

KARL MARX

# Capital

A Critique of  
Political Economy

Volume Three

Introduced by  
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Translated by  
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to it – and the capitalist is simply personified capital, functioning in the production process simply as the bearer of capital – pumps out a certain specific quantum of surplus labour from the direct producers or workers, surplus labour that it receives without an equivalent and which by its very nature always remains forced labour, however much it might appear as the result of free contractual agreement. This surplus labour is expressed in a surplus-value, and this surplus-value exists in a surplus product. Surplus labour in some form must always remain, as labour beyond the extent of given needs. It is just that in the capitalist, as in the slave system, etc., it has an antagonistic form and its obverse side is pure idleness on the part of one section of society. A certain quantum of surplus labour is required as insurance against accidents and for the progressive extension of the reproduction process that is needed to keep pace with the development of needs and the progress of population. It is one of the civilizing aspects of capital that it extorts this surplus labour in a manner and in conditions that are more advantageous to social relations and to the creation of elements for a new and higher formation than was the case under the earlier forms of slavery, serfdom, etc. Thus on the one hand it leads towards a stage at which compulsion and the monopolization of social development (with its material and intellectual advantages) by one section of society at the expense of another disappears; on the other hand it creates the material means and the nucleus for relations that permit this surplus labour to be combined, in a higher form of society, with a greater reduction of the overall time devoted to material labour. For, according to the development of labour productivity, surplus labour can be great when the total working day is short and relatively small when the total working day is long. If the necessary labour-time is 3 hours and surplus labour also 3 hours, the total working day is 6 hours and the rate of surplus labour 100 per cent. If the necessary labour is 9 hours and the surplus labour 3 hours, the total working day is 12 hours and the rate of surplus labour only  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. It then depends on the productivity of labour how much use-value is produced in a given time, and also therefore in a given surplus labour-time. The real wealth of society and the possibility of a constant expansion of its reproduction process does not depend on the length of surplus labour but rather on its productivity and on the more or less plentiful conditions of production in which it is performed. The realm of freedom really

begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. This realm of natural necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time. Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis. The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite.

In capitalist society, this surplus-value or surplus product is divided among the capitalists as dividends in proportion to the quota of social capital that belongs to each. (If we ignore accidental fluctuations in the distribution and consider simply the law governing them, their regulating limits.) In this form, surplus-value appears as the average profit that accrues to capital, an average profit that is divided again into profit of enterprise and interest and can accrue under these two categories to different sorts of capitalist. This appropriation and distribution of surplus-value or surplus product by capital, however, meets with a barrier in landed property. Just as the functioning capitalist pumps out surplus labour from the worker, and thus surplus-value and surplus product in the form of profit, so the landowner pumps out a part of this surplus-value or surplus profit in turn from the capitalist in the form of rent, according to the laws developed earlier.

If we speak here therefore of profit as the share of surplus-value accruing to capital, what we mean is an average profit (equal to profit of enterprise plus interest) that is already less than the total profit by the deduction of rent; the deduction of rent is presupposed. Capital-profit (profit of enterprise plus interest) and ground-rent are thus nothing but particular components of the surplus-value; categories in which this surplus-value is distinguished according to whether it accrues to capital or landed