

for individual consumption in a Communist society is that, whatever truth may once have adhered to such a judgement in the era of *manual book-keeping and physical accounting methods*, today, in the era of computerised recording and storage techniques, such purely pragmatic criticisms simply no longer apply. There is today no longer any need whatever for any manually or even mechanically prepared "Certificate" as such to be issued; all the information required can now be stored in a central computer and accessed at any one of thousands of terminals by means of a small magnetic strip affixed to a plastic card similar to the contemporary Banker's Card. The holder of that card, on whose magnetic strip the individual producer-consumer's Personal Control Number is recorded, having collected his chosen items of personal consumption from the Community Store, simply presses the relevant Product Codes, the relevant labour-hour values of which are stored in the memory of the central computer at the Centre of Social Book-keeping, into a machine and then inserts his card into the slot provided, whereupon the total of Labour-Hour Units represented by those codes is deducted from the individual producer's personal "account" at the Centre for Social Book-keeping. As the productivity of labour rises - and this it would do many times more rapidly than under capitalist economic laws, since all the myriad sections of the bourgeoisie or petite-bourgeoisie with a claim upon and drawing from the total stock of surplus value, and hence with a more or less marked or powerful vested interest in ensuring that a rising productivity of labour is used overwhelmingly in order to increase the rate of profit for the capitalist rather than to increase the real wages accruing to the worker-producers would have been eliminated - the Labour Hour Unit "value" of each use-value would be continually reduced. With progressive reductions in such unit "values", the day would inevitably dawn for each use-value in turn when its unit "value" becomes too small as to be worth recording for purposes of distribution for personal consumption in the form of Labour-hour Units per individual

item or group of items (10's, 100's, dozens, etc.). That particular use-value would then receive its passport to undertake the journey from the Lower to the Higher Stage of Communism by being made freely available for personal consumption, without the quanta of Labour-hour Units consumed in its production and distribution being affixed to it for purposes of the normative regulation of consumption.

In course of time, it would become altogether unnecessary to distribute use-values destined for individual consumption by allocating Labour-hour Units to individual producer-consumers on the basis of the number of labour-hours each has contributed; or else such a record would be retained only for those use-values embodying highly complex technology, such as high-fidelity amplifiers or precision cameras, for the production of which a relatively large - though, of course, with a progressively rising productivity of labour, like that of all other use-values also continually falling - outlay of Labour-hour Units would be required. On this aspect of the transition from the Lower to the Higher Stages of Communism some difference of view still exists amongst Council Communists, some of whom believe that it will always be impossible to distribute precision microscopes or high-resolution lenses on the same basis as loaves of bread or sacks of potatoes. However this question might ultimately be resolved by those worker-producers and their Councils whom history ultimately charges with finding the solution to this problem - and, of course, it is simply not possible to propose in advance solutions to every problem of the transition to Communism - in course of time the Labour Certificate would either become altogether redundant for purposes of allocating units of entitlement in distribution for personal consumption, or else its use would become restricted by some suitable method to the above-mentioned types of use-values. This would then mark the end of the last vestiges of bourgeois - or would it be proletarian? - right.



However this might be, the Communist society at both its Higher and its Lower Stages will need to know both the quality and the quantity of economic resources previously consumed in the sphere of either production or distribution, in order that it might then also know the quality and quantity of those resources it needs to *replace*. That this is so, irrespective of the mode of distribution for individual consumption, is self-evident since, for instance, it will at any given moment in history always be irrational for society to produce more or less than that which it actually needs of any particular resource, whether this be in the sphere of production (accumulation) or distribution. Thus the Average Social Hour of Labour would continue to function as the fundamental unit of economic *regulation* in the Higher Stage also. It would, however, no longer exercise any function of *control*, since the latter is associated solely with the *socially* - though not *individually* - coercive, class-determined conditions pertaining to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, i.e., to the socio-economic needs of the Lower Stage of Communism. With the attainment of the objective and *subjective* preconditions for the transition to the Higher Stage, when, as Marx puts it, "...all the springs of productive wealth flow more abundantly...", the sphere of application of the Average Social Hour of Labour would become restricted - with the sole possible exception noted above - to the estimation of economic resources consumed as a result of distribution for purposes either of *Communist Accumulation*, in which case the relevant entries in the system of social book-keeping would appear under one of the three headings of fixed means of production (P), circulating means of production (C) or labour (L); or else of *Communist Distribution*, in which case they would appear under the heading of labour (L) alone. In the system of Communist production and distribution as a whole, this would serve the purpose solely that society might know, on the one hand the quality and quantity of resources previously consumed in the course of previous production and distribution, resources which it

obviously needs to replace in accordance with a plan of either simple or extended reproduction, that is to say as part of a policy of accumulation intended either to maintain the apparatus of production and distribution as a whole, or any sector thereof, at its existing level or to expand its capacity to any degree decided by the Congress of Workers' Councils; and, on the other, the quality and quantity of use-values distributed for purposes of individual consumption - now, of course, effected as a *social service* and appearing in the system of social book-keeping under the heading, no longer of *distribution for individual consumption* in the form of Labour Certificates - which, indeed, would no longer exist - but of *social distribution* for purposes of individual consumption, which would then be effected in exactly the same way as distribution of means of production is effected - that is to say, as a *public service*.

#### The Method by which the Minotaur of Value must be Slain

The foundation of all value-based forms of production, their social precondition, is *wage-labour*. The abolition of wage-labour and the wages system is therefore *the first demand* of the proletarian revolution, along with the conversion of private and state forms of property in means of production and distribution into means of production and distribution *held in common*. Here it is essential that this latter not be confused with *state nationalisation*, which is *not* equivalent to economic resources held in common, as Marx envisaged it, but to *state property* in them. In "Soviet" society, private property in means of production and distribution in its capitalistic form as property of individual units of capital, as property of the capitalist class held by individual members or groups of members of that class, was indeed abolished and replaced by state property in means of production and distribution. Since state ownership represents no more than a higher and yet



more antagonistic form of alienative property in social resources, however, no social basis for the abolition of wage-labour was created in the "Soviet" Union, and as a consequence its continuance has been a permanent feature of "Soviet" society throughout its history.

The economic character of wage-labour in "Soviet" society differs, however, in certain fundamental respects from capitalist wage-labour. Under capitalism, labour-power is a commodity, and hence the wage paid to the worker by the capitalist is equivalent to its *price* - the price of the commodity labour-power. As with the prices of commodities in general, the price of the commodity labour-power, the wage, is regulated by *the law of value* - that is to say, its price reflects fundamentally the value of those essential goods and services needed to maintain in life the worker and any dependents he may have and to enable reproduction of the next generation of wage-workers to take place. Apart from subjective factors at work in society at large, such as action by the trades unions to maintain wage-rates at a level *higher* than that which would otherwise prevail, or state legislation to "peg" wages at a level *lower* than that at which the market, if left to its proper regulative function, would fix them at, this fundamental determinant is then modified in an upwards or a downwards direction by forces operating at the level of the market *per se*, such as changes in either the productivity or the intensity of labour, which then also modify such surface factors as the *price* of labour-power, the wage, and the level of market demand for it.

Under State Socialism, this *objective* economic system of exploitation does not operate. Because, under this system, commodities, commodity production, the law of value and the market *have all been abolished* - except, in the case of "Soviet" society, in a special form operating through an equally specialised mechanism in the sphere of agriculture - wage rates are *not* first determined objectively by the law of value and then modified upwards or downwards in the market according to supply and demand and the fluctuations

in the class struggle. On the contrary, *they are fixed by subjective bureaucratic decision*, whereupon their relative *immobility* is given the *force of law*. Thus use-value production may have replaced value production, but only in a new antagonistic form in which there is no objective mechanism through which wage-rates may be regulated. Indeed, the same is true of the prices placed upon use-values generally within the overall framework of the "prices policy" decided upon quite arbitrarily in accordance with purely pragmatic criteria by the party and state administrative bureaucrats. As a consequence, as "Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution" makes amply clear, those party and state bureaucrats have effectively arrogated to themselves the exclusive dictatorial right of decision on all economic parameters and all aspects of economic life, and thus in very truth hold in their hands the power of life and death over the whole working community.

The abolition of wage-labour is, therefore, the first precondition for the destruction of both capitalist and state-socialist production relations and their replacement by Communist relations - *but it is not the only one*. If wage-labour forms the *heart* of capitalist alienation, the *source* at which value and surplus value are generated, its head, *its brain and nervous system*, is *money*. It is through the mechanism of money that the distribution, under capitalism, of surplus value - which of itself has no tangible substance, no physical reality, being itself no more than *abstract labour time* - is realised as *profit* and distributed amongst the various sections and groups of the capitalist class, just as it is also through the medium of money that necessary value is realised as wages and distributed to the workers. To destroy the one, wage-labour, without the other, money, is to court the failure of the working class to establish the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Lower Stage of Communism and to risk the imposition of State Socialism. Thus the Minotaur of Value must be struck simultaneously through its

