The comparative analysis of the origins of industrial capitalism began with Marx's discussion of the 'two roads' to capitalist production in the third volume of *Capital*. Marx distinguished two paths to capitalist production: one that proceeds 'from below' through the differentiation of artisan petty-producers into capitalist manufacturers and wage-workers; and the other that proceeds 'from above' through the transformation of merchants into industrialists employing wage-workers. For Marx, the first path - 'from below' - is the 'truly revolutionary path' that leads to a rapid transformation of the labour process and productive forces; while the second path - 'from above' - blocks such development and 'preserves and retains' pre-capitalist productive forces and labour processes.

Lenin expanded Marx's discussion of the 'two paths' to capitalism in his studies of the agrarian transformations that wracked late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Russia. In *Development of Capitalism in Russia* and especially *The Agrarian Program of Russian Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905–1907*, Lenin identifies two broad paths to capitalism in agriculture. The first path - the American path to capitalism - proceeds 'from below' through the differentiation of the peasantry into an agrarian bourgeoisie and proletariat. The second path - the 'Prussian path to capitalism' - proceeds 'from above' through the transformation of feudal lords and other pre-capitalist land-owning classes into a rural capitalist class that transforms its dependent peasants into wage-workers. Following Marx, Lenin argued that the 'American' path to capitalism 'from below' brings about more rapid capitalist industrialisation than the 'Prussian' path to capitalism 'from above'.

Terence Byres' exciting new work, *Capitalism from Above and Capitalism from Below*, is a lengthy consideration of Lenin's thesis. Byres, a founder and current co-editor of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, begins by rejecting as 'too few, too stereotyped and too narrow' (p. 3) mainstream social science's discussion of different paths to capitalist development. Byres understands that comparative analysis cannot provide fundamental theoretical insights into the dynamics of capitalist development. Instead, he views 'the logic or the "laws" of
capitalist development. Instead, he views "the logic or the "laws" of capitalist development, which must be explored theoretically, as primary" (p. 8), and comparative analysis as a "rough negative check on accepted historical explanations" (p. 10) which can identify important variations in the process of capitalist development.

*Capitalism from Above and Capitalism from Below* is the first part of a wider comparative study of the agrarian roots of capitalism which will eventually embrace England, Prussia, the US, France and Japan. In this first instalment, Byres focuses on the evolution of rural class relations in Prussia, the US south and the US north and west. These initial cases allow him to use contemporary historical research to test Lenin's claims about the different class forces (peasant-farmers or pre-capitalist landlords) that initiate capitalism in the countryside and their differential impact on the pace of capitalist industrialisation. Byres concentrates on the class struggles that produce different rural social property relations and how these different social property relations, through their effects on the rural home market for both means of consumption and means of production shape the process of industrialisation in each case.

Byres's examination of the evolution of rural class structure in Prussia ranges over nearly 500 years of historical development and brings insights from secondary sources available only in German to an English-reading audience. His discussion of the origins of the 'second serfdom' in Prussia closely follows Robert Brenner's analysis, demonstrating the centrality of balance of class forces between lord and peasant to the transformation of the East Elbian peasantry from 'one of Europe's freest' before the sixteenth century into a class of legally bound serfs labouring on the lords' (Junkers) lands. For Byres, the amazing stability of Prussian feudalism between the sixteenth and late eighteenth century rested on the compatibility between the 'forces and relations of production' — between the appropriation of labour-rents and the technical requirements of cattle grazing and rye cultivation.

The expansion of wheat cultivation in the late eighteenth century created a 'developing contradiction between forces of production and property relations/relations of production' (p. 75). The technical requirements of 'up and down husbandry' (the growing of fodder crops for stall-fed animals who supply manure for the intensive cultivation of wheat and fodder crops on former commons lands) were incompatible with the appropriation of labour-rents which limited the quantity and quality of labour available to work on the lords' lands and the scattered field agriculture practised by both peasants and lords. While this 'forces/relations' contradiction was a necessary condition for the Prussian transition to capitalism, it was not sufficient. Growing peasant unrest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in response to greater lordly demands for labour-rents and the Napoleonic

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7 Brenner 1985a and 1985b.