

The "Unknown" Marx's *Capital*, Volume I: The French Edition of 1872-75, 100 Years Later

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ABSTRACT: None of the existing English editions of Marx's *Capital*, Vol. I, including the new Ben Fowkes translation published by Penguin in 1976, fully incorporate the text as revised by the author for his 1872-75 French edition. These omitted or alternate texts cover the subjects of the role of private property in capitalism, alienation and unskilled factory work, capitalist crises, unemployment, and imperialism. Finally, the French edition of *Capital* is viewed briefly in the overall context of the writings of Marx's last decade, 1873-1883.

INTRODUCTION

The political-economic crises of the 1960s and 1970s have resulted in an explosion of Marx scholarship and translations of his work in the English-speaking world. This period has seen the transcription of the last writings from Marx's pen — *The Ethnological Notebooks* (Marx 1983) — and a new translation of Marx's *Capital* (Marx 1976). Naturally the new translation of *Capital* was supposed to have taken into consideration the authentic French translation which had been edited by Marx for publication in 1872-1875. Unfortunately, that is not true. Over 100 years after the publication of the German and French editions of *Capital*, Volume I, and after several different English translations, we still do not have in English (or apparently in any other language) the complete published text of *Capital*, Vol. I, as written for publication by Marx.

The text of *Capital*, Volume I, contains significant differences between the various editions; which have never to this day been resolved. Marx's first German edition (*Das Kapital*) was published in 1867, and the second edition, with some revisions, followed in 1873. The latest edition on which Marx worked and prepared for the printer was the French edition (*Le Capital*) of 1872-75, published in serial form. This edition contained the most extensive changes from the 1867 edition, and is to this day the standard text of the work in the French language.¹ After Marx's death, early in 1883, Engels first republished the 1873 German edition with a few changes from the French text. This was the third German edition of 1883. In 1890, after considerable editing, to combine the French edition with the earlier German editions, Engels issued the supposedly definitive fourth German edition. Since that time, with a few exceptions such as in France, that fourth German edition has been considered the official text accepted by most Marxists and Marx scholars for volume one of *Capital*. As long ago as the 1920s, the Russian editor Riazanov had planned a scholarly edition of *Capital* which would include each of the versions as written by Marx. To this day, such a version does not exist even in German, let alone

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English. Since the first English edition of 1886 (Marx 1909), which was translated with a few changes mainly from the third German edition of 1883, later English editions have stuck closely to the 1890 text established by Engels in the fourth German edition of 1890.² The newest Ben Fowkes translation is more complete in the sense that it follows Engels' fourth German edition even more faithfully than previous English editions. The only exceptions are where Fowkes follows later East German³ editions in incorporating, in a very few places, material from the French edition not used by Engels in 1890.

THE ENGELS EDITION

Despite the claim of the newest English translation by Ben Fowkes to have restored philosophical language omitted by Engels, Fowkes, in most respects, follows Engels slavishly and acts as if the task were to restore "whole sentences omitted by Engels (Marx 1976: 87)," for the English-speaking public. He does this by consulting, not the French edition edited by Marx, but only Engels' later fourth German edition as rendered with a few additions in the East German edition of *Capital*, Vol. I, in the *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 23. Fowkes takes this East German edition to be definitive and appears to translate innocently from it, without consulting the French edition directly. While he may thus include some passages not in previous English editions, he appears in his preface to view the French edition Marx edited as a mere "popularization."

As a result, we still end up with an incomplete English edition of *Capital*, Vol. I. This means that whole pages are left out of sections such as those from the chapter on "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation." In addition, there are many places where Marx's French text has alternate sentences or paragraphs for material included in the German editions. In many cases, these alternate texts appear to be later and more polished formulations, but in any case we do not have these alternative texts to compare. Finally, in a few cases, we lose phrases or sentences from the French edition (and presumably from Engels' editions) which had previously appeared in English. In every case I examined, Fowkes seemed to accept unquestioningly the East German edition. Since Fowkes must have made this decision in consultation with the editors at *New Left Review*, they would of course share the responsibility.

In citing a few examples of the rich differences in the French edition, we must never forget that the French edition was no mere translation. Not only did Marx, in editing it himself, make more precise many basic formulations but he greatly expanded some sections, especially the crucial section on Accumulation of *Capital*, as well as the most discussed section on the fetishism of commodities. As Raya Dunayevskaya (1982a: 100) argues:

In 1867, in the first edition of *Capital*, he singles out the commodity-form as the fetish. Even here, the main emphasis is on the *fantastic* form of appearance of production relations as exchange of things. It is only *after* the eruption of the Paris Commune that his French edition shifts the emphasis from the fantastic form of appearance to the *necessity* of that form of appearance because that is, *in truth*, what relations of people *are* at the point of production: "material relations between persons and social relations between things."⁴

In his own "Postface" to the French edition, Marx called attention to the

changes he made, singling out the sections on "Accumulation of Capital" and "Fetishism of Commodities" and concluding that the French edition "possesses a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers familiar with German (Marx 1976: 105)." Marx left with Engels the task of incorporating the changes from the French into a new German edition on which he was working at the time of his death. When Engels issued the fourth German edition in 1890 he said he had scrupulously followed Marx, and it was so accepted by the post-Marx Marxists and Marx scholars. But Engels was not only hampered in this task by his own earlier attitude and preference for the earlier German edition of 1867, but he did not in fact, incorporate all of Marx's changes. As he wrote after reading one chapter of the French in an 1873 letter to Marx:

Despite all my respect for the artistry with which it has been turned into elegant French, I'm very upset by this pretty chapter. . . It would be in my eyes a big mistake to take the French as the basis of the English translation. . . (Marx & Engels 1962b: 94)

Marx replied immediately to Engels that if he were to read "further" in the French text, he would find those parts that were "better than in German (Marx & Engels 1962b: 96)."

In the year before, Marx had given his view of this matter, in a letter to Danielson:

Even though the French edition. . . may be the work of someone quite knowledgeable in the two languages, he (the translator) often translated too literally. I was therefore compelled to edit anew, in French, whole passages which I wanted to make readable. . . Later it will be all the easier to translate the whole from French into English and the romance languages (Marx & Engels 1962b: 477).⁵

In the more than a century since the appearance of the French edition, it is these two sections on "Accumulation" and on "Fetishism of Commodities" which have become pivotal. Hilferding, Luxemburg, Lenin and Bukharin discussed the problem of imperialism after 1900, in part around the section on accumulation, while Lukacs and others since the 1920s have made the section on fetishism a central focus. These debates have intensified since the rise of a new Third World, as well as have the discussions around humanism and alienation touched off by the publication of the *1844 Manuscripts* and the *Grundrisse*.

Let us look at some specific passages in the section on Accumulation. An examination of the long chapter on "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation" reveals whole paragraphs and pages that have yet to be included in any English or German edition. Fowkes' translation does include one key paragraph from the French edition which has finally made its appearance in English, some 100 years after Marx first included it in the French edition of *Capital*. But it still appears as a *footnote* rather than within the text, as Marx had written it:

But only after the mechanical industry had struck root so deeply that it exerted a preponderant influence on the whole of national production; only after foreign trade began to predominate over internal trade, thanks to mechanical industry; only after the world market had successively annexed extensive areas of the New World, Asia and Australia; and finally, only after a sufficient number of industrial nations had

entered the arena — only after all this had happened can one date the repeated self-perpetuating cycles, whose successive phases embrace years, and always culminate in a general crisis, which is the end of one cycle and the starting-point of another . . . (Marx 1976: 786).

This paragraph, apparently unknown to the major theoreticians at the turn of the century, such as Rosa Luxemburg, might have contributed to the debate on imperialism. Here was Marx, directly in *Capital*, Vol. I, drawing a relationship between his crisis theory and the phenomenon of modern imperialism. It needs to be discussed in that light today.

THE FOWKES TRANSLATION

Apparently the rise of a new Third World and a half-century of debates over imperialism, by Marxists and non-Marxists, have finally forced this crucial paragraph into the English translation. It would appear, however, that even here Fowkes apparently includes it only because the “official” East German edition now also does so as a footnote. Had Fowkes examined the passages in the French edition directly, he would have noted, immediately, whole paragraphs and pages on the rise of unemployment and the effects of economic crisis on the working class. These statements are still not in the English (or German) editions of Volume I of *Capital*, even as footnotes. For example, Marx writes in that French edition:

We have just shown that the accumulation, which makes social capital grow, simultaneously reduces the relative size of its variable part and so diminishes the relative demand for labor. Now, what is the effect of this movement on the wage-earning class? (Marx 1963: 1141).

Marx continues for several pages to describe this “effect,” but none of this material is included in the English or German editions. While this material may not be as “new” as the paragraph cited above on the world market, surely it is worth having the full text in English so that readers could decide for themselves.

The entire deleted section from the French edition at this point would appear relevant to any discussion of unemployment, and it is evidence of Marx’s “updating” his work in order to make it more relevant to a French working class audience in 1875. In fact, it was during 1875 that Marx completed his, *Critique of the Gotha Program*. In the letter which accompanied this *Critique* to Germany, Marx wrote: “I shall be sending you in the near future the last parts of the French edition of *Capital*.”⁶

That Engels did not follow Marx as scrupulously as he thought he did is clear from the failure to include important and lengthy passages from the French section on Accumulation, as discussed earlier. Why this was the case is amazing since no other Marxist made such a prodigious and painstaking contribution. This can be seen from Vols. II and III of *Capital*, which Engels edited from Marx’s notebooks (after Marx’s death), as Marx had asked him to do.

But it is also true that no other Marxist nor non-Marxist was shown the page proofs of *Capital*, Vol. I, before its first publication in 1867. And while the

surviving letters between Marx and Engels in 1867 do show a great theoretic gulf between the two men, it is also clear that Engels was of some help in achieving a more "popular" presentation of the material. One fact of significance to the reader of their correspondence in this period is the very small extent to which Marx had a serious theoretic dialogue with *anyone* in the actual working out of *Capital*. For example, Engels wrote Marx upon reading the early part of Vol. I for the first time:

At most the points here arrived at dialectically might be set forth historically at some greater length. . . Compared with the earlier account (*The Critique of Political Economy* — KA) the progress in the sharpness of the dialectical development is very marked, but in the account itself I like many things better in the first wording (Engels to Marx, June 16, 1867, in, Marx & Engels 1975: 175).

Engels went on to ask Marx to answer "in advance" some capitalistic arguments over the source of value early in Vol. I (Engels to Marx, June 26, 1867, in, Marx & Engels 1975: 178); to which Marx replied:

If I were to cut short all such doubts in advance I would spoil the whole method of dialectical exposition. On the contrary, this method has the advantage of constantly setting traps for those fellows which provoke them to an untimely manifestation of their asininity (Marx to Engels, June 27, 1867, in, Marx & Engels 1975: 179).

A full year later, it was still necessary for Marx to write a lengthy letter to Engels on "the method by which the rate of profit is obtained" (Marx to Engels, April 30, 1868, in, Marx & Engels 1975: 191-195) on the manuscripts for Volumes II and III. Thus, while it is true that none were more aware of Marx's theoretical research than Engels, it is equally true that even Engels did not see the drafts of *Capital* until the work was ready for the publisher.

ALTERNATE TEXTS IN THE FRENCH EDITION OF *CAPITAL*, VOL. I

The Fowkes translation follows the German edition in several points where the French edition appears to offer a more fully dialectical or more developed view by Marx of the same problem. For example, in the concluding section on the "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation," the climax of the book, the English (and German) text contains the following description of independent artisan production in the precapitalist era: "The private property of the worker in his means of production is the *foundation* of small-scale industry (Marx 1976: 927)." By comparison, the French text has this artisan private property as the "*corollary* of small-scale industry (Marx 1963: 22; emphasis added)," a formulation which de-emphasizes the category of private property and which does not lend itself to economic determinist interpretations, presenting social relations more as a totality.

An important alternate text occurs in the section of the chapter on "Machinery and Modern Industry" entitled, "The Factory," which contains many descriptions of alienated labor in great detail. At one point the English (and German) edition states: "All work at a machine requires the worker to be taught from childhood upwards, in order that he may learn to adapt his own movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an automaton (Marx 1976:

546).” At this point the French text reads instead: “Any child learns very easily to adapt his movements to the continuous and uniform motion of the automaton (Marx 1963: 953).” This formulation from the French edition seems more in keeping both with the experiences of workers in modern capitalism and with Marx’s own statement a few sentences later (in all editions) that: “Lastly, the speed with which machine work is learnt by young people does away with the need to bring up a special class of worker for exclusive employment by industry.”

But the very next sentences are rendered again quite differently in the two texts. The English (and German) version appears to see some positive effects on the working class from modern machinery:

The work of those people who are merely attendants can, to some extent, be replaced in the factory by the use of machines. In addition to this, the very simplicity of the work allows a rapid and constant turnover of the individuals burdened with this drudgery (Marx 1976: 547).

Here the French text reads instead:

As to the jobs performed in the factory with simple operations, the machine can for the most part take their place and, because of their simplicity, these jobs permit the periodic and rapid turnover of the people performing them (Marx 1963: 954).

Here in the French edition the focus is on the freedom machinery gives the capitalist over the worker, and not on any possible benefit of machinery in ending drudgery in the work place and so forth. This French text, furthermore, seems more in keeping with the text as a whole at this point (although various interpretations could be made here, the point is that we should have these texts to compare). The footnote to the passage just cited has Marx quoting an official factory inspector’s report on machinery’s effects on workers who concludes that “perhaps self-acting mules are as dangerous as any other kind.” This comes after a description of accidents involving modern machinery.

None of these alternate texts from the French edition have yet appeared, even as footnotes, in any English edition of *Capital*, or anywhere in the editions of Marx’s works in English. The new Fowkes translation also carries its “literalness” in translating from the East German edition so far as to remove from the new English text several passages which had been in previous English editions as edited by Engels. These passages are found in the French edition. This is true of the famous phrase also in the above-cited section on “The Factory” where Marx comments on the boring and dehumanizing character of capitalist production by stating that modern machinery “deprives the work of all interest.”⁷ Here Fowkes gives us the word “content” rather than “interest,” making the whole passage more abstract, but dutifully following his East German “original.”⁸

Inexplicably, we also lose a whole sentence from the section on commodity fetishism: “The religious world is but the reflex of the real world.”⁹ The Fowkes translation removes this sentence completely, following once again the East German edition.

Perhaps most important of all, Marx introduced a major change in the French edition regarding the question of the “So-Called Primitive Accumulation,”

where Marx discusses the origin of capitalism in the expropriation of the peasantry. In all existing English and German editions, Marx writes: "The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process. . . Only in England, which we therefore take as our example, has it the classic form (Marx 1976: 876)."

However, in an 1877 letter published for many years in English, Marx, in discussing Russia, quotes instead the same passage from the French edition. It reads instead: "But the basis of this whole development is the expropriation of the peasants. England is so far the only country where this has been carried through completely. . . but all the countries of Western Europe are going through the same development."¹⁰ Here he makes clear in the text of *Capital* that he is already interested in the theme of a possible alternate development for Russia and other non-Western countries, a theme touched on in greater detail in his famous letter to Vera Zasulich. That 1881 letter states, after quoting the passage cited above from the French edition of *Capital*:

Thus the analysis given in *Capital* does not provide any arguments for or against the viability of the village community, but the special research into this subject which I conducted, and for which I obtained the material from original sources, has convinced me that this community is the fulcrum of Russia's social revival, but in order that it might function in this way one would first have to eliminate the destructive influences which assail it from every quarter and then to ensure the conditions normal for spontaneous development (Marx to Zasulich, March 8, 1881, in, Marx & Engels 1975: 320).

The alternate text from the French edition, included here in the letter to Zasulich, has not evoked much discussion or attention in the existing English translations of *Capital*, even though it is undoubtedly of great importance.

While all of these examples of still-untranslated texts and other apparently more developed formulations in the French edition are important in themselves, they must also be viewed in light of the attitude of the post-Marx Marxists, who, beginning with Mehring, behaved as if the last decade of Marx's life, 1873-1883, was nothing but a "slow death." The truth is exactly the opposite. On every question, from philosophy to revolutionary organization, from the so-called "woman question" to the latest economic and political developments, including colonialism, Marx was his most creative.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MARX'S LAST DECADE

The last decade of Marx's life was a tremendously productive period for him. While this period did see the decline and demise of the International Workingmen's Association, Marx had no such narrow concept of working class organization as to limit it to a formal party or association. As he wrote to an American friend, Sorge, years after the break-up of the International, in 1880: "Things are going splendidly on the whole (I mean by this the general development in Europe), as well as within the really revolutionary party on the Continent (Marx & Engels 1975: 312)." To Marx, seemingly, "the really revolutionary party" meant not any specific organization but the generalized movement of the self-emancipation of labor and those other groups, including revolutionary intellectuals, who embraced its cause.

A few months later, he and Engels made the following points in a declaration on the tenth anniversary of the Paris Commune:

. . . the Continental governments who after the fall of the Commune by their persecutions compelled the International Workingmen's Association to give up its formal, external organization. . . little did they think that ten years later that same International Labor Movement, more powerful than ever. . . would bind them together into a new and greater spontaneous International, outgrowing more and more all external forms of organization (Marx & Engels 1975: 321).

The last decade also saw the development of Marx's concept of organization in his famous *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875). Only with the belated (1972) publication of his *Ethnological Notebooks*, never before published in any language, have we been able to see the full extent of the deep theoretical probing into non-Western and primitive society, into relationships of peasant to worker, of man to woman; probings which characterize Marx's last decade.

We can see new attitudes toward colonialism and non-European society even in "personal" letters such as the one he wrote from Algiers to his daughter, Jenny Longuet in 1882, just a year before his death: "I wish that on a beautiful day I could waft Johnny (her son) over here with a magic cape; how my little darling would be amazed to see the Moors, the Arabs, Berbers, Turks, Negroes. . . and the costumes (most of them poetic) in this oriental world, mixed in with the 'civilized' French (and so forth) and the tedious British (Marx & Engels 1962c: 296)."

But these new ideas were hardly kept only for private notebooks and letters. Suddenly he gave a very new and interesting theoretical answer to Russian Marxists who thought the only, the "inevitable," way was that Russia follow the developments outlined in *Capital*, Vol. I, rather than possibly passing in a different way toward a new socialist society from out of their agrarian commune. He wrote his answer not only in his famous letter to Vera Zasulich, but in the 1882 Preface to a new Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto*:

Now the question is: can the Russian obschina, though greatly undermined, yet a form of the primeval common ownership of land, pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership? Or on the contrary, must it first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West? . . . If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development (Marx & Engels 1971: 132).

For whatever reason, either the apparently "controversial" character of these statements to established Marxism, or the fact that until the publication of the *Ethnological Notebooks*, in 1972, they could be passed off, together with the letters, as "isolated" statements rather than central ones, that 1882 Preface to the *Communist Manifesto* is only rarely printed in English editions of that work. This fact is even more important when we realize that the Russian Preface was not merely about Russia. It also contained considerable discussion on United States economic development and agrarian relations. It is high time for Marx scholars to grapple with the whole of Marx's works; the last decade just as

much as the young Marx of the 1840s or the "mature" Marx of the *Grundrisse* and the 1867 edition of *Capital*.

In getting these full texts of Marx's last writings into English, including the whole of *Capital*, Vol. I, as written in the French and German editions, we should avoid the pitfall of treating Marx and Engels as the same person, or a single entity as is so common in the literature. They were two different people and two different theoreticians with different views on many subjects. Compare for example the striking differences between Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* and Engels' popularization of parts of them in the form of the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.¹¹

Presumably, it has been this tendency to view Marx and Engels as the same person which has prevented or discouraged scholars from comparing the various editions of *Capital*, Volume I, since after all, "Engels himself" put together the supposedly definitive fourth German edition. If they had done so we might by now have a full text in English. If we refuse any longer to accept Engels' editing as invariably definitive, still less should we accept that of the Moscow or East Berlin editors. It is not a question of nitpicking, but of getting the full text of *Capital*, Vol. I, finally into English.

NOTES

1. For Marx's French edition of *Capital*, I am using the text edited by Rubel (Cf. Marx 1963). This does not mean I agree with Rubel's editing of Marx, especially of Vols. II and III, or with his interpretations. For my critique of Rubel, see Anderson (1982).
2. See for example Marx (1967).
3. For the East German edition of *Das Kapital*, I have used Marx & Engels (1962a).
4. See also her discussion of commodity fetishism presented in a debate with Jean-Paul Sartre in Dunayevskaya (1982b).
5. This letter is dated, 28 May 1872.
6. Marx & Engels (1975: 279). This letter, from Marx to Bracke, is dated, 5 May 1875.
7. Marx (1909: 462). See also, the French edition on this (Marx 1963: 956).
8. Marx (1976: 548). For the German version, see Marx & Engels (1962a: 446).
9. This had appeared in Marx (1909: 91) and in, Marx (1967: 79). It still appears in the French edition, Marx (1963: 613).
10. Marx & Engels (1975: 293). This draft of a letter to the Russian journal *Otechestvennive Zapiski*, dated November 1877, was never sent. For this text in the French edition of *Capital*, see Marx (1963: 1170-1171). This point was first brought to my attention by a Japanese scholar's important article on Marx and Russia, see Wada (1981). See also the article by Shanin (1981), which discusses why Russian Marxists ignored this type of material.
11. This difference between Marx and Engels is developed in Dunayevskaya (1982c). See also, Hudis (1983). For a good critique of another myth, Marx's supposed co-authorship of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, see Carver (1980).

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