

Contemporary Imperialism and the Agrarian Question

Samir Amin

I am indeed honoured to contribute to the inaugural issue of Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy. The Journal comes at the right moment. Contemporary imperialism is conducting an attack on three billion peasants in the South, which condemns them to the most dramatic pauperisation. Obsolete capitalism of generalised monopolies has entered a phase whereby the pursuit of its deployment is synonymous to quasi-genocide. Analysing these criminal processes with a view to reinforcing the capacity of our societies to develop an effective alternative is now due more than ever.

I. The Ongoing Attack of Monopoly Capital on Peasants in the South

All societies before modern (capitalist) time were peasant societies. Their production processes were ruled by various specific systems and logics, which nonetheless shared the fact that these were not those which rule capitalism (*i.e.*, the maximisation of the return on capital in a market society).

Modern capitalist agriculture, represented by both rich family farming and/or by agribusiness corporations, is now looking forward to a massive attack on Third World peasant production. The project did get the green light from the WTO in its Doha session. Yet, the peasantry still occupies half of humankind. But its production is shared between two sectors enormously unequal in size, with a clearly distinct economic and social character and levels of efficiency.

Capitalist agriculture governed by the principle of return on capital, which is localised almost exclusively in North America, Europe, the Southern cone of Latin America, and Australia, employs only a few tens of millions of farmers who are no longer 'peasants'. Their productivity, which depends on mechanisation, and of which they have monopoly worldwide, ranges between 10,000 and 20,000 quintals of equivalent cereals per worker annually.

On the other hand, peasant farming systems still constitute the occupation of nearly half of humanity – *i.e.*, three billion human beings. These farming systems are, in turn, shared between those who benefited from the green revolution (fertilisers, pesticides, and selected

seeds), but are nevertheless poorly mechanised, with production ranging between 100 and 500 quintals per farmer, and the other group which remains excluded from this revolution, whose production is estimated around 10 quintals per farmer.

The ratio of productivity of the most advanced segment of world agriculture to the poorest, which was around 10:1 before 1940, is now approaching 2000:1! This means that productivity has progressed much more unequally in the area of agriculture-food production than in any other area. Simultaneously, this evolution has led to the reduction of relative prices of food products (in relation to other industrial and service products) to one-fifth of what they were fifty years ago.

The new agrarian question is the result of that unequal development. Indeed, modernisation had always combined constructive dimensions (accumulation of capital and the advance of productivity) with destructive aspects (reducing labour to the status of a commodity sold on the market, often destroying the natural ecological basis needed for the reproduction of life and production, polarising wealth on a global level). Modernisation had always simultaneously 'integrated' those for whom employment was created by the very expansion of markets, and 'excluded' those who, having lost their positions in the previous systems, were not integrated in the new labour force. In its ascending phase, capitalist expansion did integrate the world market, alongside the processes of exclusion. But now, with respect to the peasant societies of the Third World, it is massively excluding them, and integrating only insignificant minorities.

The question raised here is precisely whether this trend will continue to operate with respect to the three billion human beings still producing and living in the framework of peasant societies, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Indeed, what would happen henceforth, should 'agriculture and food production' be treated as any other form of production submitted to the rules of competition in an open-deregulated market, as decided in principle at the Doha conference (November 2001)? Would such principles foster the acceleration of production?

Indeed, one can imagine some 20 million new additional modern farmers producing whatever the three billion present peasants can offer on the market beyond their own (poor) subsistence. The conditions for the success of such an alternative would necessitate the transfer of important pieces of good land to the new agricultural producers (and these lands have to be

taken out of the hands of present peasant societies), access to capital markets (to buy equipments), and access to the consumers markets. Such agriculturalists would indeed 'compete' successfully with the billions of present peasants. But what would happen to these peasants?

Under the circumstances, admitting the general principle of competition for agricultural products and foodstuffs, as imposed by the WTO, means accepting that billions of 'non-competitive' producers be eliminated within the short historic time of a few decades. What would become of these billions of humans beings, the majority of whom are already the poorest among the poor, but who feed themselves with great difficulty? Worse still, what would be the plight of one-third of this population (since three-quarters of the under-fed population of the world are rural dwellers)? In fifty years' time, no relatively competitive industrial development, even in the fanciful hypothesis of a continued growth of seven percent annually for three-quarters of humanity, could absorb even one-third of this reserve.

The major argument presented to legitimate the WTO-competition doctrine is that such development did happen in nineteenth-century Europe, to finally produce a modern, wealthy, urban, industrial, and post-industrial society, as well as a modern agriculture able to feed the nation and even to export. Why should this pattern not be repeated in the contemporary Third World, in particular for the emerging nations?

The argument fails to consider two major factors which make the reproduction of the pattern almost impossible now in Third World countries. The first is that the European model developed, throughout a century and a half, along with industrial technologies which were labour intensive. Modern technologies are far less. Therefore, if the new-comers of the Third World have to be competitive on global markets for their industrial exports, they have to adopt labour-saving technologies. The second is that Europe benefited during that long transition from the possibility of massive out-migration of their 'surplus' population to the Americas.

That argument – *i.e.*, that capitalism has 'solved' the agrarian question in its developed centers – has always been admitted by large sections of the left, including within historical Marxism, as testified by the famous book of Karl Kautsky on 'the agrarian question', written before World War I. Leninism itself inherited that view, and on this basis undertook a modernisation

of agriculture through the Stalinist collectivisation, with doubtful results. What was always overlooked was that capitalism, while it solved the question in its centers, did so by creating a gigantic agrarian question in the peripheries, which it cannot solve but through the genocide of half of humankind. Within historical Marxism, only Maoism understood the size of the challenge. Therefore, those who charge Maoism with a so-called ‘peasant deviation’ show by this very criticism that they do not have the analytical capacity for an understanding of what is actually-existing imperialist capitalism, which they reduce to an abstract discourse on capitalism in general.

Modernisation through market liberalisation as suggested by the WTO and its supporters finally aligns two components side by side, without even necessarily combining them: (a) the production of food on a global scale by modern competitive agricultural producers mostly based in the North, but also possibly in the future in some pockets of the South; and (b) the marginalisation – exclusion – and further impoverishment of the majority of the three billion peasants of the present Third World, and eventually their seclusion in some kind of ‘reserves’. It therefore combines (a) the dominant pro-modernisation-efficiency discourse with (b) a set of policies for ecological-cultural reserves which would make it possible for the victims to ‘survive’. These two components might therefore complement one another rather than ‘conflict’.

Can we imagine other alternatives and have them widely debated? An alternative framework would imply that peasant agriculture should be maintained throughout the visible future of the twenty-first century, but simultaneously engaged in a process of continuous technological/social change and progress, at a rate which would allow a progressive transfer to non-rural, non-agricultural employment.

Such a strategic set of targets involves complex policy mixes at national, regional, and global levels. At the national levels it implies macro-policies protecting peasant food production from the unequal competition of modernised agricultural producers – *i.e.*, agribusiness, local and international – with a view to guarantee acceptable internal food prices, eventually disconnected from the so-called international market prices (in fact, also markets biased by subsidies of the wealthy North, the USA, Canada, and Europe).

Such policy targets also question the patterns of industrial–urban developments, which should be based less on export-oriented priorities, themselves taking advantage of low wages (implying, in their turn, low prices for food), and be more attentive to a socially-balanced internal market expansion. Simultaneously, such a choice of principle facilitates the integration in the overall scheme patterns of policies ensuring national food security, an indispensable condition for a country to be an active member of the global community and enjoy the indispensable margin of autonomy and negotiating capacity.

At regional and global levels it implies international agreements and policies that would move away from the doctrinaire liberal principles of the WTO, which would be imaginative and specific to different areas, since they would have to take into consideration concrete historical and social conditions.

II. Family Farming in the North and the Peasantry in the South

Peasant agriculture in the countries of the Global South, like its Northern counterpart, is also well integrated into world capitalism. However, closer study immediately reveals both the convergences and differences in these two types of ‘family’ economy.

Modern family agriculture in Western Europe and the United States is highly labour productive. Producing 1,000 to 2,000 tons of cereal equivalents annually per worker, it has no equal and has enabled less than 5 per cent of the population to supply whole countries abundantly and produce exportable surpluses. Although it may not necessarily be the most productive form of agriculture measured in tons per hectare, modern family farming has an exceptional capacity for absorbing innovations and adapting to both environmental conditions and market demand.

Yet, family agriculture in the Global North is different from industrial agriculture in that it does not share that specific characteristic of capitalist production: industrially organised labor. In the factory, the number of workers enables an advanced division of labor, which is at the origin of the modern leap in productivity. On family farms, labor supply is reduced to one or two individuals (the farming couple), sometimes helped by one, two, or three family members, associates, or permanent laborers, but also, in certain cases, a larger number of seasonal workers (particularly for the harvesting of fruit and vegetables). Generally speaking,

there is not a definitively fixed division of labor, the tasks being complex, polyvalent, and variable. In this sense, family farming is not capitalist. Nevertheless, modern family agriculture in the Global North is an inseparable, integrated part of the capitalist economy, and its combined productivity and labour efficiency brings tremendous productivity and resiliency to the global agro-food system.

The labor efficiency of the modern family farm is due primarily to its modern equipment, possessing 90 per cent of the tractors and agricultural equipment in use in the world. In the logic of capitalism, the farmer is both a worker and a capitalist and his/her income should correspond to the sum of their wages for work and profit from ownership of the capital being used. But it is not so. The net income of farmers is comparable to the average (low) wage earned in industry in the same country. State intervention and regulatory policies in Europe and the United States favoring overproduction (followed by subsidies) ensure that profits are collected not by the farmers, but by segments of industrial, financial, and commercial capital further up and down the food value chain.

Despite its efficiency, the agricultural family unit is only a sub-contractor, caught between upstream and downstream activities: on the one hand, agro-industry (which imposes GMOs and supplies the equipment and chemical products) and finance (which provides the necessary credits); on the other, the traders, processors, and commercial supermarkets. Self-consumption has become practically irrelevant to the business of family farming, because the family economy depends entirely on its market production. Thus, the logic that commands the production options of the family is no longer the same as that of the agricultural peasants of Third World countries, past or present. Because of their absolute subjugation to market forces, family farmers in the North are victims of the capitalist system of mass production – both as producers and consumers. This reality links them to peasant producers in the Global South and to the growing underclass of consumers of ‘mass food’ worldwide.

The Third World counterparts of Northern family farmers are the peasant cultivators who constitute nearly half of humanity. The types of agriculture here vary, from the unmechanised use of so-called Green Revolution products (fertilizers, pesticides, and hybrid seeds), whose production has risen to 100-500 quintals per labourer, to those caught in the negative spiral of ‘involution’, ushered in by the Green Revolution, whose production has dropped to around 10 quintals per labourer and continues to fall, despite costly increases in inputs. Another, growing

category of productive peasant farmers are the ‘agro-ecological’ producers managing farm and watershed-scale ecosystem functions to maintain productivity, resilience, and lower production costs and whose productivity – when measured in kilos per hectare – rivals both industrial and family farming. Nonetheless, the gap between the average production of a farmer in the North and that of southern peasant agriculture, which was 10 to 1 before 1940, is now 100 to 1. In other words, the rate of progress in agricultural productivity has largely outstripped that of other activities, which when combined with global over-production, result in a drop in real price from 5 to 1.

There are huge differences, which are visible and undeniable. They include: the importance of subsistence food for survival in the peasant economies; the low labour efficiency of this non-mechanised agriculture; the impossibly small land parcels and their systematic dispossession and destruction by urbanisation, agrofuels, and industrial agriculture; vast poverty (three quarters of the victims of global under-nourishment are rural); and the sheer immensity of the agrarian problem (the peasantry is not a tiny sector of a larger, industrialised society, but makes up nearly half of humanity).

In spite of these differences, peasant agriculture in the Global South is part of the dominant global capitalist system. Peasants often depend on purchased inputs and are increasingly preyed upon by the oligopolies that sell them. Furthermore, these farmers feed nearly half of the world’s population (including themselves). For Green Revolution farmers (approximately half of the peasantry of the South), the siphoning off of profits by dominant capital is severe, keeping them desperately poor (as evidenced, for example, by the epidemic of bankruptcies and farmer suicides in India). The other half of the peasantry in the South, despite the weakness of its production, has a combined annual income of US\$ 2.3 trillion and is growing at a rate of eight percent a year (and is therefore seen as a \$US 1.3 trillion per year potential market).

III. The Imperialist Aggression on Peasant and Family Food Systems

In response to the global food crisis, the corporate food regime – made up of Northern governments, multilateral institutions, agro-food oligopolies, and big philanthropy capital – propose using public tax revenues to modernise areas in the Global South of high agricultural potential (*i.e.*, ‘breadbasket’ regions with good land and access to irrigation) to integrate them

into global markets. This, we are invited to believe, will eradicate rural poverty and lead to national economic development for poor countries in the Third World, thus bringing an end to world hunger.

This strategy is supported by the ‘absolute and superior rationale’ of economic management based on the private and exclusive ownership of the means of production. According to conventional economics, the unregulated market (*i.e.*, the transferability of ownership of capital, land, and labour) determines the optimal use of these factors of production. According to this principle, land and labour become merchandise, and like any other commodity, is transferable at market prices in order to guarantee its best use for its owner and society as a whole. This is nothing but mere tautology, yet it is that on which all a-critical economic discourse is based.

The global system of private land ownership required for the free movement (and concentration) of capital is justified in social terms with the argument that private property alone guarantees that the farmer will not suddenly be dispossessed of the fruit of his or her labour. Obviously, for most of the world’s farmers, this is not the case. Other forms of land use can ensure that farmers (as well as workers and consumers) benefit equitably from production, but the private property discourse uses the conclusions that it sees fit in order to propose them as the only possible ‘rules’ for the advancement of all people. To subjugate land, labour, and consumption everywhere to private property as currently practiced in capitalist centres is to spread the policy of monopoly ‘enclosures’ the world over, to hasten the dispossession of peasants, and to ensure the food insecurity of vast poor communities.

This course of action is not new; it began during the global expansion of capitalism in the context of colonial systems. What current dominant discourse understands by ‘reform of the land tenure system’ and ‘new investments in agriculture’ is quite the opposite of what the construction of a real alternative based on a prosperous peasant economy requires. This discourse, promoted by the propaganda instruments of collective imperialism (the World Bank, numerous cooperation agencies) and also a growing number of NGOs with financial backing from governments and philanthropy capital, understands land reform to mean the acceleration of the privatisation of land, and nothing more. The aim is clear: to create the conditions that would allow modern islands of agribusiness to take possession of the land they need in order to expand.

But is the North's capitalist modernisation of Southern agricultures really desirable? Is it even possible? Capitalism, by its nature, cannot solve the global hunger crisis, because it cannot resolve the historical agrarian question of how to mobilise the surplus from peasant agriculture to industry without eliminating that same peasantry from agriculture. Although capitalism did accomplish this transition for the industrial societies of the Global North, this proposition does not hold true for the 85 percent of the world's population in the Global South. Capitalist modernisation has now reached a stage where its continued expansion requires the implementation of enclosure policies on a world scale similar to those at the beginning of capitalist development in England, except that today the destruction on a world scale of the 'peasant reserves' of cheap labour will be nothing less than synonymous with genocide: on one hand, the destruction of the peasant societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America; on the other, billions in windfall profits for global capital, derived from a socially useless production unable to cover the needs of billions of hungry people in the South, even as it increases the number of sick and obese people in the North.

We have reached the point that, to open up a new area for capital expansion, it would be necessary to destroy entire societies. Imagine fifty million new 'efficient' modern farms (200 million human beings with their families) on the one hand, and two billion excluded people on the other. The profitable aspect of this capitalist transition would be a pitiful drop of water in a vast ocean of destruction. The effect of increased out-migration from the countryside will shift capital's social misery to new and existing urban communities of poor and underserved 'surplus people'. The breakdown of the global food system reflects the fact that, despite its neoliberal bravado, capitalism has entered into its phase of senility, because the logic of the system is no longer able to ensure the simple survival of humanity. Capitalism's continued expansion into Southern agricultures will result in a planet full of hungry slums. Once a creative force sweeping away the bonds of feudalism, capitalism has now become barbaric, leading directly to genocide. It is necessary to replace it – now more than ever before – by other development logics, which would be more rational and humane.

IV. No Alternative to Food Sovereignty

Resistance by peasants, small family farmers, and the poor consumers most affected by the dysfunctional global food system is essential in order to build a real and genuinely human

alternative. We must ensure the functionality and resilience of family and peasant agriculture for the visible future of the twenty-first century, quite simply because they allow us to resolve the agrarian question underlying world hunger and poverty. Peasant, family, and improved, agro-ecological agriculture – along with a new relation with consumers and labour – are essential to overcome the destructive logic of capitalism.

I personally believe this operation will entail a long, secular transition to socialism. The initial weight of this transition will be primarily in the South, but will also need to address both rural and urban food systems in the North. We need to work out regulatory policies for new relationships between the market and family agriculture, between producers and consumers, between the North and South, and between the rural and the urban.

This is a historically large, multi-faceted task that must address the structural rules governing capitalist food systems. To begin, the agenda of the WTO and its attendant global market model must quite simply be refused. At the national, regional, and sub-regional levels, regulations adapted to local food systems must protect national, smallholder production and ensure food sovereignty – in other words, the delinking of internal food prices and the rents of the food value chain from those of the so-called world market.

A gradual increase in the productivity of peasant agriculture based on different combinations of agro-ecological and input-mediated strategies will doubtless be slow but continuous, and would make it possible to control the exodus of the rural populations to the towns (in the North and South), as well as provide opportunities to construct mutually-beneficial autonomous food systems in underserved communities with regards to local economies, food supply, and diet. At the level of what is called the world market, the desirable regulation can probably be done through inter-regional and rural-urban agreements that meet the requirements of a kind of sustainable development that integrates people rather than excludes them.

Currently, food consumption worldwide is already realised by local production, through competition for 85 per cent of it. Nevertheless, this production corresponds to very different levels of satisfaction of food needs: generally good for North America and West and Central Europe, acceptable in China, mediocre for the rest of Asia and Latin America, disastrous for Africa. The United States and Europe have understood the importance of national food

sovereignty very well, and have successfully implemented it by systematic economic policies. But, apparently, what is good for them is not good for the others! The World Bank, the OECD, and the European Union aim to impose an alternative, which is ‘food security’ – in fact, a prescription which is similar to that applied by national governments of the Global North to their own slums, where the food security of low income communities is achieved through the industrial production of low-quality ‘mass food’.

Accordingly, Third World countries do not need food sovereignty and should rely on industrial agriculture, mass food, and international trade to cover the deficit – however large – in their food requirements. This may seem easy for those countries which are large exporters of natural resources like oil or uranium, or to affluent consumers who can afford to eat outside the circuits of mass consumption. For the others, the advice of the Western powers is maximum specialisation of agricultural commodities for export, such as cotton, tropical drinks, oils, and increasingly, agrofuels. The defenders of ‘food security’ for others – not for themselves – do not consider the fact that this specialisation, which has been practiced since colonisation, has not improved the miserable food rations of the peoples concerned and has resulted in a global epidemic of diet-related diseases.

On top of this, the economic crisis initiated by the financial collapse of 2008 is already aggravating the situation and will continue to do so. It is sad to note how, at the very moment when the crisis illustrates the failure of so-called food security policies, the partners of the OECD cling to them. It is not that government leaders do not ‘understand’ the problem. This would be to deny them the intelligence that they certainly possess. But we cannot dismiss the hypothesis that ‘food insecurity’ is a consciously adopted objective, and that food is being used as a weapon. Without food sovereignty, no political sovereignty is possible. Without food sovereignty, no sustainable food security or food justice – national or local – is possible.

While there is no alternative to food sovereignty, its efficient implementation does, in fact, require a commitment to the construction of deeply diversified economies in terms of production, processing, manufacturing, and distribution.

New peasant organisations exist in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that support the current visible struggles. In Europe and the United States, farmer, worker, and consumer organisations are forming alliances for more equitable and sustainable food systems. Often,

when political systems make it impossible for formal organisations to form (or to have any significant impact), social struggles take the form of ‘movements’ with no apparent direction. Where they do exist, these actions and programmes must be more closely examined. What social forces do they represent, whose interests do they defend? How do they struggle to find their place under the expansion of dominant global capitalism?

We should be wary of hasty replies to these complex and difficult questions. We should not condemn or dismiss many organisations and movements under the pretext that they do not have the support of the majority of peasants or consumers for their radical programmes. That would be to ignore the formation of large alliances and strategies in stages. Neither should we subscribe to the discourse of ‘naive alter-globalism’ that often sets the tone of forums and which fuels the illusion that the world would be set on the right track only by the work of disperse social movements.

V. The Struggle for an Alternative

Whether it is growing pauperisation, growing inequality, growing unemployment, or growing precariousness, it is only normal that people would start resisting, protesting and organising around the world. People are struggling for rights, for justice. Social movements are, by and large, still on the defensive, facing the offensive of capital to dismantle whatever they had conquered in the previous decades, trying to maintain whatever could be maintained. But even if perfectly legitimate social movements of protest are growing everywhere, they remain extremely fragmented. What is needed is to move beyond fragmentation and beyond a defensive position into building a wide progressive alliance emboldened with the force of a positive alternative.

The balance of forces cannot be changed unless those fragmented movements – such as the movements for food sovereignty, food justice, and food democracy – forge a common platform based on some common grounds. I call this ‘convergence with diversity’ – that is, recognising the diversity, not only of movements which are fragmented, but of political forces which are operating with them, of ideologies, and even of visions of the future proposed by such political forces. This has to be accepted and respected. We are not in a situation where a leading party alone can create a common front. It is very difficult to build convergence in

diversity, but unless this is achieved, I don't think the balance of forces will shift in favour of the popular classes.

There is no blueprint for convergence in diversity. Forms of organisation and action are always invented by the people in struggle – not preconceived by some intellectuals, to then be put into practice by people. If we look at the previous long crisis of capitalism in the twentieth century, people invented efficient ways of organising and of acting that worked well at the time: *e.g.*, the trade unions, political parties, and wars of national liberation all produced gigantic progressive change in the history of humankind. But they have all run out of steam because the system has itself changed and moved into a new phase. And now, as Antonio Gramsci said, the first wave has come to an end. The second wave of action to change the system is just starting. The night has not yet completely disappeared; the day has not yet completely appeared, and in this crisis there are still a lot of monsters who appear in the shadows... To move from that fragmented and defensive position into some kind of unity and to build convergence with respect for diversity with strategic targets requires the *re-politicisation* of social movements. Social movements have chosen to be depoliticised because the old politics – the politics of the first wave – has come to an end. It is now up to the social movements to create new forms of politicisation.

It is the responsibility, first, of activists in the grassroots movements to see that, however legitimate their action, its efficiency is limited by the fact that it does not move beyond a fragmented struggle. But it is also the responsibility of the intellectuals. Not the academics, but those thinkers and others operating in politics, who must realise that there is no possibility of changing the balance of powers without joining the struggles being carried forward by the social movements – not to dominate them or seek their own fame, but to integrate the activity of grassroots social movements into their political thinking and strategies of change.

AUTHOR QUERIES

MY CORRECTIONS ARE UNDERLINED SAMIR

Name of Article: Contemporary Imperialism and the Agrarian Question

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1. Please provide the affiliation details and postal and email addresses of the author. Also, please provide a small abstract (within 150 words) for the article along with a few keywords.

Author's Reply

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Abstract: This article argues that the ongoing integration of the peasantry in the South into the monopoly-controlled global agro-food system can only produce mass marginalisation and pauperisation. On the basis of the global competitiveness promoted by the WTO, increases in productivity can only imply labour-saving technologies, without the possibility of absorbing the marginalised into other economic activities, or of out-migration, as was practiced by the West in the course of its own industrialisation. Thus, an alternative policy is necessary to maintain both peasant producers in the countryside and promote technological change at a rate consistent with non-rural, non-agricultural employment.

2. Page 1 Para 3 Last Line

"Capitalist agriculture governed..." Their productivity, which depends on mechanisation, and of which they have monopoly worldwide, ranges between 10,000 and 20,000 quintals of equivalent cereals per worker annually.

Please give citation/s for the highlighted fact, along with all the details, so that it can be incorporated in a reference section.

Author's Reply

Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, Histoire des agricultures du monde, le Seuil, Paris 1997 ?, book translated into English

3. Page 2 Para 2 Line 1

"The ratio of productivity of the most advanced segment of world agriculture to the poorest, which was around 10:1 before 1940, is now approaching 2000:1!"

Please give citation/s for the highlighted facts, along with all the details, so that it can be incorporated in a reference section.

Author's Reply

Ibid book Mazoyer

4. Page 3 Last Para Line 3

“That argument – *i.e.*, that capitalism...” ...famous book of Karl Kautsky on ‘the agrarian question’...

Please give the relevant citation here, along with all the details, so that it can be incorporated in a reference section.

Author's Reply

Kautsky, Karl (1988 [1899]), *The Agrarian Question*, trans. P. Burgess. London & Winchester, MA: Zwan.

No need to quote; this is the axial thesis for the whole book

5. Page 6 Para 3 Last Line

“Despite its efficiency...” This reality links them to peasant producers in the Global South and to the growing underclass of consumers of ‘mass food’ worldwide.

Do you mean to convey: ‘This reality links them to peasant producers in the Global South and to the growing underclass of consumers of ‘mass-produced food’ worldwide’ or should the original be retained. Please confirm.

Author's Reply

The original should be kept

6. Page 7 Para 1 Line 4: ‘The Third World counterparts of Northern family farmers are the peasant cultivators’

“category of productive...” Nonetheless, the gap between the average production of a farmer in the North and that of southern peasant agriculture, which was 10 to 1 before 1940, is now 100 to 1.

Earlier in the chapter, it has been mentioned that the gap which was 10:1 before 1940, is now approaching 2000:1. Kindly resolve the discrepancy.

Author's Reply

100 to 1 on the average, while 2000 to 1 for the extremes

7. Page 7 Para 3 Last Line

“In spite of these differences...” The other half of the peasantry in the South, despite the weakness of its production, has a combined annual income of US\$ 2.3 trillion and is growing at a rate of eight percent a year (and is therefore seen as a \$US 1.3 trillion per year potential market).

Please give citation/s for the stated facts, along with all the details, so that it can be incorporated in a reference section.

Author's Reply

Ibid Mazoyer

8. Page 13 Para 2 Line 7

“There is no blueprint for...” And now, as Antonio Gramsci said, the first wave has come to an end.

Would you like to provide the citation of ‘Gramsci’ here? If so, please provide all the reference details (date/title/publisher,etc).

Author's Reply

No need for ref, this is known!!

NOTA BENE

Tous les chiffres concernant les volumes des productions attribuées aux différentes catégories d'agriculteurs mesurés en équivalent blé sont empruntés à l'ouvrage magistral de Marcel Mazoyer et Laurence Roudart, *Histoire des agricultures du monde*, Le Seuil, 1997.

L'éventail des productions par travailleur/an est ouvert à l'extrême, va de 1 à 2000 si l'on considère les extrêmes et de 1 à 100 pour les moyennes comparées. Bien entendu ces indices ne donnent pas la mesure des différences de productivité du travail social mis en œuvre pour obtenir les productions comparées. Car le travailleur direct, qu'il s'agisse de l'agriculteur moderne du Nord ou du paysan du Sud, utilise des intrants produits par d'autres. Les paysans du Sud utilisent non seulement des outils simples (dont à la rigueur on pourrait négliger la valeur) mais également des engrais, des pesticides etc fournis par l'industrie moderne. Les agriculteurs du Nord non seulement en utilisent bien davantage par hectare cultivé, mais encore des équipements lourds (la presque totalité des tracteurs utilisés dans le monde). L'écart entre les productivités du travail social est donc moins marqué que celui mesuré par les productions par travailleur direct. Mais il demeure marqué. Mazoyer, en comparant l'évolution des prix relatifs des produits agricoles comparativement à ceux des autres productions, conclut que la productivité du travail social a progressé plus rapidement dans l'agriculture que dans les autres secteurs, puisque le prix relatif des produits agricoles a chuté de 5 à 1 au cours de la seconde moitié du 20^{ème} siècle. L'observation est correcte, mais sa mesure discutable. Car l'agriculteur du Nord, plus encore que le paysan du Sud, est intégré dans des rapports économiques dominés par les monopoles en amont (les fournisseurs d'intrants et de crédit) et en aval (les chaînes de commercialisation). Les prix divergent des valeurs de ce fait, une fraction de la valeur produite dans l'agriculture étant captée par les rentes des monopoles.

English translation of NB

The data provided for the volumes of production of different categories of agricultural producers, measured in equivalent wheat, are borrowed from Mazoyer and Roudart (ref book, also available in English translation). The range for the productions per worker/year is widely open, goes from 1 to 2000 for the extremes and from 1 to 100 for the compared averages. These indexes are not equal to those measuring the differences in the productivities of social labour needed for those productions. The direct producer, be it the modern agriculturist in the North or the peasant in the South, utilizes inputs provided by others. The peasant of the South utilizes not only simple tools (the value of which could be eventually neglected) but also seeds, fertilizers and other inputs provided by modern industries. Agriculturalists in the North, not only utilize more of those inputs per cultivated acre, but also make use of heavy equipment (almost all the tractors and other machines utilized are in the North). The range of productivities of social labour is therefore less open than that which concerns the productions per worker/year. But it remains widely open. Mazoyer calculates the relative prices of agricultural products compared to those of other productions and concludes that the growth in the productivities of agriculture has been quicker than in other activities since those relative prices have fallen from 5 to 1 during the second half of the 20th century. The conclusion is correct even if its measure is controversial. The agriculturist in the North, more even than the peasant in the South, is integrated in a network of economic relations dominated by oligopolies upstream, which provides the equipment, the inputs and credit and downstream by oligopolies who control the commercialization. Prices diverge from values as a result of the transfer of value produced in agriculture to the benefit of oligopolistic rents.