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The "beggar problem" in Dar es Salaam in the 1930's:  
A Discussion on the Reproduction of Labour Power

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THE "BEGGAR PROBLEM" IN DAR ES SALAAM IN THE 1930's:  
A DISCUSSION ON THE REPRODUCTION OF LABOUR POWER

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This paper is part of an ongoing attempt to study the social and economic history of Dar es Salaam from the end of World War I to Independence. The object of this particular paper is threefold: firstly to provide some data on the process of urbanization as it took place in Dar es Salaam; secondly to analyze this so-called urbanization process within the historical context of the growing penetration and imposition of capitalist relations of production; thirdly through this analysis to suggest ways of going beyond the overly general categories of colonialism and imperialism.

Since the latter point may seem controversial or polemical, some elaboration is necessary. It is obvious that the general historical context under which colonialism took place on the Continent is that of Imperialism. That imperialism on the whole prevented the full scale development of the productive forces cannot be denied, but this cannot mean that productive forces were not developed at all. They were highly developed in some sectors of the economy, and in others extremely underdeveloped. This state of affairs can, in a very general and broad sense, be attributed to "Imperialism", but imperialism cannot explain why this uneven process took different forms at different times and in different places. Imperialism is inextricably linked to the development of capitalism, but it is only an understanding of the latter that can explain the various manifestations of the former. Hence the emphasis throughout the paper on the analytical concepts of the capitalist mode of production.

That a "beggar problem" (as defined by a colonial official) surfaced in the 1930's may lead some to draw the quick conclusion that it was linked to the world wide crisis of imperialism, but as the paper tries to show

world wide crisis or no, the growing size of the working population in Dar es Salaam and its growing exploitation by capital was slowly driving sections of it into absolute and relative poverty. Even if there had been no world wide depression, there still would have existed a "beggar problem" and a growing destitution of the working (and non-working) population of Dar es Salaam.

Although the paper concentrates on the reproduction of labour power as a way of understanding the destitution of a section of the working population of Dar es Salaam, it does not mean that this is the only way of explaining the process engendered by growing capitalist relations of production in Dar es Salaam. In fact, it could even be argued that it would be a dangerous exercise to reduce the discussion of the destitution of the working class in DSH to an examination of the reproduction of labour power, but as mentioned earlier by shifting the level of analysis away from the general context to a more concrete and more specific level it is hoped that it will be possible to gain a more specific understanding of the actual processes and phases of the general context.

If answers to historical questions were already given by simply asserting the general historical context, then investigation would not be necessary. And yet, it is unfortunately this general historical context that takes precedence. A good number of the studies that have been done on colonial economic history treat colonialism as a monolithic force, one which did not contain internal contradictions or antagonisms. The theoretical framework most often used is that of underdevelopment theory or a variation of it as is for example done by drawing the distinction between the phases of competitive capitalism and monopoly capitalism from the single point of view of the development of the productive forces.

Generally speaking, it has always been easier to write on colonial history than on either the previous or subsequent periods. In part this is because the ideological stance from which it is made does not really lend itself to any kind of vacillation. Often the investigation is reduced to documenting and illustrating the ways in which capitalists and colonial officials exploited and oppressed the Africans, but the limitations of most of these descriptions or analyses appear when confronted with

similar occurrences taking place after colonial rule. These limitations are, in part the result of an apparent tacit taboo that is attached to any critical examination of post-colonial social formations, and in part the practice of analyzing colonial rule itself from a subjectivist, moralistic and humanist point of view. All of which combine to produce (for all historical periods) at worst an idealist and at best an ideological history.

Theoretical framework: Capital vs. labour.  
Formal and real subsumption of labour.

The relationships between labour and capital go through various phases which can historically be divided in two.<sup>1</sup> At first there is a period when capital is incapable of assuming its own supply of labour. This is the period which Marx described as the period when capital assumes only formal control (subsumption) of labour. This means that exploitation of labour will take place on the basis of processes of production developed under previous modes of production. In other words, capital will "take" labour and the labour process as it finds them. Because of these conditions, capital can only extract surplus-value by extending the working day. This, in turn will only be possible if compulsion and coercion are used. Hence the situation prevailing in many colonies at the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 20th whereby labour could only be obtained through military coercion and recruitment drives sanctioned by the colonial state. Marx described formal subsumption of labour in the following terms:

The distinctive character of the formal subsumption of labour under capital appears at its sharpest if we compare it to situations in which capital is to be found in certain specific, subordinate functions, but where it has not emerged as the direct purchaser of labour and as the immediate owner of the process of production, and where in consequence it has not yet succeeded in becoming the dominant force capable of determining the form of society as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

This period of formal control of labour coincides with the period under which absolute surplus-value is extracted.

Following this period is that of real subsumption of labour which

arises when the individual capitalist is spurred on to seize the initiative by the fact that value equals the socially necessary labour time objectified in the product and that therefore surplus-value is created for him as soon as the individual value of his product falls below its social value and can be sold accordingly at a price above its individual value.<sup>3</sup>

There is real subsumption of labour by capital when the labour process itself and the production process are of capitalist character, that is to say when the productive power is entirely dominated by capital. Marx summarized the distinction between the two periods as follows:

At any rate, if we consider the two forms of surplus-value, absolute and relative separately, we shall see that absolute surplus-value always precedes relative. To these two forms of surplus-value there correspond two separate forms of the subsumption of labour under capital, or two distinct forms of capitalist production. And here too one form always precedes the other, although the second form, the more highly developed one, can provide the foundations for the introduction of the first in new branches of industry. (emphasis added)

Generally speaking this is the situation that prevailed in Tanganyika under colonial rule, and has to a certain extent continued to prevail today. Although the trend has been toward extraction of relative surplus-value through increased productivity and intensification of work, extraction of absolute surplus-value is still going on.<sup>5</sup>

#### -Shortage of labour and Unemployment

In many of the studies on labour migration in colonial Tanganyika very little attention has been paid to the dialectical relationships between labour and capital. There has been a tendency to put the emphasis on the problems faced by the colonizers and employers in recruiting labour. The impression is therefore left that the constant problem is shortage of labour. In the confrontation between the bullying recruiters and the

evasive and recalcitrant potential workers, little attention is paid to the consequences of this constant drive for more and more labour, namely a growing number of unemployed people.<sup>6</sup> The confrontation between labour and capital produced a relative surplus population not only in the so-called labour reserves, but also in the places where that labour was supposed to be going to. Hence, from at least 1931 <sup>the</sup> surplus-population in Dar es Salaam that the colonial officials would <sup>have</sup> liked to eradicate.<sup>7</sup> The census taken in July 1931 revealed that there were 1,876 people out of employment. Another estimate put the figure at 3,305 for the same year (and 4,300 for 1939). The African population for that year was estimated at 22,732 which would give a 33% rate of unemployment.<sup>8</sup>

In discussing the problem of an unemployed surplus population, the colonial officials invented <sup>a term</sup> which fitted their wishes: "undesirables", and they also created a law to deal with this section of the population: Rule 136(2) of the Township rules which stipulated that:

The Administrative officer may repatriate to his home or district of origin, when such is within the confines of the Territory, any native whom he may consider an undesirable inhabitant or sojourner in the township, and any native concerning whom an order for repatriation has been made, and who may thereafter be found within the township, shall be guilty of an offence....<sup>9</sup>

Although this law was declared inapplicable by the High Court, colonial officials decided that it was necessary to re-introduce it under a different form, this time invoking "Defence Regulations" (1944). But even after the war the problem of "undesirables" continued to preoccupy colonial officials. Some of them realized that the conditions which gave rise to the drift from rural areas to the towns would still continue to exist after the war. At least one colonial official felt that this regulation restricting the move of rural people to towns was not sufficient:

The existing problems resulting from the drift of population from rural to urban areas --unemployment and juvenile delinquency-- are such as to call for positive remedial action and are likely to increase rather than diminish... it will probably be necessary to reinforce the powers of compulsory repatriation under the

legislation now proposed by introducing wider measures to control entry into townships.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the phase of formal control of labour was characterized by the necessity to resort <sup>to</sup> some form of coercion not only to recruit workers, but also to return, to "repatriate" those who came without being invited or who had become redundant, in short the "undesirables".

As already stated the period of the formal subsumption of labour is usually characterized by loosely structured relations between labour and capital. The complaints that were voiced in the early 1920's about the unreliability of labour illustrates this phase:

the local native is indolent and unreliable and the cost of his labour is considered to be excessive in proportion to the quality and amount of work done.<sup>11</sup>

This general complaint about the quality of the coast labour was attributed to two general causes: "the absence of any means of checking on the slackness or neglect of duty on the part of the labourer" and "the poor physique of the average local native". The suggestions for remedying the situation confirmed the total lack of control of capital over labour. Thus the official who registered the complaints noted that nothing could be done "until the enactment of an ordinance to make wilful neglect or breach of contract an offence".<sup>12</sup> However, the same official realized that for this to be possible it would have required a system which would have allowed to keep track of an African who left his job during the contract. Quite clearly, during these years, such a system did not exist or if it did, it did not operate as efficiently as it should have.

As to the poor physique of the labourers, it was attributed to the town unhealthy conditions, the poor quality of food available in town. The town unhealthy conditions were themselves a result of overcrowding and a pattern of settlement which rendered sanitation difficult to carry out.<sup>13</sup>

It would have been interesting to know exactly where did these complaints over labour come from, but the report simply says "complaints by all classes of employers". As the state was itself an important employer especially through the Public Works Department its interest in the condition of labour from an economic point of view was understandable, but as the enforcer of law

and order, the colonial state also had political reasons for watching carefully over the development of the relationship between labour and capital. One of the consequences of the lack of control of labour by capital was the appearance of a most undesirable floating population of criminals, or quasi-criminals, who thrive on the exploitation of unsophisticated natives who pass through the town.<sup>14</sup>

The difference between the capitalist employer or the non-government employer and the state was that the latter could exercise force directly by means of police, or army or legislation. An interesting example is provided by the attempt of the state to regulate public transport in Dar es Salaam:

More supervision has been secured for the public rickshas, the natives working them now being under police control after medical inspection on first licensing. This class is a decidedly undesirable one, and it is unfortunate that public convenience necessitates the employment of so many natives in this work. Apart from the probable ill effect on health, the nature of the work is most undesirable, fluctuating in work and profits, it makes for spells of hard exertion varied by continued loafing, and that in all weathers...<sup>15</sup>

And last, but not least "employment at night is apt to show an undignified side of European character".

Overall, while capital was struggling to establish formal control of labour it loosened up the grip that pre-capitalist political authorities exercised over the population. This process led colonial officials to complain about the "demoralizing effect" that "the present town life had on the average African"<sup>16</sup> The breakdown of traditional values which ensued could only lead to further resort to coercive means of control. The parallel processes of capitalist penetration and displacement of pre-capitalist social political and economic relations accounted for the "floating" character of that section of the population which had to supplement its insufficient wages by growing food and living outside the town.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, the colonial state thought that the solution to this would be to resort to a form of indirect rule in the town. They tried to do it in 1927 without much success. In March 1930 a colonial official noted that the growing number of Africans who were moving to town were difficult to administer by Government appointed officials. It was felt that the town must be administered by



...  
cials could not cope with this "mass of individuals each a law unto himself" and that the remedy should be the immediate appointment of Native Authorities with power to make rules, give orders and enforce obedience. In 1927, a first move in that direction had been made by dropping the name akida for wenemzi. But neither moves were effectively enforced. The necessity to resort to compulsion was explained in the following manner:

In the distant future economics will automatically compel every native to do more than he is doing now, but before that stage is reached, for his own good and training for the hard work ahead of him, surely a little compulsion on the right lines should, when example and advice fail, be permitted.<sup>19</sup>

The economic laws were obviously at work, but not along the lines envisaged above. With the growing need for more labour one notices also a growing unemployed population and a process of casualization of labour. In 1938, it was conservatively estimated that "1,500 men were either not employed <sup>or employed</sup> for such periods that they only work one day in three". It was further noted that this situation was due to "wages being forced down below the subsistence level: unskilled labour in factories varied from 8/- to 10/- per kipande (without food) of 30 days work for a 10 hour day... In Dar es Salaam, 10/- per calendar month is the barest minimum in which a man can support subsistence for himself alone."<sup>20</sup>

During the 1930's there was a shift in the manner in which labour was discussed by colonial officials. From a carefree attitude toward "the native town dweller" who is "largely underpaid" but satisfies his needs because "he owns a muhogo plot outside town",<sup>21</sup> the colonial officials began to express concern about whether or not the wages paid to the workers were sufficient.<sup>22</sup> This concern was triggered by the worsening condition of the working population, part of which was underemployed (casual labourers), part of which was being kicked out of employment. The latter resulting in a process of pauperization.

## -Pauperization

It could of course be argued that the constantly deteriorating situation of the Dar es Salaam worker was simply due to the world wide economic depression, but this would be only a partial explanation, for the trend continued to persist through the 1930's, 1940's and even 1950's.

In 1941, the provincial office noted with concern that there were "some hundreds of young boys in the town in and out of employment who are potential criminals; if in employment they are underpaid and consequently underfed."<sup>23</sup> As with the beggars, the colonial state considered that the solution <sup>to child labour</sup> would be to forcibly remove them: "drastic measures are urgently necessary in order to reduce the numbers of unemployed and underfed natives, both adult and juvenile, who infest the township."<sup>24</sup>

The extremely low wages forced people to sleep out in the open. Most of the unemployed could not afford shelter of any kind, whereas some of the employed were not sufficiently paid or "too feckless with their money to rent a room".<sup>25</sup> Thus, while other areas of Tanganyika were being depopulated, the colonial state was complaining about the excess number of people migrating from country to town. This, it was thought, could be stopped "by resurrection in legal form of the old Township Rule n° 136 prohibiting an immigrant from remaining in the township for more than 6 days without a permit from an administrative officer."<sup>26</sup>

The other solution would have been poor relief, but the proponent of this solution discarded it himself by arguing that "it anaesthetizes the feelings of the sentimentalist who might otherwise take some active steps to better conditions...." This was a direct criticism against the existence of the pauper's camp that had been built earlier on along Pugu Road, four miles from town. Instead, he would have preferred "communal kitchens in which any African can obtain an adequate meal for a small sum."<sup>27</sup>

Ten years later, in 1951, hardly anything had been done for destitutes. At this point, it was suggested that some form of voluntary organization, possibly a religious

one like the Salvation Army, be encouraged to take care of these destitutes. In 1954, it was felt that the Kipawa destitutes camp was no longer large enough to accommodate all the destitutes in town. Two years later, the destitutes began to use available means to look after themselves. The Social Services Department had its attention drawn to the "growing number of infirm and destitutes paupers who are haunting the Sewa Haji Hospital." Many of the destitutes were presenting themselves to the hospital as bona fide patients, but, in most cases their condition did not really require hospitalization. Nevertheless, it became a practice among destitutes to try and have themselves admitted, if only to enjoy a few days' respite. Those who were lucky enough to be hospitalized would try again immediately after their release. Even after treatment, "it was difficult to get rid of them!"<sup>28</sup>

Through its preoccupation with the fate of the destitutes the colonial state gave the impression of the benevolent and charitable master. Was this really the case? In order to answer this it is necessary to examine the way in which the colonial state itself perceived the growing pauperization of the working class. On the whole, poverty was seen as an annoying problem that the colonial state would rather ignore or sweep aside, but by existing and parading their destitution in town, the paupers were forcing the colonial officials (and newspaper editors) to confront the issue of poverty and begging. How the issue was confronted and discussed provides an interesting insight in colonial ideology as well as a revealing picture of the role of the colonial state with regard to the whole question of reproduction of labour power.

#### -Colonial Ideology

Quite clearly, begging hurt the bourgeois and petty bourgeois sense of propriety of colonial officialdom. This is clear from the way in which "the beggar problem" was defined by either colonial officials or newspaper editors. Great emphasis was put on the physical and physiological aspects of begging. The social aspect and the entire historical process that brought about such

a state of affairs were completely ignored, as it will be seen, for a very good reason.

The first complaints emphasized the health hazards represented by the beggars. Thus, the Tanganyika Herald of September 26, 1934 expressed surprise that "a government which cannot accept even a single mosquito larva would allow native beggars apparently suffering from infectious diseases such as leprosy, syphilis, etc... to go freely from door to door with begging bowls in their hands." A very demagogic view of begging if there ever was one, for who would not be horrified at having to rub shoulders even from afar with people, be they beggars or not, who are a potential menace to one's health. However, the opinion of the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services put the matter in a more accurate perspective when he suggested that the complaints were aired because "they (the beggars) are an eyesore and any method that could remove them from the streets without undue hardships to themselves and heavy cost to the government would be welcome!"<sup>29</sup>

At about the same time a Police report ventured a social explanation by suggesting that the beggars were there because they actually wanted to <sup>be</sup> there and were so encouraged by some Christians and Moslems who saw their presence as a way of satisfying their conscience by giving alms.<sup>30</sup> In 1937, apparently for the first time, a newspaper suggested the socio-economic origins of begging in Dar es Salaam when it pointed out that "even some able bodied persons are compelled to resort to begging as they are unable to secure any kind of employment --even casual labour." The article concluded by suggesting that the funds subscribed for the King George V Memorial might be suitably utilized to erect and maintain a Poorhouse for the natives.<sup>31</sup>

However, the cause or the source of the inability to actually find a job, even a casual one is either not investigated or simply attributed to fate:

All these unfortunate individuals should be kept off the streets and properly looked after, and their public presence rendered unnecessary.<sup>32</sup>

Further down, the beggars are not simply seen as unfortunate victims of circumstances, but as a threat:

The beggars should not be allowed to become a social menace and to drag out their existence by displaying their poverty and disabilities to the public gaze.<sup>33</sup>

By the time the State is asked to intervene, the State appears as the benefactor of the very people it had collaborated to bring to a desperate stage of destitution. But this is not how the causes of begging are perceived. Begging is presented as an accident which is more or less unavoidable since "any port is bound to have these kind of peoples!"<sup>34</sup> The role of the welfare or benevolent state is reinforced with the assertion that "in many cases probably, these people are in the unenviable plight through no fault of their own and are completely without any support or means of subsistence."<sup>35</sup>

It is not only the definition of the problem which provides an interesting insight into colonial ideology, but also the suggestions for resolving the problem:

in the interest of those who are afflicted and also of the well-being of Dar es Salaam we once again urge the authorities to tackle the question and to remove, kindly but firmly these victims of misfortune from the streets of the town.<sup>36</sup>

This position was more or less shared by the government official in charge of figuring out a solution to the "beggar problem". He pointed out that already in 1934 a full inquiry had ended with the Township Authority recommending that "a lodging house should be established for unemployable indigents and that they should be maintained free by the government." But in 1937 the recommendation was slightly different:

We would recommend a colony of 'small holdings' just outside the township, where these indigents could be housed and fed and where (for those who are able) they could be encouraged and helped to cultivate their own gardens.<sup>37</sup>

That is how the Kipawa destitute village along Pugu Road was founded. While absolute pauperization was one of the most extreme consequences of the imposition of capitalist relations of production, relative pauperization seriously affected (among others through intensification of exploitation) in various ways other sectors of the working population.

-Relative pauperization

While the colonial state could occasionally congratulate itself over the low number of total destitutes, the situation of the workers who could not quite reproduce their labour power was much more serious and spread over a much larger number of people. The relative pauperization of the working class could be seen at two levels which could also be seen as two different moments.

Firstly, there was the whole question of how to ensure that the workers would feed themselves adequately while at work. The debate on this question seems to have emerged during the late twenties, when it had been decided by the Township Authority to provide "Municipal Eating Houses" or places where workers could get meals at subsidized prices.<sup>38</sup> But this decision was not arrived at easily, nor did it mean immediate implementation. Indeed, the first preoccupation of the colonial state had not been with adequate food, but on building a Beer Market in the "native quarter" with the stated objective of providing "suitable accommodation for natives to obtain their liquor under hygienic conditions and sufficient control to prevent drunkenness and disorder."<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added)

Thus, after having improved the environment for imbibing alcohol the government or at least some of its officials began to be concerned about the environment within which food was being consumed. The construction of an "adequate building to accommodate the numerous native restaurants and snack stalls which cater for the floating and working population" was thought in August 1931 to be "some years overdue".<sup>40</sup>

In the description of the then existing facilities, the colonial official gave an indirect picture of the differentiation within the working population of Dar es Salaam. Although it would be hazardous to draw some definite conclusions from this description, it does nevertheless provide an accurate idea of how the workers were expected to reproduce their labour power. The tone is somewhat patronizing and probably exaggerates the level at which a worker would be satisfied with a meal.

In the old market there were eating rooms which provided "à la carte" meals at prices ranging from 20 to 100 cents for which one could get "a large plate of food, such as curry and rice, grilled meat or other suitable comestibles". If a worker could not afford "à la carte" meals in one of the 6 eating rooms, he could go to one of the 58 tea and cake stalls where 20 cents "provided sufficient food for a meal". Then came the area for those one would assume to be the most downtrodden, who could sample their fare from "38 muhogo, etc. stalls... at which in addition to muhogo, viazi, mealies, other odd scraps of foodstuff are sold." In these places, the writer estimated that 12 cents could provide one with sufficient food for a "meal".

The reason for listing all these facilities was to draw attention to the fact that the old market was "appallingly congested", and "is perhaps the last word in discomfort and inconvenience." Wanting to see the old market replaced, this official concluded by acknowledging that the "Native in Dar es Salaam is inadequately catered for in respect to the essentials for life."<sup>41</sup> The describer of this situation must have lacked support among the decision makers for, in February 1939, it was reported that

The Township Authority have been shilly-shallying for years over the question of its replacement by a decent building on a less valuable site.<sup>42</sup>

And a majority of the members of the Township Authority voted to put an end to these tergiversations by opposing the principle of "government providing an eating establishment for any one section of the community and that, as there is now a number of private eating houses in zone II where natives may obtain various types of meals, it does not consider that there is any justification for embarking on any scheme for the building of a native eating house!"<sup>43</sup>

However, two members of the Township Authority and the D.O. of Dar es Salaam disagreed with this majority pointing out that such a decision was bound to dissatisfy the African community. These dissenters further pointed out that while eating in private houses might not cause hardship to the artisan class, the same could not be said for the labourer:

The labouring classes cannot afford to pay for the privacy and better food that can be obtained in private eating houses nor can those employed in zones I and II always find the time to go to zone III for their food. The question of race does not enter into the question: it is a matter of means.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, they argued that delaying or not building the eating houses at all would result in a higher cost of living "which is already too high when regard is had to the wages paid by the Public Works Department and most private concerns."<sup>45</sup>

From reading the evidence, the argument put forward by some members and agents of the colonial state may seem to indicate that the colonial state was actually playing a progressive role. While this may be so in this particular instance, that is not really the issue. The issue was whether or not to favour adequate reproduction of labour-power. The issue was whether the workers were receiving sufficient wages to maintain themselves and their families in good health. From its own point of view, the state would rather <sup>have</sup> provided eating facilities with food at subsidized prices than increase the wages of the workers of the Public Works Department. This tendency to keep wages as low as possible while insuring that wages could purchase sufficient means of subsistence was one of the permanent features of the relationship between labour and capital.

#### ~~The Colonial State and class struggles~~

During the late 1930's and then later, during and after the war, the question of the adequate reproduction of labour in the face of increased cost of living will be raised time and again. While pointing out that the colonial state was more than keenly aware of the question of the reproduction of labour power, it should be noted that the colonial state or the isolated officials who raised the issue did not do so of their own accord. For example, when rationing was introduced at the beginning of the war as a way of improving the lot of the African workers without increasing their wages, it was due to a threatened strike by the workers of the Mechanical Engineer's Department of the Tanganyika Railways.



Specifically, on the 18th December 1941, the workers employed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer refused to go back to work unless they were promised that their grievances would be looked into by higher authorities.<sup>46</sup>

Similar demands were made by the workers of the Health Department and the Public Works Department.

The main grievance in each case is that the price of living has risen since wages were last considered and that the burden has now become intolerable to the labourer and weighs heavily on all classes of natives of whatever salary group.<sup>47</sup>

The discussions that went on in order to resolve the dissatisfaction of the Mechanical Engineer's Department of the Tanganyika Railways are interesting for they provide an indication (among others) of how different capitals were treating their workers. The discussions also provide an enlightening illustration of how capitalists determine the wages paid to different workers especially if these workers came from different social formations (e.g. the question of "local" Asians and Africans wanting to be paid wages paid to "expatriate" Asians) where the average conditions of reproduction of labour power were different from those prevailing in Tanganyika. More clearly than any other even in those years, the threatened strike of the Mechanical Engineer's Department workers brought out the dialectical tendencies that characterize the relationship between labour and capital.

Thus while one finds colonial officials worrying about the inability of the workers to reproduce themselves on the basis of insufficient wages, one also finds the contradictory and yet equally necessary preoccupation with the necessity to cheapen labour power. With regard to the latter question, it was noted that since there had been intensification of work, the number of hours/work per week could be reduced from 48 to 45 because, noted the writer:

I believe that the reduction in hours will not mean a reduction in output. The reduced hours would have been introduced sometime ago had it not been for the fact that it might force similar conditions on government employees.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, while relative surplus-value could be extracted in certain sectors of the economy, the same could not be done or even entertained for others.

As to the wage level, the D.C. of Dar es Salaam sounded like the spokesman of the most enlightened capitalist:

A well conceived plan to increase the value of production and concurrently raise the wage level would receive my complete support and the railway would gladly adjust its labour policy.<sup>49</sup>

Eventually, however, the issue was resolved in the other direction, i.e. provide some "improvement", but not in wages. The advantages of a ration were cited as costing the railway 6/- a man a month (due to purchase in bulk) as opposed to what the same amount of food would cost if purchased individually (11/- a man per month). Furthermore, "the workman would receive the benefit of a better balanced ration which may be expected to result in better work. He would, moreover, have more money available from his cash wages to meet the increased cost on other essentials and for the purchase of food for his family. In this manner, we consider the gap between wages and the present cost of living can, in a measure, be bridged without increasing the dangers which a rise in wages might entail."<sup>50</sup>

By the time a press communiqué had been issued on June 23 1942 the initiative of the measure seemed to have come from the government, and there was no longer mention of a "threatened strike". The cause for giving rations was identified as "an appreciable rise in the cost of living since the beginning of the war, which bears most heavily on those whose wages are at or near the minimum subsistence level...."<sup>51</sup> As with the "beggar problem", the relationships between the state, capital and labour were, to say the least, obscured. The rise in the cost of living and the war were presented as accidental causes whose consequences were softened by the intervention of the providential state.

Just as the beginning of rationing was the result of the workers' combativity, its demise too was the result of further struggles. Within two weeks of the government announcement of rationing complaints began to be heard, specifically about the quality of the flour which was described "as being of poor quality, bitter, coarse, badly ground... liable to cause stomach

trouble and to land the eater in hospital!"<sup>52</sup> At first, these complaints were directed against inadequate measures or supplies:

In spite of having coupons for our daily supply of food from the shops, it is about two months now that Africans cannot have their minimum supply as before. Are we to understand that the rationing machinery is inclined to fail? As such it is a waste of paper, materials, money, labour and life, hence it is a waste of everything.<sup>53</sup>

Then there developed outright opposition to the issuing of rations, and requests to be paid in cash instead began to be addressed to the government. For example, in June 1944, the General Secretary of the African Government Servants Association Yohanna Mkande requested that the members of the Association be paid in cash instead of rations because:

1. The quantity is inadequate.
2. Some of the stuff included in the ration items is of less appetite to the Coast African.
3. Rice and sugar which are the main commodities of the coast African are not issued free.
4. The cash allowance paid to them is too small to meet one half of the cost of their essentials.<sup>54</sup>

About a month later 700 members of the Government Servants Association wanted to press the issue further. In the meantime the African staff of the Department of Lands and Mines sent a letter to the Chief Secretary stating that with effect from July 17 1944 they were refusing to draw any more rations and that in its stead they wanted to be given an appropriate increase of salary. A week later G.W. Ogilo, Honorary Secretary of the Railway African Workers Association forwarded a similar request which was supported by the General Manager of the Tanganyika Railways and Port Services who claimed that he had "always held the opinion that the issue of rations in large townships is undesirable from all points of view." He felt that if the question was one of educating the African to think and act for himself, then this goal would surely best be achieved by letting him buy his own food."<sup>55</sup>

From the evidence collected so far it is difficult to determine exactly how the question was <sup>eventually</sup> resolved for the government continued to resort to forms of subsidization even after the end of the war. This

was done through the establishment of a Commodity Distribution Board in February 1945.<sup>56</sup> Later on, the cause of rationing shifted from being a direct means of cheapening labour-power to one of fulfilling "a valuable service in providing for Africans at controlled prices such 'black marketable' commodities as tea, sugar, rice, etc..." This was carried out through the maintenance of five restaurants and fourteen temporary selling points.<sup>57</sup> By then there was a severe shortage of some essential commodities and while the result was of course the cheapening of labour-power, these 1947 measures were drawn with different considerations in mind.

#### -Conclusion

As one can gather from this rather superficial overview, the problems of transition from a precapitalist economic system to one dominated by capitalist relations is not one which can be defined in unilinear processes. While it is true to say that the shortage of labour was a constant problem for colonial powers and capitalist employers, the search for labour, the use of coercion, the expropriation of the means and instruments of production from the peasantry, and the general control of conditions of production and reproduction by capitalism generated a series of other problems which have failed to attract the attention of researchers. The result of this imbalance between the more general picture and the detailed processes of colonization has been a heavy emphasis on ideological castigation which was both understandable and necessary given the kind of ideology that prevailed throughout colonial rule.

Thus with regard to labour, it should not be reduced to the question of shortage of labour which, understandably, preoccupied the colonial officials and the employers in search of it. But, the very fact that even the colonizers could identify and describe the problems of shortage of labour has tended to have a side-tracking effect on researchers. It became a question of documenting how harsh <sup>and exploitative</sup> the whole process of recruiting and treating labour was. The

other dialectical processes of pauperization and unemployment have been left untreated, possibly for two main reasons.

In part, it could be attributed to the sources themselves in the sense that although pauperization and unemployment are talked about, as has been shown, they tend to be treated in a cursory manner. And there may be a good reason for this other than ideological considerations: the very slow process of capitalist penetration which in its hunger for land and control of the conditions of production and reproduction still left enough means of subsistence for the peasant or the worker to dip in in the face of deteriorating economic conditions. But it should also be realized that the resilience and resourcefulness of the workers thrown out of employment or their land may give the false impression that since the workers were still able to survive, there was therefore no proletarianization. It should not be forgotten that over all these years the workers had to change their working, living, eating habits, etc. And the point that Marx made with regard to the pauperization of the English working class was applicable to the situation of workers of Dar es Salaam in the 1930's:

It must be remembered that privation of food is very reluctantly borne, and that as a rule great poorness of diet will only come when other privations have preceded it. Long before insufficiency of diet is a matter of hygienic concern....., the household will have been utterly destitute of material comfort... 58

While the Dar es Salaam workers may have seen their lot improve during periods of prosperity, the general trend forced them to cut in their necessary consumption.

This process is linked to a process of capital accumulation. The latter in Tanganyika under colonial rule cannot be analyzed by reference to imperialism alone; while imperialism was the historical context which defined the conditions under which this process took place, imperialism did not alter and could not alter the fundamental law of capital accumulation which is governed by the constant search for surplus-value.

Notes

- 1 See K. Marx, Capital, vol. I, chapter XVI, "Absolute and Relative Surplus-value", but for this discussion I have relied heavily on the so-called 'Sixth Chapter' which appeared for the first time in English in the new Penguin translation by E. ~~Howkes~~ of Capital Vol. I.
- 2 K. Marx, Capital, vol. I, Penguin, pp. 1022-3.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 1023-4.
- 4 Ibid., p. 1025.
- 5 To convince oneself of this one needs only to tour the various industries along Pugu Road, particularly the Engineering sector.
- 6 The contradictory developments of unemployment and shortage of labour at the point of destination, the mechanisms of exploitation both at the point of origin and the point of destination makes P.Ph. Rey's book much more valuable than many of the voluminous studies on migrations. See his Capitalisme Négrier (Maspéro, 1976). Note also Qui est responsable du sous-développement? by Union Générale des Travailleurs Sénégalais en France, Paris, Maspéro, 1975; and also by the same collective : Le livre des travailleurs Africains en France (Maspéro, 1970). The little volume by J.-L. Amselle, Les Migrations Africaines provide an excellent bibliography (Maspéro, 1976).
- 7 See file 21616, Repatriation of Natives, Tanzania National Archives (TNA).
- 8 File 21616, Repatriation of natives; see also file 61/14/III Labour Matters, 1929-1936, and Dar es Salaam District Book, MF/30, TNA.
- 9 File 21616, TNA.
- 10 Ibid., letter from E.F. Twining to P. Rogers, Colonial Office, 21 November 1952.
- 11 Dar es Salaam District Book, Annual Report, 1922, TNA.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid., Annual Report, 1924.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid., Annual Report, 1927.

- 18 Dar es Salaam District Books, Annual Report, 1927, 1930, TNA.
- 19 Dar es Salaam District Book, Annual Report, 1927, TNA.
- 20 File 25912, Labour in Dar es Salaam Township, letter from Acting District Officer to Hon. Prov. Com. Eastern Province, 31/10/1938, TNA.
- 21 Dar es Salaam District Book, Annual Report, 1927, TNA.
- 22 This was not peculiar to Dar es Salaam. See the interesting article by A.O. Pala in The relationship between colonial policies and academic research, and specifically on how, in the 1930's anthropologists were commissioned to make studies of dietary conditions. See Africa, vol. 9, 2, 1936.
- 23 File 30134, Unemployed and Destitute Africans in Dar es Salaam, letter from Provincial Office to Hon. Chief Secret. 29/9/1941, TNA.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 File 22360 (1), Poor House for Destitute Natives in Dar es Salaam, TNA.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid. Eventually the funds were used to build the Museum.
- 32 Clip ing of the Tanganyika Standard, October 9, 1937 in File 22360 Poor House...., TNA.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Tanganyika Standard, October 9, 1937.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 File 22360, Poor House...., TNA.
- 38 The issue was raised again, but always within the same framework. See file 18893/2 Municipal Eating House, TNA.

- 39 File 18893/I Municipal Meeting House, letter from Provincial Office to Hon. Chief Secretary, 24/8/1931, TNA.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 File 18893/III
- 45 File 18893/III, letter <sup>1/2/39</sup> from Chief Secretary to the Hon. Prov. Com. Eastern Province, DSM, TNA.
- 46 File 30602/3, extract from report of the panel of members of the labour board appointed by H.E. the Governor to enquire into the dissatisfaction among certain Railway employees in Dar es Salaam, 3/3/1942. See also file 30271, Dissatisfaction among Native labour employed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Department, Railways and Ports Services, TNA.
- 47 File 30271, Memorandum addressed to a Labour Board by the District Commissioner, Dar es Salaam on behalf of the labour employed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Department of the Tanganyika Railways -January, 1942, TNA.
- 48 Ibid., Memorandum..., TNA.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 The actual rations were 24 ounces of maize p. day  
4 ounces of beans p. day  
1 and 1/2 ounces of groundnuts p. d.  
See File 30602/3, Rations for lower paid African government in Dar es Salaam, TNA.
- 52 Provincial Office to Secretariat, 8/7/1942, file 30602/3, TNA.
- 53 Letter signed "Uwafrika" which appeared in the Tanganyika Standard, February 2, 1944, file 30602/3, Rations..., TNA.
- 54 letter 27/6/1944, file 30602/3, Rations..., TNA.
- 55 File 30602/3, Rations....., TNA.
- 56 File 52871, Commodity Distribution Board, DSM, TNA.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 K. Marx, Capital, I, p. 656.