

Uncovering Marx's Yet Unpublished Writings

Kevin B. Anderson

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When Lawrence Krader published his historic transcription of Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* 25 years ago, a new window was opened into Marx's thought. What in published form had become 250 pages of notes by Marx on Lewis Henry Morgan and other anthropologists which he had compiled in his last years, 1880-81, showed us as never before a Marx concerned as much with gender relations and with non-Western societies such as India, pre-Colombian Mexico, and the Australian aborigines, as well as ancient Ireland, as he was with the emancipation of the industrial proletariat.

As will be shown below, to this day there are a significant number of writings by Marx on these and other issues which have never been published in any language. Why this is still the case in 1997, 114 years after Marx's death, is the subject of this essay, in which I will also take up plans now in progress in Europe to publish many of these writings for the first time.

The problem really begins with Engels and continues today. While Engels labored long and hard to edit and publish what he considered to be a definitive edition of Vol. I of *Capital* in 1890, and brought out Vols. II and III of that work in 1885 and 1894 by carefully editing and arranging Marx's draft manuscripts, Engels did not plan or even propose the publication of the whole of Marx's writings. Under the post-Engels Second International, little more was done.

The First MEGA: After 1917 and Before Stalinism

It took the Russian Revolution of 1917 to break the impasse. With the strong encouragement and financial backing of Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership, the great Marx scholar David Riazanov and his colleagues began the first Marx-Engels *Gesamtausgabe* (Complete Works - hereafter MEGA1) in the Soviet Union in the early 1920s.

Since the anti-Bolshevik Second International still owned the manuscripts and letters of Marx and Engels, the newly established Frankfurt School's Director, Carl Gruenberg, who had relations with both Communists and Socialists, became the go-between. It was the Frankfurt School's staff who agreed formally to photocopy for Riazanov's Moscow-based Marx-Engels Institute most of the SI's Marx-Engels archives "with a complete record of all peculiarities and special characteristics of the originals which cannot be

recorded by photography." [ftn: Cited in Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School* (MIT Press, 1994), p. 30.]

Riazanov established a far-reaching plan for MEGA1, part of which was actually published during the years 1928-35. He divided MEGA1 into three series, each of which was to contain writings in the original language in which Marx or Engels had written them, usually German, English, or French [ftn: Some background in English on this is provided by Hal Draper in an appendix to his *Marx-Engels Register* (Schocken, 1985), and a much fuller account is given by Maximilien Rubel in the "Avertissement" (Preface) to his edition of Marx's *Oeuvres. Politique*. I(Paris: Gallimard, 1994).] as well as a rigorous scholarly apparatus of footnotes, prefaces, etc.:

Series I. Philosophical, Economic, Historical, and Political Works. MEGA1 eventually published eight volumes of this series covering the years up to 1850, including most notably the 1844 *Humanist Essays* and the *German Ideology*, neither of which had been published by Engels or the Second International. In fact, Riazanov had first published a Russian translation of the *Humanist Essays* in 1927.

Series II. *Capital* and other economic manuscripts. This series was to include all editions of Vol. I of *Capital* as Marx wrote them or Engels edited them, from the first German edition of 1867, to the last which Marx prepared for the printer, the 1872-75 French edition, to Engels' "definitive" fourth German edition of 1890. It was also to include Vols. II and III as edited by Engels, the original manuscripts for those volumes, plus other texts such as the *Grundrisse* and *Theories of Surplus Value*. None of this series of MEGA1 was published, although the *Grundrisse* eventually appeared as a separate volume in 1939-41.

Series III. Letters from and to Marx and Engels. Only four volumes were actually published, covering all known letters of Marx and Engels to each other from 1844 to 1883, but not letters to or from third parties.

Marx's Excerpt Notebooks Left Out of First MEGA

For all his commitment to publishing the whole of Marx, even Riazanov rejected the idea of publishing one type of writing by Marx, his excerpt notebooks, texts such as the *Ethnological Notebooks* in which Marx had copied extracts from, summarized, and commented on many of the various texts he had studied throughout his life.

In a 1923 report on his plans for MEGA1 to Moscow's Socialist Academy, a report which was also published in Germany the following year by Frankfurt School Director Gruenberg, Riazanov referred to a fourth or "final group" of Marx's writings, "the notebooks," which he indicated would be of use mainly to Marx biographers. He mentioned in particular "three thick

notebooks on the economic crisis of 1857..., a chronological survey of world history up to the middle of the seventeenth century" as well as "some mathematical notebooks." He made an exception for the latter, which was apparently slated for publication.

But, in a surprising outburst of condescension toward Marx, this usually rigorous Marx editor added: "If in 1881-82 he lost his ability for intensive, independent intellectual creation, he nevertheless never lost the ability for research. Sometimes, in reconsidering these Notebooks, the question arises: Why did he waste so much time on this systematic, fundamental summary, or expend so much labor as he spent as late as the year 1881, on one basic book on geology, summarizing it chapter by chapter. In the 63rd year of his life -- that is inexcusable pedantry. Here is another example: he received, in 1878, a copy of Morgan's work. On 98 pages of his very miniscule handwriting (you should know that a single page of his is the equivalent of a minimum of 2.2 pages of print) he makes a detailed summary of Morgan. In such manner does the old Marx work." This attitude helps explain why Marx's notebooks were not slated to appear in MEGA1. [ftn: Most of these citations from Riazanov's report can be found in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (Humanities Press, 1982), pp. 177-78. For the full report in German, see Riazanov's "Neueste Mitteilungen ueber den literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels," *Archiv fuer die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. 11 (1924), pp. 385-400. Raya was to my knowledge the first person to publicize and critique Riazanov's attitude toward the excerpt notebooks. As she pointed out, in his edition of the *Ethnological Notebooks*, even Krader had held back from mentioning Riazanov's dismissive attitude to the excerpt notebooks.]

By the late 1920s, Riazanov, this century's greatest Marx archivist and editor, began to feel the heavy hand of Stalin's regime. In 1931, Stalin had him arrested and deported to a forced labor camp, where he was executed in 1938. MEGA1 ceased to appear in 1935, it too having become a victim of Stalinism. Publication of Marx's mathematical manuscripts, already edited by the young German mathematician Julius Gumbel (who had been recommended by Einstein) and even set in proofs by 1927, did not appear until 1968. [ftn: In Stalinist style, that 1968 edition did not even mention Gumbel - see Annette Vogt, "Emil Julius Gumbel (1891-1966): der erste Herausgeber der mathematischen Manuscripte von Karl Marx," *MEGA-Studien* No. 2 (1995), pp. 26-41. See also R. Brokmeyer, F. Dmitryev, and R. Dunayevskaya, *The Fetish of High Tech and Marx's Unknown Mathematical Manuscripts* (N&L, 1985).]

The Marx-Engels Collected Works

Riazanov also developed a plan for a somewhat more popularized *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, which was eventually published in Russian

during the years 1928-46. This edition became the basis for the German Marx-Engels *Werke* (1956-68) as well as other single language editions such as the English language Marx-Engels *Collected Works* (1975f, hereafter MECW), which has been appearing since 1975. Taking the MECW as our example, we find that this edition also has three parts.

- I. Vols. 1-27 include Marx's and Engels' published and unpublished books, articles, and manuscripts. These have all appeared.
- II. Vols. 28-35 are Marx's major economic writings, all of which except Vols. II and III of *Capital* have appeared.
- III. Vols. 38-49 are the letters of Marx and Engels. All but Vols. 48 and 49, letters of Engels after 1885, have appeared.

Like all Stalinist editions, MECW has serious omissions as well as other problems. The prefaces and explanatory notes are often dogmatic and sometimes misleading. Divergences between Marx and Engels are covered over. Their sharp attacks on the Russian Empire's territorial ambitions, and their strong support for anti-Russian freedom fighters such as the Poles and the Chechens are sometimes concealed, or even ascribed to errors by Marx or Engels.

But the biggest problem with MECW and similar editions is that they are not a MEGA. For example, we do not get to see the whole of Marx's *Capital*, Vol. I, especially the 60 pages left out by Engels (see below), or the process by which Marx changed and developed it through its various editions.

Rubel's Marx *Oeuvres*

During the long years from the 1930s to 1989 when Stalinist Russia and East Germany exercised a near monopoly over publishing Marx's collected writings, in no small part because of the stinginess of academia and the labor bureaucracy in the West, French Marxologist Maximilien Rubel's independent editions, chronologies, and biographies of Marx offered a libertarian alternative, albeit on a smaller scale.

In 1952, Rubel co-authored an attack on the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow for its "silence" regarding "the fate of Riazanov and his enterprise," adding that Stalin "could not tolerate the publication in its entirety of an oeuvre that stigmatized his despotism via the merciless struggle waged by Marx and Engels against police states: those of Louis Napoleon, of Prussia, of tsarism." [ftn: Rubel and Bracke-Desrousseaux, "L'Occident doit a Marx et a Engels une edition monumentale de leurs oeuvres," *La Revue socialiste*, No. 59, July 1952, pp. 13-114.]

A decade later, Rubel, who by then had gained financing from a French academic institute, began to issue his Marx *Oeuvres* with the imprint of the

prestigious Paris publisher Gallimard. From 1963 to 1994, four volumes, each containing about 1500 pages of Marx and 500 pages of Rubel's scholarly prefaces and footnotes have appeared. At his death last year, Rubel was working on the remaining two volumes he had planned. Unlike in Stalinist editions, differences between Marx and Engels are noted, especially with regard to *Capital*.

However Rubel's commentary is often marred by a virulent anti-Hegelianism. [ftn: See my "Rubel's Marxology: A Critique," *Capital & Class*, No. 47 (Summer 1992), pp. 67-91]. In addition, as a Marx editor, Rubel too was opposed to publishing the excerpt notebooks. Just before his death he gave a revealing response to an interviewer's question on whether we could expect to see any important new material from Marx in the coming years: "Frankly, I do not believe so. Riazanov only wanted to publish forty volumes quite simply because he thought it useless to publish the whole of the excerpt notebooks (more than two hundred!). These Notebooks are no more than simple copies, often without personal observations, of what he was reading. For Marx was an obsessive reader." [ftn: See Nicolas Weill, "Un penseur du XXe siecle et non du XIXe. Un entretien avec Maximilien Rubel," *Le Monde des Livres*, Sept. 29, 1995, p. viii.]

The Second MEGA: Before and After 1989

In 1975, a second MEGA (hereafter MEGA2) was begun from Moscow and East Berlin. In pure Stalinist style, the editors made no reference to the pioneering work of Riazanov, their illustrious martyred predecessor. As with MECW and other similar editions, the prefaces and notes had a dogmatic character, although the actual editing of Marx's texts was quite meticulous.

After the collapse of Communism in 1989-91, MEGA2's funding disappeared, but today, after a struggle, it is receiving new funding from German and Dutch foundations. While the funding is much more limited than before 1989, and the edition has been slightly scaled back, editorial control has now passed to a varied group of mainly Western Marx scholars. The present MEGA2's outside Scientific Advisory Board includes internationally known figures such as Schlomo Avineri, Iring Fetscher, Eric Hobsbawm, Eugene Kamenka, Maximilien Rubel (who resigned just before his death), and Immanuel Wallerstein. Overall editorial control is in the hands of the International Marx-Engels Foundation, an affiliate of the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, which houses most of Marx's papers, while editing groups are functioning in Germany, Russia, and France.

MEGA2 includes four series, the fourth one being Marx's and Engels' excerpt notebooks [ftn: For a good summary of the present state of MEGA2, see Jacques Grandjonc and Juergen Rojahn, "Aus der MEGA-Arbeit. Der

revidierte Plan der Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe," *MEGA-Studien* No. 2 (1995), pp. 62-89. *MEGA-Studien* (c/o IISG, Cruquiusweg 31, 1019 AT Amsterdam), established in 1994, is an international multi-lingual journal of discussion and debate on the history and future of MEGA. Another forum for debate and information on MEGA is the yearly *Beitrage fuer Marx-Engels-Forschung* (c/o Rolf Hecker, Ribbecker Str. 3, 10315 Berlin.):

Series I. Works, Articles, and Drafts. Of 32 volumes now planned, 15 have appeared. Especially notable in this series is Vol. I/2, which includes Marx's 1844 *Humanist Essays*. Here, for the first time, two versions of these manuscripts are published, the one as established by MEGA1 with which we are familiar, and a new version, this one rougher in form but closer to the original. Interestingly, in the first 10 pages of the new version, Marx is on the same pages writing three essays at once, in separate vertical columns. Later on, we can see that what we know today as the "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" was composed in at least two parts, with the part on Feuerbach separated from the text in which Marx extols "the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle" of Hegel's *Phenomenology* (p. 292).

Series II. Marx's Major Economic Writings. Of 15 volumes now planned, 10 have been published. Significantly, what has already been published includes all the editions of Vol. I of *Capital* which either Marx or Engels prepared for publication. Especially important here is Vol. II/10, a reprint of Engels' 1890 fourth German edition, but with an important addition, an appendix which gathers together 60 pages of text, much of it very significant, from Marx's 1872-75 French edition of Vol. I. This material was not included by Engels in Vol. I, and has yet to appear in standard German or English editions of Vol. I. [Ftn: For a discussion of Vol. II/10, see my "On the Relevance of Marx's *Capital*: Why Is the Full Text as He Wrote It Unavailable?", *News & Letters*, October 1992.]

Series III. Correspondence. Of 35 volumes now planned, 8 volumes covering years through 1857 have been published. Since MEGA2 includes letters to Marx, there are some interesting items, one of which bears on the epigraph from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* with which Marx began his 1841 doctoral dissertation on Epicurus and Democritus:

Better to be a servant of this rock

Than to be a faithful boy of father Zeus (MECW 1, p. 31)

Having apparently read the dissertation, Marx's friend the Left Hegelian Bauer, who was already a university lecturer, wrote advising him:

"You must under no circumstances include those lines from Aeschylus in your dissertation, and above all nothing which goes beyond the bounds of

philosophical development" (letter of April 12, 1841). Bauer was evidently worried that Marx would never get a university position if he included those now famous lines on Prometheus. Unfortunately Marx's response has not been preserved, but those lines were, as we know, kept in the thesis.

Series IV. Excerpt Notebooks. Of 32 volumes now planned, 7 have been published. Here what is most exciting are the notebooks which have never appeared in print. Although Marx's *Notes on Bakunin's "Statehood and Anarchy"*, and the *Notes on Adolph Wagner* are in MECW, and the *Ethnological Notebooks*, the *Notes on Indian History, 664-1858*, and the *Mathematical Manuscripts* have been published separately, many new discoveries await us here.

While the actual contents of the new material in Series IV can today be studied in the archives only by those who can overcome the obstacle of Marx's very difficult handwriting, a look at the topics of the excerpt notebooks, most of which will hopefully be published in the coming years, reveals the following: (1) notes in 1853 and 1880-81 on Java, (2) 1852 notes on the history of women and gender relations, (3) many notes from the 1870s and 1880s on agriculture in Russia plus some on prairie farming in the U.S., (4) notes on Ireland from the 1860s, (5) notes on agriculture in Roman and Carolingian times, (6) a massive chronology of world history. Once these materials are published in the original language (Marx's later notebooks are often a combination of English and German), they can be translated into English and other languages in more accessible editions.

Vol. IV/6 containing Marx's 900-page 1846-47 notebooks on the worldwide history of agriculture and trade from the earliest times to the present has already been published, and we will reportedly also soon see in print Vol. IV/3 with his notebooks from 1844.

For the first time since the 1920s, a major edition of Marx's work is being published under auspices other than those of Stalinism. Raya Dunayevskaya once referred to the "incredible time, energy, and vigilance" which the Russian state-capitalist regime expended to "imprison Marx within the bounds" of its ideology. [ftn: Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom. From 1776 until Today* (Bookman, 1958), p. 63]. That period is now over, although as Marx wrote in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (MECW 11, p. 103).

Today, with the collapse of Communism, some great new possibilities have opened up for editions of Marx's work, for Marx scholarship, and, most importantly, for concretizing Marx's multi-dimensional philosophy of "revolution in permanence" (MECW 10, p. 287) as ground for a total uprooting of today's retrogressive capitalist reality. Will the present generation be able to seize the moment?