

# The peasantry seen from the left

Friday 19 April 2024, by [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 18 January 2013).

**The aim of this contribution is not to summarise in one chapter two centuries of history on a subject as complex as Marxists and the peasant question [1]. The purpose of this section is simply to set out a few milestones in order to take stock of the reversal of perspective that took place between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries - at least for a large part of the so-called "social transformation" left.**

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## Fated to disappear?

The episode is famous today, but it remained obscured for a long time [2]. The Russian Marxists had asked Karl Marx to write them a polemical text against the "populist" current which claimed that Russia could make its socialist revolution without waiting for capitalism to develop.

After working hard on the subject and writing several drafts, Marx finally sent a short letter in 1881, saying in essence: "It depends". The Russian Marxists thought that Marx was not Marxist enough and refused to publish his reply, so the matter was buried for many decades.

Marx's approach was no less fundamental. Studying a country on the European "periphery", he sought to understand the originality of its social formation - something that was later to be done for the societies of the "South". Analysing the singular history from which this social formation emerged, he opened the way, as in other earlier texts, to a multilinear conception of world history. Noting that the future of Russia was not predefined, but would depend on the outcome - necessarily indeterminate - of struggles in the country itself, as well as in the rest of Europe, he described a "historical crossroads", a constitutive element of an "open" conception of history.

In the field that concerns us here, why did Marx consider that, under certain conditions (revolutions in Western Europe, etc.), the Russian "peasant commune" could nurture a socialist transition before the development of capitalism? Why did he take seriously the writings of the "populist" Nicolaj Chernyshevskij? Why did he treat the militants of "The Will of the People" as friends and comrades? Why was he so keen to link himself to an indigenous revolutionary tradition?

These questions were not asked. With Marx's death, Marxist "orthodoxy" at the turn of the century was satisfied with Marx's texts with deterministic connotations, without taking full account of those that presented a more dialectical perception of history. It fell back on a linear conception of progress in which the peasantry had no future [3]. The reference remained to the very unfortunate formula identifying the peasantry with a "*sack of potatoes*", an atomised mass of smallholders, irredeemably

turned towards the past [4]. In this respect, the dominant view held by Marxists at the time differed little from the prejudices and dominant ideology of the urban elites. To use Roland Lew's expression, echoed by Isaac Johsua, the peasantry was "*one class too many*" - which we didn't really know what to do with [5].

Despite the work of historians who opened up a number of avenues for reflection [6], the dominant image of the peasant uprising has long remained that of a jacquerie - a revolt by serfs against their lord that could spread from estate to estate, but nothing more - social banditry, backward-looking millenarianism and so on. The great peasant wars are rarely taken into account in all their dimensions, starting with the Taiping ("Heavenly Peace") revolt in China (1850-1864), probably the largest social movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with an egalitarian, syncretic ideology, nationalist - even modernist and feminist - ideology, [for a while] and which founded a rival dynasty that reigned over a significant territory for a decade [7].

### **A temporary alliance "against"**

Excessive or not, the peasantry was nevertheless too numerous to be ignored. Although denouncing any illusion about the progressive commitment of the petty-bourgeois strata, Marx himself had envisaged the necessity of a workers' and peasants' alliance to overthrow the old regime; but an alliance which was to be formed under proletarian hegemony and dissolved in the aftermath of victory.

If there was one European country where the peasant question could not be neglected, it was Russia. Russian Marxists were aware of this. On this question, most of them (Lenin, Trotsky...) shared the same orientation: the temporary alliance *against* autocracy. Lenin was unique in that he devoted a great deal of time, writing and energy to analysing agrarian struggles [8]. He did not stick to the simplistic idea that the peasant would follow the city - whether embodied by the bourgeois or the proletarian. He sought (not without difficulty) to understand the dynamics at work in the rural world, the conditions for a *synergy* of rural and urban social struggles. He was still "orthodox" in his theoretical references (marked by a certain economic determinism), but already "heterodox" in his understanding of the strategic equation that would enable the overthrow of tsarism [9].

The fruits of this political work were collected in October 1917. We were in the middle of a world war. The Russian army was falling apart, defeated by the German forces. The vast majority of soldiers were peasants who returned to their villages, often with their weapons (which solved the difficult question of arming the people). The settling of scores against the lords increased. Lenin kept a close eye on the situation in the rural world, waiting for the "right moment", because the beginnings of a real peasant uprising was one of the necessary conditions for the conquest of power in the major urban centres. There was no succession (first the cities, then the countryside), but a combination (adding the revolt of oppressed nationalities).

It was a time of great political cross-fertilisation. Out of opportunism, the Revolutionary Socialists (descendants of the Populists) put a lot of water in the wine of their land distribution program. For reasons of radicalism, the Bolsheviks set aside their previous program (nationalisation of land, large holdings, support for poor peasants, no sharing out, etc.) and supported the programme that the peasants were actually fighting for: the distribution of land without compensation. The land belongs to those who till it! It's not a question of programmatic opportunism, but of revolutionary democracy: recognising the will of the people... [10] It is also a question of learning from experience (which Rosa Luxemburg refuses to do, in this field at least [11]).

Of course, the story does not end there. The civil war waged by the White armies against the

revolutionary government put political and social alliances to the test. The Russian Marxists were not rooted in the rural world, where the Revolutionary Socialists, the Left Revolutionary Socialists and various anarchist movements operated and where - also? above all? - struggles were led by local peasant elites... But there was still a shared conviction that unity was short-lived, and that its only purpose was to prevent the return of the old ruling classes.

Another problem was that the pre-October 17 strategy was proving to be permanently flawed. The distribution of land reduced social inequalities within the village; it was therefore impossible to rapidly trigger a class struggle within the peasantry itself by supporting the poor peasant (the future proletariat) against the rich peasant (the new bourgeois). The peasantry did not decay, nor did it voluntarily commit suicide to allow itself to be transformed into the agricultural proletariat of the state farms. New social differentiations would indeed appear, but later and in a different context [12].

### The alliance “for”, in the long term

How can we rethink the relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry, the urban people and the rural people, over the long term? Lenin continued to think intensely about this. It is remarkable that this was one of the questions on which he wrote his last articles and dictated his last notes, known as his “testament” [13]. - including the national question and the question of bureaucracy. In “On Cooperation”, he wrote: *“It seems to me that not enough attention is being paid to the cooperative movement in our country [which] has become one of great significance”. With “the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants [...] is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society out of cooperatives, out of cooperatives alone [...]?”*. Cooperation is *“from the standpoint of transition to the new system by means that are the **simplest, easiest and most acceptable to the peasant.** [The way] to build socialism in practice in such a way that **every** small peasant could take part in it.”*. A “socialist regime”, Lenin concludes, is *“given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilized cooperators is the system of socialism”*. Out with the state farm model! [14].

Can it be said that, at a different time (Russia was undergoing a major wave of industrialisation) and in a different context (inter-imperialist wars, current events and the defeat of revolutions in Western Europe) [15], Lenin reproduced in his own way Marx’s intellectual path during the 1880s?

Qualitative leaps in the degree of bureaucratisation of the USSR and the emergence of the Stalinist regime put an abrupt end to the Russian experience of integrating the peasantry into a modern revolutionary process. On the other hand, this experience was to be reborn - and with great force! - in the so-called “Third World”, particularly with the great Asian revolutions (China, Vietnam, etc.).

Analyses and strategic orientations tried and tested in Russia made it easier to understand the societies of the ‘South’. This is the case, for example, with the analysis of unequal and combined development in the imperialist era: in the ‘Third World’, very ‘modern’ production relations (the latest in capitalist enterprise and finance, etc.) are combined with old social relations, within the framework of highly original social formations dependent on the global market. The same applies to the dynamic of “permanent” or “uninterrupted” revolution, which makes it possible to understand the conditions under which the struggle for so-called democratic demands opens the way to struggles of a socialist nature. Two other facts need to be borne in mind:

- The experience of the Third World has shed light on the Russian reality. Specialists in developing

countries and the peasantry have contributed to a new analysis of the revolutions in Russia. This is particularly true of Teodor Shanin's 1905 revolution [16]. It is interesting to compare the themes addressed in his works and in other reference studies such as those by E. H. Carr [17] or Leon Trotsky [18].

- With China - and then many other countries in the South - the revolutions of the twentieth century left Europe. They unfolded in social formations born of their own historical lineages which, very often, had not known the equivalent of Western feudalism. The peasantry is therefore different. Nevertheless, they played a fundamental role in the national liberation struggles and social revolutions of the last century [19].

The Russian Revolution had been characterised by a conflictual alliance between a party and a government that sought to represent the working class (essentially urban) and peasant movements that were independent of them. The Chinese revolution inaugurated a new chapter: the direct organisation of the peasantry by a communist party [20]. For a trial run, it was a masterstroke. It inaugurated a vast series of revolutionary struggles in the colonial and semi-colonial world that profoundly changed the Left's perception of the peasant question. Particularly in the context of armed struggles for national liberation that began long before any victory was achieved, the peasantry was seen as the "main force" - but not the "leading force" - in a revolutionary struggle that was waged over the long term.

As Truong Chinh, leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party, pointed out, *"we could not continue indefinitely to send a peasant to the front while, in the village, his wife had to give a large part of the harvest to her landlord, give him gifts on feast days, pay him exorbitant rates of usury for debts incurred during an illness or following a flood, and while his children served as unpaid servants, suffering bullying and brutality at the hands of the village rich"* [21]. Not only did the theory of the Sino-Vietnamese "people's war" closely combine military concepts (guerrilla warfare, etc.) and social issues (agrarian reform, etc.), but the more or less radical implementation of the agrarian program, depending on the period, was defined in correlation with the general objectives of the moment and the assessment of the balance of power [22].

Neither independence from the imperialist powers nor the overthrow of the traditional powers could be achieved without a popular uprising, and therefore a peasant uprising. Thus, according to the Vietnamese formula, the social content of the national question was indeed the agrarian question. The role assigned to the peasantry was due to its demographic and sociological weight (no revolution can have a majority without it) and its geographical location, where it is easier to build up military forces (even if there have been experiments with urban guerrilla warfare in countries like Uruguay). But this meant guaranteeing the peasantry a future, not announcing its programmed demise.

The twentieth century saw the emergence of an overall problem. Agrarian reform made it possible to break the power of the old dominant classes in the rural world, to respond to the aspirations of the peasantry and to make it a major player in the revolution. The gradual development of forms of cooperation made it possible to overcome the limits of property fragmentation and link it to the construction of a new society [23]. In a way, it has become the reference model. Which is not to say that it was easy to implement. The village was used to forming a common front against the outside enemy (tax collectors, soldiers, bandits, etc.) and this solidarity was not easy to break, while the peasant lived under the dependence of the notable. Once the class struggle began, it could spontaneously pit the landless against the small landowner, or the middle-poor peasant against the middle-rich peasant, dividing the peasantry instead of uniting it against the large landowners and notables [24]. After victory, the success of a policy of cooperativisation depended on the overall political and economic measures led by the revolutionary power, otherwise the experiment could end

in a dramatic crisis as was the case during the 1950s in China, with the failure of the Great Leap Forward [25]. At any moment, too much radicalism could divide the popular forces and not enough allow the possessors to regain the initiative.

It is not an empty phrase to say that the social formations of the rural world were “complex” and that agrarian policy had to be “concrete”.

**In the countries of the North.** During the decade of crisis between 1965 and 1975, some of the key struggles in the North were also peasant-based. This was particularly the case in Japan at Sanrizuka, in opposition to the construction of Narita international airport, on the outskirts of Tokyo [26]; and in France, at Larzac, against the extension of a military camp on this limestone plateau (a *cause*) in the Massif Central [27]. These struggles lasted a long time: from 1967 to 1978 in the first case, ending in defeat; from 1970 to 1981 in the second, ending in victory with the election of François Mitterrand. Solidarity between workers and farmers was forged at Larzac and also during strikes such as the one at Joint français (Saint Brioux), with farmers delivering foodstuffs to the strikers through the support committee [28].

All the components of what we now call the radical and progressive left met at Sanrizuka, engaged in fierce confrontations with the forces of law and order. The Larzac plateau hosted giant gatherings (100,000 in 1974) attended by the entire left-wing protest movement of the time - and beyond. There were many reasons for being there: anti-militarism, anti-imperialism, criticism of consumer society and the dictatorship of the market. But what kept these struggles going was the peasant resistance to expropriation, in defence of a living space and small productive farms (rice, sheep, etc.). In France, they were also marked by a movement among young people to return to the land.

These struggles did not necessarily change the Left’s view of the role of the peasantry in the coming revolution. But they did create traditions of solidarity, highlighted the role of local community resistance in challenging a national order at the service of capital, and sowed many seeds. The formation of the Paysans-Travailleurs organisation paved the way for the later founding of the Confédération paysanne [29].

## **A contemporary alternative to agro-industry**

The demographic weight of the peasantry - and more generally of the rural population - has diminished considerably; however, the food issue (and therefore the agrarian issue) is still of major social, economic and political importance in today’s world [30]. Even today, the peasantry cannot be wiped clean...

According to a certain Marxist (or urban) vision, the peasant’s horizon was limited to the boundaries of the village. Today, however, peasant movements are spearheading a particularly active international organisation, La Via Campesina [31]. This international organisation is unique in that it has member organisations in the North and not just in the South: in France, it is the Confédération Paysanne [32]. An International that is also one of the most active components of alterglobalism, of the movement for global justice.

If this is the case, it is because peasant movements are asserting themselves as a global alternative to agro-industry - even though agro-industry is one of the pillars of global capitalism and shapes society as a whole, imposing its dictates on consumers and producers alike. Agribusiness embodies a capitalist model of society - and peasant agriculture the possibility of an alternative model.

The agri-food industry is one of the main areas where the offensive for the complete

commodification of the planet and social relations is underway, where the artificialization of the world is continuing, where the ultimate subordination of individuals to capital is being played out through new technologies such as GMOs. This is by no means a peripheral sector of capitalism or a secondary front of struggle.

In this area, as in others (such as nuclear power for electricity production), it's not just the fact that capitalists or financiers are in charge that's the problem. The technology and the production model itself are at issue: they are only functional in relation to a class logic, in this case a bourgeois logic. Nuclear power is not adaptable to a democratic socialist society. The industrial model is not suited to agriculture: it necessarily generates unsustainable socio-environmental damage, it crushes nature, artificializes the world to the extreme and bears a major responsibility for the destruction of (semi)natural environments (ecosystems), for the collapse of biodiversity [33].

Under certain conditions, peasant farming can be the basis for a different model of society from that promoted by capitalist agribusiness. Seen from the left, they are once again an active component of a project for social transformation.

Peasant farming keeps people in the countryside. It halts the rural exodus that leads to unemployment, and can revitalise rural areas where the human desertification caused by agro-industry has already occurred. It makes it possible to maintain or re-establish public services in regions suffering from social disintegration.

It can lead to a radical reduction in the use of chemical inputs and pollution, to high-quality food, and to a reduction in transport by encouraging the relocation of production both nationally and internationally. It promotes the fight against greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

It raises major democratic issues, such as freeing consumers and producers from the dictatorship of seed companies and other agri-food giants; the right of access to common goods (land, water, forests, etc.); the right of peoples to food sovereignty and an end to the relationships of domination forged by imperialism for the benefit of transnational corporations; resistance to the commodification of the world.

Protecting biodiversity is not just about creating reserves, far from it. Islands of green in an ocean of commercial aridity are doomed to wither away. Many rich environments are in fact "semi-natural": they depend on human activity and will disappear if that activity ceases [34]. A peasant agriculture designed for this purpose can perpetuate or reconstitute bocages, mangroves, meadows, wetlands, mountain pastures, diverse forests, etc. All that is said here is also true for the environment. All that is said here also applies to small fishing communities at a time when the collapse of fish populations is programmed, when the seabed is devastated [35]. The same applies to forest management, which the plantation model sterilises, standardises and weakens, whereas 'appropriate' ecological management, 'à la paysanne', can ensure health, diversity, sustainability and biological richness [36].

The industrial model may be 'contemporary', but that doesn't mean it's 'modern' in the sense of meeting present and future needs. The peasant model is not (necessarily) backward-looking or archaic. The ecological crisis has brought controversy on this point to a close. Far from being a doomed class, the peasantry, a veritable Phoenix, is today asserting itself as a class with a future - albeit a very threatened one.

We are not talking here about a virtual, intangible possibility, but a present reality. An international movement such as La Via Campesina has a programme that addresses all these issues. Organisations are leading vast mobilisations to jointly defend the rights of the landless and peasants,

and women's rights [37] and climate justice, such as the caravan at the end of 2011 initiated by the Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF) and its women's counterpart, the Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (BKS) [38].

But nothing is simple. As far as biodiversity is concerned, the cohabitation of farmers and large predators (bears and wolves in France, tigers in India, etc.) is sometimes the subject of violent controversy. The conditions for organic farming can be seriously degraded after decades of exploitation by agro-industrial methods: loss of soil quality and changes in soil composition, multiple forms of pollution, etc. Know-how is being lost while scientific and technological research is not geared towards the needs of small-scale farmers, etc. It is still difficult to assess all the consequences of the uncontrolled dispersal of GMOs in the wild or climate change, etc.

Peasant farmers have shown an unexpected capacity to resist or reconstitute themselves. In Russia, even on the eve of the First World War, it was common to think that the rural commune had been mortally wounded by the development of capitalism in the countryside, accelerated by the Stolypin reforms. With the revolution of 1917, however, it made a massive reappearance [39]. Even today, many peasants are struggling to thwart the commercial and legal stranglehold imposed by agribusiness. In the Philippines, villages are silently switching to organic farming and are waiting until they are in a position to market their produce (once their own consumption needs have been met) before publicising their choices, so as to be in a better position to resist pressure from the established powers. In France, producers have had to hide their intention to switch to "peasant" farming from their banks, otherwise they would not have obtained loans. Currently, in various countries, "seed houses" are being set up to escape the dictatorship of the seed companies, even if this means opposing laws designed to guarantee the monopoly of the powerful [40].

However, internal differences, of varying degrees of slowness, continue to emerge within the peasant strata, whether due to the vagaries of life (indebtedness of certain families following illness, poor harvests, etc.), competition for the best land, the aggression of the national or international market, etc. The balance between production for sale and for self-consumption remains unstable. Impoverishment feeds immigration.

Appropriate forms of cooperative can help to overcome competition between farming families by providing a framework in which collective interests, the development of social services and environmental needs are taken into account. But as long as society remains dominated by capital, this cooperative movement is in danger of sclerosis, disintegration or co-option. To maintain its dynamism over the long term, peasant cooperation must be able to rely on a State and an administration capable of regulating town-country relations while taking account of its needs (prices, appropriate industrial goods and technologies, credit, education, culture, etc.) and protecting it from the unequal competition engaged in by transnationals, as sanctioned today by free trade agreements.

### **Consciences and convergences**

The universal domination of capital over the countryside takes very different forms; it has more or less wiped the slate clean of the social past. Agrarian structures evolve over time, but this does not make them any simpler. The "agrarian question" remains "complex", agrarian policies "concrete" and the peasantry diverse.

There is often a gap between the official status of a peasant and his real condition - a gap that weighs heavily on people's consciences. A farmer-owner, for example, under contract to a transnational corporation may in practice lose all autonomy and decision-making power over his production. But it is the farmer - and not the transnational - who hires the seasonal labour. The

decisive role of the principals remains in the background of the social relationship of exploitation.

Similarly, a worker on a modern fruit plantation may think of himself as a farm labourer. But another worker on a sugar cane plantation managed in the “old-fashioned” way, in a situation of radical family dependence, may aspire to become a farmer: he could then at least produce enough to feed himself and his family.

In the past, communities occupying mountains or forests were seen primarily as farmers. Today, they are seen first and foremost as indigenous peoples with their own culture. They are obviously both. The link between the two is to some extent embodied by the figure of Hugo Blanco. While a member of the Fourth International, in the 1960s he became involved in the Quechua peasant uprising in Peru’s upper Cuzco valley, under the slogan “the land belongs to those who till it”. He has become a leading figure in the defence of Indian communities and today defends an ecosocialist perspective which, for the peoples concerned, can be nourished by a “*millenary collectivism*” [41].

The combination of exploitation and oppression referred to in the case of the Indian communities of Latin America takes many other forms, as in India with the caste structure and its link to the class structure. In the history of peasant revolutions, it is particularly interesting to note the importance of the fight for women’s emancipation. The two major laws passed after the Chinese Communist Party took power in October 1949 radically altered the legal status of women and, in particular, peasant women: the Marriage Law and the Land Reform Law, which equalised rights, including land rights. The progressive potential of peasant struggles can also be judged by this yardstick: their ability to tackle gender, caste and cultural oppression, and to build inter-community solidarity.

The peasant’s immediate enemy has a thousand faces: the big landowners, the army (which in many countries owns military farms where it exploits farmers), the transnational agri-food and seed companies, the government that evicts them in order to open up industrial zones (or build airports with no real social utility and high environmental costs, such as Notre-Dames-des-Landes in France today), the police who deny them access to forests, the developers of large dams that drown their land, the usurers who reduce them to a state of permanent dependence, the faceless poverty that drives them to migrate in desperate conditions (because peasants are also forced migrants [42]), and many other enemies besides.

Beyond the diversity of the peasant condition, what underpins the synergy of its struggles - and the convergence with other popular sectors - is obviously the more universal domination than ever of the capitalist market; but also the fact that without social change, the peasantry is doomed. This is the great historical paradox. Without ecosocialism, the peasantry has no future - and ecosocialism is no longer conceivable without the peasantry.

**Pierre Rousset**

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**PISTES POUR UNE AGRICULTURE ÉCOLOGIQUE ET SOCIALE (PATHS FOR ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL AGRICULTURE  
COLLECTION “LES CAHIERS DE L’ÉMANCIPATION.”**

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## **Presentation**

At a time of globalisation and ecological and climatic challenges, agriculture is the focus of many questions. Agriculture and the farming community, by virtue of their essential role not only in providing food for human consumption but also in regional planning and resource conservation, are an active component of any social project. Agricultural and food issues provide an opportunity for the ecologist, peasant and worker movements to come together and challenge the domination of multinationals, finance and supermarkets. The book deals with the implications of the reconversion/transition of agriculture towards peasant and agro-ecological agriculture, i.e. an agricultural model of emancipation that meets the social and environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the defence of small and medium-sized peasants. The authors draw on the existence and development of concrete examples of ways away from productivism as a basis for driving far-reaching change. The results of the industrial model transposed to agriculture are catastrophic. Without any earthquake or idealisation, we need to invent a new agricultural model that encourages working with nature rather than against it, as is the case with industrial systems.

This invention also implies a new relationship with land ownership, favouring the generalisation of the right to use land and tools and the strengthening of cooperation (planning production on a catchment area basis, joint use of equipment, storage and processing facilities, replacement services allowing access to holidays and leisure activities, etc.) in a dynamic of concrete experimentation both in terms of democracy and social and technical innovation. Perhaps agriculture will serve to rebuild our emancipatory project and to de-colonise the imaginary of both work and nature.

## **Among the authors**

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[http://www.syllepse.net/lng\\_FR\\_srub\\_98\\_iprod\\_597-pistes-pour-une-agriculture-ecologique-et-sociale.html](http://www.syllepse.net/lng_FR_srub_98_iprod_597-pistes-pour-une-agriculture-ecologique-et-sociale.html)

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## **P.S.**

- Translation for ESSF by Pierre Rousset with the help of DeepLpro.

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## Footnotes

[1] I use the term “peasantry” in a broad sense, as is more often done in French than in English - and as is done today by a movement such as La Via Campesina (the “peasant way”). Depending on the context, the term can encompass everything from the landless to family farms employing little or no outside paid labour

[2] See the dossier compiled by Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian road. Marx and the “peripheries of capitalism”*. A case presented by Teodor Shanin, Montly Review Press, New York 1983

[3] For a nuanced presentation of Marx’s analyses of agricultural production, see on ESSF (article 27100), Daniel Tanuro, 10 November 2012, “[A Plea for an Ecological Reconstruction of Marxism](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article27100)”, ESSF (article 27100) : <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article27100>

[4] For an example of Karl Marx’s analysis of the peasantry in times of revolution, see his 1850 work, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/>

[5] Isaac Johsua, *La révolution selon Karl Marx : la classe en trop* [ftp://ftp2.marxau21.fr/marxau/reserve/Johsua\\_Paris-mars08.pdf](ftp://ftp2.marxau21.fr/marxau/reserve/Johsua_Paris-mars08.pdf)

[6] See for example Michael Löwy, “[Du Capitaine Swing à Pancho Villa, résistances paysannes au capitalisme dans l’historiographie d’Eric Hobsbawm](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article1169)”, *Diogène*, no. 189, 2000. Available on ESSF (article 1169), <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article1169>

[7] For a concise introduction to this uprising, see Amit Bhattacharyya, “Taiping Rebellion”, in Immanuel Ness (ed. ), *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest, 1500 to the Present*, Vol. VII, Wiley- Blackwell 2009, pp. 3230-3235

[8] Esther Kingston-Mann, *Lenin and the Problem of Marxist Peasant Revolution*, Oxford University Press: New York Oxford, 1983.

[9] This tension is expressed in his formula of the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry”, which differentiated him from Trotsky (and which he considered “outdated” in October 1917). A question that cannot be dealt with here

[10] Robert Linhart, *Lénine, les paysans*, Taylor, Seuil (combats) : Paris 1976.

[11] Rosa Luxemburg defends against Lenin a very dogmatic point of view, very undialectical and undemocratic, according to which the division of land creates in the countryside “a new and powerful category of enemies whose resistance will be much more dangerous and obstinate than that of the great aristocratic landowners.” Without land reform, there was simply no Russian revolution, no entry in a post-capitalist transition. She also continued to advocate the “nationalisation of large and medium-sized property” and “the reunification of industry and agriculture” - in other words, an “industrial” model of agricultural production whose disastrous (social and environmental) implications we have since seen. See *The Russian Revolution*: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/index.htm>

[12] I'm not dealing here with the economic relations between town and country in the USSR after the civil war, nor with the conditions which would allow a peasant economy in the Russia of the time to be integrated into a socialist transition (see in particular how Lenin approaches the debate on the monopoly of foreign trade)

[13] See Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Minuit, Paris 1979:  
<https://archive.org/details/leninslaststrugg00lewi>

[14] Lenin, "On Cooperation", 4 January 1923:  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/06.htm>

[15] The year 1917 was not the "historical crossroads" envisaged by Marx before the development of capitalism in Russia, but another whose possibility he had not been able to perceive at the time

[16] Teodor Shanin, *The roots of otherness: Russia's turn of century*. Vol. 1: Russia as a "developing society". Vol. 2: Russia, 1905. Revolution as a moment of truth, MacMillan, Houndmills and London 1985, 1986

[17] *The Bolshevik Revolution* (3 vols.), Editions de Minuit, Paris 1969-1974

[18] 1905 followed by Bilan et Perspectives  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1907/1905/>  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/tpr/rp-index.htm>

[19] For an overview, see Michael Löwy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development. The Theory of Permanent Revolution*, Verso/NLB: London 1981

[20] For the overall context of the Chinese revolution, see Pierre Rousset, 1 May 2008, "[XXth Century Chinese revolutions - I - Chinese Communist Revolution, 1925-1949](#)" and "[XXth Century Chinese revolutions - II - China, Maoism and popular power, 1949-1969](#)", ESSF (articles 11137 and 13546):  
<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article14950>  
<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article14949>

[21] Truong Chinh, *L'édification d'une économie nationale indépendante au Vietnam*, Hanoi, 1964, p.. 36.

[22] For the overall context of the Vietnamese revolution, see Daniel Hémerly, 13 February 2007, "[L'Indochine à l'âge des extrêmes : protestations et révolutions \(XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup>\) siècles - III - 1940-2006](#)", ESSF (article 9821):  
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article9821>

[23] Particularly where population density is very high, it may now be possible and preferable to initiate the process of cooperation from a socialist perspective without going through the stage of individual land distribution, relying as much on the traditions of mutual aid in the village as on already existing forms of cooperation (but for the time being more or less integrated by capitalism)

[24] On this subject, see William H. Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, NYU Press, 1992.

[25] See for an assessment of Chinese Maoism, Pierre Rousset, 7 October 2012, "[China in the XXth Century - A critical evaluation of Maoism in the revolution: contribution and limitations](#)", ESSF (article 29004) :  
<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article29004>

[26] See Ichiyo Muto, "Japan, resistance to construction of Narita airport", in Immanuel Ness (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest, 1500 to the Present*, Vol. IV, Wiley-Blackwell 2009, pp. 1901-1909

[27] Three books have recently been published looking back at this struggle and its aftermath: Élisabeth Baillon (dir), *Paroles du Larzac*, Toulouse, Privat, 2012. Christine Burguière, *Gardarem! Chronique du Larzac en lutte*, Toulouse, Privat, 2011. Pierre-Marie Terral, *Larzac: de la lutte paysanne à l'altermondialisme*, Toulouse, Éditions Privat, 2011. See also the film *Tous au Larzac* (Christian Rouaud, 2011).

[28] This strike had a regional dimension (Bretagne), and was not just about demands. Georges Ubbiali, "Luttes ouvrières radicales", Antoine Artous, Didier Epszajn, Partick Silberstein, *La France des années 1968*, Syllepse: Paris 2008, pp. 481-495

[29] Serge Aberman, "Paysans", in Antoine Artous, Didier Epszajn, Partick Silberstein, *La France des années 1968*, Syllepse: Paris 2008, pp. 594-601

[30] See Esther Vivas, "[Food crisis: causes, consequences and alternatives](#)". Inprecor no. 556-557, January 2010. Available on ESSF (article 17866)  
<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article17866>

[31] <http://viacampesina.org/>

[32] <http://www.confederationpaysanne.fr/>

[33] Yves Dachy, May 2012, "La biodiversité oubliée", ESSF (article 25932):  
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article25932>

[34] Pierre Rousset, "[Se laisser questionner par l'enjeu écologique](#)" in Michael Löwy (coord.), *Ecologie et socialisme*, Syllepse, Paris 2005. Available on ESSF (article 164):  
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article164>

[35] Jean Chaussade, "[Assez de surpêche !](#)", *Le Monde*, 21 August 2012. Available on ESSF (article 26164)

[36] Didier Carbiener, *Les arbres qui cachent la forêt, la gestion forestière à l'épreuve de l'écologie*, Edisuden 1995.

[37] See Esther Vivas, 2011, [Without women there is no food sovereignty](#) :  
<http://esthervivas.com/english/without-women-there-is-no-food-sovereignty/> Available on ESSF (article 26779):  
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article26779>

[38] See <http://www.krishok.org/>

[39] See Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System. Essays in the Social History of Interwar*

*Russia*, New Press, 1994

[40] See Sophie Chapelle, 7 November 2012, [Des maisons de semences paysannes pour se libérer de l'agrobusiness](#), Bastas!  
<http://www.bastamag.net/article2750.html>. Available on ESSF (article 27566).

[41] See a collection of Hugo Blanco's articles in French and English on ESSF:  
[http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?page=auteur&id\\_auteur=3850](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?page=auteur&id_auteur=3850)

[42] International migrants, but also national migrants, as in China, where they have provided a labour force without legal status, overexploited, without which the development of unbridled capitalism would not have been possible. See Au Loong Yu, *China's Rise: Strength and Fragility*, Resistance Books, IIRE & Merlin Press (London), 2012