

Would Marx Be a Vegetarian?

Written by Jessica McWhirt

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JESSICA MCWHIRT, DEC 19 2012

Food is unpredictable, which is why there needs to be trade among countries. Hawkes and Murphy (2010) affirm food is weather dependent and slowly adjusts to changes in conditions or prices (p. 16). To grow food, there needs to be arable land and freshwater; there needs to be a high enough demand, sufficient prices and storage; and there needs to be roads (p. 16). Another factor of trade is import and export: while one country may produce too much of a good and needs to export it, another country may choose to import because it is cheaper than growing the good their own (p. 16). Even then, other countries do not produce enough food to meet the needs of consumers and therefore need to import more food to maintain food security within the country (p. 16); and finally, “political borders do not coincide with the land required to support each given national population” (p. 16), in which case countries must trade with other countries because land overlaps territories. Agricultural trade, therefore, is advantageous not only in regards to food being unpredictable, but the impact it has upon countries that trade with and against each other.

According to Hawkes and Murphy (2010), free trade (or trade liberalization) promotes “national and global economic growth,” efficiently improving trade (p. 17). Through tariffs and export subsidies, free trade is hindered among countries. In order to maximize global welfare, trade liberalization aims to eliminate government policies that impose such tariffs and subsidies (p. 17); trade liberalization is enacted between countries, agreeing to reduce trade barriers together (p. 18). Free trade is different from fair trade in that fair trade essentially means trade is equal amongst all countries and there is no special or preferential treatment amongst certain countries. So, not only do countries need free and liberalized trade, it also needs to be fair.

Diao, Roe, and Somwaru (2001) state that for trade liberalization to occur, four things must happen: removing all agricultural support and protection in the world, removing tariffs in the world, removing domestic support in the developed countries, and removing export subsidies in the world (p. 8). By liberalizing agricultural support and trade policy, agricultural prices will rise world-wide for both developing and developed countries. Both developing and developed countries would see an increase in agricultural exports (p. 8). Thus, by making trade “freer,” more trade will occur.

Additionally, Howard (2002) adds that agricultural trade liberalization would benefit developing countries through debt relief because most developing countries specialize in agriculture. He believes the problems developing countries have had are because we, the developed countries, have made them. Though it may be difficult to achieve free trade, he believes it is possible. Another aspect to consider when assessing global agricultural trade are factors that affect trade: land, labor, and capital. Obviously, without these factors or insufficient amounts of said factors, it is difficult to enter the world trade market, which is why developing countries have yet to expand.

Coyle and Gehlhar (2001) focus on land, labor, and capital, and how they affect global agricultural trade. Agricultural production depends on the amount of land a county possesses, more importantly, how much arable land is available. These three factors (land, labor, and capital) vary between countries. While some countries rely on their capital, others will focus on their abundance in labor. If countries use their abundant factor intensively, they will expand more than the countries choosing to use their insufficient factor (p. 9). Additionally, it costs more for labor in meat-producing sectors and therefore, companies have had to switch to “labor saving technologies” (p. 9); this is mainly because developing countries’ wages are low compared to wages in developed countries.

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Comparative advantage holds that free trade can be used as a tool “that can ensure the most efficient distribution of goods, allowing the lowest cost producer to set the terms of trade” (Hawkes & Murphy, 2010, p. 17). Countries produce the food or product that they can trade with another country. One country will produce a surplus of foods and export it to the country that wants the crop and can pay for it. To pay for the good, the importing country produces something else in exchange (Hawkes & Murphy, 2010, p. 17). We trade food because “it is perceived to promote economic growth and stabilize markets” (Hawkes & Murphy, 2010, p. 17). Ideally, this leads to a globally efficient food system through which there will be lower production costs, lower prices for consumers, as well as a reliable supply.

According to Joseph Stiglitz (2007), especially for developing countries, more risk is incurred through trade liberalization. Domestic jobs can be lost if there are too many imports; only the country as a whole will benefit, leaving the few at the top reaping the benefits while the poor and middle class suffer (p. 63). Stiglitz says we cannot assume that “trade liberalization automatically leads to more trade and growth, and that growth will automatically ‘trickle down’ to benefit all” (p. 99-100). While developed countries want to pursue trade liberalization through self-interests, they forget that the services in which they want to open, such as agriculture, are labor intensive, in which developing countries have an abundance of, resulting in more benefits to developing countries than the industrialized (p. 79).

On the other hand, developing countries rely on tariffs as a “source of public revenue,” but trade liberalization would require countries to remove tariffs. For a country to be competitive within the global market, they would have to lower taxes as well (Stiglitz, 2007, p. 69). Stiglitz lists the possible barriers to trade liberalization for developing countries: lack of infrastructure to move products, they may not have anything to export, and countries will need some kind of assistance. Further, “aid and trade are seen as complements, both are needed for successful development” (p. 69).

It is really exports, not the removal of trade barriers that help growth within a country (Stiglitz, 2007, p. 72), and “70 percent of those in the developing world depend directly or indirectly on agriculture” (p. 74). Today, agricultural goods are the few products that are still subsidized, resulting in lower prices for farmers in the developing world (Stiglitz, 2007, p. 74). This results in least developed countries (LDCs) having to choose whether or not to subsidize their farmers in order to make a profit, and thus less money spent on infrastructure resulting in slower growth for the country (Stiglitz, 2007, p. 74).

Stiglitz believes that to solve the problem of transitioning from subsidized crops to non-subsidized crops, “would be for industrial countries to provide assistance to help the developing countries through the adjustment period – even a fraction of what they now spend on agricultural subsidies would do” (p. 87). Another point to consider is Mark Bittman’s (2008), “Meat is subsidized by the federal government...meat is subject to accelerating demand as nations become wealthier, and this, in turn, sends prices higher...meat is something people are encouraged to consume less of, as the toll exacted by industrial production increases, and becomes increasingly visible” (Rethinking the Meat-Guzzler, para. 3). Subsidized crops take the highest tolls on LDCs – countries that need the most assistance.

According to Dyck and Nelson (2003), the three important meats in world trade are poultry, beef, and pork (p. iii). The leading meat exporters include US (poultry is the highest export), EU, Australia, Canada, Brazil, and Argentina, while the leading meat importers are Russia, Japan, China/Hong Kong, Mexico, and U.S (p. 18). Further, meat trade flows differ by a country’s resource base, preferences for certain types and cuts of meat, their barriers to trade, and their industry structure (p. iii). Also, meat trade relies on a consumer demand for meat, trade liberalization, and improved technology (Dyck & Nelson, 2003, p. 1). In order for a country to be competitive within the meat trade, they must have livestock, low labor costs, sizeable economies, and a market in which demands meat (Dyck & Nelson, 2003, p. iii). While developed countries have access to advanced technology, developing countries have an abundant supply of labor. Goetz and Grethe (2008) say it costs less for developing countries to produce fruits and vegetables because they have more labor paid by lower wages (p. 82).

Dohlman & Gehlhar (2009) believe because consumers in developing countries spend most of their money on food, consumer’s income, product prices, and exchange rates affect the demand for imports, subjecting trade to steeper fluctuations for other countries, making markets more vulnerable during economic downturns (p. 28). When the economy is as strained as it is now, consumers in developing countries will turn to less expensive food items instead

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of purchasing dairy and meat, which negatively affects the United States because meats and animal feed account for a large portion of its exports (p. 28). Further, the United States relies on a strong global economy to export bulk commodities like corn, wheat, and soybeans to developing countries (p. 28). On the other hand, Dohlman and Gehlhar observe, "When developing countries experience macroeconomic instability, their governments also typically have less flexibility in their ability to use fiscal and monetary tools than developed countries, which may prolong recessions in developing countries" (p. 28).

Despite the fact that the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) permits developed countries to "heavily subsidize their agricultural sector," it is also imposing a "one-sided free trade model on poor countries" (Hawkes & Plahe, 2010, p. 2). This is obviously a problem for developing countries because agriculture-based "economies comprise 65 percent of employment and 29 percent of GDP" and the AoA "undermines the right to food because it does not recognize the obligation of the State to respect, protect and fulfill this right as enshrined in international law" (Hawkes & Plahe, 2010, p. 2). Further, the AoA assumes the free market, without government intervention, will address problems of food security through free trade. Trade liberalization, through increased economic growth, is presumed to strengthen, provide, and ensure food security while creating more access to foods in the world market. In order for states to develop a comparative advantage through agricultural trade, they need to "restructure the global trading system" and "prioritize the mid- and long-term gains of free trade over the short-term hardship of transition as a country re-directs resources" (Hawkes & Plahe, 2010, p. 3).

Three "boxes" influencing much of trade are Amber, Green, and Blue. Hawkes and Plahe (2010) say the problem with these boxes is similar to the problem the AoA permits: they benefit the developed countries, while hurting the developing countries through trade. Amber boxes include trade-distorting subsidies and are the only boxes subject to cuts (p. 5). They support market prices and direct payments to farmers by governments (p. 5). Green boxes permit certain trade distortions, whether that is non or minimal or direct or indirect (p. 5-6). Green boxes are also riddled with hidden export subsidies (p. 6). Blue boxes were created by a last minute compromise between the United States and the European Union (p. 6). Blue boxes allow the developed countries to set high target prices with no limits on agriculture (p. 6). These boxes violated the free trade principles in that they protected producers from low-prices and "thus sustaining more producers than the market would support" (p. 6). As mentioned before, it is the developing countries impacted most and worst when it comes to agricultural trade.

Hawkes and Plahe (2010) say some countries "dump" their exports because there are subsidies that "allow goods to be sold below the cost of production" (p. 6). "Dumping" affects developing countries in two ways: with low priced subsidized products available in the global market, developing country producers find it difficult to get a fair export price (p. 6); local producers lose money when subsidized products are "dumped" in the Global South because they are so cheap (p. 6). Dumping is an issue when it ensures other exporters cannot make their way into the market because prices are lower than what they can afford (p. 6).

We care about different countries' main agricultural productions simply for the fact that every single country would be impacted by a switch to a world-wide vegetarian-only diet. Under the World Trade Organization, developing countries are to receive "special and preferential treatment" because they are less developed than the industrialized countries ("Work on Special and Differential Provisions"). In which case, if industrialized and developing countries no longer produced meat – with industrialized countries being the major exporters and the developing countries the main importers – industrialized countries would cease to have the kind of power they currently hold over developing countries.

First, we must lay down a set of assumptions before describing and implementing a Marxist model of trade. This hypothesis will be solely based on agricultural trade – no oil, cotton, machinery, cars, etc., will be counted in regards to trade between countries. It will also consider that countries produce everything else domestically, but because of different climates and land, there needs to be agricultural trade. I will use the terms developing countries and LCDs interchangeably, as well as using developed countries and industrialized countries interchangeably.

While Marx agreed with Ricardo that we need free trade ("Speech of Dr. Marx on Protection, Free Trade, and the Working Classes"), looking at trade today 127 years after Marx, he would agree with Stiglitz (2007) when Stiglitz

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says that free trade exposes developing countries to more risks and that developed countries take advantage of the developing. Free trade can be detrimental to developing countries because even though countries need to reduce barriers and the like, trade does not necessarily mean it will be fair. Free and fair trade must coalesce in order for all countries to benefit. Finally, the vegetarian diet is going to simply include fruits, vegetables, and grains and obviously exclude meats. Clearly, to live a healthy life, one cannot simply eat just that, but most of the world can hardly afford fruits, vegetables, and grains for a balanced meal. Therefore, this hypothesis will consider the trade of fruits, vegetables, grains, and animal meats.

When every single person in the world stops sticking meat in their mouths and gnaws on fruits, vegetables, and grains instead, developing countries will unite. Agricultural trade will take a drastic shift between industrialized and developing countries. Trading power will change within agricultural trade for developed countries rely mostly on meat trade and developing countries depend upon plant crops. This will potentially shift the power dynamics from the developed world to the developing. There will be a kind of revolt of the working class, but in our case, of the developing world.

The main exporters of meat are the United States and Canada, and both countries have an abundance of grains, meals, grass, and forage, a large domestic market, and access to several large foreign markets (Dyck & Nelson, 2003, 9). The U.S. and Canada are abundant in land, followed by Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, and Argentina. Australia and New Zealand's biggest meat exports are beef and sheapmeat; Brazil exports beef and poultry the most, and Argentina exports beef. On the other hand, the largest meat importers are Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. From limited land, because of a dense population and mountains and forests, high labor costs, and expensive large-scale food production, these countries pay to import feeds and meat because it ends up costing them less (Dyck & Nelson, 2003, 9-10).

Ellen Huan-Niemi, Janne Niemi, & Jyrki Niemi, (2010) state coarse grains are largely produced mostly to feed livestock, as well as for ethanol production, and a relatively small amount for consumption (p. 128). Corn is the largest coarse grain traded (about 3/4 of global coarse grain), largely exported by the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, and Ukraine and imported by Mexico, South Korea, and Egypt (p. 128). The U.S. produces half of the global corn production and also dominates the global corn trade, with China, EU, Brazil, India, Russia, Mexico, and Canada (p. 128). Unfortunately, for other markets, the U.S. determines the price of corn from its domestic supply and demand, even though it only exports 15% of the corn it produces (p. 128).

Generally speaking, the EU's main production is wheat; Switzerland, Norway, Iceland produce coarse grains (other grains); Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay specialize in vegetables, fruits, and nuts; Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands produce other crops; less developed countries in Africa produce raw milk; other developed and developing countries specialize in meat animals and animal products; US manufactures mostly meat products (with the exception of corn); Russia produces poultry and pigmeat; China produces dairy products; and India produces sugar (E. Huan-Niemi et al., 2010, p. 123). And the oppressed workers are the ones who sacrifice their time and labor so we can get a grisly hunk of grilled flesh on our plates for dinner.

Karl Marx saw a struggle between the dominant class (capitalists) and subordinate class (workers), which created class domination and oppression: the capitalists over the workers. Human labor gives a product value, and this laborer is part of the working class (S. Rucki, class lecture, September 27, 2010). Capitalists socialize production and privatized ownership in that anyone can work, making it a social act, but the few that benefit from production of the working class is privately held (Lenin, 1916, 7).

For capitalism to be capitalism, Lenin (1916) said there needed to be "uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses" (p. 42). In other words, as seen today, "poor" people in the United States still have more money than "poor" people in developing countries. And the reason why, Lenin believed, for there to be such a great number of starving people in the world is because capitalists are self-interested. Capitalists will export their money to the developing countries to make a profit, not to raise people's standards of living (p. 42). There is also the problem that when capitalists export their money to other countries, they spread and strengthen capitalism throughout the world (p. 44). The people live in "want," while the industries benefit. When capitalism spreads

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throughout the world, capitalists dominate finance capital, which is another way of saying they become imperialists (p. 37). Imperialism thus results in domination and violence against the oppressed (p. 8).

In our theory, industrialized countries are like the capitalists and the less developed countries are like the workers to which Marx and Lenin refer. As seen today, developing countries have no choice than to abide by the developed countries if they want to continue trade and negotiations. If there was no longer a market for meat, the European Union for example, would cease to have that kind of agricultural trading power. E. Huan-Niemi et al. (2009) state, "The removal of border protection for EU beef would give a strong advantage to the exports of low cost beef producers in the world, and the growth in beef imports would directly have a substantial impact on EU domestic prices for beef" (p. 125). Additionally, the United Nations stated the European Union imports 27% of the world's fruits and vegetables, making it the largest importer in the world (as cited in Goetz & Grethe, 2008, p. 81). The EU has preferred trading partners and thus grants preferential market access, rather than subscribing to the idea of free trade (Goetz & Grethe, 2008, p. 81).

Because we are not including other exports or imports (oil, cotton, etc.), the United States would have to rely on Thailand, Brazil, India, Philippines, Turkey, Tunisia, Columbia, Fiji, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Ecuador, and Venezuela for their fruits and vegetables (Johnson, 2010, 5). For these countries to have more power, they would need to only produce enough to keep the market sustainable because producing more than what is necessary to feed people would create monopolies, which are detrimental to societies because it is the few controlling the masses. Lenin and Marx believed that when workers controlled the state they enforced their class interest (S. Rucki, class lecture, September 27, 2010). In this regard, developing countries, like the working class, would control agricultural trade (the state, in this case) and enforce the interests of the less developed countries, rather than the opposite it is today.

Developing countries are underdeveloped because capitalism has infiltrated and integrated them into the capitalist system where their integration guarantees they stay at the bottom of the society and anything they do to catch up puts them in a worse-off position (S. Rucki, class lecture, September 27, 2010). Workers must be separated from the means of production because if they own the means of production, they have no incentive to work for capitalists. Capitalists create an underclass of workers that must sell land in order to survive, which creates competition between workers, changing craft to capitalism (S. Rucki, class lecture, September 27, 2010). This results in dependency. Chilcote (1974) says that dependency is created when the dominant country is self-sustaining and thus expands, while the dependent country can only sustain itself because of the dominant country's influence (p. 2). This overreliance the dependent (developing) country has on the dominant (industrialized) country creates economic weakness (S. Rucki, class lecture, September 27, 2010). We see this today: poor people in the developing world are exploited by rich people in developed world. One mechanism of exploitation is trade: the more developing countries trade, the more they are exploited. And when a country specializes in a product, they're stuck in this dependency stage (S. Rucki, class lecture, September 27, 2010).

Another factor of dependency is foreign direct investment (FDI) – when someone from one country buys stock from, lends money to, etc., another country. FDI can be beneficial for a country wanting to invest in infrastructure because there is more money than what they had before the FDI. The problem though is that they could become dependent upon FDI because they're not used to having more money; they may take advantage of the fact that they have more capital in their economy, and if they have a loan then that weighs over them until it is paid off. Once the entire world became vegetarians, and the fruit and vegetable power was in the developing countries' hands, the working class (developing countries) revolts against the capitalists (industrialized countries), and annihilate the state (agricultural trade). The primary function of the state is to separate labor and means of production. The state attempts to present itself as an objective outsider or mediator between disputes. All the while, it ends up being a more effective tool for the dominant class insofar as it manages the flow of capitalism in the interests of capitalist, making sure capital goes where capitalists want it to go (S. Rucki, class lecture, October 4, 2010). In other words, the developing countries would revolt against industrialized countries, and agricultural trade would no longer exist in the sense as it had before: as an objective body, an outsider, and a separator of labor and means of production. While trade seems like an objective outsider between industrialized and developing countries, it is really a tool used by the industrialized countries to control the developing countries. Also, the more diversified trading partners are, the more agricultural

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trade can give the illusion of self-reliance. When agricultural trade seems diverse and sovereign, it comes across as more effective. When industrialized countries are making compromises with each other, agricultural trade looks more objective and thus, industrialized countries can then use the power agricultural trade gives them to dominate and oppress developing countries. Just as much as the developing countries need the industrialized countries, the industrialized countries need developing countries too.

Lenin believed that Import Substitution Industrialization would help developing countries break free from their dependence on industrialized countries. Developing countries would no longer import capital and instead domestically produce goods. This would separate them from global capitalism (S. Rucki, class lecture, October 4, 2010). Once they were separated, this would create a command economy where the government controlled prices, not the market. Instead of relying on trade for capital, less developed countries would borrow from other countries to build and pay off their debts while building and restructuring. The ultimate goal would be to have state-owned industries put into the global market once they were competitive (S. Rucki, class lecture, October 4, 2010). Unfortunately, countries do not know how long they have to close off any and all trade, and if a country cannot feed its people, then instead of developing countries revolting against industrialized, the hunger-stricken poor will revolt against their own country instead.

Therefore, countries need to trade because food is unpredictable. It relies on weather and there is not one country that has the perfect climate year round to produce everything their consumers need. If the developed countries want food for their people, they are going to have to invest in developing countries' infrastructure in order for them to be able to efficiently and at maximum, produce food. This goes against Lenin's idea of Import Substitution Industrialization, but not knowing how long a country would have to close off trade in order to develop creates a problem. Stiglitz (2007) said that the most successful developing countries in the world have achieved their success through trade and exports (p. 63). And Marx agreed with Ricardo in that free trade is imperative in order to benefit the least productive nations (Speech of Dr. Marx on Protection, Free Trade, and the Working Classes). Based off of Stiglitz and Marx's ideas, the best opportunity for developing countries is through trade and export goods. Developing countries need to trade and export goods to have healthy citizens and grow as an economy.

According to Bieler (2003), Open Marxism "has to account for class struggle that takes place at the transnational level not only in substance, but also in form, involving national and transnational class fractions, which operate from within and through national forms of state" (p. 12). In other words, class struggles need to be represented globally, for it is not just a state's issue, but a worldwide issue that there are so many people living under the poverty line. With that in mind, it would not just be the working class revolting against the capitalists, but developing countries, together, revolting against the industrialized countries that have suppressed them throughout history. Agricultural trade is going to attempt to maintain the divisions between industrialized and developing countries, legitimizing the interests of the developed countries to continue "a context of world class contradictions" (p. 24), but through the developing countries' revolt, they will annihilate agricultural trade to the point where it will no longer be a "mediator" between countries nor an oppressive tool used by the developed countries.

Lenin (1916) believed free trade gave rise to monopolies, for with a rising concentration of production, monopolies soon followed (p. 4). Marx thought that in order to prevent monopolies from forming, free trade must whole-heartedly be free, and not just in some nations. It had to be the entire world commencing free trade (Speech of Dr. Marx on Protection, Free Trade, and the Working Classes). Marx (1847) stated, "Either you must disavow the whole of political economy as it exists at present, or you must allow that under the freedom of trade the whole severity of the laws of political economy will be applied to the working classes" (Speech of Dr. Marx on Protection, Free Trade, and the Working Classes). In this regard, Marx wanted things to be equal - if the developed countries were given free trade then the working classes should have the same opportunity.

People will cease eating meat, and the developing countries will realize the industrialized countries rely on them more for fruits and vegetables, so the LDCs revolt, annihilating agricultural trade and enforce the interests of the developing countries. The LDCs will give the industrialized countries an ultimatum: trade free and fair with them, or risk starving their own country. The industrialized countries have machines, but not the amount of labor that developing countries have. Growing fruits and vegetables can be done with machines, but the machines will cost

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more in order to produce fruits and vegetables compared to the mass amount of people developing countries have, where growing crops does not take as much skill as other jobs. Becoming a global vegetarian society, there would no longer be a demand for meat, and in developed and developing worlds this would impact their labor costs. Countries would face excess labor with no demand for meat and zero livestock, in which case there would be no source of income from the meat sector to pay them.

Therefore, the industrialized countries will invest in infrastructure to support the developing countries' crops and their efficiency, in turn, being able to import food for their country. The United States would have to rely on Thailand, Brazil, India, Philippines, Turkey, Tunisia, Columbia, Fiji, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Ecuador, and Venezuela for their fruits and vegetables (Johnson, 2010, 5). All the while, developing countries could rely upon themselves and other developing countries for fruit and vegetable trade. Because the once-oppressed class (developing countries) would have taken over agricultural trade, there will not be elites (industrialized countries) looking out for themselves, but enforcing the developing countries' interests.

The future of a world-gone-vegetarian has industrialized countries investing in developing countries. Industrialized countries will benefit from trade with developing countries that provide fruits and vegetables. Developing countries will benefit through foreign direct investment to build and improve the country's infrastructure. This will lead to authentic Marxism, where there are no classes in that developing countries will not be solely dependent on industrialized countries because both will depend on each other, ceasing any kind of repercussions as Dependency Theory suggests. There will be competition among countries because countries will still need to trade with each other, but there will no longer be a ruling set of countries (developed countries) dominating lower status (developing) countries all in the same of capitalism. Countries will need to work together to get what they want instead. As the United States and Canada have abundance of grains, countries with abundance in fruits and vegetables will be able to trade. We can only hope and imagine that with the United States' large supply of grains and the developing countries' fruit and vegetable production, they could use David Ricardo's (1817) model of comparative advantage in that one country with a specific good trades with another country that has a totally different good, making production and trade more efficient.

Food is unpredictable as are workers and countries. The revolution of developing countries against the industrialized countries will create free and fair trade amongst all. Capitalists will have to work with workers if they want to benefit because labor and products will be in their hands, in their countries. The industrialized countries will have their machines, but they will lack the hand power in growing fruits and vegetables, which is the importance of craft. The developing countries will no longer be considered "workers" and the industrialized countries will no longer be referred to as "capitalists." It will be a world-wide vegetarian society where the hands of all will rely on the hands of others.

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