

CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS IN JAMAICA*

Jamaica, just like the whole capitalist world, is undergoing at the present time an acute economic crisis. The main wealth of Jamaica is in its banana plantations, sugar cane, coffee and other tropical products; and in view of the fact that the prices of these products greatly dropped, the results are clear to all. The extent of the crisis can be judged from the bourgeois paper issued in Jamaica, "The Daily Gleaner", which wrote in its leader of April 28th:

"The general opinion of the business community is that difficult times are ahead of us. Accounts are hard to collect; the smaller traders seem, as a class, to be short of ready money... The future of sugar appears, for the present, problematical... The prices paid to growers of bananas are far from magnificent; this seems to be a year of high production and poor returns. And there is a similar story to be told of many of our so-called 'minor products'.... Indeed, we have heard the view expressed that a slight blow** would not be an unmitigated evil since, by restricting the supply of fruit, it might tend to improve prices."***

Just like in all other capitalist countries, the difficulties of it are completely loaded on the backs of the toilers, and the conditions of the workers and poor peasants of Jamaica, which formerly had never been brilliant, have to-day become absolutely intolerable, for in addition to their old hardships unemployment has now set in.

In order to have their conditions improved, the workers who are under the influence of the reformist Marcus Garvey**** thought that the best thing to do would be to send a deputation to the Governor of Jamaica headed by Garvey. The conversation between the Governor and the Deputation is quite instructive and we consider it would not be superfluous to give here a detailed description of it.

* Jamaica is one of the West Indies group of Islands, belonging to Great Britain; it has an area of 10,904 sq. miles. Seventy-five percent of its million population is comprised of Negroes, while there are even less than 2% whites. The Negroes who were brought to Jamaica from Africa to work on the plantations as slaves, remain up till now, even after their formal liberation slave-bound to their American and British fruit companies, which possess the biggest plantations and which are in actual fact the real bossess of Jamaica.

** Jamaica suffered greatly from the hurricane in 1907.

*** This hope for a hurricane helping out in the situation did not meet with the approval of the author of the article, who writes, that although hurricanes causing much harm are very rare, yet, in view of the fact that we cannot be sure about the extent to which the hurricane will do damage, it is better if we will not have it at all. Both the hope for a hurricane as well as the arguments against it are rather characteristic for the state of mind of the bourgeoisie.

Marcus Garvey is a famous Negro National-Reformist. He is the organiser and leader of the international organisation of Negro workers, the so-called "World Association for Bettering the Conditions of the Negroes". This petty-bourgeois organisation at its Congress in August 1929, drew up a utopian programme for ridding the Negro race of the whites by establishing their own Negro capitalist enterprises. Recently Garvey once again appealed to the Negro bourgeoisie calling upon it to sign up to a loan essential to realise the programme, of the Association. Garvey exercises much influence among the Negro toiling masses, whom he attracts by means of his utopian plans.

The principal role in the deputation was played, naturally, by Garvey himself, who in a long speech described the living conditions of the workers, endeavouring to soften the Governor's heart with his description of the workers' miserable conditions. Garvey said that the workers' wages in Jamaica are on the average from 1 shilling 3 pence to 1 shilling 6 pence (31 cents to 38 cents) per day, with 12-16 hours' work. In Kingston, (the chief city of Jamaica), the average wage per day amounts to 3 shillings 6 pence (85 cents). In view of the fact that prices on food products are rather high, the toiling population generally lives on salted fish, eating it for breakfast, dinner and supper. Milk is too much of a luxury for the worker. Rent is quite high, and the workers are compelled to put up in small huts. The workers of the plantations live in small huts with earth floors and thatch roofs. Conditions of the plantation workers are such that their daughters go to the towns, where the majority become prostitutes. The workers are subject to heavy fines. For coming late to work by 5 minutes a whole shilling is deducted from their wages, and if a worker attempts to protest he is immediately arrested for having disturbed public order.

Garvey pointed out that the exhaustive work and poor nourishment undermines the health of the workers, who very rarely reach old age, and in most cases die when 40-45 years old. On the average the workers live to about 35-40 years. Garvey, on behalf of the workers put forth rather miserable demands: to raise the highest wage-rates from 3 shillings 6 pence to 4 shillings and the introduction of the 8-hour working day. He also brought up the plan of introducing in Jamaica the system of State capitalism, proposing that the Government take upon itself the organisation of a whole number of industries.

After Garvey, also other members of the Deputation spoke, while the Governor warned them that they should not be too long for his time was very limited and he had to leave.

After the Deputation had spoken, the Governor, first of all declared that he simply did not believe them. True, there is some unemployment; but is it possible there should not be any, once the country is undergoing economic depression? However, there is no necessity for the Government to interfere with regard to help to the unemployed, for the philanthropic societies are doing their bid and rendering help to the poor. The Governor is categorically against all plans for establishing State capitalism, in view of the fact that no good results were obtained anywhere, and the endeavour made in Australia, for instance, merely led to big losses. As regards the question of raising wages to 4 shillings and the introduction of the 8-hour working day, there can be no talk about it, for this would mean reduced output and bigger costs, and Jamaica is not rich enough to permit itself such luxuries.

In conclusion the Governor said: "I am not convinced that the position of labour at present is such as to necessitate any immediate action by the Government, nor do I at present see my way to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. This is not a suitable time for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, because the circumstances which were bad now might easily become worse by the end of the year. And while the position of the sugar industry hangs in the balance as it does now, I think it is no use our endeavouring to arrive at any opinions on facts which may change either for the worse or better very materially by the end of a year or 18 months".

The workers of Jamaica in this way got their first lesson in politics. In the future they will know that a capitalist agent only judges on the bad or good state of the country not by the standards of living of the workers but by the profits of the bourgeoisie. The principal thing is to see that the dividends are good, while to the fact that the workers, exhausted by their horrible labor conditions and their semi-starvation existence, die before their time, not much attention should be paid, for so far the capitalists are not threatened with a shortage in labor power. On the contrary, higher death-rates will only rid the

philanthropic societies of extra expenditure.

This lesson is not the last. The workers of Jamaica, influenced by their pseudo-leader Garvey, have decided to send a petition to the British King. So far Garvey succeeded in preserving the illusion among the workers of the possibility by means of constitutional methods to improve their conditions; these illusions, however, will soon dissipate. The toiling masses of Jamaica will convince themselves, just like the toilers of South Africa, Gambia, Nigeria, India and other colonies and possessions of "His Majesty" have already become convinced, that the King and his Ministers, Parliaments and Governors are merely executing the will of the capitalist class.

The workers of Jamaica will get the same reply from the King as they got from the Governor, and should they happen to be too obstinate in their demands, they will soon enough convince themselves that the Royal Army Service Corps in Jamaica know how to shoot down the workers not worse than their colleagues in other parts of the British Empire. The workers of Jamaica have only one road to follow for improving their conditions--- that is the road of the class struggle. Only by freeing themselves from the influence of their reformist pseudo-leaders, only by organising militant trade unions, will the workers of Jamaica be able to force the exploiters to grant their demands. The experiences gained in the struggles of the working class of all countries and all nations prove that such men like Garvey bring much harm to the working class, and the sooner the workers will turn aside from them, the quicker will they be able to obtain improvements in their present conditions.

We are certain that the "Lesson in Politics" given by the Governor of Jamaica will give good results and that the workers of Jamaica will in the very near future line up with the ranks of the militant fighters for a New Society.

A. GOLD.

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CONDITIONS OF NEGROES IN THE FRENCH AND BELGIAN COLONIES OF CENTRAL AFRICA.

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The history of the colonisation of Central Africa is one record of murder and rapine, the extermination of entire tribes whose villages and lands are now laid waste. The Belgians and the French were no better and no worse than the other colonisers in this respect. We have no intention of writing here the history of the colonisation of this vast area; but we should remember that barely 30 years ago the population of the Belgian Congo was estimated variously at 20, 30 and even 40 millions---the 1912 census discovered that only 8½ millions were left. Similarly in 1900, the population of French Equatorial Africa was estimated at 8 to 10 millions. The 1921 census showed only 2.9 millions! That the population has decreased by half is admitted even in official quarters.

In the early 1905 the last instructions of the heads of the different companies to their agents were: "Don't forget that the Maxim machine-gun is a serious factor in the extraction of rubber." But these areas were depopulated not only by machine guns but by the inhuman exploitation of the colonial companies who compelled the natives to supply rubber and procure ivory, and by the diseases (cholera, typhus and venereal diseases) brought in by the whites and "sleeping sickness", which ravaged the country as large numbers of Negroes were transferred from district to district.

"Many tribes have died out completely; others have migrated to other localities, and areas that once supported flourishing populations are now wastes"---writes a German traveller who recently returned from the Belgian Congo.

BELGIAN CONGO. The colonisation of the Belgian Congo like the colonisation of the French possessions began in the early '90s, the aim being to tap these areas of rubber, ivory and copra. The fall of rubber prices (which decreased from 34,80 francs in 1910 to 4.75 fr. in 1914) and the decreasing ivory returns compelled the colonisers to cultivate different commercial plants like coffee, cocoa and cotton. The exportation of palm nuts and palm oil is now a big factor, whereas rubber exports have contracted considerably.

Copper (and not agricultural product) has taken the place formerly occupied by rubber. The rich copper deposits discovered in the Katanga District in 1909 determined the further development of Belgian Congo. In 1911, 997 tons of copper were exported, in 1926, 90,000 tons, increasing to 130,000 tons in 1929. The number of whites in this country has increased from 700 to 7,000; 50% of the Europeans in the Congo living at the present time in Katanga.

The "Union Minière du Haut Katango" who owns these deposits is controlled by the Belgian "Société Générale", 50% of the shares being controlled by foreign capital. About 30,000 Negroes are employed in the copper mines. This company pays out a dividend averaging 30%, while the nominal value of the shares has been increased 20 times over.

Besides copper, the Belgian Congo is fairly rich in gold deposits (4,000 Kgr. being exported in 1927). There are also big diamond diggings which occupy the second place in the world for output.

WESTERN AFRICA. The area of French Western Africa is four million square kilometres. About 80% of the export trade of West Africa is made up of oil-yielding plants and vegetable oil: ground nut and palm oil, etc. Another commercial plant that finds a big export trade is cocoa cultivated chiefly in the plantations of the Ivory Coast. The cultivation of cotton is also making big strides in West Africa today. Another big item in the export-trade of West Africa is made up of costly and common kinds of lumber, while, of late, large quantities of bananas are being grown specially for export.

EQUATORIAL AFRICA. The area of Equatorial Africa is 2,8 million square kilometres, or more than four times larger than the territory of France. The economic life of Equatorial Africa depends mainly on the production of rubber, the plantations being owned chiefly by the French "Compagnie Forestière Sanga Oubanghi". There is also a big export trade in lumber.

However, it must be said that despite the stupendous natural resources of this country (for there are known big mineral deposits, in particular copper-ore, with a 50% content of metal), Equatorial Africa has hardly been developed so far.

TOGOLAND AND THE CAMEROONS which were annexed by the French after the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty, have a good system of railroads that were constructed before the war by the Germans. This is playing a big role in the economic development of these colonies. Palm oil, cocoa-beans, cotton, rubber, coffee and other commercial plants are the chief products exported.

CONDITIONS OF NEGROES. Information on the condition of the Negroes in these colonies is of a casual nature. No information on this question is to be had from official quarters, and consequently the only source of information are the writings of travellers. During the last few years two books have been published on the Negroes and their lives in the French colonies, which give us a very good idea of what the conditions are. One of these books, written by Londres^o, the well-known french journalist, created a big stir even in the bourgeois press. The second book was written by a prominent French writer---André Gide.^{oo}

^o) The land of the Black.

^{oo}) A voyage to the Congo.

There is another book on the Belgian Congo, by Walters, published in 1924. But the book of this socialist, a former "Minister of Labour" as we learn from the cover, is far too official and less interesting than the works of the foregoing authors. Apparently the conditions of the Negroes in the Belgian Congo is essentially the same as in the French Congo. According to Ortis, the Chairman of the Belgian Red Cross, the death-rate among the natives in 1927 was 128 and 144 per thousand for certain categories of workers in the Belgian Congo. The questions and debates in the Chamber initiated by the Brussels Representatives regarding the position of the natives in the Congo have recently prompted Ortis to send a letter to the Minister for the Colonies in which he asserts that his data is incontestable.

The Negroes in the French and the Belgian Colonies earn on the average from 60 to 80 centimes a day plus very bad food (rice, vegetable oil and salt). If the cost of food is also included, then as Walters points out in one place the wage is 2 fr. 15 centimes, or in other words, a Negro working here gets for a whole day's work as much as an unskilled worker in the metropolis is paid for one hour's work. Apart from the story the foregoing figures tell, both Gide and Londres give excellent descriptions of the onerous living and working conditions of the Negroes.

Londres describes the construction of the Brazzaville-Ocean Railroad which connects outlying parts of the continent with the ocean;

"I have seen how railroads were built in other places. I have seen how special equipment and materials were prepared beforehand for the laying of the road. But here, the Negro is used instead of machinery, instead of everything else in fact. He takes the place of the machine, the motor-lorry, the crane. And were it only possible he would be used instead of explosives too!

In order to shift a barrel of cement weighing 130 kgr. the "Batignolles" Construction Co. uses as its equipment a stick and the heads of two negroes. I found here two other very modern instruments---the hammer and the pick. In Mayombi we intend to dig a tunnel with these instruments!

"The Negroes died like flies. Of the 8,000 that came to Batignolles only 5,000 were soon left, and then 4,000, and later 1,700. New recruits had to take their places. But what was happening among the Negroes?

"As soon as the whites made preparations for the road the cry of "Machine" went up everywhere (this is how the Negroes call the Railroad). The Negroes knew that the whites had gone to find more people to build the railroad. They ran away. "You yourselves taught us---they told the missionaries---that we must not commit suicide, but to go on the "machine" means death". They sought refuge in the forests, of the Chad Coast in the Belgian Congo. In districts that were once inhabited by people the recruiting agents only found the Chimpanzee. Can you build the Brazzaville-Railroad with monkeys? We started to hunt the Negroes. Our men caught them as best they could with the help of lassoes, etc. We put "collars" on them as they are called here. Afterwards repressions were started. Entire villages were punished.

"The human material recruited this way was not of the best. Since transport and supplies were not improved, the death rate increased. The barges that brought them in could well be called funeral biers, and common cemeteries soon sprang up around the working places. The group working in Gribing lost 75% of their number. Of 2250, only 429 persons returned to Mikula Kasaka. Of 174 persons recruited in Duego on the Sango River, 80 got as far as Brazzaville and 69 to the place of work. Three months later only 36 were left!

"The death-rate was just as high among the other groups! We must reckon with a loss of 6 to 8,000 people", said Governor General Antonnetti---or give up the railroad."

"But the number of victims was greater. To-day it already exceeds 17,000 and there is still 300 kilometres to go."

"The Negroes are treated as if they were oxen. Any administrator will tell you that transportation is the scourge of Africa. The portages kill children and undermine the health of adults. They dull the minds of the men and women and degrade them to the level of animals. The whites defended this with the words: "we shall compel them to make the roads---it's for their own good. True the portages are killing them, but when the roads are built they will not need to carry any more." But they are still carrying to this day!

"Wherever we should have worked to extend the settlements, we have depopulated the districts and laid them waste. Woodcutters in the human forest."

What is the result? A threatening and dangerous situation:

"During the course of three years: (1) 600,000 natives migrated to the Gold Coast (British Colony); (2) 2,000,000 natives went to Nigeria; (3) 10,000 natives do not live in the Kraals but in the bush (that is all that is left them!) on the Ivory Coast.

"They are running away: (1) from the army recruiting agents; (2) from the recruiting agents for the railroad companies and from (3) individual offers to work in the forests."

"Here are a thousand Negroes marching along in Indian file with loads on their heads. They are going to Tafir to build the railroad on the Ivory Coast. Seven hundred kilometres. Supplies? They will find them on the road if God pleases! This caravan will be on the road a month before it reaches its destination. How these slaves keep in step! If anyone is left on the road, the gap is soon filled up. The file becomes shorter.

"They could easily be transported by motor; 20 days could be saved and in all probability as many lives. Pay lorries? Wear out tyres? and burn gasoline? The funds would never hold out! The Negroes are fat enough to stand it!"

"Once against the forest resounds. Two hundred Negroes are tugging at a big tree just cut down. It is going to serve as a support for the bridge. No ropes, no chains are used, only the hands of the Negroes. The trunk does not move.....

"The foreman shouts 'one, two, three!' and suddenly in a fit of hysteria runs along the trunk that has to be lifted and lashes the backs of the poor men already doubled up under the load....

"Since the trunk did not budge an inch, the foremen threw themselves on these naked people, kicking them and hitting them with their fists."

"The foreman and the guards kept on hitting the Negroes as hard as they could, and the Negroes as it were by reflex action hit the rock harder."

"I always have a stick ready in my hand, said one of the white foremen to Londres. You cannot work any other way here.... It is a hard thing to say, but machines cannot displace the Negro. You would need millions. There is nothing better than the "Banana-motor"!"

"Here is a description of the way wages are paid out: 'Z. earned 77 francs a month. The master has paid 88 fr. in taxes for him: 40 fr. poll-tax, 48 fr. in lieu of compulsory labour (as instituted by the Government) and after working a whole month in the forest Z. is to get only 11 francs

"Bernhardt, the manager, decided to deduct only 50 fr. this month. Z. gets 38 francs and says "Thank you."

"But, Bernhardt, if they are sent to work in the forest they cannot put in their compulsory work. Why do they have to pay 48 francs when they are compelled to do other work?"

"Oh!---replies Bernhardt---that's specially for the Negro. The whites don't need to understand anything here."

Continuing his description of the way wages are paid out, Londres in conclusion remarks ruefully: one month's suffering in the jungle, and instead of being paid---they get into debt? The organisation of labour in Africa still leaves much to be desired!

André Gide writes in his "Voyage to the Congo": On the road we met a party of women mending the road. These ~~un~~fortunate creatures were working in a heavy downpour. Many of them without leaving their work were nursing their children at the breast. Every 20 metres or so along the road, there were big holes running to a depth of 3 metres, and here WITHOUT ANY PROPER INSTALLATIONS OR INSTRUMENTS (Gide's italics) these poor creatures were scraping the sand out with their hands to level the road. Not infrequently the undermined earth would slide down in heavy falls burying the women and the children working underneath in the excavations. Many told us about it."

Here is what we read in another place:

"All the women from morning to night are dragging earth to the road; sometimes they have to go to fetch it a long way off. They have nothing with which to dig the earth, which is carried in baskets on their heads. Quite a large number of the women were nursing children. This explains the high-mortality-rate and the progressive depopulation.

"This work is compulsory. It is done instead of paying the tax fixed by the Government. These women workers get nothing whatever for their toil."

"Natives who do not gather sufficient rubber are fined 40 francs. i.e. all they can ever earn in a month."

"Once," the author relates, "a native crept into his tent and taking him for the chief of the caravan begged him to defend him. It appeared that six days ago the administrator of the Boda District charged Lieutenant Yambo to start repressive measures against the inhabitants of a village whose only crime was that they had refused to leave their huts and fields, which for some reason were needed by the company in that area. A punitive expedition of three gendarms commanded by Lieutenant Yambo started out, and in every village that they passed they took two or three of the males. Chained together, the prisoners were brought to Bodenbergs, and the executions began. Twelve men were tied to a tree, but the chief managing to escape. Yambo and his soldiers shot down these innocent people after which many women were flogged and beaten. Still dissatisfied, Yambo ordered his men to get five children who were thrown into a hut which was burned to the ground. According to Yambo, the chief who managed to escape, this incident cost 32 people their lives.

The imperialists claim that their mission is to civilise the colonies. They always point to the cultural mission of the "white man". But the foregoing facts illustrate what their mission really means. The working and living conditions of the natives are incredible. They are ground down and mown down by the white settlers. The system of labour in the colonies is actually slavery instituted and legalised by the State. The French and Belgian capitalists strive to justify forced labour with a plethora of juridical formulas about "forced labour" taking the place of tax. In their reply to the contemplated Draft International Convention on the question of "Forced Labour" as proposed by the League of Nations Labour Office, the Belgian and French Governments define the meaning of Forced Labour as follows:

"All labour, work, carried out against the will of the individual...

with the exception of labour for any sanction as a result of financial or civil liabilities.^o This formula legalises the present state of affairs. It shows that like the imperialists everywhere, the French and Belgian bourgeoisie have no intention of giving up "compulsory labour" and thus reconcile themselves to any reduction of their colonial profits. The abrogation of compulsory labour would knock the bottom out of the whole colonial system, which can only be smashed by the struggle of all the workers and the oppressed peoples throughout the world against Imperialism and Capitalism.

MICHELSON.

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THE CONDITIONS OF THE NATIVES IN EAST AFRICA.

British East Africa consists of: Kenya, Zanzibar, Uganda, North Rhodesia and Tanganyika.

East Africa has a fertile and well irrigated soil. It is rich in coal and copper mines. However, the basic significance of East Africa for Great Britain is not only the fact that it provides the British industry with raw materials, but besides, also serves as a profitable market for Britain for exporting its capital and manufactures.

The invasion of East Africa by the British took place under the pretence of struggling against the slave trade. After having reinforced its power over there, the British declared the land to be the property of the Government (in 1898); the natives were only granted the right to rent their lands (with the exception of Uganda, where the natives preserved the right to possess land), besides, the best plots of land were handed over to the Europeans, while those which were absolutely not fit for cultivation were left to the Negroes. And while the density of the population comprises on the average 12 persons to one sq. mile, and hundreds of fertile soil remains uncultivated, some of the lands allotted to the natives are so thickly populated that these lands are not even able to feed them. Is it any wonder, then, that as the result of British Rule, a country which formerly had a surplus of grain, is at the present frequently experiencing periods of famine; that the country which formerly exported its grain is forced to import it today?

Capitalism in East Africa has sprung up only recently; 35 years ago there were no railroads there, no mines nor factories. Hired labour was also unknown at that time. The native would cultivate his land, pasture his cattle and from time to time, together with the other members of his tribe, fulfil his public duties on the laying and cleaning of roads, building of primitive bridges, etc.; to this work they would be sent upon orders of the Chief of their tribe.

The Europeans already at the very beginning were faced with the problem of labour power for cultivating the vast areas seized by them. To import labourers into Africa would cost too dear; Besides, it seemed rather inexpedient to bring in workers not used to the tropical climate. And the Government made up its mind to do everything possible for compelling the natives to work for the Europeans. "We consider the only method for forcing the natives to leave their reserves and seek work to be---taxation. Only in this way the cost of living will go up and consequently, a stimulus will be created for the natives to offer their labour". Such were the words of one of the Governors of Kenya, in a speech made by him in 1913, and this shows quite plainly the reason for the brutal tax oppression under which the native population of Africa is languishing.

^o) Forced Labour. League of Nations, International Labour Office, 1930.

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In the different regions of East Africa the taxes (poll and hut), were in 1924 approximately as follows: from 2/- to 9/- per year in Tanganyika, from 2 to 7/- 6 in the North East, from 2 to 10/- in North West Rhodesia, from 12 to 15/- in Uganda and from 12 to 20/- in Kenya. In the Buganda region (Uganda), the native cotton-growers pay 15/- per year to the British Government, 10/- to the landowner, and to the native authorities, for freeing them from obligatory public work---10/-. Altogether he pays 35/- per year.

Usually the amount of taxes is fixed in such a way, that the native is quite unable to pay the amount from the money earned by him from the cultivation of his land.

The following are some examples:

The whole agricultural output of the natives in Kenya amounted in 1924 to £546,000; while the amount of taxes paid out by them amounted to £876,000. The general income of a native cotton-grower amounts to about £6-7 per year (the large native output of cotton is to be found in Uganda and partially in Tanganyika), while the tax (from the whole of the population including children), reaches the sum of 4½/- per head.

According to other sources (See "White Capital and Coloured Labour") the average cost of agricultural products for each family equals to 70-90/- per year, out of which the goods output equals to not more than 30 shillings. The taxes swallow up one-third of the income of the family. Counting only the adult and able-bodied male workers, the amount of taxes comprises 25/- per year; and if we were to figure the number of male workers working for hire (approximately 15% of all the able bodied men workers of the tribe), the amount for one hired labourer will reach 13/8d. per month. The maximum wages earned on the estates in the locality to which we refer here, amount to 12/- in cash besides food. Consequently, when the tax for a whole family has to be paid from the sum earned by the natives working for hire, their earnings cannot even suffice to pay their tax. When a hired labourer pays only for himself, during the course of one year, he pays out 2 months of his wages for taxes.

In 1922 the average wage in Kenya amounted to £6.10 per year, i.e. almost 11/- per month; while the majority received only 8/- per month. The cost of the food given to the workers amounts to £5 per year, or 6/- per month (1924); at the same time food for one European in Kenya amounts to about £5 per month. Consequently, receiving 8/-, the worker is not able to provide even for a small family.

In 1924 in the Province of Kikuyu (Kenya), wages, according to data of the Private Recruiting Agency, amounted to 8/- per month, besides food. This rate is a little higher than the pre-war level, in spite of the fact that prices in Kenya during this time have doubled, and taxes went up by one and a half times.

Wages for particularly heavy work as for example, for building roads, etc., are higher: 14 to 18/- per month. A small group of highly skilled workers whom it is difficult to replace, are paid £5 per month. In the Kisumu Docks, where there is a sharp shortage of labour power, the workers succeeded in getting the 8-hour working day and a raise in wages to 18/- per month with additional raises every six months by 2/-. Besides, they get a food ration, consisting of 1½ pounds of meat and 1 pound of potatoes once every week. This is the biggest pay received by natives in East Africa for the most difficult work.

According to the Annual Report of the Native Labour Department in 1928 in Kenya there were on the average 135,023, or 30.03% of the whole adult able-bodied male population. Besides, during the harvest 4,600 women and 17,300 children were working, doing some of the more easy work.

Wages of the agricultural unskilled workers were about 12-14 shillings per month, besides food. The plantation workers and the majority of the labourers occupied on the building of railways in charge of the Public Works Department, received 16-18 shillings per month, besides

food; women---10-12/-, and children---6-8/- (besides food). (Information Sociale, April 7, 1930).

According to the data of the census of 1929, out of 83,020 male workers occupied on the European plantations in Nyassa, 19,411 got less than 6/- per month and 60,639---from 6-20 shillings. In the official report concerning railway construction in Nyassa (1929), it is referred to the small labour productivity of the natives, which is explained by their becoming quickly exhausted owing to their continually not getting sufficient nourishment. In the same report it is said that even the prisoners in the Central prison are fed better than the native workers (Revue Internationale du Travail, May 1930).

In view of the fact that the natives are inclined to leave work just as soon as they earn a sum sufficient to pay their taxes the Government of East Africa issued a number of laws, supposed to regulate the relations between the labourers and the landlords and define the terms for hiring workers and punish any who may leave the job before the end of the term agreed upon. Generally, these terms are from about 2 to 8 months. When hiring workers for a term of more than one month, the agreement is signed in the presence of an Government official. If a labourer fails to fulfil the agreement, he is subject of imprisonment. Owing to the absence of any sort of native organisations, in whose name collective negotiations with regard to labour conditions could be conducted, the workers, when closing their individual agreements, have no means for protecting themselves from the employers mistreating them in any way they please.

In order to compel the natives to go to work outside, those who remain at home in Nyassa are forced to pay a double tax as compared to those who work for the Europeans.

It must be said that there is no way of getting out of paying the taxes in East Africa, for the natives are attached to the land of their tribes, and from which they have the right to leave only if hired by Europeans. According to the registration law, every native worker is obliged to have a certificate with the imprint of his thumb. Anyone who runs away from his landlord is thrown into prison either as a deserter or as a vagabond. Only for 1922 there were 3,872 natives sentenced to different terms for not having paid their hut taxes, etc., and 2,674---for having violated the registration law of the native population.

However, in spite of all the Government measures noted above the shortage of labour power is not being liquidated, and as a source of supplying labour power in East Africa, the Institute of Forced Labour has been sanctioned.

Workers are recruited by force with the help of the chiefs of tribes, who are serving and getting salaries from the British Government; besides, the Europeans also have the advantage owing to the tradition already mentioned by us of natives doing collective public work upon the orders of the tribal chiefs, and which to a significant degree facilitated the compulsory recruitment of natives. Another form of forced labour is the labour of those who are in the prisons and concentration camps, for which the men get no pay whatever, and where they are sent to for violating the rules of hunting for game of the different limitations for fishing, the rules for the protection of game, for infringing upon the rules for trespassing upon strange territory, if not to mention the violation the masters and servants laws. All of this gives rise to the wide possibilities for getting free labour power.

And so, the chain has been completely locked. All the links are there! At first the African natives are deprived of their land, their only source for existence, and, with the help of taxes, from which they can in no way be freed, are compelled to close agreements with the European boss to become "voluntarily hired" workers. Should it happen that the native refuses to close such an agreement despite of everything, he can at any rate be compelled to do forced labour and be paid less than the worker who offers his services voluntarily. If he violates his agreement,--- and this agreement practically always requires that the

native leave his home for the sake of a miserable wage and toil in the most horrible conditions--he is looked for and found with the help of the registration system, after which he is sent to the concentration camp, where he is forced to work without any pay whatever.

Beginning with 1921 forced labor has been officially applied only on public construction works, during the building of railroads and roadways, etc. In actual fact, however, forced labor has been used all along and is used to-day also by private persons.

In 1922, for work on the railroads, voluntarily hired workers were paid 14/- a month and forced laborers---12/-. In 1923 voluntary laborers earned on the railroad construction works 16/- a month, and forced laborers---14/-. The death-rates among the first comprised 1.34 to every 1,000 per month, among the second---2.25.

"The above data", writes the author of the pamphlet, 'British Imperialism in East Africa', "are to a sufficient degree characteristic for the railway construction works. At times the number of sick and the death rates are smaller; at times, during epidemics or if the conditions happen to be exclusively bad, it is higher. In one case, when the Spanish influenza raged, there were 10.6 deaths to every thousand persons per month."

The widespread contagious diseases among the natives are to a great extent the result of the horrible conditions of transporting the workers and their miserable housing conditions in which they are forced to live by their bosses.

The workers are being driven from place to place in flocks; many of them are as a rule ill and leave behind them the disease germs. In Nairobi and Mombassa the workers are sent to premises over-crowded with people, where it is worse even than in the worst kind of night-lodgings in the European cities.

The miserable labor conditions and widespread diseases, for which the British bear the full responsibility, lead to the gradual depopulation of the natives in East Africa, and even the white colonisers have lately come to realise that no matter how good the system of forced labor may be, the dying-out and infected with disease masses will not be able to continue to supply them with the necessary amount of labor power for ever".

M.K.

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CONDITIONS OF THE NATIVES IN WEST AFRICA.

British West Africa is comprised of Gambia (the oldest of the British possessions in West Africa), Sierra-Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria. The Britishers first appeared on the West African Coast more than 300 years ago, attracted by the advantages of the slave trade, and eventually had significantly depopulated the region. In 1787, owing to this catastrophical consequence of the slave trade, which threatened to bring a shortage of native labor power, Britain began to reimport freed slaves into West Africa, settling them on the territory of Sierra Leone, obtained from one of the native chiefs. On the pretence of maintaining peace among the different tribes, the British gradually invaded new and new districts, enlarging in this way their possessions in Sierra-Leone.

On the Gold Coast the British settled as far back as the end of the Seventeenth Century. In 1900-1901 they obtained 4,000 mining concessions from the native chiefs, and gold industrial enterprises of modern type were established.

In Nigeria the invasion of the British first took place in 1862, which was carried out under the pretence of struggling against the slave trade. The British trading firms immediately started the exchange of products with the natives: they exchanged alcohol, fire-arms, and other articles manufactured in Europe for the local products---cocoanut, palm oil, etc

(cocoa and palm oil together comprise 60% of the whole export from West Africa; the Gold Coast provides about 50% of the total world production of cocoa).

Having settled in West Africa, the British, however, did not deprive the natives of their land, as was done by them in their East-African possessions. This policy was pursued because of the necessity to develop the native agricultural industry and increase the output of the natural products of the country which could be done only by the natives as the exclusively harmful tropical climate prevents the development of European colonisation; in East Africa, for example, there are elevated places where the climate is much more temperate than in the valleys, and where it is possible for Europeans to live; this, however, is not the case in West Africa.

The agricultural industry is chiefly in the hands of the small native farmers. About three-fourths of the totalling population of West Africa is occupied with peasant labor (both agriculture as well as gathering the fruit of the wild trees). The products of the peasant is being bought by the British firms at exceedingly low prices, the latter reaping tremendous profits when selling these articles in Europe. In spite of the fact that the prices on imported products from West Africa are steadily going up on the European markets, the natives are being paid less and less, so that the native peasant, in order to keep up his usual standard of living, is compelled to continually increase his output. Simultaneously with the decreased rates of pay for the products of the African peasant, imported goods which are continually required by the peasant have greatly increased in price. Thus, for example, for English cotton goods one had to pay in 1920 four times more than in 1913, while 1 ton of palm oil one sold in 1918 by £3.18/- cheaper than before the war; 1 ton of palm kernel---by £2 10/- 10. cheaper; cocoa---by £1 7/ 8. cheaper, etc.

While the exploitation of the native peasant, who is chiefly occupied in the agricultural industry, is effected by way of the exchange of products, in the mining industry (in Northern Nigeria tin is produced, in Southern---coal, on the Gold Coast---gold, manganese, diamonds), where the British capitalists rule (up till the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century gold was obtained in West Africa by the natives themselves), the native workers are cruelly exploited.

The following is the way hired labor is paid in the different branches of the mining industry:

The minimum wage in the tin pits, in which 23,400 workers are occupied, equals to 1d. per hour, or about 4/- for a 48-hour working week. The average wage is 1/- per day.

On the Gold Coast, in the gold fields, where nearly 10,000 workers are occupied, wages reach 1½/- to 2/- for a 9-hour working day.

In the coal industry in 1926 unskilled surface workers were paid ¾/- per day and underground workers 1/- per day.

A very widespread occupation in West Africa is portering. The porters carry great weights on their heads, covering long distances. In Sierra-Leone alone there are 18,000 porters, working for private persons, and a large number of them are being hired by Government and other institutions. Such a carrier makes from 12 to 18 miles per day with loads of 45-50 pounds on his head. They earn from 1-1½/- per day.

In West Africa the wages are generally paid in money daily or weekly. But in some of the pits and in the majority of the forestry concessions exists the system of using native-contractors, who hire workers on conditions that wages will be paid to them after the term of six months, when the contractor will finish his job and get paid by the concessioner. Until the six months are up the worker merely gets some small sums for food; besides the workers are to buy their food on the local market only, which is usually in the hands of the same contractor, who is interested in raising the market prices, so that by the time the worker will have to receive his money, there is very little or nothing left for him to get. The concessioner pays the contractor a certain sum of money for the work produced.

The extent to which the native laborers are being exploited by British capital can be judged by the colossal profits received by the British capitalists in West Africa.

Thus, the ROPP TIN Co., Ltd., paid out 50% of its dividends in 1913, 60% in 1919, 80% in 1924, and 65% in 1925; beginning with 1913 up to 1925 the shareholders received 820% profits on their capital. The Kadun Syndicate paid during the period of 1917-1920 435% on its invested capital. Four of the companies for working up the tin mines sold each ton of tin in 1925 with a profit of 64%; in the other 36% of the selling price, 22% comprised wages. If we figure it up in working hours, we see that out of every 8 hours' work put in by the miner in the tin mines of Nigeria, more than 6 hours he works on the employer while only about 2 hours for himself. In other words, for every pence earned by the worker, more than 3 pence go into the pocket of the employer.

The supply of native labor power is becoming greater, because of the increase cost of living which results in the peasant family being able to preserve its former standard of living only by having one or more members of the family work for wages at the European enterprises.

However, in some of the districts the influx of labor power is insufficient to satisfy the demands of the industry. To stimulate the supply special taxes are being levied and in Northern Nigeria, for example, the following system of taxation is applied: the peasants are taxed to the amount of 10% of the gross receipts, which amounts to approximately 25% of the net profits, while wage laborers are only paying 3 1/3% of their average wages (1/- per month with an average wage, as we indicated above, of 1/- per day). Naturally, in this way "voluntary" offers of native labor is stimulated! "The Government taxes them (the natives) with a yearly tax", wrote one of the mineowners of Northern Nigeria, "and the natives understand that the easiest way to pay such a tax is to get the necessary money by working for wages instead of selling their goats or products of their farms. Undoubtedly, the Government does its best (what it should really do), to supply the necessary amount of labor".

Forced labor is openly used in West Africa to a very limited degree, namely, merely for keeping in order the land and water transport lines, and in some of the provinces also for railway construction; however, the heavy taxes are sufficient for guaranteeing the employers with the necessary number of workers.

B. Smith.

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