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Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power by Michael Reid

Chapter 10: Oil, Farming, and The Amazon

Brazil is an “agricultural superpower,” especially since their weather allows for it. The country exports only less than the United States and the European union. Opening up the coffee business really helped to push Brazil to this point. During this “Green Revolution” the country began an agricultural research institute which sent students abroad to learn agronomy (Reid, 199). Brazil’s main energy sources are biofuels, specifically ethanol derived from sugar. Sugar eventually became more than just a farm field. Its industry grew into facilities mainly concerning the crop (Reid, 202). However, there were issues when it came to farming in Brazil. The MST, a group of landless people, became the face of inequality in Brazil as land distribution had no balance. With Cardoso’s land reform plan, about 90 million hectares were distributed (Reid, 203).

The Amazon began to have it tough, as highways were built, bringing in more people accompanied with more new ways to exhaust the precious forest. These included gold miners, cattle ranchers, rubber tappers, and loggers (Reid, 206). Of course, there were people who wanted to preserve the Amazon, but businessmen never fail to find sources of revenue, even if it is in the most environmentally diverse and sensitive place on the planet. Conservationists are popular in Brazil, maybe due to new world pressures on better environmental practices. Those who want the land for development do not understand the environmental service values, like the fact that it is a carbon sink and that it holds huge amount of water, preventing flooding in other areas. Today, there are many forces working to preserve the land.