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150 years of the Paris Commune

# Marx's Commune: An Appreciation and a Critique

- Features -

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**The Paris Commune of 1871 only lasted from March 18 to May 28, just 72 days, yet it is one of the most celebrated events in socialist history. [1]** It is a legend. But, what was it? And what is it for us today? A model for socialists? A heroic failure? A negation of the state? Or the first workers' government?

Karl Marx, then a member of the leading council of the International Working Men's Association (or First International), gave the Commune his wholehearted and passionate approval. He also wrote the most famous contemporary account of the Commune, his magnificent essay *The Civil War in France*. Though the Commune had not been organized by and was not led by the International, though its leadership was largely in the hands of ideological rivals, the Blanquists and Proudhonians, though the workers' government failed to take the decisive action he thought necessary to defeat the capitalist class, and even though he recognized early on that the Commune was doomed to defeat, Marx did not hesitate to give it his complete support, to vindicate it, and to insist that the International support it; after it was crushed, he did not cease to defend its reputation and to commemorate it. He did so simply because he believed that the Paris Commune represented a democratic workers' government, the first such government ever. He was absolutely right to do so. Yet it is also the case that, as we will see, he failed to take up some of the Commune's serious problems. What issues did he decline to comment on? And why did he avoid them?

Marx writes in *The Civil War in France*, his principal interpretation of the Commune,

The Commune was formed of the municipal councilors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. [2]

In Friedrich Engels' introduction to Marx's essay, written on the twentieth anniversary of the Commune, he remarks that it was "the really democratic state." [3]

Marx praises the Commune's progressive measures: its abolition of conscription and the standing army, National Guard made up of the citizens in arms, confirmation of foreigners elected to the Commune, election of representatives and voters right to recall them, payment of workingmen's wages to Commune officials, separation of church and state, end of subsidies to the church, and nationalization of church property. He also mentions the destruction of the Vendôme Column, the monument erected by Napoleon I that was widely viewed as a symbol of chauvinism and militarism. [4] And he listed all of the labor measures as well, from the abolition of night work for bakers to an end to fines and withholding of wages, as well as turning over closed factories to the workers themselves. [5]

While all of those were important, Marx writes, "its true secret was this. It was essentially a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor." [6] It is that sentence that has captivated the imagination of all succeeding interpreters of the event: the notion of a workers' government that could emancipate labor. As he writes in another passage, "The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence. Its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people." [7] For Marx, the Commune clearly represented an example of a profoundly democratic workers' government.

## Marx Passes Over Some of the Commune's Problems

In writing on the Commune, Marx was under certain constraints that placed limits on his analysis. First, he wrote as a member of the First International's leadership council; consequently, he had to write in terms of the positions recently agreed upon at the International's last convention, positions that reflected the consensus among the loyalists of Joseph-Pierre Proudhon, the British trade unionists, and Marx's own followers in the group. He was thus writing not as Marx but as spokesperson for the International.

Second, while Marx was absolutely right to defend the Commune's democratic structure, he chose not to discuss some of its significant weaknesses. We can easily understand why he might have done so. First, while it was not published until June of 1871, *The Civil War in France* was written in April and May, before the Commune had been crushed by the Versailles army sent by Adolphe Thiers. No doubt Marx focused on defending the Commune because he knew it would face a vicious attack by the Versailles government, and because he believed it would in all likelihood be defeated. Marx was, naturally, concerned with the strategic questions facing the Commune, which he may have believed took precedence, in the moment, over questions of principle. In any case, reading Marx's account, it is clear that he avoids certain issues on which he had long had strong views.

## Women's Suffrage

For one, Marx, who generally took progressive positions on women's rights, failed to mention that the Commune's "universal suffrage" was in fact universal male suffrage. Half the adult population was excluded from the vote: the women. Also, since women were excluded from the National Guard, the largest and most important organization of the Commune, they could not vote in the Federation of the Guard either. During the period of the Commune, women did not express a desire for the vote, but we know that some women had demanded the vote in the French Revolutions of 1789 and many more in 1848; and we know, of course, that women's full political participation is essential to any genuinely democratic socialist society, as Marx agreed. For even though Marx failed to mention the female vote, he was already an advocate of women's political participation. And it is not surprising he would be, since it had for years been a major issue.

Women's political equality was, of course, not a new question. Olympe de Gouge's "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen" had been published in 1791 in France during the Revolution, while Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" was published in England in 1792; both had called for political equality and women's suffrage. During the Revolution of 1848, French women had demanded the right to vote, and attempted to do so. In May of 1867, John Stuart Mill gave his speech "On the Admission of Women to the Electoral Franchise" to the House of Commons of the British Parliament, whose debates Marx followed closely.

In the 1860s, Marx had already argued for women's equality in the International Workingmen's Association, which accepted women members. Marx himself made the motion for the formation of women's branches. [8] Elisabeth Dmitrieff, who left London for Paris to join the Commune and organized the Union of Women, was in fact sent as an agent of the International. We know from his letters that Marx was already a believer in women's political equality. For example, in a December 12, 1868, letter to his comrade, Dr. Louis Kugelmann, Marx wrote:

Tell your wife I never suspected her of being one of Generaless [sic] Geck's subordinates. My question was only intended as a joke. In any case ladies cannot complain of the International, for it has elected a lady, Madame Law, to be a member of the General Council. [9]

Joking aside, great progress was evident in the last Congress of the American "Labor Union" in that among other things, it treated working women with complete equality. While in this respect the English, and still more the gallant French, are burdened with a spirit of narrow-mindedness. Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment. Social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex (the ugly ones included). [10]

We can see that Marx, despite his joke in poor taste, believed in women's "complete equality" well before the Commune.

Not that long after the Commune, Engels wrote to his friend Ida Pauli:

When we get to the helm, women will not only vote, but also be elected and give speeches. The latter is already happening here in the school administration, and last November I gave all seven of my votes to a lady ... What makes the ladies on the local school boards stand out is the fact that they talk very little and work a lot, on average each as much as three men. [11]

Knowing the views of Marx and Engels in this period on the question of women's political equality, one has to assume that the two made a conscious decision in their contemporaneous and even in their later writings on the Commune not to take up the issue of the lack of women's suffrage in the Commune. Yet one has to think that it is precisely in a moment of such radical change in Paris that it was possible to raise such an issue, and that had women won the vote, that might have made the movement more democratic and perhaps more radical. And after the Commune had been defeated, there was no reason not to go back and point out that it had failed to enfranchise half the adult population.

## Other Democratic Questions

While the Commune was a government of the working people, it also had some other serious limitations that Marx did not discuss. Take the question of the Commune's meetings, which were held in secret. The justification for this was, as Communard Paschal Grousset put it, that they were "a council of war." Several Communards, however, criticized this stealthy practice and demanded, to no avail, that the meetings be public. Only after April 18 were the proceedings of the meetings published in the *Journal officiel*. [12] Marx praised the Commune for publishing a record of its activities, [13] but surely its publication was no substitute for open meetings that could be observed and made subject to popular control. As historian Jacques Rougerie writes, "The secrecy that surrounded the deliberations of the Commune could hardly have been accepted by the Parisian people who demanded 'direct' democracy and the control of the elected by those who elected them." [14]

Insiders also complained that the Commune engaged in endless and pointless discussions, in which its members were so often at odds with each other that business could not be conducted. To deal with this problem, the Commune elected a new Executive Committee made up of the heads of the various commissions, but this meant decisions were still made in closed meetings, just by an even smaller number of people. [15]

Another issue is the question of the repression of civil rights. As Rougerie observes, "The Commune experienced a real drift toward repression and that is surely the least sympathetic side of this popular adventure." [16] Raoul Rigault and other Blanquists took charge of the Commune's police force. Blanqui said that Rigault had "the soul of a policeman." Rigault and his men viewed everyone with suspicion, and they took as prisoners the archbishop, the judge of the court of appeals, several priests, and others. Note that they were simply held hostage, rather than charged and held for trial. The police also pillaged churches and some wealthy people's homes. As for freedom of the press, Rigault's police shut down thirty newspapers, most of them conservative, but also *The Commune*, which was edited by Jean-Baptiste Millière, a leftist critic of the Commune's errors. [17] Prosper Olivier Lissagaray had a somewhat different critique of the Blanquist police, charging them with being ineffective: "The culpable heedlessness, which the people have paid for with their blood, was the salvation of criminals." [18]

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The Commune proposed to be a moral revolution, and Rigault's police immediately put up signs that read "Death to Thieves." They arrested people for public drunkenness, stopped public gambling, shut down houses of prostitution, and when those women then turned to street walking, arrested 270 of them in one month. [19] Clearly most of those arrested would have been working-class and poor people. The worst action of the Blanquist-led police force was the pointless massacre of their hostages in the last days of the Commune, which imitated rather than rose above the pernicious example set by Versailles.

Another example of this drift toward a police state was the formation in May 1871 of the Committee of Public Safety. It was named, of course, for the original Committee of Public Safety established in 1793 during the French Revolution and responsible for overseeing the Terror, during which three hundred thousand were arrested, seventeen thousand were officially executed, and another ten thousand were unofficially killed or perished in prison. The motion to create a Committee of Public Safety divided the Commune into a majority of Blanquists, Jacobins, and Proudhonians, who were in favor, and a minority, mostly made up of Internationalists, who were against. Gustave Lefrançais, a member of the minority, wrote of the Commune debate on the Committee of Public Safety that it divided into:

the pure revolutionary party, composed of Jacobins and Blanquists, differentiated only by the fact that the former wanted the dictatorship of a group, while the second group wanted the dictatorship of a single person, to clear the terrain before proceeding to the reconstruction of a new order of things ... the socialists [on the other hand] were absolute adversaries of the notion of an authoritarian government; they were convinced that the social revolution could not be carried out until the existing political institutions had given way to new institutions having as their foundation communal autonomy. [20]

The final vote to establish the Committee of Public Safety in early May was 45 to 23. The minority was made up, says Rougerie, of the "authentic socialists," mostly members of the International. The minority issued a statement saying:

By a special and specific vote, the Commune of Paris, has abdicated its power, transferring it into the hands of a dictatorship which it has named Public Safety ...

We, like the majority, wish to carry out the political and social renovations, but unlike their way of thinking, we make our demands in the name of the voters whom we represent, with the right to answer alone for our acts before the voters, without having between us the authority of a supreme dictatorship, which our mandate neither permits us to accept or to recognize. [21]

The democratic socialists of the International rejected and repudiated the authoritarianism of the Commune's majority. The internationalists, believing in socialism from below, refused to accept the idea of a new society octroyed from above. [22]

After being reorganized on May 10-11, 1871, the Commune's Committee of Public Safety was made up almost entirely of Jacobins and Blanquists. On May 15, the majority of the Commune leadership declared itself to be the "revolutionary fraction" and proceeded to purge the minority. That is, the authoritarians purged the democratic socialists. The conjunction of the Jacobins' nostalgia for the great bloodletting of the 1790s and the Blanquists' predilection for police work never really got off the ground, since all attention had to be directed toward the military defense of Paris against Versailles.

We should note that in *The Civil War in France*, Marx himself never used the term "dictatorship of the proletariat." He only used it to describe the Commune at the October banquet on the seventh anniversary of the founding of the International Workingmen's Association. Scholar-activist Hal Draper argues that in using the term as a descriptor of the Commune, Marx never meant the use of special dictatorial powers, but simply the workers' democratic institutions. [23]

In *The Civil War in France*, written when Paris was under attack, Marx did not discuss these differences between the authoritarian majority and the democratic-socialist minority, though certainly he was well aware of them, being in regular contact with various representatives of the International in Paris. [24] During what was no doubt a moment of vulnerability, he did not want to discuss the Commune's internal divisions. Today, we have no reason to overlook them. We should, I believe, place ourselves on the side of the minority who opposed creating a dictatorship over the Commune's elected representatives.

## Could the Commune Have Been Saved?

Marx's strongest critique of the Commune, in fact, concerns a moment that preceded its formal declaration: the failure of the Central Committee of the Twenty Districts to attack Versailles before Thiers had concentrated his military forces there. Marx writes:

In their reluctance to continue the civil war opened by Thiers' burglarious attempt on Montmartre, the Central Committee made itself, this time, guilty of a decisive mistake in not at once marching upon Versailles, then completely helpless, and thus putting an end to the conspiracies of Thiers and his Rurals. [25]

Marx views this failure to strike at the opportune moment as one that permitted Thiers to strengthen his forces and launch another campaign against Paris in April. In fact, the Blanquists had put forward a motion for an attack on Versailles, but it was rejected by the majority of the committee.

While Marx's criticism is correct, one has to ask: What would then have happened had the Paris Commune carried the revolution to Versailles? Had it done so, Paris would have been spared immediate attack by Versailles, but surely the bourgeoisie would have organized, either under Thiers or another government and army, to undertake the crushing of the armed working people of Paris. The bourgeois government would have attempted to reach an accommodation with German chancellor Otto von Bismarck and have tried again to get him to invade Paris. The creation of another army would have necessitated the continued suppression of the communes springing up in other cities and winning the continued support of the rural population for the Thiers government. So, this question takes us to another, that of the peasantry who formed two-thirds of the French population. Could the Commune have survived by winning over the peasantry?

Marx, in his 1852 essay "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," had, in what became a very famous passage, discussed the French peasantry as it was at that time:

The small-holding peasants form an enormous mass whose members live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with each other. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is furthered by France's poor means of communication and the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small holding, permits no division of labor in its cultivation, no application

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of science, and therefore no multifariousness of development, no diversity of talent, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient, directly produces most of its consumer needs, and thus acquires its means of life more through an exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. A small holding, the peasant and his family; beside it another small holding, another peasant and another family. A few score of these constitute a village, and a few score villages constitute a department. Thus, the great mass of the French nation is formed by the simple addition of homonymous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. [26]

And what are the political implications of this? He draws them out:

Insofar as millions of families live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests forms no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not constitute a class. They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or a convention. They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, an unlimited governmental power which protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power which subordinates society to itself. [27]

This was the basis of the political power of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon III); the peasants had received their land from the French Revolution, which they identified with his uncle Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon I), and therefore they transferred their loyalty to him.

Had the peasantry changed enough by 1870 that it could be won over to working-class leadership, to a labor party, to deeper reform, and possibly to a new revolution?

Things had changed some. France had been building railroads since 1852, and by 1870 the basic framework of the national railway system was already in place. Railroads made possible the commercialization of the peasants' crops, tending to create greater inequality in the countryside, a growth in the number of large farmers, a reduction of some peasants to agricultural laborers, and the migration of some laborers to the cities. The larger farmers tended to lead the smaller ones, while the Catholic Church provided the cultural glue to keep the peasantry together as a bloc. [28] The question is, could the Commune have reached these peasants and won them to support the democratic, social Republic?

Marx argued in *The Civil War in France* that indeed the Commune could have won over the peasants with fundamentally economic arguments regarding taxes and tithes. He writes:

*The Commune ... in one of its first proclamations declared that the true originators of the war would be made to pay its costs. The Commune would have delivered the peasant of the blood tax would have given him a cheap government transformed his present bloodsuckers, the notary, advocate, executor, and other judicial vampires, into salaried communal agents, elected by and responsible to himself. It would have freed him of the tyranny of the garde champêtre, the gendarme and the prefect; would have put enlightenment by the school master in the place of stultification by the priest. [29]*

Indeed, Marx goes so far as to claim that "three months communication of Communal Paris with the provinces would



bring about a general rising of the peasants." [\[30\]](#)

Marx's view that the peasantry could be won away from conservative political parties (Bonapartist, Royalist, and Liberal) in just a few months of propagandizing by the Commune seems overly optimistic. The countryside's new wealthy farmers, its bourgeoisie, and its officials, though a minority, would have waged their own propaganda war to turn the peasantry against Paris' usurious bankers, landowners, and other elites, and especially against the socialists and communists who wanted to socialize property and redistribute wealth, including the peasants' land. The bourgeoisie would have railed against the atheists, who wanted to destroy the church. It seems a stretch of the imagination to think that in a few months, or even in a year or two, the Commune could lead a national uprising of the peasantry in a country where the peasants already owned their own land for three or four generations, in fact. Moreover, peasant incomes whether of landowners, tenants, or laborers had improved somewhat under the Second Empire. Bumper crops and integration into the national economy, thanks to the railroads, had led to a general prosperity; and while some were still quite poor, in general the peasants had become "a kind of middle class." [\[31\]](#) Could this new "middle-class" peasantry have been won to a worker-led revolution?

If Marx is right about the potentiality of the Commune to lead the peasants, and if a new revolutionary government could have been established, then the next fight would have been with the great powers of Europe, which, just as they did in the 1790s, would join together to crush the Parisian workers. Prussia is already at the gates of the city. England could land forces in Dunkirk. The Low Countries could invade from the north. Could the Commune, now a national workers' and peasants' movement, have survived? Would there have been the necessary international solidarity? Would an international revolutionary wave sweep the continent, such as had taken place in 1848, and would happen again in 1918? The odds seem long, given that between 1848 and 1918, the Paris Commune was the only major revolutionary workers' movement in Europe. Not until the period from 1905 to 1910 do we see Europe-wide radical democratic and socialist movements. All of this is very speculative, of course, and doesn't detract from Marx's analysis, but it does lead us to wonder whether the Commune, even had it attacked Versailles, as Marx thought necessary, could have been saved and could have succeeded in the longer term.

## Smashing the State

Marx believed that the experience of the Commune taught the workers' and socialist movements many things, but the most important was the idea that workers could not take over and use the capitalist state, but rather that the state would have to be smashed and a new democratic workers' state created in its place. In April 1871, Marx wrote to Louis Kugelmann:

If you look at the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it, and this is essential for every real people's revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting. [\[32\]](#)

What was the state to which Marx referred? It was, in his words, "the centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature." [\[33\]](#) In other passages, Marx refers to this as the "parasite state," which lives off the society that it oppresses.

As we know, the Parisian workers had not actually had to smash this state because much of the state bureaucracy and the army had been removed to Versailles. The old police force had remained behind to deal with the situation,

but with Paris in rebellion, it quickly became clear that it could not. As Rougerie wrote, by February, "all authority in Paris was gradually dissolving." It was this crumbling of the state in Paris that made it possible for the Parisian workers to create their own democratic state institutions such as the Central Committee of the Districts, the Federation of the National Guard, and then the Commune, as well as a new police force.

The Central Committee and the Commune passed resolutions abolishing the standing army and reorganizing the old police, and they created new commissions to replace the old bureaucracy, but they did not smash the state; in Paris, by then, there was little state to smash, because it had fled to Versailles. As we know, the state subsequently returned to Paris to retake power.

## Could the Commune Have Led to Socialism?

Marx argued that the Commune "intended to abolish class-property," the cause of exploitation. He asked the Commune's bourgeois critics, who argued that communism was impossible, "What else, gentlemen, would it be but Communism, 'possible' Communism?" [34] Engels in his 1891 introduction to *The Civil War in France* elaborates, writing:

By 1871, large-scale industry had already so much ceased to be an exceptional case even in Paris, the center of artistic handicrafts, that by far the most important decree of the Commune instituted an organization of large-scale industry and even of manufacture which was not only to be based on the association of the workers in each factory, but also to combine all these associations in one great union; in short, an organization which as Marx quite rightly says in *The Civil War*, must necessarily have led in the end to communism. [35]

Does it really seem likely that the Commune might have led to communism? In fact, large-scale industry did not exist in Paris at the time, except in a handful of enterprises; the unions did not, at the time, accomplish the creation of a "great union"; and, it is not at all clear that the momentum existed to establish a socialist society that would have ended in communism. [36]

While Marx and Engels may have believed that the Commune's thrust would lead to communism, if pressed, they would have had to admit that, in fact, it had not abolished private property in the means of production and had only seized a few national enterprises like tobacco, and that only a few workplaces had been abandoned by their owners. He may be right that, had the Commune had more time and had it become a successful national movement, it would have established a socialist society, "possible Communism." It does not seem, however, that this was possible. What both the study of the Commune's history and a review of Marx's analysis suggest is that the Commune's great achievements were fundamentally democratic and not socialist.

Marx himself was actually not nearly as sanguine as Engels. In a February 1881 letter to Dutch socialist Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis regarding populist governments, Marx stated:

Perhaps you will refer me to the Paris Commune; but apart from the fact that this was merely the rising of a city under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in no wise socialist, nor could it be. With a modicum of common sense, however, it could have reached a compromise with Versailles useful to the whole mass of the people that only thing that could be reached at the time. The appropriation of the Bank of France alone would have been enough to put an end with the terror to the vaunt of the Versailles people, etc., etc. [37]

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Marx had, to his credit, defended the revolutionary workers of Paris when they rose up against the bourgeois government of Thiers, but upon reflection almost a decade later, he saw no possibility of socialism or victory. Seizing the Bank of France would have given the Commune a negotiating chip with which to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict, saving thousands of lives and allowing the Parisians to fight another day for their social republic, for their Commune. Political theorist Stathis Kouvelakis suggests that this represented part of a more general rejection of the notion of armed revolution in favor of a parliamentary struggle for power in republics such as England, France, and Germany, reserving force for the fight for democracy and socialism under authoritarian governments. [38]

Socialists today should learn from both the successes and failures of the Commune. We should emulate the democratic achievements, the creation of organizations of workers to take over and run institutions, and we should strive to reproduce and extend that sort of democratic accomplishment. The Commune created a workers' administration, but a real workers' state never fully emerged. The Commune unlike the Russian Revolution of October 1917 never had the opportunity to face the more difficult challenges of establishing a democratic collectivist state and society that might open the way to communism.

Perhaps Marx, as spokesperson for the International, could not speak in his own voice. And no doubt he was also concerned not to criticize the Commune while it was under attack and, he feared, about to be crushed. So he hesitated to discuss some of the Commune's problematic issues. Today, 150 years later, we have no reason not to discuss them; in fact, we have a responsibility to do so.

Source: [New Politics](#).

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[1] In writing this essay I have relied principally on three books by Jacques Rougerie: *Paris Libre 1871* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1971); *La Commune et les Communards* (Paris: Editions Gallimard 2018) (Rougerie); and *La commune de 1871, "Que sais-je ?,"* no. 581 (Paris: PUF, 2019). On women in the Commune, I have turned to Carolyn J. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades: Women in the Paris Commune* (Indiana University Press, 2004). See also interview with Mathilde Larrère, "[They were all the more monstrous because they were women, they transgressed everything](#)" International Viewpoint, March 27, 2021, and video interview with Larrère, March 30, 2021 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\\_q3T1x\\_Vlw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_q3T1x_Vlw) (in French).

[2] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Writing on the Paris Commune*, Hal Draper, ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 73. (Hereafter: Draper edition.)

[3] Friedrich Engels, "[1891 Introduction to The Civil War in France](#)", online in Marxist Internet Archive.

[4] Draper edition, 73-75.

[5] Draper edition, 81.

[6] Draper edition, 76.

[7] Draper edition, 81.

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[8] Hal Draper, "[Marx and Engels on Women's Liberation](#)" in *International Socialism*, S1, no.44 (July/August 1970).

[9] Harriet Law, a Marxist, was an advocate of women's suffrage.

[10] Karl Marx, *Letters to Kugelmann* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), 83.

[11] Friedrich Engels to Ida Pauli, February 14, 1877, in *Marx-Engels Werke*, vol. 34 (Dietz Verlag 1973, 253).

[12] Rougerie, 37.

[13] Draper Edition, 83.

[14] Rougerie, 37.

[15] Rougerie, 38.

[16] Rougerie, 47: "Par ailleurs la situation l'exigeait-elle à ce point ? la Commune connut une réelle dérive policière, et c'est la côte assurément le moins sympathique de cette aventure populaire."

[17] Rougerie, 47-48.

[18] Prosper Olivier Lissagaray, [History of the Paris Commune of 1871](#), Eleanor Marx, trans. Online at Marxist Internet Archive. Chapter XVIII "The work of the Commune".

[19] Rougerie, 48.

[20] Gustave Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste à Paris en 1871* (Neuchâtel, 1871), 189-90, cited in Rougerie, *La Commune et les Communards*, 255-56, 406n.

[21] Rougerie, 287.

[22] According to Stathis Kouvelakis, Marx agreed with neither of the majority nor the minority.

[23] Hal Draper, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Marx to Lenin* (Monthly Review, 1987), 1-41. Available online in Marxist Internet Archive [here](#).

[24] Stathis Kouvelakis, "[On the Commune](#)," part 1, Verso blog, March 29, 2021, Kouvelakis argues that Marx and Engels, even though they were not in Paris, should be considered participants in the Commune.

[25] Draper edition, 67.

[26] Karl Marx, "[The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte](#)" (1852), online in Marxist Internet Archive).

[27] Marx, "Eighteenth Brumaire."

[28] Alain Plessis, *The Rise and Fall of the Second Empire, 1852-1871* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 108-10.

[29] Draper edition, 79.

[30] Draper edition, 80.

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[31] Plessis, Rise and Fall of the Second Empire, 108-10.

[32] Marx, Letters to Louis Kugelmann, p. 123.

[33] Marx, "[Third Address](#)", May 1871.

[34] Draper edition, 76-77.

[35] Draper edition, 31

[36] Rougerie, *Paris Libre 1871*, 9-13. Unions played a role, but the Chambres des Métiers were more important. There was no "one big union."

[37] Karl Marx to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, February 22, 1881, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 337-39.

[38] Stathis Kouvélakis, "[On the Paris Commune.](#)" [part 3](#), Verso blog, April 3, 2021,