In a later paper, "Arusha Declaration and the Rule of Law"[3] Professor James traced some of the consequences of the failure to put the ujamaa movement under the guidance of the rule of law.

3 Presented at a seminar at the University of Dar es Salaam in March 1973, under the auspices of the Economic Research Bureau.

Review Article

MAHMOOD MAMDANI*

E. A. Brett, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919-1939* (London: Heinemann, 1972).

The post-war crisis of capitalism in the underdeveloped world shattered the hegemony of bourgeois social science over the explanation of underdevelopment in the third world. As would be expected, social science ideology was first challenged where the crisis was most acute—in Latin America. In place of an empirical and a historical *description* of underdevelopment there developed, through the efforts of Frank, Stevenhager, and Laclau, an analysis of underdevelopment as a system, with its historical origin in the *relations* between the capitalist and the pre-capitalist modes of production and with its own laws of motion that enable the system to reproduce these same relations and thus itself.

In Africa, as the euphoric dust surrounding the independence years settled down and the UN 'Decade of Development' remained at the level of a pious proclamation, grotesque against the ongoing reality of underdevelopment, the material base for a hegemonic bourgeois ideology began to disintegrate. Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*[1] sought to establish the general movement in the historical relation between the capitalist economies of Europe and the pre-capitalist economies of Africa. E. A. Brett's *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919-1939* is an attempt to reinterpret the colonial relation and delineate its consequences for the process of underdevelopment in East Africa. The preface introduces the book as "part history, part economics and part political science"; more importantly, Brett presents it as a "contribution to the old tradition of political economy and more especially to its Marxist variant". What Brett lays claim to is not just a set of conclusions different from what bourgeois social science has given us, but another method of analysis, i.e., historical materialism. What he does present, unfortunately, is an eclectic combination of structuralism at the level of the economy, and pluralist analysis (or pressure group analysis) at the level of politics, with a liberal sprinkling of the *terminology* of class analysis in the introduction and conclusion. It is important to establish the specificity of Brett's method and its distance from both traditional bourgeois idealism and historical materialism, for it is his method of analysis that explains the shortcomings as well as the strengths of his book.

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1 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972).

It is at the level of an analysis of economic structures that Brett makes his contribution. Following Hobsbawm's *Industry and Empire*,[2] Brett explains the nature of the crisis in the structure of British capitalism after the First World War. Within this theoretical framework, he locates the origin of colonial aid and preferences in an attempt to solve this crisis. While the purpose of granting preferences to colonial primary products was to cement the unequal colonial relation, the Colonial Development Act of 1929 is shown to have a dual purpose: capital assistance for colonial infrastructural development sought to increase the production of primary commodities in the colonies (and thus its supply to the metropole) while providing a market for the metropolitan capital goods industry (thus helping alleviate the unemployment problem in the economy).

His analysis of economic structures in East Africa includes a detailed and valuable analysis of precisely how a transfer of surplus took place from the peasant to the settler economy on an East Africa-wide basis. Settler appropriation of at least a part of the peasants' surplus product was facilitated through control over railway and customs policy:

(1) Railway Rating Policy: Low freight rates on the export of temperate-climate foodstuffs—maize and wheat—enabled their producers (Kenyan settlers) to compete effectively with South African and Argentinian competitors in the export market. At the same time, these rates were subsidized through high charges on the export of predominantly peasant exports (cotton and coffee) and imports (cheap textiles).

(2) Railway Building Policy: (i) The political success of the Kenya railway administration in ensuring its control over the transport of the lucrative high value-to-weight ratio crops of the Kilimanjaro (Arabica coffee) and the Lake (cotton and Robusta coffee) Regions. In Kilimanjaro, inspite of official Tanganyikan opposition, the settlers succeeded in keeping open the Voi-Kehe connection between the Kenya-Uganda and the Northern Tanganyika Lines, thereby successfully monopolizing the bulk of the Kilimanjaro traffic. While the Northern Tanganyika Line operated at an estimated loss of £500,000 between 1919 and 1931, the Kilimanjaro traffic took the Kenyan route. In Lake Region, the Kenyan administration prevented the Tanganyika Railways from developing an independent steamer service on Lake Victoria or from offering lower rates to produce (the two railway systems were unified in order to prevent competition). Thus, the new Tanganyika Tabora-Mwanza Line served only the area directly due south of the Lake while the Kenyan system continued to carry more than two-thirds of the Lake Region exports.

Railway Building Policy: (ii) The building programme of the railway concentrated on building branch lines in settler regions, sparsely populated and specializing in low-rated products, thus operating at a permanent loss. The loss, however, was subsidized by high charges on peasant products.

(3) Customs Union: An East African Customs Union operated after 1922. A 'free exchange of local produce' effectively opened the Ugandan and Tanganyikan markets to high-cost settler production, while common tariffs closed them off to cheaper imports. At the same time, the railway 'country produce rates' guaranteed a highly protected market for Kenyan settlers and Ugandan sugar planters by imposing very low export but very high import rates on locally produced commodities like butter, wheat and sugar.

While he explains the techniques by which a transfer of surplus took place from the peasant to the settler economies, like the old bourgeois political economy that Marx criticized, Brett confines himself to the sphere of *distribution.* Marx, on the other hand, located the motive force for the development of any society in its process of *production*—in both the level of development of the productive forces and in the social relations of production. He identified as the basis of any society an historically determined structured whole, the *mode* of production. Historical materialism as a method of analysis thus demands both that we 'think the present historically'[3] and that we think it wholistically at the level of a mode of production.

It is important to keep in mind that historical materialism, strictly speaking, is *not* class analysis. It investigates relations of production, be these non-antagonistic or antagonistic. It is as relevant for a classless society as it is for a class society. Specifically, it is only in a social formation where one social group *appropriates* the surplus product from another that we find the emergence of *antagonistic* social relations, i.e., of classes. Only in such a society can we speak of class formation and class struggles. Brett, however, while he acknowledges the transfer of surplus from the peasant to the settler economies in colonial East Africa (thus acknowledging the existence of a class society), has nothing to say about the consequences of the social production and appropriation of the peasant surplus product for class formation within the colonies—the *central* question for a Marxist analysis of class society.

The point is that an analysis of economic structures must be incorporated into an analysis of class formations. The relation between historically developing economic structures and class formations within the economy must be analysed and brought out in the open. But when Brett speaks of production, he remains at the level of the peasant economy. In Kenya our understanding is limited to peasants and settlers. Class formations within the peasant sector, giving rise to a migrant rural proletariat (through the tax system), a stable rural proletariat (through the squatter system) and a kulak class in the reserves (a class that formed the backbone of the 'loyalists' during Mau Mau)—all this is obscured. At the same time, in Uganda, the peasant economy is assumed to be a collection of those mythical individuals, the peasants, millions of them

2 Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire; an Economic History of Britain Since 1950* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

3 Pierre Vilar, "Writing Marxist History," *New Left Review*, 80 (July-August 1973).

added arithmetically. The Mailo landlords, the tenant peasantry, its transformation into a kulak class after the 1928 Busulu and Envujjo Law, the Banyaruanda rural proletariat these kulaks employed (nearly 20 per cent of the Buganda population by the Second World War, the period Brett ends with)—these processes are also obscured.

The fact is that Brett's understanding of colonial domination and exploitation is confined to *external* relations. Because of the absence of class analysis, of an analysis of historical movement as the result of relations and struggle between classes, he fails to understand, even identify, the processes of class formation and class struggle within the colony. He thus fails to understand colonial domination as a historical process that *internalizes* what is initially a purely external relation. Although he quotes with approval Laclau's critique of Frank, the fact is that the critique is much more applicable to Brett.

It is when we leave the analysis of economic structures and come to the level of politics that the shortcomings of methodology are most obvious. There is here an absence of any political (class) analysis. When it comes to explaining *qualitative* changes in the political economy of the colony, Brett resorts to a descriptive analysis, of events and attitudes. Side by side with a persistant detailing of 'events' in a chronological order is a maticulous probing into the mind of the colonial bureaucracy. Decisions are personalized and seen as the product of the rise and fall of officials or as the result of the changing *attitudes* of 'key' officials. Thus, the explanation of why Tanganyika in the 1920s emphasized peasant production side by side with plantation production boils down to the 'attitude' of one Governor, Cameron! The explanation, in other words, is fortuitous. It does not emanate from analysing the dialectical and historical development of a particular structure.

When he does attempt to explain the social basis of political decisions, Brett resorts to a pluralist method. It consists in isolating a number of 'key' issues, gathering information on who *participated* in the 'decision-making process', finding out what the attitudes of individuals and the positions of groups were, and then comparing these to the actual decision. The purpose is to find out *who* decided. The method emphasizes pressure group and interest group analysis, *not* class analysis. Here, Brett shows no understanding of how the exercise of power is *institutionalized* in a given structure, and how the normal operation of a system produces and reproduces conditions that sustain the interests of the ruling class. In contrast, he understands only the obvious and articulated exercise of power. The limits of his political analysis are the limits of empiricism.

But we have already seen that Brett does not *always* ignore structure. His use of a structural analysis, however, is restricted to analysing economic phenomena within a given historical period; it is not used to analyse the historical process in its totality. The historical analysis lacks a structural dimension, whereas the structural analysis remains ahistorical. Structure and history, both integral to a Marxist analysis, remain apart.

The best illustrations of his political analysis are the two most detailed case studies in the book: of 'oligopoly' in the Ugandan cotton industry, and of the Kenyan political economy. In his case study of the Ugandan cotton industry, Brett seeks to explain (1) the dominance of British expatriate ginners, (2) the obsession of the State with the *quality* of the cotton produced, and (3) the nature of the State itself.

The dominant position of British ginners is explained as the result of their political *connections* with the metropolitan and the colonial State, and the relative political isolation of the Indian ginners:

> The large British ginning firms, although weaklings in the field of direct economic competition, were undoubtedly armed most effectively in the political sphere. Their British directors had direct access to the Colonial Office—Humphrey Leggett of the British East Africa Corporation was, as has already been said, the favoured advisor there in the early years of the twenties. Cotton interests were also represented on the Joint East Africa Board, but the firms themselves were in any event prestigious enough to be able to command direct access to the Colonial Office whenever they felt the need. And in Uganda the local managers of these firms were always among the most influential members of the local unofficial community and prominently represented in the Legislative Council. The small ginners on the other hand, and especially the Asians with limited capital working on a family basis, were unrepresented in London and much less closely connected to the authorities in Uganda, where in any event informal contacts between officials and high-status European unofficial persons were strong and exerted a powerful influence on policy. (p. 244)

The "obsession [of State cotton policy] with quality control" is explained as the result of the "overall paternalism" and the "pattern of recruitment and organization" of the Agricultural Department:

> The Department was made up almost exclusively of agriculturalists trained in scientific and technical matters but having little or no knowledge of economic or commercial issues, let alone those concerned with politics. . . . Their commercial naiveté led agriculturalists to ignore completely the advantages to the grower resulting from competition and to favour instead a controlled marketing system based upon the larger firms, which could be relied on 'responsibly' with regard to questions of proper storage, quality and so on. (pp. 246-7)

Finally, the State bureaucracy and its partiality to monopoly expatriate enterprise is explained in the following terms:

> The bureaucracy, with its ideological roots in the Weberian tradition of scientific administration, and its social identification with the expatriate business and agricultural class, strongly supported this latter position; the more so because of its dislike of the Asian trading class, which it suspected of dishonesty, and of its desire to stop Africans from moving out of their traditional pursuits into the modern sphere. (p. 304)

What this admixture of Weberian and pressure group analysis *assumes* is the autonomy of the State. Thus the social attitudes of the members of the bureaucracy—identification, dislike, suspicion or desire—combined with the pull and push of various pressure groups emerge as the *determinants* of State policy. The role of the State at any particular moment and through history is seen as the result of the social origin and the *interpersonal relations* of members of the bureaucracy; the State is not seen as a structure with an *objective relation* to society.[4]

What Brett also misses is the *specificity* of the *colonial* State. The colonial State throughout its history remained *subordinate* to the metropolitan State. It was thus not the political expression of internal class struggles, in fact it remained relatively above these; the internal class contradictions remained 'muted' (Cabral), unfolding to their fullest only after independence. But the colonial State did not just mediate the internal class struggle, it also *created* new classes (e.g., the rural and urban workers). While it is difficult to accept Frank's rather mechanistic determination of the colonial State as simply *reflecting* the interests of metropolitan capital, it would be totally wrong to ignore the *primacy* of the external colonial relation when speaking of the colonial State. We would do well to remember with Cabral: "In the colonial period it is the colonial State which commands history."[5]

Whereas the colonial State represented the interests of metropolitan capital, this representation was *mediated* through internal class forces, be these a settler rural bourgeoisie, comprador commercial capital or comprador landed capital. As we shall see in the case of Kenya, if we are to understand the changes (through history) in the nature of this mediation, we must understand the changing class formation in the colony.

Only an understanding of the class nature of the colonial State will explain the class basis of colonial policy and thus answer the questions put forth by Brett. For example, the colonial State's continual and primary emphasis on the quality of cotton to the exclusion of commercial factors, was *not* the result of idiosyncratic behaviour on the part of individuals who staffed the Agricultural Department ("commercial näiveté") but was a function of the demand for high quality cotton by the metropolitan bourgeoisie, (in this case, Lancashire capitalists). As early as the Cotton Famine of 1861-66, Lancashire was adversely affected by the fact that Indian cotton proved a poor substitute for American Middling. In 1902, the Empire Cotton Growing Association was formed expressly with the purpose of encouraging the cultivation of cotton in the Empire. But, as its chairman emphasized to the Royal Society of Arts,[6] "The problem . . . was not only how to establish and develop new cotton fields but also to discover countries where cotton of good and suitable quality could be grown". Such a country was Uganda.

Brett's failure to understand the class nature of the colonial State affects not just his analysis but also his empirical understanding. At the level of analysis, he fails to see the contradiction between the interests of the British ginners *in Uganda* and the metropolitan bourgeoisie *in Britain*. At the level of empirical understanding, he either ignores or does not realize the fact that the

4 On this point see Nicos Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist States," in Robin Blackburn, ed., *Ideology in the Social Sciences* (Fontana, 1972).

5 Amilcar Cabral, "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea," in his *Revolution in Guinea* (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1969), p. 69.

6 See M. Mamdani, "Uganda: Economic Policy Between the Wars," mimeo, University of Dar es Salaam, p. 7.

control of the cotton industry in Uganda, by 1928, had passed from the hands of the British ginners—in spite of their close *connections* with the colonial State and the Colonial Office—to big Indian capital which had come in from India after the First World War.

In his total analysis, then, Brett fails to grasp the *periodization* (qualitative movement) in the *historical* development of the cotton industry, a periodization which would roughly be as follows (for the period that Brett is concerned with):

I.	1906—1914	British ginners control the cotton industry.
II.	1914—1918	First World War shipping crisis. The first connections with the Bombay market made.
III.	1918—1928	Arrival of big Indian capital in search of a supply of high quality cotton for domestic industry. Conflict between European and Indian ginners *reflecting* a conflict between established and new capital.
IV.	1928—1938	Indian big capital controls the ginning industry. Co-operations between it and the few remaining British ginners to secure monopoly profits.

In spite of the fact that this is a historical case study, it lacks historical analysis. In fact, Brett's analysis of the Uganda cotton industry adds little to a study of the same by Ehrlich in the fifties.[7] Unfortunately, Brett seems to share with Ehrlich not only his understanding but also his ideological and methodological position: it is an empiricist critique from the point of view of a free trader.

The problem Brett poses in his analysis of Kenya is as follows: why did not Kenya develop into a Uganda (a peasant economy) nor into another Rhodesia (a politically *independent* settler economy)? His answer is three-fold: (1) the weak economic base of the settlers and thus their inability to attract settlers on the South Rhodesian scale, (2) the presence of the humanitarian opposition in Britain, and (3) the essentially parasitical nature of a settler economy.

As his analysis unfolds and leads to a conclusion, at times it smacks of almost an *arithmetical* reasoning: two reasons are better than one, and three even better. There is a reluctance to abstract the *determining* cause(s) behind the historical development of a social process.

What is most evident in this case study on Kenya, once again, is an *absence* of a political analysis. The weakness of the economic base of the Kenyan settler economy was not a *technical* one (that it was a parasitical economy, a feature it shared with every settler economy, including the South Rhodesian one) but a *historical* one. While the weakness of the economic base led to the political weakness of the settlers, this was in itself, in part, the result of political opposition from and conflict with other classes in Kenya: the Indian commercial bourgeoisie in the 1920s and the Mau Mau rural proletariat

7 Cyril Ehrlich, *The Marketing of Cotton in Uganda 1900-1950; a case study of colonial government economic policy* (London, 1958).

in the 1950s. What explains the difference between the fortunes of the settlers in Kenya and those in Rhodesia is the difference between the internal political (class) struggles in the two colonies.

The conflict with the Indian commercial bourgeoisie gave rise to the Devonshire White Paper of 1923—*Indians in Kenya*—proclaiming "the paramountcy of African interests" in Kenya. Precisely at this time, however, the Rhodesian settlers were receiving from the same Colonial Office a declaration of internal self-government.[8] But since he has not understood the nature of the colonial State, Brett takes the Devonshire White Paper's declaration of "the paramountcy of African interests" literally and then proceeds to show how the fact that the "inviolability of the Highlands" was maintained "necessarily meant that the commitment to African paramountcy must become null and void". (p. 180) But the declaration was not mere verbal gymnastics. With it, *direct* political control over the colony passed from the Kenyan Government (with strong settler representation) to the Colonial Office. Brett, however, continually assumes that the Kenyan State was controlled throughout and ultimately by the strongest pressure group in the colony: the settlers. (This is unlike his Uganda case study where he assumes the State to be autonomous). He thus cannot understand that the Devonshire White Paper was in fact a declaration of the paramountcy of the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie! The point he does not grasp is that while 'African interests' were defined paramount in *opposition* to the interests of the settler rural bourgeoisie and the Indian commercial bourgeoisie, it was the colonial State which was to determine the content of these interests, and the colonial State represented the metropolitan bourgeoisie!

Political opposition to the settlers crystallized in the fifties once again. After the war, while MacMillan marched up and down Africa heralding 'the wind of change', in Rhodesia the wind blew the way of the settlers who sailed within a decade to U.D.I. In Kenya, however, it ship-wrecked the settlers (not because of MacMillan but because of Mau Mau) who were compelled, in that same decade, to hand over political control of the colony to the Colonial Office and ultimately to the national petit-bourgeoisie. Once again the internal political (class) struggle decided the fate of the settlers.

While he shies away from Marx's *method*, Brett is not at all averse to using Marx's *conclusions*. Marxism is thus put forth in the book not as a method of analysis but as a set of conclusions; not in its creative moments, but in its orthodoxy! This is clear in the introduction and conclusion where Brett attempts to situate himself in the context of all those writing on colonial capitalism. He identifies two 'extreme' trends: the 'right' apologists of colonial capitalism (the Parsonian school) and its 'left' critics (exemplified by Frank) who question the 'progressive' role of capitalism in the colonies. Brett situates himself in the centre (along with Marx, as he puts it). The Marxist position

8 See Ivory Robinson, "The Petit-Bourgeoisie: An Analysis of its Socio-Economic Origins and its Contemporary Role in the Political Economy of Kenya," (East African Society and Environment Reader, Vol. 1, University of Dar es Salaam), p. 17.

according to Brett—quoting Marx on India—is to recognize the dual aspects of the colonial relation, that it had both progressive and exploitative aspects. Here Brett fails to look at underdevelopment in its historical specificity, that is, colonial capitalism as distinct from metropolitan capitalism. The progressive nature of capitalism in Europe, for Marx, stemmed from two consequences: one, its 'revolutionary' role in advancing the development of productive forces, and two, that capitalism created its own *radical* negation—the proletariat—through the proletarianization of the peasantry. *Both* processes are absent in colonial capitalism. The historical failure of capitalism in the colonies was its failure to develop the productive forces, that is, develop the productivity of labour. The political consequence was the failure to develop a class that would be its radical negation, the proletariat. The class that reproduces itself in the colony is the peasantry regardless of the internal differentiations. Colonial capitalism is a peasant society. But for Brett the historically progressive role of capitalism in the colonies exists because it produces 'a negation'. Note: *any* negation. This is a banal tautology. *Every* social process produces its negation. Concretely, the negation of colonial capitalism was the national petit-bourgeoisie, not the proletariat; and the national petit-bourgeoisie sought to *nationalize* capitalism, not to overcome it.

Brett's eclectic method does not just distort a part of his analysis; it penetrates the very core of it, including his theoretical conception of those processes that are central to the history of the underdeveloped world: colonialism and underdevelopment. Thus colonialism is understood as "a system of rule which assumes the right of one people to impose their will upon another" (p. vii). Just as the old colonial historians, and in line with the neo-colonial historians like Robinson and Gallagher, he sees central to colonialism a moral thrust. Most importantly, the definition allows Brett to get away from coming to terms with the Leninist theory of imperialism. Underdevelopment becomes "a condition . . . in which the activities of a given society are submitted to the over-riding control of an external power over which it can exert little control". That is, colonialism is underdevelopment and underdevelopment is colonialism. Both are seen purely as *external* processes. At the same time, neither is identified in its specificity. The only departure Brett has made from bourgeois social science is to understand that underdevelopment is not a curse inherited from tradition but the creation of a historical process. What his conception of underdevelopment lacks is an understanding of the *content* of this process.

Central to the creation of underdevelopment are two processes. First, capital from the metropole penetrates the very process of production in the colony; the structure of production in the colony is thus distorted and functions in response to the consumption needs of metropolitan capital. Second, over the colonial period, what is initially an *external* relation becomes *internalized*: at the level of economic structures it appears as the dominance of circulating (unproductive) capital in the economy; at the level of class relations, it appears as the rule of class(es) that derive their income directly or indirectly from the process of circulation over the producing classes. The historical process creates within the colony mediating economic structures and social classes that have an objective interest in maintaining the condition of underdevelopment.

What is important to bear in mind about this process of *internalization* is first, that it is a process, and second, that it is completed only with independence, i.e., with the birth of the neo-colonial State. It is only at independence that the comprador class—the national petit-bourgeoisie—assumes control over the neo-colonial State apparatus.

For Brett, however, the *internalization* of the colonial relation never took place. With eyes cast solely on the external relation, it is no wonder that he conceptualizes development as "a change process characterized by increased productivity, equalization in the distribution of the social product and the emergence of indigenous institutions whose relations with the outside world, and particularly with the developed centres of the international economy, are characterized by equality rather than by dependence or subordination". (p. 18) These three 'goals' of development are then summarized as "growth, equity and autonomy". Neither is it surprising that the model of development that he considers most relevant is that of Japan: ". . . dependence will finally disappear only when the Third World, like Japan, has acquired the ability to produce new forms on equal terms with the developed world." (p. 18)

Japan, however, is a relevant model only if we ignore the specificity of colonial capitalism: that it neither developed the productive forces nor gave rise to a national bourgeoisie capable of doing so. The ruling class in the neo-colony is instead the petit-bourgeoisie, a comprador class incapable of surviving as a ruling class without entering into an unequal relation with international capitalism. The model of Japan is precisely the possibility that the history of underdevelopment now denies us. The historical possibilities are only two: an underdeveloped capitalism under the class rule of the petit-bourgeoisie, or socialist development under the class leadership of the proletariat and the peasantry. This real course of history has escaped Brett. As he points with one hand to the model of Japan and with another holds the banner of "growth, equity and autonomy", Brett gradually slides into the fold of Parsonian social science.

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