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THE SO-CALLED NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE IN KENYA

by

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Introduction

The importance of a scientific analysis of the problem of social class in Africa has been sharpened in recent years by arguments of articulation of modes of production and the eclectic use of Marxist phraseology to hide deep prejudices against Africa. The observations of commentators on the historical evolution of European societies have been uncritically applied to non-European societies. A concrete analysis of Western European historical paths was based on the premise that when societies reach a certain level of development of their productive forces they break up into antagonistic classes. Marx and Engels' classical formulation of class struggles from primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism was related to a European phenomenom and the struggles in Africa did not follow this path. Although this is to state the obvious, it needs to be reasserted since some Marxists see capitalist development as a logical and necessary stage of human evolution.

Karl Marx, writing in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, recognised that the schema of human development from primitive communism to capitalism could not adequately explain the richness of historical variety, especially with respect to the Egyptian and Chinese civilisations. Recognizing the limitations of the state of knowledge in his epoch, Marx took care not to transpose the lessons of the European experience. He chose a new formulation for certain pre-colonial societies - the Asiatic Mode of Production - to explain societies which were not based on slavery or feudalism. This characterisation showed deep insight in spite of its limitations but in the study of Africa, one hundred years later, some academics on the left try to find everywhere the same historical categories analysed by Marx in Europe. If a few slaves existed, then the society was based on slavery. If there was an African king and a chiefly strata, then the society was feudal. Nowadays, in the era of multilateral imperialism, transnationals and of socialism, if a few Africans own a transport company, a shoe factory, some chicken farms and manage the local coercion of labour, then they comprise a *national bourgeoisie*.

The debate on class, state and underdevelopment in Africa during the seventies arose out of a general disillusionment with liberal bourgeois forms of thought and economic organisation. The ideologists of tribalism, backwardness and the concommitant modernisers are forced to come to terms with the social havoc of underdevelopment which had been hitherto treated as conceptual isolates. But the struggles of the masses which forced the modernisers into the dustbin of history have yet to be grasped in theoretical terms. The attempt of many to bridge the gap between looking at isolated factors of social conflict, an anthropological approach to Africa, and the new thrust of historical and dialectical materialism has led to the echoing of the same stage theory - stating that Africa must develop with the emergence of a national bourgeoisie. This Eurocentric view of social development coming from both Marxists and non-Marxists has been buttressed by the debate on articulation of modes of production.

Walt Rostow and the old dualism are brought in through the backdoor in the debate about the bourgeoisie in Kenya where the conditions of the proletarianised masses are ignored. The literature is sprinkled with structural notions of relative autonomous classes, although there is only discussion of one class, the new ruling class in Kenya. A pre-Leninist debate which negates the contemporary scramble for Africa, the participants are located in the cultural and ideological centres of imperialism and hope to perpetuate prejudices about African peoples which are reproduced by Africans themselves.

History and Underdevelopment

The history of Kenya and the interlude of settler colonialism has been ignored by the spate of literature citing the history of so-called 'tribes' - the enterprising Kikuyu, the warlike Masai, the thrifty Luo and the exotic coast peoples, etc. But this ideological thrust of the Manchester School of Anthropology and the Rockefeller Foundation modernisers, was undermined by a bevy of African scholars and the dynamic work of Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Shock-waves went through the heads of the established Africanists who said the work was not scholarly. An inability to come to grips with content led them to decry the very title of the work. But Rodney challenged the vicious circle of poverty theory, emphasising the fact that:

> *an indispensable component of modern underdevelopment is that it expresses a particular relationship of exploitation...namely the exploitation of one country by another. All of the countries named as underdeveloped in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now preoccupied is a product of cap-*

> *italist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independently until they were taken over by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and the export of surplus ensued, depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources.*[1]

Rodney's central postulate that the structural dependence of Africa is the most serious legacy of colonialism, challenged the widespread and sometimes disguised view that underdevelopment is a state natural to Africa. He investigated the history of Africa to graphically illustrate the quagmire of malnutrition, famine and hunger and historical arrest which followed the wake of capitalist expansion into Africa. Utilizing Cabral's central formulation that when colonialism came, Africans left their own history, Clive Thomas strengthened this historical approach by outlining how the whole pattern of investment and aid in Africa was predicated on the notion that underdevelopment was susceptible to eradication through capitalist economic organisation and capitalist beneficence. Thomas enriched the historical approach of Rodney by highlighting the contemporary problem of the

> *lack of an organic link rooted in an indigenous science and technology, between the pattern and growth of domestic resource use and the pattern of growth and domestic demand.*
>
> *Historically this divergence has been made manifest through the direct institutional forms of resource ownership, resource use, income creation and demand formation...we have had exploitation and underdevelopment organised through slave institutions such as the plantation, the modern multinational corporations, direct colonial rule, i.e. the administration of production 'Crown Colony' style, as well as through audiences with independent client states and the management of capitalist enterprises.*[2]

Both Rodney and Thomas located this problem of structural dependence not only in the clear economic stagnation and historic arrest, but also in the cultural and psychological crisis which is reflected in the acceptance by the African petty bourgeoisie of the European version of the world.

> *There are social, psychological and cultural manifestations of dependency which are also likely to be functionally autonomous and which can in-*

> *hibit the thoroughgoing nature of any social and political revolution. Not least among these is the perception of size and the limited psychological freedom which this seems to permit in comprehending the people's capacity to master their environment.*[3]

Whilst in each case of underdevelopment the material dynamic of technological dependency has been the same, the cultural and social dimension of dependence have differed. This difference helps to explain some of the surface contradictions of different African states. Samir Amin attempted to capture the essence of the differences not only in regional terms, but also in the form of capitalist penetration. Hence, the fact of settler colonialism and the draconian expropriation of land has been termed the "Africa of the Labour Reserves". This variant of colonialism and administration of production with white settlers signified a different process of exploitation than the economic *de traite*. Under both colonial systems, the capitalist powers were able to shape a system which made possible the large scale production of tropical products for export under terms profitable for metropolitan capital.

Settler colonialism in Kenya was marked by the extensive use of compulsion to produce cheap labour for the settler estates. After seizing eight and a half million acres of the most fertile land by military conquest, the expropriated African population was corralled into reserves with loyal Africans appointed chiefs. E.A. Brett, in his transitional work, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*, documented the elaborate system marshalled to prop up the inefficient white settlers and Boers. The colonial state was an instrument for British imperial rule and the resources of exploited labour provided the gambit of extension services, service roads, schools, hospitals, railways and tsetse-free country for the Limuru Hunt.

Economic opportunities for Africans were circumscribed by the very racist nature of the settler economy. Africans were forbidden by administrative fiat to grow certain agricultural crops for export, especially coffee and pyrethrum. This racially hierarchical structure was compounded by the importation of the Asians who dominated the retail trade and serviced the middle levels of the colonial bureaucracy. Kenya was the epicentre for British imperialsim in East Africa and the state's coercive and ideological apparatus were more fully developed than those in Tanzania or Uganda. In fact, the British always attempted to forge an abortive federation to simplify the administration of colonialism in a supra-national state called the East Africa Federation.

After World War II there were modifications in the old colonial division of labour. These modifications took the form of light industrialisation and import substitution factories providing consumer goods to the settlers and to their administrative counterparts in Kampala and Dar es Salaam. From this protected position in Kenya, the British capitalist hoped to control the future process of exploitation in East Africa, but this complacency was shattered by the political and armed struggles for political independence. The struggle of the *Land and Freedom Army* exposed the bestiality of the social democratic British people in Kenya when between 1952 to 1960 the armed defenders of British capital killed more than 15,000 Africans.[4] In the campaing against the Kenyan workers and peasants the British initiated military strategies and tactics which have since become commonplace. It was the British who instigated 'villageization' or 'strategic hamlets', mass detention, 'strategic' bombing, 'hearts and minds' campaigns, 'rehabilitation' through physical and psychological compulsion and counter 'terror'. The concentration camps, mass killings and the stench of the bodies of the victims of Hola Camp, brought some of the Fabians to Kenya, but the British State exploited the 'jingoism' of a confused working class to justify its policy against the so called *Mau Mau*. The newsreel records of a tribalistic outbreak led by some ambitious Kikuyu was confirmed by the holy missionaries who felt they had failed in their civilising mission. The solution to this atavistic problem was first a return to colonial law and order, and then a promotion of those Loyalist and Home Guards who would become junior partners in the transition from settler colonialism to African allies in a neo-colonial enterprise.

The historiography of the struggle for political independence in Kenya has followed the lines of British propaganda even among those who sought to show that there were real grievances among the dispossessed Africans. The struggle is depicted as that of Kikuyu Nationalism and Nottingham and Rosberg, in *The Myth of Mau Mau*, while claiming to write about nationalism in Kenya, have perpetuated the myth that the roots of nationalism were all Kikuyu and led to 'Mau Mau'. The *Kikuyu Central Association* and the *Kenya African Union* are seen as vehicles of 'tribalism' without understanding the dynamic of regional differentiation which centralised the response to colonialism in the areas most integrated within the colonial production. The tribal ideologists discount the efforts to rise against the politicisation of ethnicity in the broad-based alliances which forced constitutional decolonisation. Dedan Kimathi cries out through the pen of Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Micere Mugo:

> *Would you call the war for national liberation*
> *a regional movement? Hear me. Kenya is one*

> *indivisible whole. The cause we fight for is larger than provinces; it shatters ethnic barriers. It is a whole people's cause.*[5]

While the army Command Headquarters took over the seek and destroy missions and the Nairobi spot checks, the British set about creating a prosperous middle class which could be the future bastion of stability. Three reports - (the East African Royal Commission Report, the Swynnerton Plan (a Plan to Intensify the Development of Africa) and the Carpenter Report) advocated the removal of racist economic restrictions and the dismantling of the structures which perpetuated white control. *U.S.A.I.D.* undertook to grant loans to prospective African businessmen, while *I.C.F.T.U.* ensured that the working class movement would be derailed into pacificism and anti-communism. Through the *British TUC* and the *I.C.F.T.U.* Tom Mboya, the pinstriped 'nationalist', was funded to the tune of $8000 per month. In addition, the *Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)*, through the *Fund for International Social and Economic Education*, contributed more than $25,000 to Mboya's political operations.[6]

Underwriting Mboya and his *Kenya Federation of Labour (KFL)* was a natural strategy for the Americans who began to understand the geo-political importance of Kenya, especially for their future in the Indian Ocean. Between 1962 and 1967 American investments reached US $100 million and the American Embassy in Nairobi was the monitoring station for struggles in Zanzibar, Eritrea and for counterinsurgency operations in the Congo (now stabilized and called Zaire).

Britain granted independence to the Loyalist, Homeguards and a few rehabilitated *KAU* leaders in December 1963. The Africanization push by the political leaders was a quest to build-up the colonial state apparatus and in the process consolidate its hold over the neo-colonial state. This petty bourgeois strata which held political power by virtue of its tendential alliance with the masses in the transition period, did not have the material resources to challenge foreign and settler capital, so they sought to build themselves up in the interstices of the system. Her Majesty's Government had loaned over £20 million to develop capitalist farmers and to generally implement the Swynnerton Plan.[7] Meanwhile, the American Ambassador, William Attwood, instigated latent political differences to ensure that those 'radicals' would not influence the policy of government. A permanent presence of British troops helped to hasten the arrest of the workers movement. The conspicuous consumption of the ruling petty bourgecisie expressed in the need for luxury items from Europe, distanced those who shouted 'Harambee' and 'Uhuru' from the land hungry and destitute. When the workers protested against the high prices and low wages, the political careerists began to outdo the trueowners of capital in their frenzied demands for industrial calm. The Trade Unions (Amendment) Act of 1964 gave the state extensive powers to regulate the internal affairs of the Unions and the Trade Disputes Act of 1965 gave the ruling class the power to control strikes, the only political weapon available to the workers. The creativity of the political leadership was confined to coercive legislation against illegal strikes, while the 'national' interest was equated with the interest of foreign capital. The very leaders who straddled the working class movement in the call for independence began to tell the workers that they should steer clear of politics. Those who refused to heed this warning were incarcerated and, in the case of Pio Gama Pinto, assassinated.

Transnationals in Kenya

Imperialism in the age of national liberation movements in Africa was content to solidify its base in Kenya. The transnationals moved to compete with the expanding Asian traders and the settlers moved into the import/export sector of the economy.[8] By 1971-72 the subsidiaries of the top TNC's accounted for 69% of employment generated in Kenya and 84% of the capital employed in manufacturing; and this figure was increasing.[9] Even the religious and ideological arm of imperialism had to question the transnational corporate maneuvers in Kenya in a document specifying: *Who Controls Industry in Kenya*. Well-known British and American leaders of finance capital dominated the banking sector and facilitated the export of capital in the face of lukewarm exchange control regulations. Even in the retail and wholesale trade the transnationals were moving. They were entrenched in mining, quarrying, manufacturing, commerce, transport and haulage (quite apart from the multilateral financial and technological control over the East Africa Railways) petrol distribution, footwear, leather, rubber, petroleum and industrial chemicals, soap, metal products, while the Asian comprador commercial class struggled to hold on to food processing, grain milling, sugar processing, beverages, textiles and dairy products.

With the decolonisation process started in Sudan and Ghana, British subsidiaries had accumulated the experience of setting up with local allies in an effort to put up tariff walls against German, Japanese and American capital. Steve Landgon, in his extensive study of unabashed haste to welcome private investment, has pointed out how the Kenyan leaders have multiplied state expenditures to build the necessary infrastructure and nurture a hospitable investment climate.

> *Among international companies the established manufacturing subsidiaries in Kenya after independence were: Hall - Thermotank, Enfield Cables, Glaxo-Allenburgs, Reckit and Colman, Cadbury, Schweppes, Boots, British Batteries Overseas, L.G. Harris and Co. and Booker McConnell - all of the U.K.; Del Monte, Firestone, Union Carbide, Sterling, Winthrop, Johnson Wax, CPE Ltd., Singer and Colgate Palmolive of the U.S.; plus Phillips of Holland, Sango of Japan, Hocchest of Germany, Kiwi of Australia, Brollow of Italy and Burla of India, etc.*[10]

The 'nationalist' leadership, while organizing recreation for the international bourgeoisie under the guise of 'tourism', were arrogating to themselves dictatorships on the branch plants of the transnationals. The degree of integration and interpenetration between the state and the nationalist was such that those who did not benefit from time to time questioned the alliance between the local directors who were members of parliament.[11] In particular, the relationship between the London-Rhodesia Company (Lonrho) and the ruling family in Kenya best expresses the bosom relationship between the neo-colonial economy and foreign capital.

The London-Rhodesia Company exploded into Africa with the super-profits from the apartheid of both South Africa and Zimbabwe (called Rhodesia). Tiny Rowland, the Managing Director, sensed the 'winds of change' so that from a new London headquarters he began to develop a personal relationship with the top functionaries of the neo-colonial states. By 1967 Lonrho had substantial investments in fourteen African states, with Kenya one of their strongest footholds. Lonrho's major acquisition in Kenya was in 1967 when it gained control of Consolidated Holdings Ltd. and Tancot Ltd., with interests in primary produce, packaging, engineering and printing, office supplies and the control of one of the major daily newspapers. The Express Transport Co. Ltd. was responsible for the warehousing, sorting and despatching of Kenya's entire coffee crop.[12] By 1972 Lonrho had more than fifty subsidiaries in Kenya and in recognition of the alliance with the political bureaucratic strata, Lonrho created its first regional director for the whole of Eastern and Central Africa, Udi Gecaga, a well-connected young Kenyan who had been groomed at Princeton and Cambridge and was recruited to Lonrho while he was an executive of the Bank of America in Kenya. Shortly after joining the board Mr. Gecaga married one of the daughters of the venerable reactionary President Kenyatta.

Lonrho was skilled at the art of working through African intermediaries in order to get access to the resources of the state. The company borrowed money locally and injected very little capital into Kenya. The operations of this company became clear when the subject of Kenya Motor Holdings was started. This project initiated in 1975 to establish a commercial vehicle assembly plant in which Kenya Motor Holdings was to play a part, together with the state which would finance the project through the Industrial Development Bank, Ltd., Inchape MacKenzie and Associated Vehicles were the other partners (Gecaga and other members of the Kenyatta family also bought heavily into Inchape of Kenya). The parliamentary wrangle brought out the fact that the Nairobi Chibuku Company - distributors of Chibuku beer, was owned by Lonrho, although it was registered as an African company; and that Udi Gecaga and his uncle, Nyoike Njorge, were involved in Chibuku's complex system of Holding Companies.

The fronting of local capitalists for transnationals is not a new phenomena since these capitalist giants have accumulated vast experience in the form of reaping surplus profits.[13] Whenever, by chance, the weaker Greek or Asian capitalists are expropriated, there is an international uproar, as in the case of the Ruby Mines, but in general it is the transnationals who, through their allies in the so-called Ministries, use their power of the state to expropriate local businessmen. The case of the large deposits of the chemical Flourspar, now being exploited in the Keiro Valley by the Flourspar Co. of Kenya Ltd., illustrates the determination of the foreign capitalists to use their political strength to meet their objectives when faced with large-scale resource opportunities. The deposits of flourspar was found by a local Swahili who started a labour intensive operation in 1970. He employed his own geologist and mining engineer to determine the potential of the mine and sought advanced technology to speed the exploitation of the resource. But while he was negotiating with some foreign companies - Dutch and German - the Americans and British moved to use the state to gain control of the mine. These entrenched Americans and British went straight to the powers in Kenya to expropriate the Swahili. Langdon summed this up excellently:

> *the state moved decisively, even without consulting most of the senior officials in the Dept. of Mines and Geology to find their assessment of the Swahili's development activity, the government stripped him of his claims and established the new Flourspar Co. Ltd. - 51% of ICDC owned with 24 1/4% share for the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers and a similar share plus a management*

> *contract and marketing for Continental Ore (a U.S. company). The justification was that the Swahili could not have organised full extraction and export of the mineral.*[14]

The neat relationship between the state and the foreign capital only became exposed in the intra-struggle between the East African petty bourgeoisie. When the greed of the Kenyan capitalists led to the break up of the East African Community and the Tanzanians closed the border, charter aircrafts and tourist vehicles were seized by the Tanzanians in lieu of outstanding debts by Kenya. However, the British High Commissioner stepped in to say that the vehicles did not belong to Africans but were the property of a British company.

With the protection and cooperation from comprador Kenyans, the transnationals are making fantastic profits. A report of the Kenya Statistical Digest showed that profits in 1966 were 34.2%, while it dropped to 27.8% the next year and reached a 'low' of 27.0% in 1968. Since 1968 profits rose steadily to 30.2% in 1969, 32.6% in 1970 to 35.2% in 1971[15] and this was only for profits, not for management fees, patents and other concealed profits. This piracy of transnationals in Kenya is part of the global strategy of imperialism to extract surplus value from their control of management, international marketing and financial arrangements rather than by the old forms of colonialism. Competition between the major capitalist powers primarily the United States, West Germany and Japan, and the technological advances of space research, nuclear energy and electronics have altered the international division of labour and spurred the efforts to locate in African countries where conditions are more favorable to their global profit maximizing considerations. A falling rate of profit and the increased organic composition of capital propels the search for profitable investment and a second scramble for Africa. Kenya, with the infrastructure and communications network of settler colonialism, is a major centre for the new search for surplus profits. There are now more Europeans in Kenya than during the colonial era. Nairobi and Mombasa reflect the aggravating hypertrophy of underdevelopment with the marked contrasts between rich and poor, country and town.

Assembly plants importing machines and equipment to produce high-priced tariff-protected luxury and consumer items, control the local market with very little backward and forward linkages inside the economy. With the armed struggles for liberation raging on the continent of Africa, and the very safety of capitalists rendered problematic by the generals commanding the peasants for double production, the strategy of the transnationals has been to dominate the growing internal market and until recently to use the East African Community as their regional niche. It is with respect to the technological advances of the centre which serve the overall political and economic strength of the foreign capitalists.[16] The transnationals control strategic areas of production and coercion through their control over technology whether or not they directl own the means of production. Hence, the reproduction of a few African capitalists servicing this epicentre of Imperialism should not create illusions of capitalist development.

> *If direct appropriation of the means of production was until recently the necessary medium of control by capital, this is no longer the case, at least not at all levels of the productive process. It is sufficient to control its strategic focal points to get hold of most of the surplus value generated in the process as a whole.*[17]

The smokescreen of the ILO and UNDP literature on informal sectors and transfer of technology has tended to obscure the well-known dictum that

> *the technological domination of the metropolitan bourgeoisie over the underdeveloped peripheries reproduces the relations of domination which determine the relations of exploitation.*[18]

In the context of the transfer of technology, we have to bear in mind that there are capitalist technologies, controlled by monopolies. Hence, we will be transferring the underlying capitalist relations of production. Moreover, by this transfer, we will not be escaping the domination of imperialist capitalism. On the contrary, we will be extending its scope by integrating the periphery more firmly into the imperialist system.

As yet, in Kenya no comparable work on the price of transnational domination has been done like that of the Andean Group to expose the exorbitant prices paid for equipment and patents which are many times the real cost of production. Data on the amount of surplus value siphoned off in interest and dividends is hard to come by in Kenya and is more and more disguised by the local frontmen.

In the infrastructural expansion to service this transnational sector, a few African capitalists are produced to package, transport and distribute the products of foreign capitalists, while some Africans enter the developed and organised prostitution racket called tourism. The uneven distribution of wealth has led to cries of alarm from the social democrats who call for rational capitalism, redistribution with growth and a facade of basic needs. On the left of the social democrats are their fellow researchers who celebrate the presence of African firms with the clarion - the rise of the national bourgeoisie in Kenya!

We Must Create African Capitalists

Since 1963 the professional, bureaucratic and careerist political elements have gained strategic control over the state. They have used this position to raise their own level, relative to the better established sectors of Greeks, Asians and white farmers. The latter, as established capitalists, were engaged in production or distribution, and they realise value through rent, the direct exploitation of labour and the exploitation of the market. On the other hand, the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie had no immediate base in production and hence their need for political hegemony. They reproduce themselves as a class by providing more salaried jobs and by strengthening their ties with the metropolitan bourgeoisie. In the process of expansion the petty bourgeoisie cements class alliances, cements internal friction and allows the consciousness of itself as a class to develop through the exercise of state power. Some rush to accumulate, to become full-fledged capitalists while political retrogression follows the politicisation of ethnicity and anti-democratic laws.

Since the transition to neo-colonialism, it was the policy of the colonial state to create a few African capitalists. The Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation instituted by the British ostensibly set out to develop a small business loan scheme, but after ten years, with average loans of £240 to Africans, this could hardly keep a chicken farm afloat. At the granting of independence the political careerists strengthened the schemes to develop African businessmen, especially the Agricultural Finance Corporation and the Development Finance Corporation. Legal instruments and trade licensing led to a number of regulatory bodies which contolled entry into the commercial sector. The Trade Licensing Act of 1967 was a crucial political weapon against the weaker members of the Indian commercial class while the stronger Indian capitalist were astute enough to enter a partnership with the top politicians.[19]

A counter-productive state trading corporation was given the task of handing over the distribution of specific commodities to African wholesalers. Like the abortive Uganda National Trading Corporation and the corrupt Ghana State Trading Corporation, the African wholesaler and shopkeeper needed to have state power in order to compete with foreign capital. But bribery, misappropriation of funds, losses and fronting for non-citizens plagued this state apparatus entrusted to create African capitalists. Colin Leys, in his major work on Kenya, documented the fact that many of the KNTC distributors were operating for Asians. Citing the commercial weakness of the KNTC and losses incurred, he summed up:

> *In short, what African traders wanted was a fixed share of specific markets, public loan funds or publicly guaranteed commercial credit, fixed suppliers and fixed prices. Without these things, African trading was ground between the upper millstone of the established non-African trader (or in some cases consumer) and the other millstone of mass competition from other Africans prepared to operate on minimum turnover. But the effect of granting the conditions in which African traders could make profits and begin to accumulate capital was to bind them tightly to the established foreign suppliers and to the state, making them into highly dependent clients, not entrepreneurs.*[20]

It was these clients who struggled to keep afloat in business being dependent on foreign suppliers of manufactured goods, on the state for credit and on the transnationals for supplying the consumer items. This dependence was a manifestation of the broader domination of the neo-colony by the metropolitan bourgeoisie. The Americans were pleased that these dependent clients were surviving alongside foreign capital. One former American Ambassador boasted of his role in isolating Kenya from the armed struggles in the Congo. Praising the efforts of USAID to grant $50,000 in 1961 to train African businessmen, he cited the more than 250 Kenyans studying in the United States of America and the funding of the Kenya Institute of Administration. William Attwood, on departing from Kenya, expressed satisfaction that

> *white fears of blacks in power in Kenya had proven to be unfounded; a white Kenyan was still Minister of Agriculture and 1700 Englishmen still worked in various branches of the Kenya government. Odinga and the demagogues were out of office. The men moving up like Moi, Ngala, Mwai Kibaki and James Nyamweya, were unemotional, hardworking and practical minded. When they talked about Kenya's agricultural revolution, they sounded like Walt Rostow; they spoke of available credit, fair prices, technical assistance and the cash purchase of tools and consumer*

> *goods...Nor were Kenya's plain people as backward as they might look from a tourist bus. In 1964 a carefully-conducted public opinion survey of fifteen hundred mostly illiterate farm families would have warmed the heart of Horatio Alger.*[21]

Like the carefully conducted poll, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundation modernisers set out to investigate the conditions for the development of more African clients. The Ford Foundation financed a study to examine the context for the promotion of African entrepreneurs. The result - *African Businessmen* - by Peter Marris and Anthony Somerset, was a tedious document to ascertain whether African businessmen were steeled in the Protestant ethic. The usefulness of Marris and Somerset's work lay in their honesty, concluding simply that African businesses were 'mostly small affairs'. Using questionnaires to interview clients of the ICDC they found that

> *a few had already failed, and we traced their owner where we could. We would get no first-hand information of three unsuccessful enterprises, and one turned out to be a minor undeveloped activity of an agricultural cooperative, not yet a business in its own right.*[22]

They had to painstakingly find the owners of seven saw mills, two plough contractors, two metal workshops, a small garment factory, a diesel injection pump repairer, a canning factory, a mining company, a radio factory, printer, shoemaker, contractor, photographer, sisal decorticator, typewriter repairer, a plastic factory, tour and safari agent and a soapstone carving factory. In all the 848 interviews carried out, using high school students, the vast majority were

> *retail stores selling the same stock of cigarettes, cloth and general groceries, ranged on rough wooden shelves behind a counter.*[23]

Despite the overwhelming evidence that the loans from the ICDC were linked to the politicisation of ethnicity, the authors suggested that Kenya's economic future depended on the small independent traders (later called informal sector by ILO experts). Echoing the old ideology of tribalism, the authors spent an inordinate amount of time looking at the 'predominance of Kikuyu entrepreneurs'.

> *The ICDC loans went mostly to the Kikuyu because they were the keenest applicants and they scarcely enjoyed any political advantage.*[24]

Discounting the rapacious nature of colonialism, they set out to show how the Kikuyu actually benefitted from forced labour, reserves and compulsory destocking. Somerset and Marris did not hide their ideological proclivities:

> *The Kikuyu were surrounded by the achievements of modern commercial agriculture, the coffee plantations, the herds of dairy cattle, the European townships with their industries and sophisticated shops. They acquired a wider experience of colonial civilisation than other peoples, a keener sense of their own exclusion from its opportunities.*[25]

Such a crude justification for colonialism and its civilizing role was rapidly being undermined by the debates at the East African Social Sciences Conference. Henceforth, the modernizers and tribalists would adopt a new language. The entrepreneurs were not the *national bourgeoisie.*

From Somerset and Marris to Leys - Continuity and Change of Language

Roger van Zwaneberg was one of the first to make this linguistic transformation - with an article "Neo-Colonialism and the Origin of the National Bourgeoisie in Kenya 1940-1973".[26] For van Zwaneberg, the origin of the national bourgeoisie lay not in the process of production and exploitation, but in the plans of the colonial state to foster an 'African middle class' and the development of a free market in land (East African Royal Commission and the Synnerton Plan). For Dr. van Zwaneberg at the time of independence, 1963, there was already a national bourgeoisie which had

> *opened up the forces of production at all levels to remove the old restrictions on the productive forces based on race, and to introduce commodity relations in every part of the territory.*[27]

There is no indication whether the economic circuit comprised of the East African Community, was the domain of the bourgeoisie or simply the geographical area of Kenya. No mention was made of how many different categories of capitalists made up this national class - whether they were financial grants, industrialists, landlords farming on a capitalist basis, manufacturers, ship owners, newspaper magnates, transporters - or whether they were the small affairs ranged on wooden shelves which Somerset and Marris at least documented.

Launching a broadside against the Marxists at the University of Dar es Salaam, van Zwaneberg argued that

> *the new bourgeoisie has been instrumental in releasing the creative energies of large numbers of the Kenyan peoples. While it is obviously true that large numbers, probably the majority of people, have benefitted materially, that the expectation of opportunity is widespread, even among the poorest people.*[28] (Echoes of Attwood but without the careful opinion poll).

To support this unsubstantiated assertion, we are told in a footnote that

> *it would be very difficult to prove this point from an empirical analysis, but it is clear to me from my travels and discussions that there is a very widespread feeling that some of the cream of the economy is available if only people could find the way.*[29] (Too bad they did not have the Protestant ethic).

Continuing with this make believe class, he warned

> *If anyone still doubts the fact about the opening up of the economy, statistical data will corroborate the analysis. In the 8 years, from 1960 to 1968 the total cash flowing to Africans from private industry and commerce increased by over 150%. African non-agricultural wages increased by over 200% over the same period. The cash inflow to small holder farming increased by a similar proportion from £10 - £30 million in the same eight years. The growth in the educational structure has been of the same order of magnitude, schools aided by the government increased from 82 to 364 and unaided schools from 15 to 585 between 1963 and 1972. Finally, if anyone doubts the creativity and acceptability of the multi-million self help institutes of technology, a development unique in Africa, should dispel all doubts.*[30]

The absurdity of the above arguments borders on naivete. Since when did the increase in wages of the working class provide the basis for capital accumulation? Obviously the fierce struggles of the working class in the transition to neo-colonialism did bring increases in wages. But what were the rates paid by settlers, and what was the rate of inflation? More important, how many of these workers could accumulate capital from wages to become capitalists exploiting other workers? These questions are relevant since these figures about the cash inflow to small holder farming were quoted by Leys as a significant source of capital accumulation. But of this £30 million, how much did the peasants' families pay for clothes, transportation, taxes, school fees and for basic household consumer goods like salt, sugar, flour, and cooking oil? How much did Lonrho make in marketing coffee? Between 1954 and 1960 cotton growers in Uganda earned 84.9 million; were they also a national bourgeoisie?

The simplistic and incorrect assumptions of van Zwaneberg could be discounted but for the fact that the figures he quoted and his analysis is seen as the basic starting point on the debate of the so-called national bourgeoisie. But the play on words leads to contradictory statements like

> *the new national bourgeoisie are therefore a dynamic force in the sense that they have been participants in the development of Kenya society. Development in this sense is not used as a mechanistic concept, which is concerned with the final stage in the movement from capitalism to socialism. Rather, development has involved, in this latest stage, the opening up of the entire society to the forces of national and international capitalism.*[31]
> (His emphasis)

van Zwaneberg ignores the dialectical interaction between the rise of the African petty bourgeoisie and the consolidation of the neo-colonial state. His preoccupation with superstructural elements led him to neglect the relations of production and to locate the African ruling class simply by their conspicuous consumption. In an article about the origins of the Kenyan bourgeoisie, there is little about their origins and no clear distinction to say whether the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie in the administrative apparatus of the state were the same as the national bourgeoisie. It is this facile analysis which is extended with even more theoretical confusion by Kipkorir Aly Azad Rana.

In a very long piece on "Class Formation and Social Conflict: A Case Study of Kenya", Kipkorir Aly Rana used the core of van Zwaneberg's arguments to argue that not only was there a bourgeoisie in Kenya, but one divided

> *into two fractions - the comprador and the national bourgeoisie.*[32]

This formulation is indicative of the whole thrust of the so-called Marxist studies on Kenya. The fact is that in the advanced capitalist countries where the national bourgeoisie evolved over many decades, indeed centuries, the expansion of the productive forces produced a variety of socio-economic strata interpenetrating the existing juridicially-defined social orders of booming and fierce capitalism; among these were landlords, merchant bankers, industrialists, shipowners, wealthy professionals and manufacturers. It was these different capitalists who comprised the bourgeoisie proper. In France, for example, this national bourgeoisie did not solidify as a class until the middle of the nineteenth century.[33] This national bourgeoisie could not be a fraction of itself. To compound this recourse into the Poulantzas notion of fractions Kipkorir Aly Rana introduces an old and a new petty bourgeoisie in Kenya;[34] without a clear exposition of who were the old and who are the new.

Social class in Kenya becomes an eclectic use of phrases merging the structuralism of bourgeois sociology with a misunderstanding of the debate on fractions. Of the comprador bourgeoisie, the reader is told that they were members of a *reformed class*. The reader is told very little of the social base of this class; it is possible that there were again van Zwaneberg's workers who pulled themselves up by the bootstrap. Since there were no African capitalist class to speak of in Kenya before 1950, we are told by Kipkorir Aly Rana

> *they were socialised and exposed to a new and different life style, intellectual tradition, religion and an economic system. Their roles forced them to experience racial indignities and also challenge colonial barriers.*[35]

Citing the creator of the reformed class, Mike Cowen, Kipkorir Aly Rana tells us of a class of pre-colonial accumulators who were transformed into a reformed class through institutions of mission schools and fleeting periods of skilled labour. (So much for ideological gymnastics). But Kipkorir Aly Rana could not hide his modernizing sympathies so his case study of social conflict is strewn with role playing, politics and personalities, sub-cultural nationalism and when he catches himself, the word class struggle appears.

Nicola Swainson rescues these gymnastics by 'documenting' the "rise of the national bourgeoisie".[36] Starting with the necessary assault against the Marxist theory of underdevelopment,Swainson follows the path of Somerset and Marris not to discuss 'entrepreneurs' but to look at the bourgeoisie which was "able to consolidate its position after independence in 1963" but had its origins in the 1920's and 30's. For the first time the nature of British colonialism is downplayed. For Somerset the colonialists were civilizing Africans but for Swainson there were capitalists in the 1920's in Kenya. Using the same questionnaire scheme to look at the number of registered - instead of who actually owned the firms - Swainson looked at the provision of credit, loans provision and connections between foreign and local capital. Colonialism was so good to Africans that they accumulated capital on the basis of *wage labour*. Instead of KNTC clients, we are now told that the £200 - £300 loans of the ICDC were sufficient for a bunch of traders to emerge as the bourgeoisie.

The dramatic dislocation of Asian traders in East Africa has bothered the international bourgeoisie who propped them in the commercial sector for seventy years. In Kenya, the emerging African capitalists have used their political muscle to move out some Asian traders but the takeover of Indian shops in Nairobi or Kampala is not in itself a guarantee for success of African traders. In spite of this fact, Swainson's case is pinned to Africans taking over local subsidiaries and removing Asians. Let her speak:

> *African firms gradually increased as a proportion of new private firms being formed in Kenya and in 1972, 310 firms being formed in Kenya, African firms, for the first time, exceeded the 249 formed by the Asian community. This reflected an increasing amount of merchant capital taking corporate firms, and by 1972 the effects of the Traders Licencing Act were being strongly felt by the non-citizen community. By 1973 African firms constituted 50% of all private firms coming in that year, and if the 'mixed group' is included (involves over 30% African partners) then it can be concluded that from 1973 onwards, indigeneously owned companies formed the largest proportion of new companies forming in Kenya.*[37]

While Kipkorir Aly Rana exalts in ideological configurations, Swainson conjures up misleading statistics. If the Kenya Africans form 50% of all companies forming that year, what percentage of the total number of companies do they control? For example, at the time of Langdon's study, if there were 46 companies producing shoes before the emergence of African capitalists, and in the year of Swainson's questionnaire there were four new companies, then she could rightly say if Africans started two of these companies, that they started 50% of the newly formed companies. But what about the volume of their production, i.e. labour intensive or capital intensive, were they gaining a bigger share of the local market?

Remember Mr. Karume, her prototype of the new bourgeoisie, after taking over one big shoe company, had to appeal to the foreign suppliers of raw materials to keep him in business.

The other question raised by her statistics is the question of firms. Clive Thomas, in his study of dependency, went to great lengths to make the distinction between firms making decisions about markets, output investments and long-term growth, and branch plants where a transnational simply gives a local the patent to assemble their product. The reader is told of the 485 firms with registered capital of $80,000 and over 121 were owned by Africans, 198 by Asians, 99 by Europeans and 67 were mixed ownership. But these statistics tell us very little of the size of these 'firms'. Were the firms doing $80,000 or $80 million worth of business? Were these firms producing capital goods (Dept. 1) or were they simply producing consumer products with a level of technology which was left behind during the fifties by Europe and the United States?

Apart from the range of questions which could be raised on the statistics ranging from size to profitability,[38] the theoretical questions left unanswered seem more urgent. Were the Africans, Asians and Europeans part of the Kenyan national bourgeoisie or were they only Africans? If only Africans belonged to this national bourgeoisie, to which 'national' bourgeoisie did the European and Asian capitalists belong? In dissecting the Kenya national bourgeoisie Swainson gives us a quantitative analysis of the increase of African directors, 'take over of multinational corporations' by local African capitalists and the growth of GEMA Holdings. But capitalism is not simply the number of individuals expanding their business ventures nor the sum of capitalist enterprises. Capital is an overall social relation. One should not confuse capitalism with commercial relations, this is very inadequate and in the case of the literature on Kenya has led to serious misinterpretation of the dynamic of imperialism in the era of neo-colonialism. Crude empiricism views capitalism and the national bourgeoisie from the angle of immediate phenomena. This micro-economic approach of conventional economics simply reflects the inability to understand that the capitalist imperialist system is greater than the sum of its component parts.

It is useful that at least Swainson observed the unproductive nature of the contemporary African capitalists in Kenya since for Cabral and other African Marxists the development of national capitalism is seen as a dialectical process.

> *The important thing for our people to know is whether imperialism in its role as capital in action, has fulfilled in our countries its his-*

> *toric mission; the acceleration of the process of development of the productive forces and their transformation in the sense of the increasing complexity in the means of production, increasing the differentiation between the classes with the development of the bourgeoisie and intensifying the class struggle; and appreciably increasing the level of economic, social and cultural life of the peoples.*[39]

Has this dialectical process occurred in Kenya? Do the careerists and bureaucrats who use the instrument of state power to accumulate capital bother about the level of life of the whole society? Are they concerned about the encroaching desert, locusts, famine and cattle trypanosomasis? Not to mention the day to day wretchedness of the vast reserve army of labour with the attendant social mass in the over-crowded urban slums. (At least the national bourgeoisie in the metropole can provide social security). Is it an oversight that those who write celebrating articles about the entrepreneurial spirit of the Kenyan leaders overlook the squalor of Majengo, Eastleigh, Pamwani or Mathere Valley, where the sewage runs like a stream between the cardboard and zinc structures called houses?

The conditions of the broad masses and the struggles around the state remind the world that the ILO and IDS smokescreens and statistics will not hide the crimes of imperialism. Even some of the top politicians are forced from time to time to assert that there is no real economic independence in Africa. If independence implies the ability to allocate resources to make choices concerning production and consumption and what is done with the surplus generated in the economy then one can conclude that there is no real independence from Cape to Cairo. The import of this formulation is sharpened with an understanding of the nation state. The African states which were carved out at the Conference of Berlin do not constitute proper national entities.[40] Although the nation is older than capitalism, national economies were carved out in the modern era by the embryonic bougeoisie breaking down feudal barriers in a process which went on for decades. The modern nation is constitutively bound up with capitalism, including its imperialistic stage. The bourgeoisie integrated the resources of a given territory to expand capitalist production, revolutionize the labour process and stamp a national culture and language. This included the maintenance of universally valid legal relations, the issue of fiduciary currency, the expansion of a market of more than local or regional size and the creation of an instrument of defence of the specific competitive interests of indigenous capital against foreign capitalists.

However much the contemporary world is one of interdependence on the economic level, it remains true that some states participate as national entities. France, the United States, Japan and Sweden can participate in the world market as national economies, but Ghana, Senegal, Zaire, Kenya and Nigeria do not participate in the world economy as national entities. They participate as fractions of a system of which they are dependent and peripheral parts. They were brought into the world economy as fractions in the colonial scramble and have not yet transcended this state of affairs. Of course, Kenya, Tanzania and the Ivory Coast publish figures that are called national income figures, they publish statistics which supposedly represent the national wealth, but there is very little which is national about it. In fact, their very colonial condition originated in the struggles of the European bougeoisie - not only between nations, but also between different branches of capital.

This class struggle in the bourgeois nations manifested itself in the tendential fall in the rate of profit. Marx showed that the increasing organic composition of individual capitals develop into a general capitalist tendency. This was because the material growth of constant capital implied a growth in its value and consequently in that of total capital. The gradual growth of constant capital in relation to variable capital (which declines) must gradually lead to a gradual fall in the general rate of profit so long as the rate of surplus value or the intensity of the exploitation of labour by capital remained the same. This progressive tendency of the rate of profit to fall is therefore an expression peculiar to the capitalist mode of production and the development of the social productivity of labour. Marx's keen understanding of capitalism as a world system led him to specify the fact that as a counteracting tendency which annulled this general law, the capitalists seek colonial production where

> *capital invested in colonies may yield higher rates of profit for the simple reason that the rate of profit is higher due to backward development and likewise the exploitation of labour, because of the use of slaves and coolies, etc.* [41]

Lenin enriched the understanding of the phenomenon of capitalism in his work on Imperialism by illustrating the fact that the tendency towards concentration and centralisation in the era of monopolies led to the plunder of weaker societies and territories.[42] The development of modern imperialism was significant since it signalled the end of the possibility of colonial and semi-colonial countries developing autocentric national economies. It meant that under the heel of the metropolitan bourgeoisie the colonies could either become neo-colonies, stagnant reserves of labour under commandist rule or break out to a higher level of social organisation than capitalist.

This does not mean that imperialism would not produce local capitalists. In the main, these capitalists lack autonomy and function in the underbelly of the world capitalist system.

Colin Leys and the Pre-Capitalist Accumulators

Professor Colin Leys waffled into the debate on underdevelopment after a long academic career with an important book called *Underdevelopment in Kenya: the Politics of Neo-Colonialism*. This work was an important leap from his modernising and tribal days which was reflected in his *Politics and Change in Developing Countries: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Development*. But Leys began to waffle out of a concern for imperialism with his own variant of the national bourgeoisie in a paper: "Capital Accumulation, Class Formation and Dependency: the Significance of the Kenyan Case". In studying class formation in Kenya there is no reference to the arrest of the working classes, the soaring cost of living, or the petty bourgeois squabbles; instead, the paper is inordinately preoccupied with the indigenous bourgeoisie in Kenya. Understanding the fundamental limitation of a national capitalist class, accumulating capital in a mere 14 years in the teeth of transnational competition and an extended capitalist depression, Leys seeks recourse to a class of pre-capitalist accumulators who prospered under colonialism and were now stamping a bourgeois culture in Kenya. Like Kipkorir Aly Rana, Leys quotes at length the creator of this class, M. Cowen.

The outstanding fact is this analysis seeks to obscure the violent disruption of history and class struggles in Kenya by British imperialism. And in spite of the fact that many Europeans denigrate oral history, it is well known that the use values in pre-colonial African societies were never sources of accumulation. Added to this is the fact that the emergent classes in pre-colonial Kenya were weak, fragmentary, and the societies were dominated by the movements of the militarily superior pastoral peoples. Unlike the interlacustrine kingdoms where the ruling class stamped their rule with the emergence of the state, nowhere in the region called Kenya did the state appear. Scientific theory of the evolution of human societies teaches us that the state is a product of a society divided into classes. The state evolves to provide for the general conditions of production in class societies and there was always a dialectical relationship between the state and the ruling class in that one helps to define the other. In Kenya, neither the small independent extended family producers associated in the village communities or on ridges, nor the pastoral peoples developed state institutions. The ownership of land was collective, and nowhere was land a commodity. There is a fundamental right to the land by every peasant who belongs to the village community or to the ridge. Specifically in the area of central Kenya, the amalgamation of members of different ethnic communities came to be called Kikuyu, the Mbari system of land tenure was a safeguard against exploitation by any one member of the clan, however strong or influential he might have been.[43] Although one could not accumulate land, the elders and chiefs had access to large tracts of land and cattle was individually owned.

Trade, both long distant to Zanzibar and inter-regional, played an important part in the social contact between societies, even those which were antagonistic to each other. This trade in meat, skins, hides and later ivory could not become a monopoloy in any one sector of the society since social differentiation had not advanced enough to grant the traders the military protection needed to successfully accumulate wealth. The history of Kenya prior to British piracy is clear with respect to the weakness of the ruling classes in the region. It is this weakness which renders this class of pre-capitalist accumulators a myth.

To lay bare the fiction of the continuity between pre-colonial and colonial periods, one only had to read the colonial records of British pacification, of the brutal suppression of the African masses. The British did not even pretend to use indirect rule in Kenya and the chiefs were more than usual loyal servants or soldiers of the British rather than Africans with some traditional right to chieftianship. For those who owned cattle, the devastation of the military campaigns and the epidemics shattered the weak and egalitarian African societies. The imperial warlord, Lord Lugard, drew the right conclusions when he wrote that the rinderpest

> *has favoured our enterprise. Powerful and warlike as the pastoral tribes are their pride has been humbled by this awful visitation. The enormous extent of the devastation it caused can hardly be exaggerated. Most of the tribes possessed vast herds of cattle, and of these in some localities, hardly one is left, in others, the deaths have been limited to 90 per cent. In the case of the Bantu tribes, the loss, though a terrible one, did not as a rule involve starvation and death to the peoples since, being agriculturalists, they possess*

large crops as a reserve. But to the pastoralists loss of cattle meant death.[44]

The ecological disaster and the 90% death of the livestock accounted for a substantial portion of the wealth of the Africans and during the colonial era, there was forced destocking. Without a licence to hunt and barred from planting the lucrative commercial crops, it would be instructive for Leys to document the source of the wealth of these pre-capitalist accumulators - instead of the so-called transformation through wage labour.

After making allowances for the non-existence of the so-called continuity during the years of forced labour, whippings, reserves and Kipande pass, the absurdity of the reformed class is clear. Leys is correct in asserting the fact that education was a basis for social mobility, but it is incorrect to see this education as a basis for capital accumulation. Data is lacking on the numbers of Africans educated in the de facto apartheid system of colonial Kenya. J.E. Goldthorpe's superficial work on the *African Elite* tells us that there were 997 Kenyans studying abroad in 1955 but only 110 of these were Africans.[45] The absence of schools for Africans, apart from the missionaries who sought to stamp out the cultural patterns of Africans, led to the independent schools movement.

In tracing the growth of a class of African capitalists one is of necessity thrown into the initiatives of the colonial state since the war in the forest and the strikes in Nairobi. Right up to the last decade of colonialism, one would be hard put to find African personnel in the 'upper level' earnings in the colonial society. Unlike Ghana and Southern Nigeria, where the African petty bourgeoisie was large and subject to tensions between wealthy and not so wealthy, and where an African professional class had been entrenched for decades, the Kenyan educated were too weak to be differentiated before 1963. There were very few university graduates and the higher civil service posts were controlled by whites and they admitted a few Asians as clerks, with Africans as messengers, interpreters, telephonists. Earnings by Africans - even those in the colonial state bureaucracy - were not dictated by places in the machinery of coercion, but rather by racist values and the arbitrary decision of the European colonisers as to what constituted a 'living wage' for Africans at different levels.

Of those Africans involved in trade and functioning as hawkers, the commercial structure of the society militated against accumulation by Africans. Given the African retailer's dependence on the Asian trader as a supplier of goods and especially credit, the African retailer was more a wage labourer than a retailer in his own right. The financial institutions did not lend money to Africans since credit was barred by the Credit to Natives Restriction Ordinance 1931. Since Africans could not get loans from the commercial banks and even the gazetted chiefs were under the thumb of the Europeans, the number of Africans accumulating capital were a handful.

Whether the present African capitalists, who undoubtedly exploit other Africans as wage labourers, are already an autonomous class is an issue beyond the scope of this commentary. What is certain is that today they are very much in evidence. They have rapidly grown since the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism - viz. in the past 20 years. It would be a bit hasty to call this class a national class since so many rose from the bureaucracy and the politicization of ethnicity and regionalism render them *anti-national*. Interestingly enough, those petty bourgeoisie and capitalists who preach 'tribalism' are the most pro-imperialist Africans. They look to Europe and America as models of society, but exploit their ethnic origins as part of their own pursuit inside the class of political power seekers. My concern in tracing the origins of the Kenyan ruling class is to underline the role of the state in the gestation of this class. The relationship of the state and the ruling class generates struggles around the state. The violent deaths of the top politicians in the past ten years attest to this fact. This question of state power, although minimised by the new theoreticians, should be central since the ability of the present ruling class to ensure a stable state will, at the same time, ensure reproduction of the new ruling class.

But the fact is that in a neo-colony like Kenya, the ruling class,[46] the political leaders, do not have the material base requisite to assert their independence. The recent events in the Congo where Mobutu Seke Seko is propped up by French, Belgian and American troops, is a clear reminder of the real masters behind the resident ruling classes in Africa. The permanent presence of British troops and the continuous docking of the American Indian Ocean navy at Mombasa, are clear reminders that Kenyan defence is seen as part of the defence of Western imperialists. The literature on relative autonomy is of little relevance to Africa since the present states did not emanate from class struggles solely in Africa. There is a marked continuity between the colonial and neo-colonial state with respect to abrogating the basic rights of the proletarianized masses.

To be sure, Leys and his ideological comrades end up depending on 'futurology' of African capitalists to emphasise his vision of capitalist development.[47] But the class struggles of the Kenyan masses make predictions about the future of capitalism problematic. In 1973, Nixon was predicting how stable Zaire and Ethiopia would be for foreign investments. However, the plight of the masses precipitated a violent convulsion of the ruling class. This convulsion in Ethiopia and Uganda should remind one of the temporaneous nature of a class of bandits who understand their short term piracy so that they invest in land in Sussex, England or Swiss Banks.

The most clearly reactionary aspect of Leys' analysis is his notion of the present bourgeois culture, where there is a distinctive bourgeois lifestyle, housing, entertainment and the university education in the U.S. or Britain. These cultural attributes to which Leys refers are nothing more than the lack-lustre imitative lifestyle of a class which Fanon derided in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Those of us Africans who have had to sit through the cultural assault called G.C.E. O and A Levels, and then studied in the metropole, know the colonial and neo-colonial school bred confusion, subordination and alienation. European education is dominated by the capitalist class and the racism and cultural boastfulness harboured by capitalism is included in the package of modern education. How then can a class of Africans who internalise the prejudices of Europe be called the guardians of a new national culture? Why is Ngugi Wa'Thiongo incarcerated for attempting to advance the cultural and political horizons of the masses?[48] Those Africans who struggle to send their children to Europe are conscious of the fact that they accept the ideas of white supremacy. This educated strata is the transmission belt for the borrowed values of consumption, culture and technology of Europe. For the masses, the educational system is dysfunctional for those who can pay school fees. Mass illiteracy and loss of traditional techniques accumulated through centuries leave a vacuum yet to be filled. The educational system in Kenya is part of the whole process of social decay in the era of capitalist depression.

The social decay of Ethiopia and Uganda demonstrates the crisis of imperialism. Kenya remains an important epicentre and the link in the intelligence network between Tel Aviv and Johannesburg. Fortunately, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Hearings inform us that the CIA has been funding the leadership of Kenya for the past ten years. So far, the theorists of 'national bourgeoisie' have chosen to ignore the facts of the general crisis of capitalism and the fact that Africa is now going through a process of compounded underdevelopment. The waste of the human resources in Africa, famine, floods and malnutrition all attest to the inability of the present ruling class to carry out 'development'.

A national independence movement and a national bourgeoisie must aim at the recovery of control over national productive forces. Instead, the expansion of transnational control over the productive forces proved compatible with the granting of independence. It is tempting to suggest that instead of political independence being sequentially prior to economic independence it was a maneuver to consolidate economic dependence. This generalisation, proceeding unusually from those holding to a Marxist perspective, does not separate politics and economics. Nevertheless, it falls at another fence, by minimising the role of the exploited and the oppressed in the historical process. The capitalist imperialist system has a dynamic centre which lies outside of Africa and is guided by classes and state structures which are also located beyond the boundaries of Africa, but the peoples of Africa responded as they were integrated in this system. It was the organized and spontaneous activity of the proletarianized masses - especially the Land and Freedom Army - which forced the concessions and re-adjustments which constitute what is called constitutional or political independence. The post-independence society must disengage from imperialism for the ruling class to break out of dependency.

Social and political repression in Kenya arise directly out of the material conditions of neo-colonial underdevelopment and the lopsided division of the social product. Socialist transformation remains the only alternative to the generalised crisis of international capitalism and the particularly acute manifestation of such crisis in Africa. Those who hope to cite Kenyan 'development' and the stability of capitalism as a demonstrator for Zimbabwe and other states, should remember colonial underdevelopment has been antithetical to bourgeois democracy and civil rights for the vast majority of the population. The failure of the metropolitan bourgeoisie under colonialism is now being repeated by the petty bourgeoisie under neo-colonialism. This lacklustre ruling class in Kenya have shown no evidence of any ability to restructure the economy so that it becomes integrated, independent and self-generating. The new rulers have intensified the maldistribution of wealth and have increased the gap between themselves and the working poor. They have also marched against the grudgingly and sparingly conceded freedoms of latter day colonial rule. Neither capitalism, socialism nor any form of democracy can be achieved under the present leadership in Kenya. The experience of Mozambique demonstrates that only a leadership rooted in the working class can lead to a road which can hope to recover the national productive forces. Probably, the most important conclusion to be drawn from the contemporary political road in Kenya is that the proletarianized masses are the only guarantors of economic growth, political democracy and a system of social justice. Studies on the nature of working class organisations and their struggles to end political arrest in Kenya are long overdue.

Footnotes

1. Rodney's work was influenced by the Latin American debate on underdevelopment. But in Europe some liberals used the language of underdevelopment to hide their own views of Africa. See for example the ideas of Geoffrey Kay which said that Africa was underdeveloped because it has not been exploited enough. See *Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis*, McMillan, London, 1975.

2. Clive Thomas, *Dependency and Transformation*, Monthly Review Press, 1974.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Although academics have downplayed the heroic struggles of the Kenyan peasants, the horrific levels of the British response is just coming to light from some of the fighters in the forest and even from British intelligence agents. See Anthony Clayton, *Counter Insurgency, A Study of Military Operations Against the Mau Mau*. Transafrica Publishers, Nairobi, 1976. This account is useful in that Clayton, a lecturer at Sandhurst, worked for the British Intelligence both in Nairobi, 1952-1956, and London, 1956-1965. From this post he was promoted to lecturer at Sandhurst Military College.

5. See *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi Wa'Thiongo and Micere Mugo, Heinemann, London, 1976.

6. See "The C.I.A. As An Equal Opportunity Employer," by Dan Schechter, *et al.*, *Ramparts*, 1969.

7. Ahmed Mohidin, "The Colonial Background to Sessional Paper No. 10". Mimeo, Makerere University, 1973.

8. *Who Controls Industry in Kenya?* Report of a Working Party, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1968, pp. 53-67.

9. Steve Langdon, "Multinational Corporations in Kenya," D. Phil., Sussex University, 1976, pp. 82-83.

10. *Ibid.*

11. J.M. Kariuki, the populist politician , continuously asked questions about the burgeoning economic power of Lonrho in Kenya. He was assassinated in March, 1975, and his death caused a serious political crisis in that the people saw his questions as related to their subjugation to foreign capital.

12. See "Black African Allies" of Tiny Rowlands in *Lonrho - Portrait of a Multinational* by S. Cronje, M. Ling and G. Cronje, Pelican Books, London, 1976, pp. 36-38.

13. N. Girvan, "Economic Nationalists vs. Multinational Corporations" in C. Widstrand, *Multinational Firms in Africa*, Uppsala, Sweden, 1975.

14. See the MNC's vs. indigenous entrepreneurs in Langdon's thesis for a full documentation of the different techniques used in Kenya to dominate the local economy.

15. Reported in the *Daily Nation*, Aug. 29, 1973. These capitalists are happy with 5 to 7 percent profit in Europe and North America.

16. G.K. Helleiner makes the distinction between consumption technology and production technology in underdeveloped states. See his piece "The Role of Multinational Corporations in the Less Developed Countries," *World Development*, 1975.

17. See Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, Harvester Press, 1977, pp. 169-177.

18. *Ibid.*

19. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kenya was one of the many Kenyan politicians who was involved with the top Indian capitalists in East Africa, Jayant Madhvani. For a laudatory eulogy by N. Mungai see *Jayant Madhvani*, printed privately, London, 1973.

20. Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya, The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism*, Heinemann, London, 1975, p. 155.

21. William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, Harper and Row, New York, 1967, p. 287. This book was banned by the political leadership because of the clear admission of the U.S. ambassador of how his embassy influenced political events in Kenya.

22. Peter Marris and Anthony Somerset, *African Businessmen: A Study of Entrepreneurship and Development in Kenya*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1971, pp. 14-15.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. Roger van Zwaneberg, "Neo-Colonialism and the Origin of the National Bourgeoisie in Kenya Between 1940 and 1973," *Journal of Eastern Africa Research and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1974, pp. 161-188.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Kipkorir Aly Azad Rana, "Class Formation and Social Conflict - A Case Study of Kenya," *Ufahamu*, University of California, Los Angeles, Vol. VII, No. 3, 1977, p. 25.

33. For a critique of some of the notions of class formation in Africa see Walter Rodney, "State Formation and Class Formation in Tanzania," *Maji Maji*, University of Dar es Salaam, August, 1973.

34. Given the high organic composition of capital in the metropolitan capitalist states, the needs of capitalism require far more skilled workers. The branches of technology have undergone considerable diversification and today electronics mechanics and engineering are important scientific sources of technology. The training of skilled labour is becoming increasingly specialised and involves many more workers than the small number of engineers in the 19th century. This training involves workers, and Poulantzas instead of coming to grips with the global division of labour, simply terms these workers "The New Petty Bourgeoisie." See *Class in Contemporary Capitalism* by Nicos Poulantzas, NLB Books, 1975, pp. 251-286. This characterisation of a section of the working class as petty bourgeois is the failure to understand the alliance of the trade union bureaucracy with capitalism in the Social Democratic Model. However, this problem of the degradation of work skills of the majority of the producers with the concommitant increasing specialisation of a minority is described by Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, Monthly Review Press, 1974.

35. *Ufahamu*, p. 25.

36. Nicola Swainson, "The Rise of a National Bourgeoisie in Kenya," *Review of African Political Economy*, Jan. - April, 1977, pp. 39-56.

37. *RAPE* - No. 8, p. 44. Swainson does not distinguish between first and branch plants. The fundamental weakness of this argument lay in the misunderstanding of the local expressions of transnational corporations. These branch plants are not firms. It is true that there are Directors, Managers, Managing Directors, etc. but these figureheads cannot make long-term decisions about output, investment, markets, since the ultimate decision about the future of capitalism is made in the North Atlantic.

38. Swainson tells us that "African firms are more commonly in these sectors concerned with primitive accumulation, agriculture and trade, and some in property, finance, transport and tourism, with relatively few in productive industry." Almost half of the Asian firms are in commerce, but significant numbers are in various branches of manufacturing, while European companies are more lately in corporations of finance as well as manufacturing capital, p. 45.

39. Amilcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea*, Monthly Review Press, 1969, p. 49.

40. Somalia is one of the few African states which is ethnically homogeneous and yet the Somali regime claims that the Somali nation is bigger than the present geographical boundaries.

41. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, p. 212, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1974.

42. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism.*

43. Samir Amin explains the difference between the tributary mode of production and the usual confusion with the feudal mode. See *Unequal Development*, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1976, pp. 13-58.

44. Lord Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, Vol. 2, 1893, pp. 525-526.

45. There were 285 Kenyans at Makerere, 1958-1959, and 355, 1959-1960. See figures in J.E. Goldthorpe, *An African Elite*, O.U.P., 1965, pp. 17-18.

46. This use of ruling class in Kenya is to capture the amalgam of African capitalists, petty bourgeoisie and bureaucratic careerists who dominate the institutions of the state. The Kenyan Asians are seen as part of this ruling class albeit the weaker element. The Asians comprise also commercial capitalists and commercial petty bourgeoisie. The Europeans

in Kenya are seen as agents of the metropolitan bourgeoisie resident in Kenya.

47. See Leys, "Capital Accumulation, Class Formation and Dependency," p. 23. Leys interchangeably used indigenous bourgeoisie and Kikuyu bourgeoisie. Again, this lack of precision in locating this indigenous bourgeoisie suggests that the old analysis of a society of 'tribes' plagues those who seek to escape the ideological pit of modernisation.

48. Characteristically those who celebrate the rise of the national bourgeoisie suggest that Ngugi is nothing but a 'bourgeois nationalist'. But Ngugi's major novel, *Petals of Blood*, remains one of the most vivid descriptions of the distortion of the society by the new modernisers.

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