaro was not a peculiarity of that area. It was merely the beginning of a phenomenon which has gained momentum

over time.⁶⁶ Such then are the origins of those children we see in the streets of Dar es Salaam selling ice-cream, groundnuts, coffee, newspapers and so forth. It is not that they refused to go to school, and thus make history of having come up in the hard way. Historical conditions proved otherwise.⁶⁷ Men make history but not under conditions of their own choice.⁶⁸

4. CONCLUSION:

This essay has attempted to offer a broad context within which to view the question of child labour in general, and its origins in Kilimanjaro in particular. The life of the labourer, R. Samuel has observed in the context of English social history, is not very well known.⁶⁹ We do not know whether the labourer was a man, a woman or a child. We neither know where he lived or what he worked as during the different seasons.⁷⁰ The same observation could be made with regard to plantation labour in Kilimanjaro. We are given to thinking that only adults submitted to the rigour of plantation labour. Yet historical forces determined otherwise. If this paper has given undue emphasis to these forces at the expense of the child who laboured on the coffee estates of Kilimanjaro, it is only with a view to showing that the topic has been neglected too much and that the dress rehearsal had to be undertaken by someone.

FOOTNOTES:

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