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The Paris Commune and Karl Marx's *Le capital*

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Few books on political economy have become as influential as Capital, volume 1. After Karl Marx, in 1867, published the first volume of Capital on the capitalist mode of production, the book was published again in Russian in 1872, in a second German edition in 1872–3 and in French—as Le capital—in 1872–5. The publishing process of the French edition started in December 1871 in the wake of the Paris Commune. This article aims to investigate the conditions that led to the initiation of this process. We specifically argue that by looking at the Paris Commune and its aftermath, we are in a better position to understand the new possibilities it created for publishing Marx's work in French, the connections it facilitated, and the way it shaped the publishing process of Le capital.

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Few books on political economy have become as influential as *Capital*, volume 1. This central piece in Karl Marx's published scholarly work has become crucial to understanding not only Marx's intellectual activities, but also how these related to his political endeavors and private life. In addition to an analysis and interpretation of the content of this work, studies have reconstructed the history of its publication, which includes four different editions in Marx's lifetime. After Marx, in 1867, published the first volume of *Capital* on the capitalist mode of production, the book was published again in Russian in 1872, in a second German edition in 1872–3 and in French—as *Le capital*—in 1872–5. The other volumes (i.e. 2 and 3), the third and fourth editions, and the English edition were released posthumously.¹

¹The three volumes *Theorien über den Mehrwert: Aus dem nachgelassenen Manuskript "zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie" von Karl Marx* (Stuttgart, 1905–1910) are sometimes called volume 4. Rosdolsky-Kreis, *Mit permanenten Grüßen: Leben und Werk von Emmy und Roman Rosdolsky* (Vienna, 2017), 388; Rolf Hecker, "Nikolaj F. Daniel'son und die russische Kapital-Übersetzung," *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung, Neue Folge* (2012), 135–47; Albert Resis, "Das Kapital Comes to Russia," *Slavic Review* 29/2 (1970), 219–37; Kevin Anderson, "On the MEGA and the French Edition of Capital, Vol. I: An Appreciation and a Critique," *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung, Neue Folge* (1997), 131–6. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band. Buch I: Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals* (Hamburg, 1867), Fe 4873-1ca> (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) and International Institute of Social History (hereafter IISH) D 1182/1K; Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band. Buch I: Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals: Zweite verbesserte Auflage* (Hamburg, 1872), Fe 4874-1 (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) and IISH D 1182/2K; Marx, *Le capital par Karl Marx (traduction de M. J. Roy, entièrement révisée par l'auteur)* (Paris, 1875), IST 9904 (Sapienza Università di Roma, Scienze Giuridiche—Filosofia del Diritto).

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The French edition of this work has been, for the most part, unnoticed, and its history underexplored. However, *Le capital*, published in forty-four instalments arranged in series, has an important place in the academic work of Marx.² In the “Avis au lecteur,” or reader’s notice, of *Le capital*, dated 28 April 1875, Marx wrote, “Whatever the literary imperfections of this French edition, it has a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers familiar with the German language.”³ Moreover, Marx highlighted there that he had changed parts of the text (simplifications and additions) compared to the second German edition, and, in a title page of the French edition published in the first instalment on 17–18 September 1872, he states that this edition is a complete reworking of volume 1.⁴

Le capital, in fact, contains differences compared to the two German editions that Marx published. In the “Nachwort” or afterword to the second German edition, dated 24 January 1873 and published in May 1873, Marx thus communicated the importance of the French edition to the German reader: “Nevertheless, in revising the French translation published in Paris, I now find that some parts of the German original would have required more thorough reworking here, greater stylistic correction there, or even more careful elimination of occasional oversights.”⁵

Through an examination of the (political) context of the publishing process of *Le capital* (i.e. the writing, translating, editing, and printing of the work) and how this aligned with Marx’s network of contacts, this article aims to investigate the conditions that led to the initiation of this process. We specifically argue that by looking at the Paris Commune and its aftermath, we are in a better position to understand the new possibilities it created for publishing Marx’s work in French, the connections it facilitated, and the way it shaped the publishing process of *Le capital*. Although studies have concentrated on the extent to which the Paris

²The contract concerning the publication of *Le capital*, concluded between Karl Marx and Maurice La Châtre’s company (dated 13 Feb. 1872) states, “à 2 Colannes et à dix centimes la livraison de huit pages de texte.” See Annex I in François Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital: Une correspondance inédite entre Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels et l’éditeur Maurice Lachâtre* (Mont-Saint-Aignan, 2019), 178–9. Gaudin’s book contains printed colour scans of primary sources. Jacques D’Hondt, “La traduction tendancieuse du Capital par Joseph Roy,” in Georges Labica, ed., *1883–1983: L’œuvre de Marx, un siècle après* (Paris, 1985), 131–7; Jacques Bidet, “Traduire en allemand ‘Le capital,’” in *ibid.*, 139–45.

³Marx, *Le capital*, 348: “Quelles que soient donc les imperfections littéraires de cette édition française, elle possède une valeur scientifique indépendante de l’original et doit être consultée même par les lecteurs familiers avec la langue allemande.”

⁴See Marx, *Le capital*, title page, “entièrement révisée par l’auteur.” See also New York Public Library, Karl Marx to Friedrich A. Sorge, 21 June 1872, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Werke* (hereafter *MEW*), 44 vols. to date (Berlin, 1956–), 33: 491–3; *Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx: Correspondence* (hereafter *Corr.*), 13 vols. to date (Paris, 1971–), 12: 144–6; *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works* (hereafter *CW*), 50 vols. (Moscow, 1975–2004), 44: 398–400; Friedrich A. Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen von Joh. Phil. Becker, Jos. Dietzgen, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx u. A. an F. A. Sorge und Andere* (Stuttgart, 1906), 59–62; IISH D 2821, Maurice La Châtre to Karl Marx, 19 Oct. 1872, *Corr.*, 12: 418–19; IISH D 4378, Just Vernouillet to Karl Marx, 18 Sept. 1872.

⁵Marx, *Das Kapital: Zweite verbesserte Auflage*, 813–14: “Dennoch finde ich jetzt bei Revision der zu Paris erscheinenden französischen Uebersetzung, dass manche Theile des deutschen Originals hier mehr durchgreifende Umarbeitung, dort grössere stylistische Korrektur oder auch sorgfältigere Beseitigung gelegentlicher Versehen erheischt hätten.” See number 108, 12 May 1873, of the *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel und die mit ihm verwandten Geschäftszweige* on the ninth instalment of the second German edition (p. 1738).

Commune influenced the content of Marx's work and on the existence of a "French Marx" who adapted his work to French audiences, less research has focused on understanding the circumstances connected to the Paris Commune under which this French edition came to exist.⁶

The French edition of *Capital* involved many people in the publishing process, which required a coordinated effort across national borders.⁷ After the contract between Maurice La Châtre's company and Marx dated 13 February 1872 was signed, work was further divided between geographically separated individuals in Western Europe, with the aim of publishing a French translation of *Capital*. The nature of this endeavor required the involvement of various people, such as Marx (the author, residing in London), Joseph Roy (the translator, living in Bordeaux), La Châtre (the refugee editor, living consecutively in Spain, Belgium, and Switzerland), and Just Vernouillet (working for the editor's company in Paris). Additionally, relatives and friends of Marx (e.g. Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, Laura Marx, and Charles Longuet) participated to some extent in the publishing of this edition.

This article focuses on reconstructing the start of the publishing process of *Le capital*. It specifically describes events that were foundational to the French edition of *Capital* in the period from the end of November 1871 until the signing of the publishing contract in February 1872. Although Marx had the intention of publishing a French edition of *Capital* before the events of the Paris Commune in 1871, we show in section I that the revolutionary context of the Commune helped to enable the publication of a second German and a French edition of volume I of the work. After the Paris Commune, the context favoured the author's intention to publish a French edition of his work on political economy. In section II, we show that, in the wake of the Paris Commune, the initial stage of the process of publishing *Le capital* ended with the preparation and signing of a contract between Marx and La Châtre's company in February 1872. The contents of this contract were vague, however, given the changed political context in France, an editor in exile and thus unable to be present at his company, and other geographical obstacles. In section III, we further discuss the implications of the Paris Commune for the publishing process of *Le capital*. We argue that the circumstances helped Marx to publish his work but also created obstacles. Although the focus of this article is on the starting phase of the publishing process, we argue that this phase has implications for understanding how the process

⁶Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom* (Delhi, 2013), Ch. 6; Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London and Brooklyn, 2016), Ch. 3. Julia Nicholls, *Revolutionary Thought after the Paris Commune, 1871–1885* (Cambridge, 2019), 149–78.

⁷François Gaudin, "Traduire sous l'étouffoir: Maurice Lachâtre et l'édition française du Capital," in Alix Bouffard, Alexandre Feron, and Guillaume Fondu, eds., *Le capital livre 1: Présentation, commentaires et documents* (Paris, 2018), 17–41; Marx–Engels Gesamtausgabe, *Le capital Paris 1872–1875* (hereafter MEGA² II.7) (Berlin, 1989); François Gaudin, *Maurice Lachâtre, éditeur socialiste (1814–1900)* (Limoges, 2014); Émile Bottigelli, "La première édition française du 'capital'," *Cahiers de l'institut Maurice Thorez* 28 (1972), 12–31; Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, *Le capital livre 1: Traduction de la 4e édition allemande entièrement révisée par Jean-Pierre Lefebvre avec un nouvel avant-propos* (Paris, 2016); Werner Krause, "Zur Vorgeschichte der französischen Ausgabe des ersten Bandes des 'Kapitals' von 1872 bis 1875," *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung* 20 (1986), 20–33. The second German edition had an editor in Hamburg (Meissner) and a printer in Leipzig (Wigand) while Marx was in England (see also below). "Druck von Otto Wigand in Leipzig," in Marx, *Das Kapital: Zweite verbesserte Auflage*, 830.

would further unfold and the involvement of Marx's networks of contacts in publishing this edition. It also serves as an illustration of Marx's working process.

The historiography on the publication of the French edition is mainly made up of French and German works by Émile Bottigelli, the Marx–Engels–Gesamtausgabe (MEGA²), Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, François Gaudin, and Laurent Baronian and Nicolas Rieucan.⁸ The history of *Le capital* was mostly written in the twentieth century and was limited to the available sources that allowed a partial reconstruction of the publishing process. In 2019 and 2020, additional and hitherto unknown primary sources directly related to the publication of the French edition were disclosed.⁹ These additions, and other primary sources that tend to be underutilized in (historical) studies of Marx's work, such as correspondence with relatives (e.g. from August Philips on the publishing contract) and other contacts (e.g. from the German editor Otto Meissner), open up new possibilities to investigate Marx's and other people's involvement in *Le capital*.

We will build on these works to further reconstruct the history of the starting phase of this edition, making use of (un)published German, French, and English letters, biographical testimonies and other documents of the period, including primary sources in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (IISH, e.g. the Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Papers), the Russian State Archive of Sociopolitical History in Moscow (RGASPI), the Public Library in New York, the Paul Lafargue archive in Paris and the British Library in London.

I

In the context of the 1871 Commune, when revolutionaries took over Paris, Marx gained international prominence as “the best calumniated and the most menaced man of London.”¹⁰ He was described, for example, in the *Chicago Tribune* of 3 June 1871 as one of “the real leaders of the Commune.”¹¹ The International, too, attracted public attention. During the meetings of the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA), Marx declared that in the French, Swiss, and German press “the International was made the general scapegoat for all untoward events.”¹² “Slanders against the Commune and against the International” became a discussion topic of these meetings of the IWMA, which

⁸Bottigelli, “La première édition française du ‘capital,’” 12–31; Marx–Engels Gesamtausgabe, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band Hamburg 1872* (MEGA² II.6) (Berlin, 1987); MEGA² II.7; Lefebvre, *Le capital livre 1*; Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*; Laurent Baronian and Nicolas Rieucan, “Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital,” *Cahiers d'économie politique* 2/78 (2020), 7–26. See also Anna Uroyeva, *For All Time and All Men* (Moscow, 1969), 124–80.

⁹Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*; Baronian and Rieucan, “Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital,” 7–26.

¹⁰IISH C 132, Karl Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 18 June 1871; *Corr.*, 11: 217–18; *MEW*, 33: 238; *CW*, 44: 157–8; Karl Marx, *Briefe an Kugelmann* (Berlin, 1952), 126–31.

¹¹*Chicago Tribune*, 3 June 1871; IISH B 86 (Hermann Jung papers); Marx–Engels Gesamtausgabe, *Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe, März bis November 1871* (hereafter MEGA² I.22) (Berlin, 1978), 544–6; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1964), 182–6 (meeting of the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association, 2 May 1871).

¹²IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 521–4; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 157–62 (21 March 1871).

also discussed responses to counteract claims (see the meetings of 21 March, 13 June, and 20 June 1871).¹³

The publication of *The Civil War in France* (hereafter *Civil War*) in mid-June 1871 as an “address of the general council of the international working-men’s association” concerning the events of the Paris Commune was well received, with a third English edition and translations already in 1871 (e.g. in German).¹⁴ Already near the end of June and July 1871 there was a need for more editions of the text.¹⁵ It was a document that Marx wanted “to circulate ... as widely as possible among the Working Class.”¹⁶

Marx was not named as the author on the front page of the three English editions of the *Civil War*. However, in the *Daily News* of 23 June 1871, a text from the IWMA assigned the authorship of the *Civil War* to Marx: “The address, like many previous publications of the Council [i.e. of the IWMA], was drawn up by the corresponding secretary for Germany, Dr. Karl Marx, was adopted unanimously, and revised by nobody.”¹⁷ Before this address came out, Marx was identified as “the grand chef of the International,” and authorship of the *Civil War* could therefore also be assumed by readers.¹⁸

In the year of the Commune, before any contact was made with La Châtre as editor of a French edition of *Capital*, a second German edition of the book became necessary. As we will show, this version would be important for the French edition, as it would be used for the French translation.

On 28 November 1871, Marx heard from the editor of *Das Kapital*, Meissner, that a new edition of the book—i.e. the second edition—was needed since few copies of the first German edition were still available.¹⁹ The sales of the first German

¹³Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 204–8 (6 June 1871); IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 521–4, 559–61, 562–4, 565–7; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 157–62, 209–15, 216–21.

¹⁴British Library, Add MS 38075, IISH C 136, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel’son, 13 June 1871, MEW, 33: 231–2; CW, 44: 152–3; *Corr.*, 11: 210–11; IISH D VIII 12, Edward Truelove to Karl Marx (15 June 1871). In series in *Der Volksstaat: Organ der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei und der Internationalen Gewerksgenossenschaften* 52–61 (28 June 1871–29 July 1871); see also CW, 22; Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working-Men’s Association. First and Second and Third Edition, Revised* (High Holborn, 1871); Mary Gabriel, *Love and Capital: Karl and Jenny Marx and the Birth of a Revolution* (New York, Boston, and London, 2011); IISH K 420, Friedrich Engels to Wilhelm Liebknecht, 22 June 1871, MEW, 33: 239–41; CW, 44: 159–61; *Corr.*, 11: 222–4; IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 576–9; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 18 July 1871, 234–40.

¹⁵IISH B 86, meetings of the General Council of the International Workingmen’s Association, 27 June 1871, 25 July 1871; MEGA² I.22, 568–9, 580–84; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 221–6 and 240–5.

¹⁶IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 568–9; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 221–6, 27 June 1871.

¹⁷*Daily News*, 23 June 1871, 6; MEGA² I.22, 229, 568–9; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 221–6, 27 June 1871.

¹⁸IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 521–4; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 157–62, 21 March 1871; IISH C 132, Karl Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 18 June 1871, MEW, 33: 238; CW, 44: 157–8; *Corr.*, 11: 217–18.

¹⁹IISH D VI 56, Otto Meissner to Karl Marx, 28 Nov. 1871; Rolf Dlubek and Hannes Skambraks, *“Das Kapital” von Karl Marx in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (1867 bis 1878): Abriß und Zeugnisse der Wirkungsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1967), 147–8; Jürgen Bönig, *Karl Marx in Hamburg* (Hamburg, 2017),

edition in 1871, the year of the Commune, were remarkable. They were four times higher than in 1870 or in 1872, as reported by his German editor.²⁰ Most copies of the first German edition of *Capital* sold after 1869 were sold in 1871. Meissner wrote that after 1869 there were “in total still 308 copies to be accounted for, of which 50 for 1870, about 200 for 1871 and 50 for 1872.”²¹ On 28 November 1871, Meissner also wrote that sales in 1871 had been particularly strong in Russia.

The events in Paris, the attention that Marx and the IWMA received, and the success of the *Civil War* are fundamental to understanding why there was a need for a new German edition of *Capital*. People were able to make a link between the *Civil War* and Marx's other publications, as seen in a letter from the publisher of the *Civil War*, Edward Truelove, dated 12 September 1871, where he informed Marx that he had been contacted to provide more information on *Capital*, including its price, “with a view to purchase.”²² More international attention could lead to more sales of the first German edition of *Capital*, making a second edition possible.

Before the necessity arose for a second German edition, Marx had already planned to rework the beginning of the book (i.e. the first chapter in the first German edition) and now took the opportunity to do so, starting near the end of 1871.²³

Correspondence from Marx, his relatives, and friends documents that he was working on the second German edition at this time. In the winter of 1871, Jenny Marx (his daughter) wrote in a letter to the Kugelmann family (dated 21/22 December 1871), “What with interruptions of every kind Mohr [Karl Marx] has

153. See also the announcement of Otto Meissner in the *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel und die mit ihm verwandten Geschäftszweige* 278 (2 Dec. 1871), 4054: “Die Auflage ist nahezu vergriffen und muß ich wegen Erscheinens der neuen Auflage alles zurückweisen, was mir nicht bis Ende dieses Monats zurückgesandt ist.” This is signed “Hamburg, 1. Decbr. 1871.” Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 30 Jan. 1872, in Baronian and Rieucou, “Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital,” 18–19 (we also received primary sources referred to in this article by Nicolas Rieucou and Olivier Marquis): “mon éditeur allemand me prévint qu’une deuxième édition était devenue nécessaire.” He also made some changes for a Russian translation of *Capital*. The publishing process of the second German edition would be faster than the publishing of the French edition.

²⁰IISH D VI 60, Otto Meissner to Karl Marx, 8 April 1872.

²¹IISH D VI 60, Otto Meissner to Karl Marx, 8 April 1872 “in Ganzen noch 308 Exemplare zu verrechnen, davon 50 auf 1870 etwa 200 auf 1871 u. 50 auf 1872.” IISH D VI 56, Otto Meissner to Karl Marx, 28 Nov. 1871; Bönig, *Karl Marx in Hamburg*, 153; Dlubek and Skambraks, “*Das Kapital*” von Karl Marx in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (1867 bis 1878), 147–8. These numbers might be approximations, because in both letters Meissner also wrote about “höchstens 50” in 1870. Later, Meissner again discussed the sales of the first German edition in a letter of 17 August 1872, IISH D VI 66.

²²IISH D VIII 14, Edward Truelove to Karl Marx, 12 Sept. 1871.

²³More generally, after the printing of the first German edition, Marx also revised a copy (IISH D 1182/1K) showing that he further worked on the text. British Library, Add MS 38075, IISH C 138, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel'son, 9 Nov. 1871, *MEW*, 33: 311–13; *Corr.*, 11: 340–42; *CW*, 44: 238–40; Russian State Archive of Sociopolitical History (hereafter RGASPI), 1.1.6986, Karl Marx to César De Paepé, 24 Nov. 1871, *MEW*, 33: 338–40; *Corr.*, 11: 365–7; *CW*, 44: 262–4; Bernard Dandois, *Entre Marx et Bakounine: César De Paepé. Correspondance présentée et annotée par Bernard Dandois* (Paris, 1974), 206–9; Maximilien Rubel, “Trois lettres inédites de Karl Marx,” *L'actualité de l'histoire: Bulletin trimestriel de l'Institut français d'histoire sociale* 25 (1958), 28–31; RGASPI 1.1.6061, Karl Marx to Paul Lafargue and Laura Marx, 24 Nov. 1871, according to letter books also 25–11, *MEW*, 33: 341–7; *Corr.*, 11: 368–74; *CW*, 44: 265–71. British Library, Add MS 38075, IISH C 139, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel'son, 28 May 1872, *MEW*, 33: 477–8; *Corr.*, 12: 131–3; *CW*, 44: 385–6.

had the greatest difficulty to find time to arrange the first chapter of his book for the second edition. By hook and crook he now hopes to be enabled to send it to his publisher before the end of the next week. He has much simplified parts of it.”²⁴ Engels also wrote to Lafargue in a letter dated 30 December 1871, “I have not seen Mohr today, he is working hard on his second German edition,” and he repeated in a letter to Lafargue, on 19 January 1872, that Marx was working on the second German edition.²⁵ Marx wrote to the editor of *Le capital*, in a letter dated 30 January 1872, that after the news that Meissner was to produce a second German edition, “I had to immediately start revising the text of the first edition, where I introduced some very important changes.”²⁶

The process of publishing the second German edition thus started at the end of 1871, and would—from December 1871 onwards—overlap with the start of the publishing process of the French edition. There was an overlap in content (e.g. the translation of the French edition would be based on the second German edition) and form (both were published in instalments over time).²⁷ The publication of the French edition should therefore be understood with reference to this second German edition.

The Commune helped create the need for a second German edition, and Marx had already intended to rework the first edition even before this need. Similarly, Marx intended to publish *Capital* in French but had not found a suitable publisher (see below). It is not surprising that Marx was interested in bringing out his work in French. After all, in the nineteenth century, the political landscape in France was particularly eventful, which occupied Marx in works such as the *Civil War*.

According to Julia Nicholls, Marx preferred not to produce a rendition that just mimicked the German edition.²⁸ Such a “literal” translation was described by Marx as something that was not inherently undesirable but did not fit its purpose “to make it more accessible to the reader.”²⁹ The French audience was given a version

²⁴IISH G 206, *MEW*, 33: 686–91; *Corr.*, 11: 395–401; *CW*, 44: 565–70; Bert Andréas, “Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntenen Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 2 (1962), 263–72; Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Gespräche mit Marx und Engels* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), 395–7.

²⁵RGASPI 1.1.5870, *MEW*, 33: 364–6; *Corr.*, 11: 404–6; *CW*, 44: 284–7: “Je n’ai pas vu Mohr aujourd’hui, il travaille durement à sa seconde édition allemande.” Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 1868–1886 (Paris, 1956), 15–18; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 1868–1886 (Moscow, 1959), 32–6. RGASPI 1.1.5850, *MEW*, 33: 381–5; *Corr.*, 12: 18–22; *CW*, 44: 301–4; Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue *correspondance* (1956), 19–23; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue (1959), 37–42. To Liebknecht Engels also said that Marx “bearbeitet seine 2te. Auflage des Kapitals,” in a letter dated 15 Dec. 1871. RGASPI 1.1.3083; *MEW*, 33: 359–62; *Corr.*, 11: 388–93; *CW*, 44: 279–83; Marx–Engels–Lenin Institute, *Marx–Engels Briefe an A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky und Andere*, vol. 1, 1870–1886 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1933), 41–6; Georg Eckert, *Wilhelm Liebknecht Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels* (The Hague, 1963), 143–7.

²⁶“Il me fallait donc immédiatement m’occuper de la révision du texte de la première édition où j’ai introduit des changements très importants.”

²⁷IISH C 139, British Library, Add MS 38075, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel’son, 28 May 1872; *MEW*, 33: 477–8; *Corr.*, 12: 131–3; *CW*, 44: 385–6; Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 30 Jan. 1872, in Baronian and Rieucau, “Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital,” 18–19; Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 7 March 1872, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 85–9.

²⁸Nicholls, *Revolutionary Thought after the Paris Commune*, Ch. 5.

²⁹“Avis au lecteur,” Marx, *Le capital*, 348: “de la rendre plus accessible au lecteur.”

of *Capital* that the author would recognize not as a mere translation of its German counterpart, but as a version tailored to the French public, and more specifically to French workers. Efforts to make the book still more accessible continued in 1883, when Gabriel Deville published a shortened version which further increased dissemination of the French edition of *Capital* among French audiences.³⁰

The Commune was directly responsible for Marx finally finding an editor, thus making the publishing process of the French edition as we know it possible. On 12 December 1871, Lafargue (Karl Marx's son-in-law) wrote to Engels (a collaborator and friend of Marx) that he had an offer for Marx to publish a French edition of his book. Laura Marx (Marx's daughter) and Lafargue (Laura's husband) had met La Châtre in San Sebastian, Spain, after all had fled France due to the events of the Paris Commune.³¹ Although she had not met the editor, another of Marx's daughters, Jenny, described La Châtre as "a first-rate French publisher, who is very anxious to publish 'Das Kapital'."³²

Previous attempts had been made to translate the work, with Marx intending to publish the book in French, but none were ultimately fruitful. Charles Keller had been working on a French translation of the first German edition for Marx but without an available publisher; at the time of the news from La Châtre, Keller was doing other work.³³ The meeting between Laura Marx, Lafargue, and La

³⁰British Library, Add MS 38075, IISH C 139, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel'son, 28 May 1872, *MEW*, 33: 477–8; *Corr.*, 12: 131–3; *CW*, 44: 385–6; IISH C 388, Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 18 March 1872, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 90, 93, *MEW*, 33: 434; *Corr.*, 12: 74, 404; *CW*, 44: 344. Meissner, the German editor of the second German edition, also wanted a cheaper edition for the labourer (IISH D VI 56, Otto Meissner to Karl Marx, 28 Nov. 1871). Dlubek and Skambraks, "Das Kapital" von Karl Marx in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (1867 bis 1878), 147–8; Bönig, *Karl Marx in Hamburg*, 153. Bönig states the date incorrectly as 28 Feb. 1871; IISH D VI 59, Otto Meissner to Karl Marx, 19 March 1872; Dlubek and Skambraks, "Das Kapital" von Karl Marx in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (1867 bis 1878), 148–9. *Le capital de Karl Marx: Résumé et accompagné d'un aperçu sur le socialisme scientifique* (Paris, 1883) with Henry Oriol as editor.

³¹RGASPI 1.5.2668, Paul Lafargue to Friedrich Engels, 12 Dec. 1871, *Corr.*, 12: 393–4. *Le Radical* was also mentioned as an outlet for the French edition in this letter and Laura's. See Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance*, vol. 3, 1891–1895 (Paris, 1959), 432–5; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 1891–1895 (Moscow, 1960), 403–7; in *MEW*, 33: 773 n. 405; *Corr.*, 11: 393, the letter was dated December. To Engels, Lafargue also wrote about the possibility that the editor would cover all costs but that this would not be suitable for Marx: "il en aurait exigé la possession pleine et entière, ce qui n'aurait jamais convenu à Marx." RGASPI 1.5.2667, Laura Marx to Karl Marx, 12 Dec. 1871; IISH L VI 657, Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 18 March 1868, *MEW*, 32: 47; *Corr.*, 9: 189; *CW*, 42: 553–4; IISH G 204, Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann, 3 Oct. 1871, *MEW*, 33: 682–5, *CW*, 44: 562–4; *Corr.*, 11: 316–19.

³²IISH G 207, Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann, 22 Jan. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 695–6; *Corr.*, 12: 23–5; *CW*, 44: 573–5; Andréas, "Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntenen Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels," 273–7.

³³IISH G 207, Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann, 22 Jan. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 695–6; *Corr.*, 12: 23–5; *CW*, 44: 573–5; Andréas, "Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntenen Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels," 273–7. *Le courrier français*, 1 October 1867, already featured a French translation of parts of the preface of the first German edition, with the title "Le socialisme en Europe." This was written by Laura Marx and Paul Lafargue. The translated preface in the French edition is different (IISH L VI 624, Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 12 Sept. 1867, *MEW*, 31: 346–7; *Corr.*, 9: 33–5; *CW*, 42: 427–8; Marx–Engels Gesamtausgabe digital, at <https://megadigital.bbaw.de/briefe/detail.xql?id=B00352>. IISH D 2860, Laura Marx to Karl Marx, 18 April 1870; Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 9 Jan.

Châtre would eventually offer Marx an opportunity to finally publish a French translation of *Capital*.

Without the events of the Commune, Laura Marx, Lafargue, and La Châtre would perhaps not have met each other, and perhaps the possibility of publishing *Le capital* would not have arisen. Furthermore, Marx, who was seen as an instigator of the Commune, would now be able, perhaps because of this status, to finally publish his first volume on the capitalist mode of production in French. Later, in 1895, Engels noted that the years 1870, 1871, and 1872 were crucial years for Marx. He wrote to Karl Kautsky that these years were “at one and the same time the most important episode in Marx’s public life and that least amenable to accurate portrayal from printed sources.”³⁴

The author’s intentions of publishing volume 1 of *Capital* in a French version accessible to French workers aligned with the editor’s commitment to a socialist project. This was clear from the start of Marx’s interaction with the editor, in which Laura Marx and Lafargue served as intermediaries. Laura Marx wrote to Marx in December 1871 and discussed the offer made by La Châtre, who claimed “that it would be a good work to popularize this book by the great philosopher; it would be a marked service to the cause of socialism.”³⁵ The French editor also offered two options for the publication: a more expensive or a cheaper edition of the work. “From the point of view of principles and propaganda, the popular edition will have to be produced; later on, the library edition can be produced.”³⁶ The editor offered to pay two thousand francs but asked the author for two thousand francs which, according to Laura Marx, Lafargue was willing to pay: “It appears that no more than 4000 frs. are required for the beginning.” Laura Marx also wrote that the translator would be paid around 1,500 francs. The editor wished also to publish a portrait and biography of Marx (Lafargue was mentioned as a possible author) and his own foreword.

There were, however, geographical and political obstacles that needed to be overcome to set the publishing process in motion. The changed political situation in France, the persecution related to the Commune, and the geographical distances between the actors involved in creating the French edition made the production of *Le capital* burdensome. Marx would also revise the translation and change the text.³⁷ Moreover, due to unrelated circumstances, both the editor and Marx were persecuted and living as refugees in a foreign country.³⁸ On the one hand, the persecuted editor, La Châtre, could not travel to his company in Paris as he was living in exile outside France in various locations (consecutively in Spain, Belgium, and Switzerland) during the whole publishing

1873, Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 74–9. Although Marx wrote “1872,” this letter deals with the second series and fits 1873.

³⁴RGASPI I.1.5497, 25 March 1895, *MEW*, 39: 446–8; *CW*, 50: 480–83; Benedikt Kautsky, ed., *Friedrich Engels’ Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky* (Vienna, 1955), 426–8: “die wichtigste und gleichzeitig die am wenigsten aus gedrucktem Material richtig darzustellende Episode in Marx’ öffentlichem Leben.”

³⁵“que ce serait faire une bonne œuvre que de vulgariser ce livre du grand philosophe; ce serait rendre un service signalé à la cause du socialisme.”

³⁶“Au point de vue des principes et de la propagande; il faudra faire l’édition populaire; plutard on pourra faire l’édition de bibliothèque.”

³⁷In 1875, Marx noted that the geographical distances made the publishing process difficult. Marx, *Le capital*, 351.

³⁸IISH D 2804, Maurice La Châtre to Karl Marx, 17 Feb. 1872, *Corr.*, 12: 395–7; Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 83–4. In MEGA² II.7, 724 the year 1871 is written.

period of the work. He had narrowly avoided being killed in Paris in events related to the Commune, and—in the name of caution—he wrote to Marx that he wanted to avoid announcing the forthcoming French edition until it was published.³⁹ On the other hand, Marx was at risk of persecution and therefore could not travel to France to, for example, physically deliver material. Marx, who was born in Germany, had been living in London since 1849 after being exiled due to political activities.⁴⁰ In the wake of the Paris Commune, and although none of them were or could be physically present in Paris, they would nevertheless start the publishing process in France relying on the support of people in Paris working for La Châtre.

The extent of relatives' and friends' involvement at the start of the publishing process of *Le capital* is also noteworthy. Lafargue and Laura Marx not only played a significant role in securing an editor, but also were closely involved in the negotiations on the publishing stipulations. Indeed, Marx responded to La Châtre's offer in a letter to Laura Marx dated 18 December 1871, in which he wrote that he would accept the offer if certain financial and publication conditions were met:

- "1) that if the enterprise fails, I have to pay [to Lafargue] the sum advanced with the usual interest upon it,
2) that Toole [Lafargue] does not advance more than the 2000 frs. The expression of the Editor that this is only wanted for the beginning seems to me *ominous*. At all events Toole must *stipulate* that his obligations refer only to this 'beginning'."

Marx also emphasized that the French edition must be easily available—"I prefer in every respect a *cheap popular* edition"—and that he was working on the second German edition.⁴¹ Marx wrote, "It is a fortunate combination that a *second German edition* has become necessary just now. I am fully occupied (and can therefore write only a few lines) in arranging it, and the French *translator* will of course have to translate the amended German edition. (I shall forward him the old one with the changes inserted)" (original emphasis).⁴²

The events of the Paris Commune also contributed indirectly to the publication of *Le capital*. As a result, refugees moved from France to England, and particularly to London.⁴³ As Marx was a figure in the (inter)national scene in London, he received and supported such *Kommuneflüchtlinge* ("refugees of the Commune") in his house. In a later report in *Die neue Zeit*, Friedrich A. Sorge noted, "When the commune refugees appeared in London, Marx and his family made

³⁹IISH D 2804, Maurice La Châtre to Karl Marx, 17 Feb. 1872, *Corr.*, 12: 395–7; Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 83–4; RGASPI 1.5.2667, Laura Marx to Karl Marx, 12 Dec. 1871; IISH D 2836, Maurice La Châtre to Karl Marx, 24 Dec. 1873, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 152–3; IISH D 2848, Maurice La Châtre to Karl Marx, 3 May 1875.

⁴⁰IISH L VI 11, Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 23 Aug. 1849, *MEW*, 27: 142; *CW*, 38: 212–13; *Corr.*, 2: 30–31.

⁴¹RGASPI 1.1.6062, *MEW*, 33: 363; *Corr.*, 11: 393–4; *CW*, 44: 283–4.

⁴²See also IISH G 207, Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann, 22 Jan. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 695–6; *Corr.*, 12: 23–5; *CW*, 44: 573–5; Andréas, "Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntem Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels," 273–7.

⁴³Laura C. Forster, "The Paris Commune in London and the spatial history of ideas, 1871–1900," *Historical Journal* 62/4 (2019), 1021–44; IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 559–61; Institute of Marxism-Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 204–8, 6 June 1871.

extraordinary efforts to render help and services. Besides the refugees who came and went from his house, workers from the provinces, Manchester, Liverpool, London, the Continent, America, and other distant parts of the world were frequently met there. Marx had an open house and an open hand.”⁴⁴ The General Council of the IWMA also discussed aid to the refugees in their meetings, taking note of Marx’s own financial aid to them.⁴⁵

One aspect of the publishing process that is relatively underexamined is that these refugees also contributed to the publishing process of *Le capital*.⁴⁶ Besides Lafargue’s involvement in securing the editor and his later help with paying for *Le capital* (see below), other exiles contributed to the project. One example is the Frenchman Longuet, who also fled the Commune and later married Marx’s daughter Jenny. He was instrumental in arranging a translator for *Le capital* (Édouard Vaillant, also a communard, was also mentioned as someone helping to choose the translator) and was later also involved in reviewing the translation.⁴⁷ For instance, according to Engels in a letter dated 16 November 1872, Marx went to Oxford for several days at the end of 1872, where he checked the French translation with the Longuet family.⁴⁸ A focus on the publishing process of *Le capital* shows

⁴⁴Friedrich A. Sorge, “Zum 14. März,” *Die neue Zeit* 21/23 (1902–3), 722, “Als die Kommuneflüchtlinge in London erschienen, haben Marx und seine Familie außerordentliche Anstrengungen gemacht, um Hilfe und Dienste zu leisten. Und außer den Flüchtlingen, die bei ihm aus- und eingingen, traf man dort häufig Arbeiter aus der Provinz, von Manchester, Liverpool, London, vom Kontinent, von Amerika und anderen fernen Weltteilen. Marx hatte offenes Haus und offene Hand.” Institut für Marxismus–Leninismus, *Mohr und General: Erinnerungen an Marx und Engels* (Berlin, 1965), 203; Enzensberger, *Gespräche mit Marx und Engels*, 373. On 29 Dec. 1871 Eleanor Marx wrote to Wilhelm Liebknecht that there were many people there from the Paris Commune. IISH G 21, Eckert, *Wilhelm Liebknecht Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, 413–15. This information confirms what is stated in other letters around this time. RGASPI 1.1.6061, Karl Marx to Paul Lafargue and Laura Marx, 24–5 Nov. 1871, *MEW*, 33: 341–7; *Corr.*, 11: 368–74; *CW*, 44: 265–71.

⁴⁵IISH B 86; MEGA² I.22, 565–7; Institute of Marxism–Leninism, *Documents of the First International*, vol. 4, 216–21, 20 June 1871.

⁴⁶Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 1 May 1872, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 100.

⁴⁷IISH DV 209, Charles Longuet to Karl Marx, 13 Jan. 1872, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 81; IISH C 561, Karl Marx to Jenny Marx (daughter), *MEW*, 33: 625; *Corr.*, 12: 353; *CW*, 45: 15; Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 9 Jan. 1873, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 74–9. RGASPI 1.1.6063, Karl Marx to Laura Marx, 28 Feb. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 411–12; *Corr.*, 12: 55–7; *CW*, 44: 327–8; RGASPI 1.1.6062, Karl Marx to Laura Marx, 18 Dec. 1871, *MEW*, 33: 363; *Corr.*, 11: 393–4, *CW*, 44: 283–4; Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 30 Jan. 1872, in Baronian and Rieucou, “Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital,” 18–19; Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 1 May 1872, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 100; IISH G 207, Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann, 22 Jan. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 695–6; *Corr.*, 12: 23–5; *CW*, 44: 573–5; Andréas, “Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntenen Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels,” 273–7; RGASPI 6.1.80, Jenny Marx (mother) to Wilhelm Liebknecht, 26 May 1872, in Rolf Hecker and Angelika Limmroth, eds., *Jenny Marx: Die Briefe* (Berlin, 2014), 458–60.

⁴⁸New York Public Library, Friedrich Engels to Friedrich A. Sorge, 16 Nov. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 537–41; *Corr.*, 12: 213–19; *CW*, 44: 446–51; Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen von Joh. Phil. Becker, Jos. Dietzgen, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx u. A. an F. A. Sorge und Andere*, 77–82. Marx had certainly asked both Paul Lafargue and Charles Longuet for help at times. E.g. Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 9 Jan. 1873, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 74–9; Friedrich Engels to Friedrich A. Sorge, New York Public Library, 07–12 (or 09)–1872, *MEW*, 33: 544–6; *Corr.*, 12: 221–4; *CW*, 44: 453–5; Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen von Joh. Phil. Becker, Jos. Dietzgen, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx u. A. an F. A. Sorge und Andere*, 82–4. An earlier letter from Eleanor Marx to Jenny Marx (daughter) stated that Marx

that Marx's intellectual work, political activities, and private life were all intertwined, and that the Commune figured prominently in all realms.⁴⁹

II

In the wake of the Paris Commune, the meeting of Lafargue and Laura Marx with the editor La Châtre gave Marx the opportunity to discuss and sign a publishing contract for *Le capital*. This contract would formalize how the French edition would appear. The contract for the French edition was created and signed by two parties: Marx and La Châtre's company. The contract stipulates that both will publish a French version of the book.⁵⁰ This contract marked the official start of the publishing process: its stipulations, which were discussed in advance, set out the fundamental features of the French edition and the further steps in the publishing process. However, as we will see, this basis was rather vague.

In December, Lafargue would write to Engels, "These terms are not extravagant nor out of the way, even less are they unpleasant."⁵¹ Marx received a draft of the contract and, at the beginning of January, Lafargue asked Engels whether Marx had made progress with the contract.⁵² Engels wrote to Lafargue on 19 January 1872 that it was being discussed but "there were one or two absolutely unacceptable things in the contract."⁵³ Marx did not write to the editor immediately and, close to the end of January, Lafargue informed Engels that he had received a letter claiming that Marx had not yet contacted La Châtre.⁵⁴ Both Engels and Lafargue received

would go to Oxford. Her estimation was 8 November 1872. Eleanor Marx to Jenny Marx (daughter), 7 Nov. 1872, received from IISH. Olga Meier, ed., *Les filles de Karl Marx: Lettres inédites. Collection Bottigelli* (Paris, 1979), 152–4; Meier, ed., *The Daughters of Karl Marx: Family Correspondence 1866–1898* (London, 1982), 113–15; Meier, ed., *Die Töchter von Karl Marx: Unveröffentlichte Briefe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 126–8.

⁴⁹E.g. Kenneth Hemmrechts and Nohemi Jacobeth Echeverria Vicente, "Le capital: a transnational, family, and personal endeavour," forthcoming.

⁵⁰"Mr Karl Marx a offert à Mrs Maurice La Châtre et Cie qui l'acceptent, de se charger de la publication en français de son ouvrage 'Le Capital' à l'exception de tous autres éditeurs." The editor's company was based in Paris (boulevard Sébastopol 38) and Marx's address was listed as 1 Maitland Park Road, London. The contract is available in facsimile and transcription in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 178–9. In the following notes on the contract, we use this primary source.

⁵¹RGASPI 1.5.2668, 12 Dec. 1871, *Corr.*, 12: 393–4: "Ces conditions ne sont ni fantastiques, ni extraordinaires, et encore moins désagréables." Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (1959), vol. 3, 432–5; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence* (1960), vol. 3, 403–7.

⁵²In a letter dated 7 Jan. 1872, RGASPI 1.1.3105, Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (1959), vol. 3, 439–41; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence* (1960), vol. 3, 412–15.

⁵³RGASPI 1.1.5850, *MEW*, 33: 381–5: "il y avait dans le contrat une ou deux choses absolument inadmissibles." *Corr.*, 12: 18–22; *CW*, 44: 301–4; Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (1956), vol. 1, 19–23; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence* (1959), vol. 1, 37–42.

⁵⁴In a letter dated 25/26 Jan. 1872, RGASPI 1.1.3120, Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (1959), vol. 3, 442–6; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence* (1960), vol. 3, 415–21.

news of the French edition and were up to date on how the publishing process was unfolding. This is also true for other family members.⁵⁵

Before sending a letter to the editor concerning the contract, Marx first gave a draft contract to Philips, one of his family members knowledgeable in law.⁵⁶ In a letter dated 26 January 1872, Philips gave his opinion and legal advice on the contract. He wrote to Marx that he should not sign the draft contract, which stipulated that two thousand francs should be invested by the author, and that Marx risked losing the money.

Marx probably also asked Philips to participate in the financing, a proposal which he rejected, giving two reasons, one ideological and one financial: "Mainly because I do not want to support propaganda for the International; but also because I see no advantage for you in this publication ... I will not do this for your political or revolutionary goals." Philips also suggested that Marx add another stipulation to the contract: "that the present agreement shall not prevent Mr K. M. from publishing in France or elsewhere translations of his above-mentioned work in any language other than French." In the final contract, this stipulation was not inserted.⁵⁷

Marx took his time to respond to the editor about the contract and sent him a letter dated near the end of January in which he discussed the offer, including the changes he wanted made to the contract.⁵⁸ Marx found the contract as he received it "the most unfavourable I have ever been offered by a publisher, I accept it with the following modifications."⁵⁹ The change that Marx asked for was the deletion of the following stipulation: "At that time, if Mr. Karl Marx prefers, M.rs Maurice La Châtre et Cie will remit the two thousand francs which will have been charged and will be exonerated from all royalties for all print runs made subsequently." This moment was from "the eleven thousandth."⁶⁰ Marx clearly did not want to include an option that would enable the editor to print more editions after paying

⁵⁵E.g. IISH G 207, Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann, 22 Jan. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 695–6; *Corr.*, 12: 23–25; *CW*, 44: 573–5; Andrés, "Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntem Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels," 273–7.

⁵⁶Jan Gielkens, "Was ik maar weer in Bommel": *Karl Marx en zijn Nederlandse verwanten. Een familiegeschiedenis in documenten. Bezorgd en ingeleid door Jan Gielkens* (Amsterdam, 1997), 41–2, 136; Jan Gielkens, *Karl Marx und seine niederländischen Verwandten: Eine kommentierte Quellenedition* (Trier, 1999), 72, 225. See also August Philips, *Specimen historico-juridicum de dominio rei mobilis, ad artic. 2014 cod. civ. neerl* (Leiden, 1847).

⁵⁷"Hauptsächlich weil ich nicht eine Propaganda für die Internationale fördern will; dann aber auch weil ich in dieser Auslage für Dich kein Vortheil sehe ... für Deine politischen oder revolutionären Zwecke thue ich das nicht." And "que la présente convention n'empêchera pas Mr K. M. de publier en France ou ailleurs des traductions de son ouvrage sur-nommé en toute [tout in original] autre langue que la langue française." IISH D VI 232; Werner Blumenberg, "Ein unbekanntes Kapitel aus Marx' Leben: Briefe an die holländischen Verwandten," *International Review of Social History* 1/1 (1956), 54–111.

⁵⁸Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 30 Jan. 1872, in Baronian and Rieucau, "Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital," 18–19: "J'ai retardé si longtemps la réponse à l'offre que vous avez eu la bonté de me faire par M. Lafargue pour plus d'une raison."

⁵⁹"le plus défavorable qui m'ait été jamais proposé par un éditeur, je l'accepte avec les modifications suivantes."

⁶⁰"A ce moment, si Mr. Karl Marx le préfère, M.rs Maurice La Châtre et Cie feront la remise des Deux mille francs qui leur auront été comptés et seraient exonérés de toute redevance pour tous les tirages qu'ils feraient ultérieurement." And "À partir du onzième mille." See Baronian and Rieucau, "Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital," 18–21.

one single financial compensation to him.⁶¹ Marx also wanted forty free dissemination copies of the instalments. From the correspondence, we see how much Marx prioritized the publication of a French version of his book, even after the negative evaluation of the draft contract by Philips and himself. This commitment to bringing out a French edition is remarkable and is related to his effort to disseminate his work to a wider public beyond the German-speaking world, appealing to French workers.

Marx would eventually sign a one-page version of the contract dated 13 February 1872, which contained the following five stipulations.

- 1 Marx would deliver a publication that would be inexpensive to buy and would follow the publication format and instalment price of *l'histoire des papes* (History of the Popes) by La Châtre. More specifically, it would use a format of two columns per page, in instalments of eight pages each.⁶² In his letter of 30 January to the editor, Marx expressed doubts about this publication format but went along with it: "The form of these instalments is not the most advantageous for a scientific work; nevertheless, in the given circumstances, I believe with you that it is better to use it."⁶³ Marx also offered more thoughts on the format of the published work, more specifically on its publication in instalments, in a printed facsimile of a letter dated 18 March 1872 (one year after what can be seen as the start of the Commune) from Marx to La Châtre in the first instalment of *Le capital*.⁶⁴ This letter was requested by the editor and repeated the stipulation in the contract that the publication would be in instalments and that publishing in this format would make it

⁶¹Furthermore, in the draft contract that Marx discussed in the letter of 30 January 1872, the work is defined as philosophical, and is "à l'exclusion de tous autres éditeurs." In material to be found in the Paul Lafargue archive in Paris it is also described as a work of philosophy and there is reference to a "Remboursement à l'Auteur de sa participation de 2000 fr ou, A partir du onzième mille, droits à payer à l'auteur 15 centimes par exemplaire." "Calculs relatifs à la publication du livre de philosophie 'Le Capital' par Mr. Karl Marx." Paul Lafargue Archive in Paris: 300 J7 Dossier 1 – Nr. 95. Marx did not wish to see this *remboursement* included in the contract.

⁶²In the document just cited that seems to pre-date the contract, mention is also made of eight pages with two columns in one instalment. This document mentioned thirty instalments. In a letter from Jenny Marx (daughter) to Ludwig Kugelmann (IISH G 207, 22 Jan. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 695–6; *Corr.*, 12: 23–5; *CW*, 44: 573–5; Andréas, "Briefe und Dokumente der Familie Marx aus den Jahren 1862–1873 nebst zwei unbekanntenen Aufsätzen von Friedrich Engels," 273–7, she also wrote about thirty instalments.

⁶³"La forme de livraisons n'est pas la plus avantageuse pour un ouvrage scientifique; néanmoins, dans les circonstances données, je crois avec vous qu'il vaut mieux d'y avoir recours." See Baronian and Rieucou, "Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital," 18–19. In the draft contract it is written "le format, la justification, le prix de l'histoire des Papes."

⁶⁴See also Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, *Histoire de la commune de 1871* (Paris, 1896); Alain Badiou, *L'hypothèse communiste* (Clamecy, 2009). Marx, *Le capital*, 7. On page 8 of the original edition there is the undated response from La Châtre to Marx. This letter was edited by Marx, as seen in the letter of 7 and 20 March 1872 (Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 85–9, 96–7). In that response, it is said that "le manuscrit de la deuxième édition allemande" was used for the translation and "avant même son apparition en ALLEMAGNE, et révisée par l'auteur." This comment was influenced by Marx's letter of 7 March and was devised before the first instalment of the second German edition came out. *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel und die mit ihm verwandten Geschäftszweige* 179 (3 Aug. 1872), 2837.

- easier for workers to get hold of the publication.⁶⁵ Although he clearly found this fact important, he also identified possible problems. A first possible problem is that the opening pages can be difficult and that this should not be underestimated. Marx also thought that publication in a serial format might put off readers. It does not seem to be a coincidence that Marx chose to give this facsimiled letter in the French edition the date of 18 March 1872. It seems to be intended to serve as a reminder of the Commune.
- 2 Marx would be allowed to choose the translator of the book. He eventually chose Roy, a resident of Bordeaux, instead of Keller, a translator with whom Marx had worked previously.⁶⁶ After Marx had received news that La Châtre wanted to publish a French translation of *Das Kapital*, he contacted Keller, who had been working on a French translation of the first German edition. Near the end of 1871, Jenny Marx (mother) had tried to locate Keller.⁶⁷ However, Keller was occupied with other work and since Marx felt that the editor wanted to publish fast, he chose Roy, who, unlike the others, was available.⁶⁸ It is, however, likely that Keller had an influence on Marx and on this French edition, as there is evidence of discussions on the translation of words.⁶⁹
 - 3 The translator and other publication costs would be paid by the editor's company: the translator would receive a maximum of 1,500 francs and Marx would pay two thousand francs:

“The author reserves the right to choose the translator, giving him a remuneration of five to four centimes per line, and a maximum of fifteen hundred francs for the entire translation of the work, which will be paid by the publishers. Mrs Maurice La Châtre et Cie will pay all the costs of the publication in return for: 1° A cash contribution of two thousand francs which will be handed over to them in Paris by Mr Karl Marx fifteen days after the request.”⁷⁰

⁶⁵In his letter of 30 Jan. to the editor: “Dans la lettre autographe que vous me demandez, j’expliquerai cela en quelques mots au public français.” Baronian and Rieucan, “Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital,” 18–19.

⁶⁶RGASPI 1.1.6063, Karl Marx to Laura Marx, 28 Feb. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 411–12; *Corr.*, 12: 55–7; *CW*, 44: 327–8. It seems that Lafargue had already heard of the existence of Roy. Letter to Jenny Marx (mother) dated Jan. 1869 in Hecker and Limmroth, *Jenny Marx*, 425–7.

⁶⁷RGASPI 1.1.6062, Karl Marx to Laura Marx, 18 Dec. 1871, *MEW*, 33: 363; *Corr.*, 11: 393–4; *CW*, 44: 283–4; RGASPI 1.5.2667, Laura Marx to Karl Marx, 12 Dec. 1871.

⁶⁸Karl Marx to Maurice La Châtre, 9 Jan. 1873, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 74–9.

⁶⁹IISH D V 62, Charles Keller to Karl Marx, 23 Nov. 1872. See also RGASPI 1.1.6055, Karl Marx to Paul Lafargue and Laura Marx, 18 Oct. 1869, *MEW*, 32: 635–6; *Corr.*, 10: 181–2; *CW*, 43: 359–60; IISH D 2866, Paul Lafargue to Karl Marx, 23 Oct. 1869.

⁷⁰“L’auteur se réserve le choix du traducteur, en lui attribuant une rémunération de cinq centimes à quatre centimes par ligne, et au maximum une rémunération de quinze cents francs pour la traduction entière de l’ouvrage, qui seront payés par les éditeurs. Mrs Maurice La Châtre et Cie se chargent de tous les frais de la publication Moyennant: 1° Une participation en espèces d’une somme de deux mille francs qui leur sera remise à Paris par les soins de Mr Karl Marx quinze jours après demande.” Marx commented on this stipulation in a letter dated 28 Feb. 1872 to Laura Marx. He had included the specific stipulation of the two thousand francs: “somme de ... sera remise à Paris ... quinze jours après demande,” and that a payment could be made on 1 July. RGASPI 1.1.6063, *MEW*, 33: 411–12; *Corr.*, 12: 55–7; *CW*, 44: 327–8. In a letter to the editor dated 7 March 1872, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 85–9: “Dans notre traité j’ai inséré que les

A letter from Lafargue to Engels tells us that Lafargue paid. This probably refers to the payment for *Le capital* and shows how important Marx's close networks were for organizing the French edition.⁷¹

- 4 Marx would receive 100 free copies per instalment or in softcover to give "to the French or foreign press or to workers' groups."⁷² These were dissemination copies. There is evidence that Marx sent instalments of the French edition to individuals and to the British Library (e.g. to Hector Denis, Sorge and Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, with handwritten changes made by Marx).⁷³
- 5 The two parties agreed on how many copies the editor could freely print.⁷⁴

Vernouillet—who was in charge of the publishing house in Paris—sent Marx a clean copy of the contract. This followed a letter from Marx dated 9 February 1872, requesting a copy of the contract with La Châtre's signature, as well as a clean copy of the contract. There is also talk about the translator who will start translating *Capital* into French.⁷⁵ According to Vernouillet, the contract copy with Marx's signature was received on the fifteenth of the same month, while La Châtre's copy was

2000 francs devront être versés quinze jours après demande. Si cela ne vous gêne pas, je préférerais [préférerais in the original] de verser l'argent le 1er juillet, parce que dans le cas contraire j'aurais à vendre des effets bien placés."

⁷¹In a letter dated 29 May 1872, RGASPI 1.1.3227, Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (1959), vol. 3, 466–71; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence* (1960), vol. 3, 444–51. Bottigelli, "La première édition française du 'capital'," 17, wrote that the date of this letter is 19 May 1872. In the draft contract that Marx revised (Baronian and Rieucan, "Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital," 19–21, we read, "1° une participation en espèces d'une somme de Deux mille francs qui leur sera remise à Paris avant le ... par les soins de Mr. Karl Marx." So the date of payment was made more explicit in the final contract. In a letter from Lafargue to Engels dated 12 Dec. 1871 (RGASPI 1.5.2668, *Corr.*, 12: 393–4; Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondance* (1959), vol. 3, 432–5; Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence* (1960), vol. 3, 403–7), Lafargue was asked by the editor and agreed to pay this sum of two thousand francs. Marx would then also be able to arrange his own translation: "ces deux mille francs, me rendent associé et me donnent des droits, qui permettront à More de disposer comme il l'entendra de la traduction de son livre."

⁷²"à la presse française ou étrangère ou à des groupes d'Ouvriers et d'Ouvrières." In his revision of the draft of the contract, Marx wanted forty free copies of the instalments to give to the press. Baronian and Rieucan, "Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital," 18–19. In the revised contract, Marx or someone else also seemed to want ten free copies for Lafargue. *Ibid.*, 19–21. There is a "40 Ex. à K.M" and "10 Ex. à L." written in the draft contract.

⁷³Kenneth Hemmerichs and Nohemi Jacobeth Echeverría Vicente, "Revisiting the Hector Denis Copy of *Le capital* (KF⁵)," *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung, Neue Folge* (2020–21), 183–97.

⁷⁴"2° et le droit de faire un tirage à Dix mille exemplaires ou plusieurs tirages s'élevant à ce chiffre, les passes-doubles en plus, sans droits à payer à l'auteur. A partir du onzième mille, Mrs Maurice La Châtre et Cie payeront à Mr Karl Marx ou à [a in the original] ses ayants-droits un droit de demi centime par livraison, au comptant, au moment où [ou in the original] s'effectuera le tirage, les passes-doubles déduites, suivant l'usage." See also the document in an earlier note that seems to pre-date the contract. In the contract proposal (Baronian and Rieucan, "Pièces inédites de Marx: Lettres et projet de contrat pour la publication française du capital," 19–21) we read, "s'élevant à ce chiffre, les doubles passes d'usage en plus," "au moment où s'effectuera le tirage, les passes-doubles déduites." There is no "Cie." This possibility for payment was in the draft contract, including the paragraph that authorized Marx to receive back the two thousand francs which Marx wanted out of the contract (see earlier).

⁷⁵IISH D 4374, Just Vernouillet to Karl Marx, 13 Feb. 1872; RGASPI 1.1.5923, Karl Marx to La Châtre Cie, 9 Feb. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 399; *Corr.*, 12: 43; *CW*, 44: 316.

sent one day later to Marx.⁷⁶ The signing of the contract by Marx and publication in instalments are confirmed by Engels in a letter to Wilhelm Liebknecht dated 15 February 1872.⁷⁷ This specific legal side of the publishing process was now finalized, but the actual work to make the French edition a reality had just begun.

After this overview of the contract signed between the two parties involved in *Le capital*, several points for further discussion can be derived. The contract, beyond its symbolic function, is relatively limited in its stipulations; this was perhaps not uncommon at the time, but would give the next steps in the publishing process, including the solutions to problems that might arise, an improvisatory nature. The contract is relevant not only because of what was written there, but also because of what was not written.⁷⁸

The contract, for example, did not set out any further work steps, i.e. how the writing, translating, editing, and printing would be organized; the timing of instalments; or how many instalments were planned. It did not specify how long the publishing process would take, nor did it include any deadlines. No mention was made of possible ways to mitigate any problems during the publishing process between the editor and the author.

It was still necessary to devise a way to organize the process between the author and the editor that was workable for all parties, since other parties were also involved. The other parties besides Marx and the editor were the translator, the printer, and the people working in the editor's company. These parties were barely mentioned, if at all, but they too were an important aspect of how the work would be arranged between the editor and the author in the coming months. Marx and La Châtre were geographically separated and, as they were in exile, had to work through intermediaries (e.g. the postal system and other people in La Châtre's company). A flow of (translated) manuscripts and proofs back and forth to the involved parties had to be organized and enacted. This process had to be put in place post-contract and could therefore be open to change.

How does the contract relate to the context of the Paris Commune? As we have seen, the publishing process was not fully defined in the contract, and fundamental steps in the process still had to be determined. The changed political context in France in the wake of the Paris Commune perhaps made a more detailed contract necessary. In a subsequent phase of the publishing process, Marx and La Châtre were confronted with the task of finding ways to organize the next steps. This is

⁷⁶IISH D 4375, Just Vernouillet to Karl Marx, 16 Feb. 1872. Marx also had to decide on "questions relating to the translator": "Mr La Châtre me charge de vous dire qu'il vous prie de décider les questions relatives au traducteur." It then says that the translator can send material so they could start with the composition.

⁷⁷IISH K 421, Friedrich Engels to Wilhelm Liebknecht, 15 Feb. 1872, *MEW*, 33: 401–3; *Corr.*, 12: 44–7; *CW*, 44: 318–21; Marx–Engels–Lenin Institute, *Marx–Engels Briefe an A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky und Andere*, vol. 1, 1870–1886, 56–60; Eckert, *Wilhelm Liebknecht Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, 155–8. After Engels wrote to Liebknecht that the "Unterhandlungen schweben." Letter dated 18 Jan. 1872 (in the letter "71." was written), RGASPI 1.1.3106, *MEW*, 33: 376–9; *Corr.*, 12: 11–17; *CW*, 44: 296–9; Marx–Engels–Lenin Institute, *Marx–Engels Briefe an A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky und Andere*, vol. 1, 1870–1886, 50–56; Eckert, *Wilhelm Liebknecht Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, 150–55.

⁷⁸It seems that there also existed a contract between the editor and the translator. See Karl Marx to the printer Lahure, 17 March 1873, in Gaudin, *Traduire Le capital*, 131, 137.

seen in the correspondence between the author and the editor, who further discuss the organization of the work process. For example, in a letter from La Châtre to Marx dated 12 March 1872, details of the next steps were set out informally.⁷⁹ The process of publishing *Le capital* would require fine-tuning after the signing of the contract, which signified completion of the first step towards the last translation of volume 1 of *Capital* brought out in Marx's lifetime.

III

There are different interpretations of the political legacy and importance of the Paris Commune. Nevertheless, the importance of the Commune and its role in the production of an intellectual work such as *Le capital* tends to go unnoticed. In this article, we have documented the importance of the Paris Commune for the existence of the French edition of 1872–5. We have shown that the Commune contributed directly by enabling contact with the editor who would ultimately publish the book; it also contributed indirectly by giving Marx access to people who could help with the language editing of the French text. Although Marx was proficient in French, there is also evidence that Marx received some help from French-speakers (including refugees from the Commune) to produce *Le capital*.⁸⁰

The political context in which the book came into being also threw up obstacles. Geographical distance, connected to the risk of persecution, did not make it easier to organize the publishing process. The impact of the geographical distance would, however, be lessened by the nineteenth-century postal network, which was able to distribute letters relatively quickly.⁸¹ For example, the letter sent by Vernouillet to London containing the contract was dated 13 February 1872; but in another letter, Vernouillet claims that the contract with Marx's signature was received back in Paris on 15 February 1872.⁸² Members of the editor's company, such as Vernouillet and the printer in Paris, were close geographically, so not everyone was abroad. Moreover, people close to Marx, family members such as his daughters, and friends were informed of Marx's work steps and knew the status of the French edition.

The historical account in this article of the initial phase of the publishing process of *Le capital* shows that it was produced in circumstances that, on the one hand, facilitated the coming into being of this edition and, on the other hand, enabled relatives and friends of Marx to play an active role in its production.

⁷⁹IISH D 2806, Maurice La Châtre to Karl Marx, 12 March 1872, *Corr.*, 12: 397–8. See also Lefebvre, *Le capital livre 1*, xxxiii.

⁸⁰He published, for example, Karl Marx, *Misère de la philosophie: Réponse à la philosophie de la misère de M. Proudhon* (Paris and Brussels, 1847). Terrell Carver, "Making Marx Marx," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 17/1 (2017), 10–27; Terrell Carver, *Marx* (Cambridge, 2018); Gilbert Badia, "Einige Bemerkungen über die Verbreitung der Werke von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels in Frankreich," *Marx-Engels-Jahrbuch* 4 (1981), 447–62; Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York and London, 2013). In his reminiscences Wilhelm Liebknecht wrote about Marx's language skills. Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Karl Marx zum Gedächtniß: Ein Lebensabriß und Erinnerungen* (Nuremberg, 1896), 36–7; Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus, *Mohr und General*, 59–60.

⁸¹See also Lefebvre, *Le capital livre 1*, xxviii, xxxi, xl.

⁸²This last letter from Marx was sent with a *lettre chargée*. IISH D 4374, Just Vernouillet to Karl Marx, 13 Feb. 1872; IISH D 4375, Just Vernouillet to Karl Marx, 16 Feb. 1872.

With respect to the first element, the fact that the first steps in the publication of *Le capital* took place in the wake of the Paris Commune was not necessarily problem-free. The collapse of this experiment and the persecution and the hostility towards its fundamental ideas and assumed leaders seemed to encourage censorship of intellectual work that could potentially nourish new revolutionary attempts. Nonetheless, as we have documented, the Paris Commune proved to be the turning point for the publication of the French edition of *Capital*; it seems to have precipitated rather than prevented its production by helping with the finding of an editor.

Analyzing the publishing process of *Le capital* demonstrates by example that critical literature continued to be published in France. It shows how this kind of literature was published in a context of political change, although the revolutionaries were “defeated, depleted, and scattered across the globe,” and amidst censorship and open persecution towards revolutionaries and revolutionary ideas in the years that followed the Commune.⁸³

Regarding the second element, as set out in this text, Marx’s family and friends made substantial contributions to the initial phase of this French edition: finding a publisher, translator, and contract, and revising the translation in French. Intellectual production and family life were combined in the publishing process. Thus, instead of giving a biographical account that aims to depict a broader view of Marx’s life, the account in this article reveals something about the life of the author and his relationship with his network of family and friends, seen through the lens of the history of the work on *Le capital*.

As we have shown, the relatively underexplored starting phase of the publishing process of *Le capital*, moreover, had repercussions on the further steps in this process and on the published form of the French edition. This phase represents the beginning of what Marx would later call *das schmerzliche Experiment* or “the painful experiment,” referring to the process of publishing *Le capital* that extended until November 1875.⁸⁴

In 1877, after completion of the publication of the French edition, which had cost him much work and time, Marx did not want to be further involved with other translations of volume 1, as can be seen in correspondence concerning a possible American translation of this volume.⁸⁵ Regarding this translation, Marx wrote to Sorge that the translator should “compare the 2nd German edition with the *French edition* in which I have included a good deal of new matter and greatly improved my presentation of much else.”⁸⁶ Marx also stressed here the importance of the French edition and promised to give Sorge a French copy and a *Verzeichnis*

⁸³Nicholls, *Revolutionary Thought after the Paris Commune*, 3.

⁸⁴IISH C 16, Karl Marx to Wilhelm Bracke, 6 Nov. 1876, *MEW*, 34: 223; *Corr.*, 13: 118–19; *CW*, 45: 166; Marx–Engels–Lenin Institute, *Marx–Engels Briefe an A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky und Andere*, vol. 1, 1870–1886, 135–6; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Briefwechsel mit Wilhelm Bracke (1869–1880)* (Berlin, 1963), 102–3. IISH D 3692, Adolphe Quèst/Plantet to Karl Marx, 15 Nov. 1875; IISH D 3693, Adolphe Quèst/Plantet to Karl Marx, 25 Nov. 1875; IISH D 3694, Adolphe Quèst/Plantet to Karl Marx, 4 Dec. 1875.

⁸⁵New York Public Library, Karl Marx to Friedrich A. Sorge, 27 Sept. 1877, *MEW*, 34: 294–7; *CW*, 45: 275–9; *Corr.*, 13: 226–30, Sorge, *Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen von Joh. Phil. Becker, Jos. Dietzgen, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx u. A. an F. A. Sorge und Andere*, 154–8.

⁸⁶“neben der 2ten deutschen Ausgabe die *französische Ausgabe* vergleichen, wo ich manches Neue zugesetzt ü. vieles wesentlich besser dargestellt habe” (original emphasis).

or “list” to show “where *the French edition* shouldn’t be compared with the *German*, but the French text be used as the only basis.”⁸⁷

Although, in 1878, Marx wrote to Nikolaj F. Daniel’son that he felt “sometimes obliged—principally in the first chapter—to ‘aplatir’ [flatten] the matter,” we argue that the French edition can be used to interpret terminology in the two German editions that Marx published.⁸⁸ Marx made this comment in a letter addressing the content of a second Russian edition, where he added that the second German and French edition have to be compared because “the latter contains many important changes and additions” and that the text divisions of the French edition need to be used.⁸⁹ In a letter dated 28 November 1878, Marx came back to Daniel’son and again stressed the comparison between the French and second German edition of *Capital*, volume 1: “save the changes which the translator must make by comparing the second German edition with the French one—only a very few alterations are necessary, the which you will find later on in this letter.”⁹⁰

The second German and French editions of *Capital*, volume 1, consist of text that partially overlaps and diverges and can provide interpretive nuances when the two editions are compared. A case in point is the use of the verb *bedingen* in German (“determine”) versus the verb *dominer* in French (“dominate”) in the following passage in Chapter 1, on the relationship between the mode of production and other areas of life: “the mode of production of material life determines the social, political, and intellectual process of life in general” versus “the mode of production of material life generally dominates the development of social, political, and intellectual life.”⁹¹ The verb *bedingen* implies a stronger relationship between the mode of production and other life domains than *dominer*. Another example can be found in Part Three, Chapter 7, of the French edition: “The use or employment of labour power is labour,” versus the corresponding passage in Part Three, Chapter 5 in the second German edition: “The use of labour power is labour itself.”⁹² The sentence is more detailed in the French edition. Given these differences, it is

⁸⁷“wo nicht *die* [*das* in original] *frz. Ausgabe* mit der *deutschen* zu *vergleichen*, sondern wo der *französ. Text ganz* zu Grund gelegt werden muss” (original emphasis).

⁸⁸British Library, Add MS 38075, IISH C 146, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel’son, 15 Nov. 1878; CW, 45: 343–4; MEW, 34: 358–60; *Corr.*, 13: 293–5. Maximilien Rubel, *Karl Marx: Essai de biographie intellectuelle* (Paris, 2016), 247.

⁸⁹IISH D 995, Nikolaj F. Daniel’son to Karl Marx, 28 Oct. 1878.

⁹⁰Marx specified that “*The two first sections* (*‘Waare und Geld’* und *‘Die Verwandlung von Geld in Kapital’*[]) are to be translated exclusively from the *German text*.” Marx noted necessary changes in the letter. See British Library, Add MS 38075, IISH C 147, Karl Marx to Nikolaj F. Daniel’son, 28 Nov. 1878, MEW, 34: 362–3; CW, 45: 346–7; *Corr.*, 13: 296–8.

⁹¹“die Produktionsweise des materiellen Lebens den socialen, politischen und geistigen Lebensprozess überhaupt bedinge” versus “le mode de production de la vie matérielle domine en général le développement de la vie sociale, politique et intellectuelle.” Marx, *Das Kapital: Zweite verbesserte Auflage*, 60; Marx, *Le capital*, 32. See also Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie: Erstes Heft* (Berlin, 1859), v; Marx–Engels Gesamtausgabe, *Ökonomische Manuskripte und Schriften, 1858–1861* (MEGA² IL2) (Berlin, 1980), 100.

⁹²“L’usage ou l’emploi de la force de travail, c’est le travail,” versus the corresponding passage in Part Three, Ch. 5 in the second German edition: “Der Gebrauch der Arbeitskraft ist die Arbeit selbst.” Marx, *Das Kapital: Zweite verbesserte Auflage*, 163; Marx, *Le capital*, 76.

important to understand how the French edition came about and it turns out that the Paris Commune was an important context.

This article contributes to the broader literature on Marx by describing why and how the seemingly individual creative output of *Le capital* came into existence at that specific historical juncture. Considering the content of the French (or second German) edition without fully acknowledging the publishing process might give the false impression that a work is produced in a social vacuum or solely based on voluntaristic explanations. Besides a textual comparison, a contextualization of the publishing process of the French edition is necessary to understand to what extent and why this edition was different from the other volume 1 editions of *Capital*. Moreover, its context sheds light on topics in Marx's historiography that have been touched upon only in a fragmentary way. First, there is the significance of the French edition for the author, especially on the verge of publication of a second German edition. The start of the publishing process shows clearly that Marx was committed to bringing out a French translation of *Capital* at a time when a new German edition was being prepared, and it highlights his determination to oversee the process. Second, it illustrates how Marx found ways to publish his work in a hostile (international) environment. Third, it highlights the active contribution of Marx's family and friends to this initial phase of the published French edition, emphasizing that *Le capital* was a family endeavor.

Acknowledgements. We thank the editors and reviewers for their comments.