Discussing the advantages of large-scale farming in capitalist agriculture, Karl Kautsky mentioned in passing that these advantages did not occur in the feudal system. Large-scale farming under feudalism is for most part called Gutsherrschaft and is characterized by servile peasants working on the lord's demesne. A special feature of the Gutsherrschaft was that methods of production were not essentially different on the demesne than on the subsistence plot of the peasant: the peasant cultivated both the demesne and his own plot with same methods, implements, draught animals etc.¹ This was also emphasized by R.H. Hilton:

"It must...be emphasized that the element of the agrarian economy over which the lord might seem to have complete control, namely the demesne, was also entangled in the customary practices of the peasant community...The demesne...was reduced to the work rhythm of peasant holdings - or worse, since labour services were badly and unwillingly performed"².

In this context Hilton also pointed out that "...the landowning class fulfilled no entrepreneurial function"³. It has been mentioned by many authors that this is probably the main reason why empirical studies seldom show any proof of higher yields on the demesne than on the subsistence plot⁴. It is also clear from evidence from different parts of Europe, that the possibility for the estate-owner or his bailiff to control the labour process was very small indeed under these circumstances. From different regions we can empirically verify the dividing of the demesne into plots, cultivated by relatively independent peasants. Such a system is,
for example, mentioned regarding Brandenburg during the 18th century by F. W. Henning and for Denmark during the same period by F. Skrubbel-trang.

The relative independence of the peasants in a system of Guts-herrschaft is also expressed by the lack of a "managerial problem" - in the relationship between lord and peasant - in agricultural textbooks and treatises during this time. Examining agricultural treatises written in Britain 1600 - 1800, Keith Tribe found that:

"Indeed the only extra-household relations which could be considered, those pertaining to landlord and peasant, are not formulated within the strictly agricultural texts, but... are to be found in legal treatises".

This is also the impression from Swedish treatises and agricultural textbooks written during the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is only in the beginning of the 19th century that supervision and management of the labour process becomes a special topic. I shall give an example of this later on.

In the famous "transition-debate" between Sweezy, Dobb, Takahashi and others which followed the publication of Maurice Dobb's "Studies in the development of capitalism" (1946), Dobb especially argued for a definition of feudalism which regarded this system, not only as a "system of production" but also - and essentially - as a "system of relations of production". Following Marx closely, Dobb emphasized that the social relation between lord and peasant in feudalism was of an extra-economic nature: surplus extraction had to be combined with some kind of coercive force, either that of military strength or of custom. The reason for this of course was that, in the last resort:

"... the direct labourer remains the possessor of the means of production and labour conditions for the production of his own means of subsistence".

The debate between Dobb and Sweezy was centered upon the question of
the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Instead of taking production for profit as the prime mover in this transition—as did Paul Sweezy and later on also Immanuel Wallerstein—Dobb took as his point of departure the expropriation of the peasant and the development of hired labour. Discussing Sweezy, Dobb points out that:

"He (Sweezy) nowhere pays more than incidental attention to what has always seemed me a crucial consideration: namely that the transition from coercive extraction of surplus value by estate-owners to the use of free hired labour must have depended upon the existence of cheap labour for hire."¹⁰

In the subsequent controversy on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, Dobb's standpoint has been challenged from different points of view. But it would not be far from the truth to argue that Dobb's viewpoints on these matters still prevail among Marxist historians. Especially Marxist in eastern Europe have emphasized the process of "Bauernbefreiung" as a necessary precondition for the transition from feudalism to capitalism in agriculture.¹¹ In different parts of Europe, this dissolution of estates has taken on different forms. Following Lenin's classification, three development paths have been emphasized: the Prussian, the classical and the American.¹²

But the question put forward here is whether hired labour really is a necessary precondition for capitalist agriculture. It has recently been emphasized by several authors that large-scale capitalist farming successfully can combine wage labour with subsistence cultivators in the labour force over a long period.¹³ As long as agriculture has not reached a high level of mechanization, small-scale farming obviously has certain advantages.¹⁴ It is also probable—under certain given conditions—that the opportunity cost for labour that has its reproduction costs covered by a subsistence plot it is comparatively lower than for hired wage labour.¹⁵

Should we then draw the conclusion that wage labour and "Bauernbefreiung" are no necessary preconditions for the rise of large-scale capitalist agriculture?
If we return to Marx, we find that he defines feudalism essentially as a social system of relations of production where the peasant-producer possesses his own means of production. But what does this mean exactly? What is it that Marx wants to express with the word "possess"? It is clear that for Marx the ownership of the means of production was not restricted to a juridical relationship. Above all it expressed a social relation and the fact that the servile peasant, in a system of feudal social relations, controlled his own labour process. This social fact was expressed in certain customs and traditions in feudal society and sometimes also codified in written law. Social relations of production, then, did not only determine how much rent the lord could get from his peasants, but also — in a system of Gutsherrschaft — which kind of work he could claim in the form of a labour obligation and also his possibility to control and influence the labour process of the direct producer; the peasant.

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Thus, following our definition of feudalism, the transition from feudalism to capitalism above all implies the alienation of the means of production from the peasant-producer. But this alienation process is not restricted to a juridical form of ownership of the means of production. In many cases, alienation in a legal and a social sense coincide: the estate-owner "encloses" his estate, expropriates the means of production and develops large-scale farming with hired labour; the so-called "Prussian" road to capitalist agriculture. But there are also cases where legal and social expropriation of the means of production do not coincide. Obviously there are examples, as we saw, where the labour force, even after a transition to capitalist agriculture,
is dominated by subsistence cultivators. Legally the subsistence farmer is still the owner of his means of production, but he gradually loses control of his own labour-process. His work becomes increasingly more regulated by the estate-management. In the beginning of this process, the demesne is probably still cultivated by implements, stock etc. which are in the legal possession of the subsistence-peasant. But when using them, he is no longer, in R.H. Hilton's expression, "...enangled in the customary practices of the peasant community". Agricultural revolution means the application of new methods of cultivation, new crops etc. The scientific development of agriculture demands a higher degree of management and supervision, and knowledge of these new methods of production is concentrated in the hands of the estate-owner and the estate-management. Supervision of the labour process thus becomes an aspect of management. When mechanization starts, the attending of machinery, implements etc. becomes an important task for the management. The new expensive implements are also kept by the management.

Social relations between lord and peasant have, because of this gradual concentration of the means of production, become fundamentally altered: the feudal peasant has turned into an agricultural labourer with a subsistence plot. In many cases his position is not fundamentally different from that of the farm-hand. The appropriation of surplus value no longer necessitates extra-economical force, custom etc. Instead it becomes a function of the ownership and control of the means of production. Using the system of tenancy the subsistence-plot is handed over to the cultivator for a number of years, in Sweden 10 years for the most part. In reality the subsistence-plot becomes a hidden wage and the subsistence cultivator a wage-labourer.

The gradual concentration of the means of production in the hands of the capitalist was, according to Marx, a typical feature of the development of a capitalist mode of production. It was also the subject
of several chapters in the first volume of Capital, in "Grundrisse" and in other works. To sum up this process, he used the concept of "formal" and "real" subsumption of labour. The term is mostly used to express the development from handicrafts, manufactory and the "putting-out system" to modern industry, but Marx occasionally also gives examples from the development of large-scale agriculture. "Formal" subsumtion Marx defined as a process where:

"Der Arbeitsprozess wird zum Mittel des Verwertungsprozesses, der processes der Selbstverwertung des Kapitals - der Fabrikation von Mehrwert".

But subordination is still of a formal nature; it has not yet reached the labour process:

"Trotz alldem ist mit jenem change durchaus nicht von vorn herein ein wesentlicher Wechsel in der Realen Art und Weise der Arbeitsprozesses, des wirklichen Produktionsprozesses eingetreten. Im Gegenteil liegt es in der Natur des Sache, dass die Subsumtion des Arbeitsprozesses unter das Kapital eintritt - auf Grundlage eines vorhandenen Arbeitsprozesses".

The manufactory is, Marx points out, a type of organization where formal subsumption of labour predominates. But he emphasizes also that, already here, cooperation and the division of labour - as in Adam Smith's famous example of the division of labour in the needle factory - lead to an altering of the labour process, which means the subordination of labour by the capitalist. Subordination of work and the division of labour also give way to mechanization and the production of relative surplus value on a wider scale. From the point of view of the labourer, this means that the

"...objektiven Arbeitsbedingungen (Produktionsmittel) und subjektiven Arbeitsbedingungen (Lebensmittel) ihm als Kapital, als monopolisiert vom Käufer seines Arbeitsvermögens gegenüberstehn".
The development of capitalist relations in large-scale agriculture has been treated so far as a process whereby the estate-owner, directly or through a subsumption process, expropriates the means of production. In the following, this problem will be discussed with regard to Sweden during the 19th century.

In the late Middle Ages a system of Gutsherrschaft developed in Middle and Eastern Europe. The term Gutsherrschaft implies, in essence, large-scale farming with servile labour. During the 16th and 17th century, Swedish crown lands were alienated on a massive scale. During the period from 1560 to 1680, at which point Charles XI put a stop to this alienation by the so-called "Reduktion", the nobility's share of land under cultivation grew from approximately 20 to 60%. In one blow, the "Reduktion of 1680 reduced this share to about 30%. As a result most estates were reduced in size, and positive checks against the rebuilding of large estates were introduced. On the other hand, as Eli Heckscher once pointed out, the transition from Grundherrschaft to Gutsherrschaft in the 18th century may also have been a result of the "Reduktion", in that it may have forced noblemen to concentrate their land possessions into so-called "säterier".

To what extent the rise of "säterier" also meant the rise of Gutsherrschaft has been widely discussed by Swedish scholars. Some have argued that "säterier" by and large, were not predominantly characterized by demesne farming. Instead they have causally linked the rise of "säterier" with the exercise of certain privileges connected with "säteri"-status. On the other hand, others have argued that the formation of "säterier" was the first step in the development of Gutsherrschaft. Relying on empirical data from roughly 20 estates, I tried to verify the existence of Gutsherrschaft in Sweden in the middle of the 18th century. The following
definition of Gutsherrschift was put forward:

1) The estate must comprise a relatively large demesne.

2) Demesne production must be more important to the estate economy than rents in kind and money.

3) A considerable portion of rent payments must assume the form of labour services.

4) Demesne production must be directed towards the market.

The investigation showed first of all that farmstead acreage, both absolutely and relatively, was greater than in most cases than the acreage of the demesne. In absolute figures, the average size of the demesne was 20 ha. 22

Secondly, comparing rent payments in kind and money with other sources of manorial income, I found that approximately 60% of manorial income came from demesne production.

There were two problems involved in assessing, thirdly, the proportion of labour services in the total rent. In the first place, I found that the extent of the labour obligations was seldom exactly defined in any written document. Secondly, there was the problem of transforming the labour burden into money in order to compare it with other forms of rent, both tedious and — as Wittold Kula pointed out — dubious procedure 23. In cases where it was possible to obtain exact figures, the material showed that two days per week during the greater part of the year seemed to serve as a standard for a middle-size farm. My investigation also seemed to indicate that landlords did not use all the labour obligations they, at least theoretically, had customary right to. Examples showed that, for some landlords at least, it was more attractive to transform this customary right into rent in kind and money. The reason for this was probably the small size of the demesne which made a heavy labour obligation unnecessary.

Empirical data also showed in the fourth place, that servile peasants
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constituted the main part of the labour force on the estates. Hired labour in the form of bailiffs, blacksmiths, foresters etc. was of little importance and was seldom used in regular field work. Cowmen and dairymaids were also mostly hired.

It was possible, lastly, to verify the existence of demesne production predominantly directed towards the marketplace in Sweden during the middle of the 18th century. Grain was, of course, the most important good: 55% of the harvest (the average for 15 estates) was regularly sold on the market. Hence estates bought very little from the market. The sale of grain on a large scale meant large money surpluses every year. Thus we find in Sweden a situation like that in Poland, described by Wittold Kula, a "...tendency to maximize the naturalization of production with the aim of maximizing commercialization." 24

On summarizing the investigation I concluded that it was possible to use the word "Gutsherrschaft" when discussing large-scale farming in Sweden during the 18th century. But it obviously had its own distinctive appearance. In comparison to its Danish or German counterparts for example, Swedish estates and demesnes were rather small and had fewer servile peasants. Accordingly the demand for more labour obligations was probably more restricted in Sweden than elsewhere 25.

The development of large scale capitalist farming in Sweden during the 19th century has been suggested by many scholars. Especially the Swedish economic-historian Gustaf Utterström emphasized the "Prussian" path of development with regard to Swedish large-scale agriculture: the peasants were released from heavy labour obligations, wage labour became more important, the estate "enclosed" etc. 26. Later research in this field has somewhat modified this picture. Especially U. Jonsson has suggested that wage labour did not play a leading role in the estate economy in Sweden before late in the 19th century. Field work at least was until that point mostly done by subsistence cultivators 27. This was also the result of my own inves-
In my investigation I could show that demesne production grew quickly during the first half of the 19th century. But, surprisingly, this was not at all a consequence of "Bauernbefreiung": instead the increase in cultivated area was predominantly a result of land clearance. At the same time the number of hired labourers grew, but so did the labour burden of the subsistence cultivators as well. Thus subsistence cultivators dominated the labour force at least until the end of the 19th century. An expansion in the demand for labour arising from the extension of demesne production thus seemed to affect the traditional force, the subsistence cultivators, whose burden of labour was extended, while also giving rise to a growing demand for new hired labour.

Consequently, there seem to be strong indications that suggest that the development of large-scale farming in Sweden during the 19th century did not necessitate the transition from servile to hired labour. Both forms seem to fit very well indeed! Does this then imply that there was no transition from feudal to capitalist large-scale farming during this period? Are we to find this transition in the 20th century? Or is there something wrong with our concepts? The answers to these questions of course depend on how we define this process of transition. If we define it as a process whereby the social means of production are expropriated by the estate-owner, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the mere existence of subsistence cultivators in the workforce does not exclude the notion of a transition from feudalism to capitalism in Sweden during this period.

The discussion and scientific research concerning the labour process in agriculture during the transition from feudalism to capitalism has not yet reached very far. This is certainly true at least in the Swedish
Consequently there exists many unanswered questions. What follows here are merely some reflections I have made during my own research, and they must be regarded only as a possible point of departure for such a discussion.

In my investigation of the Swedish Gutshehrschaft-system during the 18th century, I found, in the first place, that the labour burden of the peasant was not only restricted to a certain amount of days per week, year etc. It was also restricted regarding the kind of work the lord could claim. Customary practices seemed to be very precise on this point: the peasant could not be used in the same way as a farm-hand, for example as helpers or in household work. The labour services of the peasantry seem to have been restricted to regular field work and for carting and fencing etc. In addition to the peasant, there was another type of subsistence cultivator, having a lower social position and often a smaller subsistence plot than the peasant: the cottager. There is evidence to show that the cottager, contrary to the peasant, could be used for all kinds of menial labour.

A second important feature of the Gutshehrschaft was that the demesne was often divided into plots and cultivated, probably quite independently, by a certain farmstead year after year.

Thirdly, I studied the structure of rent and found that most peasants paid their rent both in the form of labour obligations and in kind and money. The size of the farmstead affected the total amount of rent, but rarely its composition and the form in which it was paid. In some cases rent in kind was transformed into rent in money. By and large however, it was not usual for all-or most of-rent in kind and money to be transformed into a labour obligation, or vice versa 29.

As I have already pointed out, the growth of large-scale farming on estate during the 19th century did not mean the "extermination" of the peasant/subsistence cultivator. But it was probable, as we have
argued, that this social position changed fundamentally. There are several indications in the Swedish development that point in this direction:

1. During the late 18th and 19th centuries, estate-owners and -managers became increasingly interested in the application of new agricultural methods, for example crop rotation, enclosure and new seeds. Among the propertied classes there was a lively discussion concerning agricultural topics. Special organizations for the spreading of agricultural innovations, such as the so-called "Hushållningssällskap" and schools for the education of bailiffs, estate-managers, etc., were also established during this period. That the management aspects of large-scale farming becomes more interesting is shown for example by agricultural treatises from this period. The control and supervision of the labour process has suddenly become one of the most important tasks for the estate-management, according to many treatises. For example in a text-book from 1816 Isac af Darelli points out that a good bailiff must:

"1...know his people and be able to distribute the proper task to the proper man, not according to his reliability, but according to his special skills.
5...be present when work is performed.
6...be responsible for all work.
8...be able to distribute tasks so that no one is uncertain regarding the work he is supposed to perform".

2. That there is a change regarding the social position of the peasant on estates during the 19th century is also a main result of my own investigations. As we saw, the composition of rent between money rent, rent in kind and labour obligations was the same among the estate peasants during the 18th century. An innovation of the 19th century is the division of the estate: some peasants pay their rent exclusively in the form of money (or in kind) and others perform only labour obligations. The social position of the day-labouring peasant is without doubt worsened, while the opposite seems to be
the case for the other kind of peasant, who is now becoming more independent (in his relation to the estate-management) than before. One indication of the worsened social position of the day-labouring peasant is the fact that his labour-burden, both in terms of its quantity and quality, resembles more and more that of the cottager. The kind of work the estate-owner can claim from his peasants is no longer restricted to field-work etc: the peasant -like the cottager and the farm-hand - can obviously now be used for all kinds of labour.

3. My investigation also verified that hired labourers become more numerous on estates during the 19th century. All types of work are now shared between hired labourers, cottagers and peasants. There are no indications of a system of dividing the demesne into different plots cultivated by independent peasants during this period. Instead field work seems to be increasingly administrated by the estate-management. The sharing of work between different kinds of labour gives rise, of course, to certain problems of coordination, which have to be solved by different means. Authority and discipline, among other things, become increasingly important during this period.

4. An investigation of inventories from a large number of estates during the period 1750–1860 has shown that there was a slight increase in net capital formation (in real terms) from the demesne during this period. If we look at the net capital formation in tools, implements, machinery etc. and excludes cattle, buildings etc., there was, on the other hand, a more rapid increase. This seems to support the hypothesis that demesne production was relying less on its peasants for necessary implements etc. On the contrary, there seems to be a concentration of the means of production - adapted for large-scale farming - in the hands of the estate-management. The mechanization of agriculture in the late 19th century, of course, only accentuates this trend.
In this paper we adhere to the definition of feudalism as a system of social relations of production where the peasant is, essentially, the owner of his own means of production. Ownership here implies, in the first place, the relatively independent position of the feudal peasant in the labour process. This relatively independence is, as we have argued, also a distinctive feature of the Gutsherrschaft, where custom determines not only the size of the labour burden, but also its content. The development of capitalist relations in large-scale farming is defined as a process whereby the means of production is monopolized in the hands of the estate-owner. But this alienation of the means of production from the direct producer does not always and everywhere have to presuppose the transition from servile to hired labour, as the model of the "Prussian" path of development seems to imply. In many cases subsistence cultivators continue to play an important role in the work force of the demesne. Our point, however, was that capitalist development means the gradual transformation of the social position of the peasant: he gradually loses control of his own labour process, which is increasingly subsumed under the management.

Our purpose was to put forward some empirical evidence for a process of real subsumption of labour in Swedish large-scale farming during the 18th and 19th century. Regarding the 18th century, we described the system of large-scale agriculture as a form of Gutsherrschaft, characterized by relatively independent peasants doing labour services on their lord's demesne. Capitalist development during the 19th century did not lead to a total transition from servile to wage labour. But, and in accordance with our hypothesis, we found that the social position of the peasant/subsistence cultivator was fundamentally altered. The traditional form of labour
services were abolished, and the difference in how much and which kind of work the lord could claim from different kinds of labour - peasants, cottagers, hired labour - was no longer of any importance. The feudal peasant and the subsistence cultivator of capitalist estates in the 19th century are obviously - in a social sense - two different persons. Gradually during the 19th century, the subsistence cultivator loses control of his means of production, which instead are centralized into the hands of the estate management.

Dr. Lars Magnusson
University of Uppsala
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