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The East African Groundnut Scheme and its Legacy

NICHOLAS WESTCOTT

As colonial development took off after the Second World War, Britain's Labour Government embarked on a scheme to convert 3 million acres of bush in Tanganyika into the largest mechanized groundnut farm in the world. The Groundnut Scheme was to prove the most expensive and most disastrous development scheme it had ever undertaken. Initially employing the United Africa Company as agent, the Government set up the Overseas Food Corporation to manage the scheme as an example of socialist development in Africa. Army surplus kit and demobbed soldiers poured into the country; by the time the effort was abandoned in 1950, the write-off figure was £36 million, yet almost no groundnuts had been exported. This book examines in detail, for the first time, this early major failure of agricultural development in Africa, and seeks to explain why it was launched despite experts' doubts, why it went wrong, and its lasting political and developmental consequences.

NICHOLAS WESTCOTT is Director of the Royal African Society and Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. His previous posts include Managing Director, Middle East and North Africa, and prior to that Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service (EU), Brussels.

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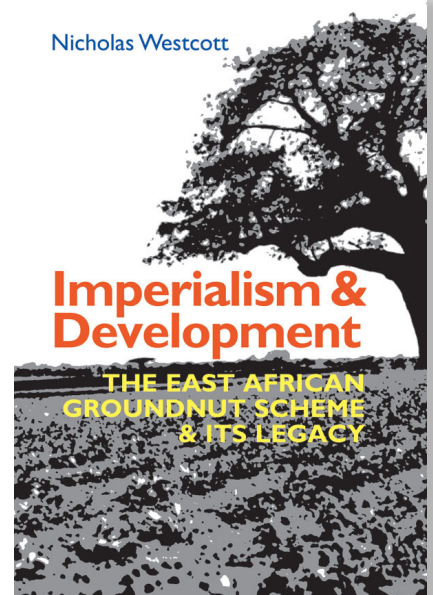
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