The Meaning of Class Struggle: Marx and the 1848 June Days

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Abstract: Karl Marx characterised the 1848 June Days uprising as a class struggle between proletarians and the bourgeoisie. But modern investigations have shown that the insurgents actually consisted primarily of artisans and not proletarians. They have also undermined Marx's claim that one of the primary forces used to defeat the insurgency, the Mobile Guard, was recruited from the lumpenproletariat, when in fact they shared the same social background as the insurgents. As a result of these findings, critics have questioned the adequacy of Marx's class analysis and concluded that he was wrong to describe the June Days as a class struggle. I argue that the empirical findings represent serious shortcoming in Marx's account and need to be properly incorporated into our understanding of the uprising. However, I challenge the characterisation of Marx's class analysis and show that though the June Days were not the class struggle that Marx presented, they were still a class struggle in his understanding of what class struggle means.

Keywords: Karl Marx, class, class struggle, June Days, Journées de Juin, 1848 French Revolution, artisans, proletarians, lumpenproletariat, petty bourgeoisie, Mobile Guard.

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I
Introduction

Our view of the working-class insurrection that consumed Paris in June 1848 was long shaped by one of its most influential contemporary interpreters.[2] Writing two years after the events in question, Karl Marx characterised the uprising, subsequently known as the *journées de juin* or June Days, as a class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, describing it as 'the first great battle [that] was fought between the two classes that split modern society'.[3]

This portrayal of the June Days has, however, come under intense critical scrutiny on a number of fronts from a broad array of scholars. In his recent and much noted biography of Marx, Gareth Stedman Jones harshly criticises Marx's account on the basis of this accumulated research, and he elsewhere accuses Marx of offering 'no solid evidence of the existence of a class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie' and having instead resorted to 'fiction'.[4] That judgment has increasingly become the scholarly consensus. The purpose of this article is to review and evaluate the criticisms underlying it. I argue that the empirical criticisms of Marx's account of the June Days are correct and need to be properly appreciated and incorporated into our understanding of the uprising. However, I also argue that the theoretical criticisms drawn from these empirical findings are often misguided; in part because critics tend to rely on simplified accounts of Marx's class analysis that have become detached from his actual writings on the June Days. Reengaging with these writings, in the light of modern research, allows for a more nuanced assessment of Marx's account of the June Days. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of 'probably the idea most closely identified with Karl Marx', [5] and certainly one of the central elements of his thought: the idea of class struggle.

I begin with an overview of the events of the June Days and Marx's analysis of those events (section II). I then outline the main criticisms of Marx's account (sections III-V). The first criticises Marx for describing the insurgents as

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[2] Titles of Marx's works are given in the original language of publication and references are to the *Marx Engels Werke* (Berlin, 1956–2018), henceforth *MEW*; and the *Marx Engels Collected Works* (London, 1975–2005), henceforth *MECW*. Where necessary I refer to the more authoritative but less accessible *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin, 1975–), henceforth *MEGA*②.

[3] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 31; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 67.

[4] See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London, 2016), pp. 309–10; and 'Elusive Signifiers: 1848 and the Language of "Class Struggle"', in *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*, ed. Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones (Cambridge, 2018), p. 449.

[5] Alex Callinicos, 'Class Struggle', in *The Marx Revival: Key Concepts and New Critical Interpretations*, ed. Marcello Musto (Cambridge, 2020), p. 92.

proletarians when they were in fact overwhelmingly artisans. The second disputes Marx's claim that one of the primary forces used to supress the uprising, the Mobile Guard, was recruited from the lumpenproletariat when they actually shared the same social background as the insurgents and that consequently Marx's class analysis cannot adequately explain the Mobile Guard's loyalty to the regime. On the basis of these findings, critics have concluded that Marx was wrong to describe the June Days as a class struggle.

Having set out the main criticisms I turn to evaluating them in turn (sections VI-IX). I first concur with the finding that the June insurgents were primarily composed of artisans and consider why Marx incorrectly identified them as proletarians. I then further agree with the evidence that the Mobile Guard were not recruited from the lumpenproletariat, but I question the characterisation of Marx's class analysis. Finally, I argue that though the empirical findings have shown that the June Days were not the class struggle that Marx presented, they were still a class struggle under his theoretical conception of class struggle. For Marx, class struggle meant conflict between classes in pursuit of their respective class interests and it incorporated the possibility of the state acting on behalf of the dominant class and recruiting part of the subordinate class to its cause.

As a point of clarification, when I refer to 'workers' or the 'working class', I mean in it the loose sense of urban manual labourers. This consequently lumps together those who, in Marx's class analysis, would be classed separately as *proletarians* (those who have no means of production and have to sell their labour-power for wages) and *artisans* (those who own their means of production and employ little or no wage-labour). The looser usage adopted in this article is in line with general political and social discourse at the time of the June Days, where proletarians and artisans (including master artisans who engaged other labourers) were all referred to as, and understood themselves to be, workers. In contrast, Marx generally used 'workers' and 'working class' interchangeably with 'proletarians', and by that he meant those who met the criteria of a proletarian outlined above. The advantage of including both artisans and proletarians in the larger category of workers (for the purposes of this article), is that it allows for a more accurate description of the participants in the June Days and clarifies some of Marx's linguistic and conceptual innovations. Specifically, as I discuss in section VI, it reveals how Marx displaced artisans from the category of workers into the category of the petty bourgeoisie. We should bear in mind that all of these categories and terms were in a conceptual flux at the time

of Marx's writings, and that even 'proletarian' was in 1848 still sometimes used in an older more encompassing sense that included artisans and even peasants.[6]

II
Marx's Account of the June Days

In order to understand the June Days uprising we have to go to back to the start of the 1848 French Revolution, which broke out in February of that year.[7] The most important social concession the workers forced onto the newly established Second Republic was a commitment to the 'right to work' and its instantiation through the National Workshops. This was essentially a public works programme, which paid workers a small daily wage to work on projects such as reinforcing earthworks and rebuilding roads. Though only a pale imitation of Louis Blanc's proposed state-funded, co-operative Social Workshops, the National Workshops provided a crucial stopgap for the huge population of unemployed workers in Paris's severely depressed economy. Initially designed to sign up only 10,000 workers, the National Workshops mushroomed to over 100,000 with another 50,000 on the waiting list.

The Workshops quickly became the target of conservatives, who saw them as a breeding ground for socialism and an unacceptable burden on public finances. (The Workshops had in fact effectively managed to co-opt the workers into supporting the regime and the costs involved were comparable to the sums the new Republic spent on recruiting the much smaller body of Mobile Guards to defend it).[8] After a sustained conservative campaign, (which also found support amongst the peasantry resentful at the taxes being used to support unemployed urban workers), the government finally published the decree dissolving the Workshops on 21 June. Outraged and desperate workers attempted to petition the government the next day, arguing that without the Workshops they faced destitution and starvation. However, the government remained intransigent, and consequently insurgents erected the first barricades on Friday morning 23 June.

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[6] The narrower definition employed by Marx dates from the late 1830s, see the overlooked study by R. B. Rose, '*Prolétaires* and *Prolétariat*: Evolution of a Concept, 1789-1848', *Australian Journal of French Studies* 18, no. 1 (1981): esp, 298-99.

[7] Comprehensive accounts of the June Days can be found in Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (New York, 2002), pp. 294–318; and Maurizio Gribaudi and Michèle Riot-Sarcey, *1848, la rèvolution oubliée* (Paris, 2008), pp. 181–250.

[8] Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 145–46; Jonathan M. House, *Controlling Paris: Armed Forces and Counter-Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York and London, 2014), p. 103.

The government handed emergency powers to General Eugène Cavaignac, who withdrew his troops to the outskirts of the city to avoid dispersing them and leaving them vulnerable to disarmament (as had occurred in February). Cavaignac had three main sets of troops available to him: 25,000 soldiers from the regular army, 15,000 Mobile Guards, and some 18,000 militia from the National Guard (out of a notional force of 237,000, with the vast majority of National Guardsmen staying at home or joining the insurgency, especially those based in the poorer eastern parts of the city). The number of insurgents ranged against Cavaignac's forces has often been estimated at around 40,000-50,000; but a more realistic figure may be closer to 10,000-15,000.[9] The two sides fought a ferocious and bloody set of battles over the next four days, with the authorities deploying cannon to break through and then storm the barricades. Outmanned, outgunned, the insurgents' final barricade succumbed on Monday 26 June. Summary executions of insurgents by enraged troops continued over the following days. How many died in the fighting is hard to establish and estimates in the literature vary, but in addition to the nearly 1,300 casualties (killed and wounded) on the side of the authorities, a minimum of 1,400 and perhaps as high as 3,000-4000 insurgents were killed.[10]

Marx received news of the uprising in Cologne, where he was editing the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, and he and Friedrich Engels immediately set out to defend the workers in the newspaper's editorials. They boldly declared that it was 'the *greatest revolution that has ever taken place*…a *revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie*'[11] (a position that put the paper at odds with much of the rest of European radical opinion, which saw the uprising as an illegitimate assault on a democratically elected government).[12] Two years later, when Marx had been forced into exile in London, he set out to account for the course and failure of the Revolution in a revived journal version of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (now subtitled *Politsch-ökonomische Revue*). He produced a three-part series of articles, entitled simply '1848 bis 1850' (1848 to 1850), which form his most extensive discussion of the June Days. These articles were republished by

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[9] Charles Tilly and Lynn H. Lees, 'The People of June, 1848', in *Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the Second French Republic*, ed. Richard Price (London and New York, 1975), pp. 185–86; Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 201-202n21.

[10] Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago and London, 1995), p. 49; Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2005), p. 212; Tilly and Lees, 'People of June', p. 186.

[11] Marx and Engels, 'Nachrichten aus Paris', *MEW*, vol. 5, p. 116; *MECW*, vol. 7, p. 128 (joint authorship attribution in *MEGA*②, vol. I.7, p. 193).

[12] Marx may have consequently used a subsequent speech to row back on his earlier support, see Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York and London, 2013), pp. 226–27; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, pp. 271–72.

Engels in 1895 and given the title by which the text has been known ever since: *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich* (The Class Struggles in France).[13]

Marx's account of the June Days tried to show that despite the workers' bloody defeat an important historical advance had been achieved, one which carried the seeds of their future victory. He argued that the repression of the uprising had destroyed the workers' illusions about the republic and marked their first real independent foray onto the revolutionary stage. He thus maintained that even though the working class was in 1848 not yet advanced enough to 'carry out its own revolution', the uprising had helped create the conditions for an eventual successful 'social revolution of the nineteenth century'.[14] Marx believed that this social revolution would be the outcome of a protracted social and political struggle that pitted the proletariat against bourgeoisie, and hence his influential statement that the June Days were 'the first great battle [that] was fought between the two classes that split modern society'.[15] Marx was not the only one amongst his contemporaries to understand the June Days in these terms. Alexis de Tocqueville may not have shared Marx's political position or view of history, but he too saw the June Days as 'a class combat, a sort of slave war'.[16] (As we shall see in section V, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that one or both of these quotes from Marx and Tocqueville features in every historical overview of the June Days).

Marx located the immediate cause of the class struggle behind the June Days in the National Workshops: in the threat their closure posed to the workers and the threat their existence posed to the bourgeoisie. The former, because the workers would 'starve' without them; the latter, because 'the national *ateliers* were the embodied protest of the proletariat against bourgeois industry, bourgeois credit and the bourgeois republic. The whole hate of the bourgeoisie was, therefore, turned upon them.'[17] But Marx also maintained that the June Days were not simply a struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but that the latter found significant support amongst the petty bourgeoise. He claimed that 'No one had fought more fanatically in the June days for the salvation of property and the restoration of credit than the Parisian petty

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[13] Engels also added a fourth section to the text, which he took from a jointly written piece with Marx that had also appeared in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung: Politische-ökonomische Revue*, see 'Revue. Mai bis Oktober 1850', *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 421-63; *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 490-532.
[14] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 20, 34; *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 56, 70.
[15] *Ibid*., *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 31; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 67.
[16] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Luc Monnier, vol. 12 (Paris, 1964), pp. 207-208; *Recollections: The French Revolution of 1848 and Its Aftermath*, ed. Olivier Zunz, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Charlottesville, 2016), p. 97.
[17] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 27; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 63.

bourgeois—keepers of cafés and restaurants, *marchands de vins*, small traders, shopkeepers, handicraftsmen, etc.'[18] Note here the inclusion of artisans, the 'handicraftsmen', in the list of petty bourgeois occupations.

The other significant aspect of Marx's account is his description of the Mobile Guard – a paramilitary force that had been set up after the February Revolution to defend the Republic from insurrection.[19] In the weeks leading up to the June Days there had been considerable speculation over whether the Mobile Guards would support the government, because they had been recruited primarily from Paris's working class and especially from those that had manned the barricades in February.[20] The fact that they stayed loyal to the government and even enthusiastically joined in the repression came as something of a surprise to the city's bourgeoisie and was bitterly resented by workers and radicals. Marx's explanation for why the Mobile Guard sided with the government, following an argument first made by Engels in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*,[21] was that though the Guardsmen were recruited from the proletariat they were in fact from its *lumpenproletariat* elements. Marx argued that because the government could not rely on the regular army and the National Guard,

> [t]here consequently remained but one way out: *to play off one part of the proletariat against the other*…For this purpose the Provisional Government formed 24 battalions of Mobile Guards, each a thousand strong, composed of young men from 15 to 20 years. They belonged for the most part to the *lumpenproletariat,* which in all big towns forms a mass sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds, *gens sans feu et sans aveu,* [men without hearth or home]…And so the Paris proletariat was confronted with an army, drawn from its own midst.[22]

Marx here describes the lumpenproletariat as forming '*one part*' of the proletariat and at the same time insists that it is 'sharply differentiated' from the main part of the proletariat, the industrial proletariat. While the industrial proletariat are proper workers engaged in wage-labour the lumpenproletariat are in essence a dispossessed social underclass without any fixed employment. It is from this distinguishable part of the proletariat that Marx claims the Mobile Guard were

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[18] *Ibid*., *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 37-38; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 74.
[19] For further discussion of the Mobile Guard, see House, *Controlling Paris*, chapter 5; and Laura O'Brien, '*Cette Nouvelle Transformation du gamin de Paris*: The Figures of the Mobile Guard and Vivandières in Popular Culture in 1848', *French History*, 25 (3) (2011), pp. 337–61.
[20] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 45–53.
[21] Engels, 'Der 25. Juni', *MEW*, vol. 5, p. 131; *MECW*, vol. 7, pp. 142-43
[22] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 26; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 62.

recruited, with the strong implication (though he does not explicitly say so) that this is what explains their actions in the June Days.

Marx's account of the June Days, and the wider 1848 Revolution, ranks as perhaps the most influential explanation of events. One historian writes that commenting on Marx's portrayal of the June Days and the wider period of the Second Republic 'became obligatory for any twentieth-century scholar writing about the French working class. Nearly all of the research on the Second Republic has been to some extent a commentary on Marx's interpretations.'[23] Marx's account has consequently been subjected to multiple critical studies, which have chipped away at some of the interpretation's central contentions and attempted to challenge its overarching theoretical framework. The following sections (III-V) provide an overview of the main criticisms that have been made of Marx's account, leaving evaluation of those criticisms to the ensuing sections (VI-IX).

III
Criticisms of Marx's Account: The Class Composition of the June Insurgents

In 1848, outside of Britain and a few scattered regions across Belgium, France and Germany with concentrations of large-scale steam-powered industry, the working class of Europe still consisted overwhelmingly of artisans and not proletarians.[24] These artisans tended to be highly-skilled, owned their own tools and worked either alone or in small workshops with a minimal division of labour. In Paris at the time, half of all workshops had just one owner or one assistant, and the average number of workers in an industrial establishment was just over five per workshop.[25] Larger factories did exist in Paris, employing some 30,000 workers across the Seine, and were an expanding form of production, but they remained a minor part of the overall Parisian economy.[26]

A long series of investigations has shown that it was this overwhelmingly artisanal working class that supplied the backbone of the insurgent forces in

[23] Casey Harison, *The Stonemasons of Creuse in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Newark, 2008), p. 165.
[24] Sperber, *European Revolutions*, pp. 12–20; William H. Sewell Jr., 'Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789-1848', in *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (Princeton, 1986), 45–70.
[25] Roger Price, *The French Second Republic: A Social History* (London, 1972), p. 166; Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 7–8.
[26] Tilly and Lees, 'People of June', p. 175.

June.[27] These studies have been based on the records of the nearly 12,000 people arrested for suspected involvement in the uprising.[28] The arrest records provide a wealth of information on the insurgents and allow for a detailed categorisation of their occupational and sectoral background. (They do not record the size of the workshop or factory of the person arrested, which is one of the better markers of likely proletarian or artisanal class background and means that conclusions about this background have to be inferred from what we know about the composition of particular industrial sectors from contemporaneous studies of the Parisian labour force).[29]

The most statistically sophisticated study of the arrest records is the 1975 study by Charles Tilly and Lynn H. Lees. They found that the typical insurgent was a male, artisan worker, between twenty and forty years old, resident in eastern Paris, very likely a member of either the National Guard or National Workshops and drawn from the metal, building, furniture or clothing trades.[30] While Tilly and Lees thus concluded that it was not 'a factory proletariat [that] made the June Days revolt', they did find a correlation between sectors with larger workplaces and participation in the insurgency, and they stressed that the June Days involved an 'increasingly proletarianized labour force'.[31] In an earlier study, George Rudé similarly argued that the majority of the insurgents could not plausibly be described as proletarians, but also emphasized that the effect of mechanisation and industrialisation did differentiate the working-class insurgents from previous Parisian insurrections – evidenced by the more than 300 machine workers and railway workers amongst the arrested.[32] The studies thus show a dual conclusion, that while the insurgent workers of 1848 were certainly not an industrial proletariat, neither were they the *sans-culottes* of 1793.[33]

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[27] Rémi Gossez, 'Diversité des antagonismes sociaux vers le milieu du XIXe siècle', *Revue économique*, 7 (3) (1956), pp. 439–58; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964), pp. 175–78; Price, *The French Second Republic*, pp. 155-92; Tilly and Lees, 'People of June'.

[28] The arrest records have now been digitised in an invaluable online database, see Jean-Claude Farcy, Rosine Fry, *Inculpés de l'insurrection de Juin 1848*, Centre Georges Chevrier - (Université de Bourgogne/CNRS), accessed 24 September 2020: http://inculpes-juin-1848.fr/index.php

[29] Price, *French Second Republic*, pp. 163–64; Tilly and Lees, 'People of June', pp. 193–94. For the challenges in transferring occupational titles in French census data into Marxist class categories, see Ronald Aminzade, 'A Marxist Approach to Occupational Classification', Working Paper No. 132 (Ann Arbor: Center for Research on Social Organization, 1976).

[30] Tilly and Lees, 'People of June', p. 190

[31] *Ibid*., pp. 176, 190, 193–94, 202. That correlation is, however, disputed by Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 222-24n60.

[32] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 177.

[33] I owe this congenial phrasing to one of the referees.

The arrest records also allow us to come to firmer judgements regarding the involvement of other social classes in the insurgency. Roger Price finds that 9.71% of those arrested came from lower middle-class professions, such as clerks, tavern owners and shopkeepers. (His figures indicate a further 9.5% from other backgrounds, including students (0.33%), lumpenproletarians (2.55%), police, Mobile Guardsmen and soldiers (3.26%), and assorted others and unspecified (3.36%), leaving some 80% from working-class professions).[34] This was a lower rate of middle-class participation than the more heterogenous class coalition that had manned the barricades in previous Parisian insurrections, with a notable decline amongst students and middle-class republican leaders.[35] But Price argues that it is higher than Marx's comments on petty bourgeois involvement would lead us to believe. Price thus concludes that 'Marx's characterization of the struggle [is] overly simple' and that,

> To describe it [the June Days] as 'proletarian'…[is] inaccurate. This was a revolt of the poorer elements of the Parisian population, of the 'people', the small shopkeepers, tavernkeepers and patrons of workshops as well as the artisans, labourers and, given the structure of the Parisian industry, of only a relatively small number of factory workers.[36]

IV
Criticisms of Marx's Account: The Class Composition of the Mobile Guard

Marx's claim that the Mobile Guard was recruited primarily from the lumpenproletariat, and that this was distinguishable from the working class that made up the insurgents, has also been subjected to several critical investigations. As a result of these studies, historians now generally conclude that 'Marx's lumpenproletariat thesis is untenable in its most extreme formulation'.[37]

The most extensive and sophisticated investigation of the Mobile Guard is Mark Traugott's 1985 study *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848*.[38] The originality of Traugott's investigation lay in the comparison he was able to make between three sources: the arrest records of the June insurgents, a representative sample of Mobile

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[34] Price, *French Second Republic*, pp. 164–65.
[35] Harsin, *Barricades*, p. 314; Tilly and Lees, 'People of June', p. 192.
[36] Price, *The French Second Republic*, pp. 165–66, 188.
[37] Roger Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class*, vol. 1: The Age of Artisan Revolution, 1815–1871 (Oxford, 1992), p. 146.
[38] See also, the important work by Pierre Caspard, 'Aspects de la lutte des classes en 1848: le recrutement de la garde nationale mobile', *Revue Historique*, 511 (1974), pp. 81-106.

Guard recruits drawn from the enlistment records of six battalions, and data on the occupational make-up of the Parisian working class in 1848 provided by an important inquiry carried out by the Paris Chamber of Commerce.[39] By coding the Mobile Guard sample using the occupational categories of the Chamber of Commerce study, Traugott was able to compare the recruits with the wider Parisian working class (Table 1); and by applying Tilly and Lees' occupational categorisation to the Mobile Guard recruits, he could directly compare the occupational background of the recruits to the June insurgents (Table 2).

[Please insert Table 1 and 2 around here]

Traugott argues that studying these pairwise comparisons shows a striking similarity in their occupational structure. A few minor discrepancies aside, Traugott notes that the Mobile Guard matched the 'socioeconomic distribution of the Parisian working class at large' and that its recruits were 'essentially indistinguishable from the insurgents themselves'.[40] Statistical analysis also reveals little or no correlation between participation in the Mobile Guard and such lumpenproletariat markers as low salary, illiteracy or those living in transient accommodation.[41] Furthermore, examining the enlistment records, Traugott finds that even using a broad understanding of lumpenproletarian background (such as itinerant peddlers, scrap-metal dealers, ragpickers and market porters) only 3% of the Mobile Guard sample can be described in these terms, and that there is hence 'no support for the contention that the Mobile Guard consisted *predominantly* of lumpenproletarians'.[42] Traugott thus concludes that Marx's lumpenproletariat thesis is deeply flawed: the Mobile Guard were not primarily lumpenproletarians and they shared essentially the same social background as the June insurgents.

In addition to finding Marx's account to be 'empirically inaccurate', Traugott further maintains that it is 'theoretically unsatisfactory'.[43] Traugott portrays Marx as adhering to what he repeatedly calls a 'strict class interpretation' of events, an interpretation based on a 'general theory…[which] presumes that under the intrinsic logic of the capitalist mode of production, class

[39] See Chambre de Commerce, *Statistique de l'industrie à Paris résultant de l'enquête faite par la Chambre de commerce pour les années 1847-1848*, (Paris, 1851), especially general table no. 2.
[40] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 69, 71.
[41] *Ibid*., pp. 74–75.
[42] *Ibid*., pp. 76–77.
[43] *Ibid*., p. 170.

position translates directly into class action'.[44] According to Traugott, this strict class theory rules out political and organisational factors having any real independent role in determining the actions of classes, and which assumes that 'any group clearly defined in class terms should be unequivocally associated with a specific political stance'.[45] According to Traugott, this strict class account is unable to provide an adequate explanation for the June Days, since 'It is impossible to explain the diametrically opposite political orientations of the two key groups [June insurgents and Mobile Guard] by their class position alone when those positions fail to differ in any significant respect.'[46]

In the place of strict class analysis, Traugott proposes what he calls an 'organisational' analysis in order to explain the actions of the Mobile Guard.[47] This approach moves away from looking at the individual social background of the Mobile Guard recruits to the collective organisational identity that was forged in the months between February and June. Traugott identifies three organisational factors that were crucial to the Mobile Guard supporting the government in June.[48]

First, the loyalty of the Mobile Guard's officer corps was ensured by modifying the initial system of battalions' democratically electing their own officers, with one where provisionally elected officers were subject to the approval of the commanding general and the Minister of War. This combined a degree of democratic legitimation with the Mobile Guard administration retaining the capacity to weed out potentially undisciplined or disloyal officers. Second, the authorities dealt swiftly with practical grievances that threatened to undermine the morale and allegiance of the rank and file. Early disputes over pay, food, uniforms and housing were addressed as a matter of urgency.

Third, and most importantly, the authorities effectively isolated the Mobile Guard recruits from the general Parisian population. Mobile Guard members were subjected to an exacting daily military regime (from 6 am to 9 pm) and housed in barracks, which were progressively moved to the outskirts of the

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[44] *Ibid*., p. 188. Peter Amann similarly describes Marx's account of the revolutions of 1848 as a 'rigid class interpretation', see 'Writings on the Second French Republic', *The Journal of Modern History*, 34 (4) (1962), p. 410.
[45] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, p. 175.
[46] *Ibid*., p. 171.
[47] A third form of explanation focuses on the starkly contrasting age of participants, since the average age for the Mobile Guard was 21.5 years versus 34 for the June insurgents, see Caspard, 'Aspects de la lutte des classes en 1848', pp. 88–89, 96, 105–6; and Robert J. Bezucha, 'The French Revolution of 1848 and the Social History of Work', *Theory and Society*, 12 (4) (1983), pp. 480–81. For critical discussion, see Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 78–82, 176–82 and Magraw, *History of the French Working Class*, vol. 1, pp. 146–47.
[48] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 83–113.

city and away from the ward in which they had originally been recruited. In comparison, National Guard members (as a part-time civic militia) only joined their troop for a weekly training session and returned to their families and neighbourhoods in the evening, thus remaining enmeshed in their social and political networks. The Mobile Guard administration also took deliberate steps to prevent contact between Guardsmen and subversive external influences (hence stymieing radical attempts at fraternisation), while at the same time actively encouraging contact with the regular army. Traugott argues that, taken together, these three factors provide a convincing explanatory account for why a group of men recruited from the working class in February, willingly and enthusiastically joined in the repression of their fellow workers four months later.

V

Criticisms of Marx's Account: The June Days and Class Struggle

In his classic 1973 study of the Second French Republic, Maurice Agulhon argued that the June Days 'more than any other period before or since in French history, remain a class battle pure and simple'.[49] That has become an unfashionable judgment, with a number of scholars questioning the extent to which the June Days should be characterised as a class struggle and criticising Marx account for having described it as such.[50] This has increasingly developed into the accepted scholarly position (one introduction to a volume on the 1848 Revolutions, for instance, simply refers in passing to the June Days as 'not the epitome of a class struggle').[51] This consensus can be seen as the theoretical outcome of the two empirical criticisms raised above.

The finding that the insurgents were artisans and not primarily proletarians underlies one avenue of criticism against Marx's judgment of a class struggle. Thus John Gillis rejects Marx's description of the June Days as 'class warfare' because the 'small industrial working class of Paris was scarcely involved at all' and Jonathan House similarly argues that in '1848, Karl Marx was famously attributing conflict to class warfare, even though these categories were

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[49] Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1850*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, 1983), p. 57.

[50] Some accounts still characterise the June Days as a class struggle, see Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, p. 34; Harison, *Stonemasons of Creuse*, p. 164; Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1914*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 171–72. Others argue that class struggle is one aspect of the June Days, but needs to be set against a range of other important elements, see Quentin Deluermoz, *Le Crépuscule des révolutions, 1848-1871* (Paris, 2012), p. 52.

[51] Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, '1848-1849: A European Revolution?', in *The Revolutions of 1848 in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction*, ed. R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (Oxford, 2000), p. 6.

anachronistic in Paris, where the actual rebels could hardly be categorized as proletarians'.[52] This criticism is sometimes broadened to cover the general underdevelopment of capitalist industry and relations in France at the time, so that capitalists cannot be said to be the insurgents' primary opponents. In this vein, T. J. Clark argues that both Tocqueville and Marx's judgement of a class struggle is 'False, because the classes of Paris were still, in 1848, confused and shifting…false because the master of the forge or the workshop fought alongside his employees, because the target was not yet the employer or the capitalist.'[53]

The point is further extended by Stedman Jones who disputes Marx's judgement of a battle between proletarians and bourgeoisie because it mischaracterizes the nature and role of the state. Stedman Jones argues that 'the executive of the new republic was not composed of employers, industrial or otherwise… What caused the rebellion was not the action of the employing class, but the decisions of members of the National Assembly'.[54] That argument is repeated by Edward Casteleton, who criticises Marx's account because 'social unrest revolved around state behavior (the closing of the National Workshops), and not the injustices committed by any capitalist class', and hence '[i]f there was a class struggle in 1848…it would seem to have been more political than economic in nature'.[55]

The finding that the Mobile Guard shared the same social background as the insurgents forms the basis of the other main criticism of Marx's judgment of the June Days as a class struggle. We find this argument mixed in with Clark's above cited remarks, where he argues that Tocqueville and Marx were wrong to call the June Days a class struggle 'because there were workers on both sides of the barricades'.[56] Traugott, after also citing the well-known quotes from Marx and Tocqueville, argues that 'if we take literally their implication that the dividing line between insurgents and repressors in June was strictly one of class' then this is 'demonstrably in error'; and says that one of the aims of his investigation is 'to correct the errors of the widely accepted view of the June Days as a class war'.[57] Gillis argues that Marx and Tocqueville were wrong to interpret

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[52] John R. Gillis, *The Development of European Society, 1770-1870* (Lanham, 1983), p. 143; House, *Controlling Paris*, p. 16.
[53] T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (London, 1973), p. 13. Clark, however, adds that the verdict of a class battle is also 'True because, however much we can qualify the opposition, everyone knew that worker fought bourgeois, that the Barbarians had risen to salvage *their* revolution.'
[54] Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 309-10; Stedman Jones, 'Elusive Signifiers', p. 448.
[55] Edward Castleton, 'Untimely Meditations on the Revolution of 1848 in France', *Opera Historica* 19, no. 2 (2018): 254–55.
[56] Clark, *Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 13.
[57] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, p. 32.

the June Days as 'the first example of class warfare' since 'in reality, the social backgrounds of the insurgents and their oppressors were not that different'.[58] Geoffrey Ellis begins, once again, by citing Tocqueville and Marx, and then cautions that the 'social origins of the combatants of the June Days do not fit any neat "class model"' since '[i]n reality, worker fought worker'.[59] Price cites Marx calling it a class war and replies that 'the struggle might also been seen as a civil war between workers'.[60] Finally, Jonathan Sperber in his standard textbook on the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, criticises 'Marx's picture of a struggle between workers and property owners' since 'Insurgents and members of the Mobile Guard were from precisely the same social groups. It is harder to understand the June Days as a workers' uprising against capitalism, if workers were doing the fighting against the insurgents.'[61]

VI
Evaluation of Criticisms: The Class Composition of the June Insurgents

Having laid out the main criticisms that have been made of Marx's account of the June Days, we are now in a position to evaluate them. I begin with the first criticism focused on the class composition of the insurgents.

Marx's contention that the June insurgents were proletarians is unsupported by the available data on both those arrested and the composition of the Parisian working class at the time; and that data instead supports the conclusion that the insurgents were overwhelmingly made up of artisans. Limitations in the data (regarding the size of a worker's workshop or factory and hence the likely class background of the arrested worker) mean that it is not possible to come to completely definitive conclusions; but these limitations are not enough to overturn the finding that the June Days were driven by artisans. We can therefore say with some confidence that Marx was wrong to have presented the June Day as a proletarian uprising.

It is true that there were proletarians among the insurgents and that many Parisian artisans were undergoing a transformation of their working relations, a process that was drawing them further and further into capitalist ones. They can

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[58] Gillis, *Development of European Society*, p. 143.
[59] Geoffrey Ellis, 'The Revolution of 1848-1849 in France', in *The Revolutions of 1848 in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction*, ed. R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (Oxford, 2000), p. 42.
[60] Roger Price, '"The Holy Struggle Against Anarchy": The Development of Counter-Revolution in 1848', in *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform*, ed. Dieter Dowe et al., trans. David Higgins (New York, 2001), p. 37.
[61] Sperber, *European Revolutions*, pp. 213-14.

thus be thought of as, what Christopher H. Johnson calls, 'proletarianizing' and even 'proletarianized' artisans, with some sectors, like tailoring, especially affected by structural changes to the organisation of production, such as the explosive growth of outworking in the years leading up to the 1848 Revolution.[62] The workers that took to the barricades in June 1848 were thus part of a labour force that was increasingly (but not extensively) proletarian. Marx's characterisation of the insurgents as proletarians can consequently be said to have responded to a real process of transition. As Rudé notes, Marx 'may have looked too far ahead when he wrote as though the Parisian proletariat was already fully formed; but he was certainly right to stress the new relations developing between the classes'.[63]

This process of proletarianization is an important qualification to bear in mind when judging Marx's account, even though it does not rescue Marx's unqualified characterisation of the insurgents as proletarians, which presents a trend as an already established fact. That flawed judgment stands in stark contrast to Marx's generally sober assessment of the level of economic development in France. His discussion of the June Days is accompanied by the observation that the French proletariat is 'almost lost in the superior numbers of peasants and petty bourgeois' and that '[t]he struggle against capital in its developed, modern form, in its decisive aspect, the struggle of the industrial wage-worker against the industrial bourgeois, is in France a partial phenomenon'.[64] The incongruity of Marx's misidentification of the insurgents with this more accurate assessment of the wider conditions in France calls for explanation.

While the process of the proletarianization cannot fully rescue Marx's account it does help explain how he came to that misjudgement. Marx was convinced that the currently 'partial phenomenon' of capitalist relations in France (and beyond) was being steadily and irreversibly extended across the whole of society. He predicted that independent artisans and their small-scale production would be supplanted by capitalist industry and a propertyless proletariat, and that a social revolution in France would only succeed when such

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[62] See, Christopher H. Johnson, 'Patterns of Proletarianization: Parisian Tailors and Lodéve Woolens Workers', in *Consciousness and Class Experience in Ninteenth-Century Europe*, ed. John M. Merriman (New York, 1979), 65–84; and Joan W. Scott, 'Men and Women in the Parisian Garment Trades: Discussion of Family and Work in the 1830s and 1840s', in *The Power of the Past: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, ed. Pat Thane, Geoffrey Crossick, and Roderick Floud (Cambridge, 1984), 67–93. The process of proletarianization should, however, not be seen as straightforwardly linear, see Judt, *Marxism and the French Left: Studies in Labour and Politics in France, 1830-1981* (Oxford, 1986), p. 37.

[63] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 177.

[64] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 20; *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 57.

conditions were in place.[65] Marx's central claim that the June Days were the 'first great battle' between proletarians and capitalists should be read in the light of this background assumption; as not only a description of what happened in those four days in Paris in 1848 but as a prediction about the future course of industrial development and class struggle (indicated, of course, by Marx calling it the '*first* great battle'). This background social theory and its accompanying set of predictions meant that Marx was primed to interpret the June Days as a proletarian uprising, seizing on it as an early, inchoate example of what he thought future social struggles would consist in. His misidentification can thus at least partly be seen as a case of confirmation bias – Marx saw what he expected to see.

This tendency was further sharpened by the political context of Marx's writings on the June Days. It is an underappreciated aspect of Marx's thought that for much of his life his proletarian communism was a minority current in a broader socialist movement still predominantly oriented towards artisans, and that Marx was, in line with the theoretical commitments discussed above, engaged in a struggle to displace these other currents. The months surrounding Marx's writing and publication of the articles that became the *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, for instance, were marked by growing tensions in the Communist League between Marx and his supporters and the more artisan inclined faction around August Willich.[66] This culminated in the split of the League in September 1850 with Marx accusing the Willich faction of having 'pandered' to artisans and abusing 'the word "proletariat" as a mere phrase' by pronouncing 'all petty bourgeois as proletarians'.[67] Marx's writings on the June Days should be read against this context and his identification of the insurgents with the proletariat as an attempt to claim the uprising for his form of communism.

Here it is worth reminding ourselves that treating Marx's writings as solely social-scientific observations is likely to mislead, since they were also political interventions that tried to shape the interpretation of events and help bring about a new political and social movement.[68] Identifying the insurgents as

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[65] Ibid., *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 20; *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 56-57.

[66] See, Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840-1860* (London, 2006), chap. 3, esp. 79–80, and Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, vol. 1 (Pittsburgh, 1974), pp. 150–51, 185-91.

[67] See the minutes of League's Central Authority meeting, 15 September 1850, *MEW*, vol. 8, p. 598; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 626. Karl Schapper, who joined the Willich faction, had previously defined 'proletarian' to include not just workers but 'the scholar, the artist…[and] the small bourgeois', see 'Proletariar!', *Kommunistische Zeitschrift,* no. 1, September 1847, p. 3.

[68] For the importance of reading Marx in this way see, Terrell Carver, 'Marx and the Politics of Sarcasm', *Socialism and Democracy*, 24 (3) (2010), pp. 102–18 and William Clare Roberts, *Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital* (Princeton, 2017).

proletarians contributed to Marx's efforts to stress the central role of an ascendant proletariat and discredit those forms of socialism and communism based on a declining artisanate. We should therefore see Marx's misidentification of the class composition of the June insurgents as an amalgam of him seeing what he wanted to see and saying what he thought needed to be said.

The consequence of these factors was that Marx seriously underplayed the participation of artisans in the uprising; instead consigning them, alongside shopkeepers, merchants and café and restaurant owners, to the class of petty bourgeoisie who supposedly 'fought…fanatically' on the side of reaction.[69] Marx's claims about the participation of other petty bourgeois professions (what we could colloquially call the middle-class sections of the petty bourgeoisie) certainly also deserves some revision; Marx's rather specific claim, for instance, that the '*marchands de vin*' had helped suppress the uprising must be tempered by the finding that there were in fact 191 wine merchants among the arrested.[70] But it is the inclusion of 'handicraftsmen' in that list of petty bourgeois occupations that 'fought…fanatically' for the forces of reaction that deserves the closest scrutiny and criticism.[71] It was these artisans who in fact formed the vast bulk of the working-class insurgents, who in turn made up some 80% (if we follow Price's figures) of the overall number of insurgents. It was they who made the June Days a workers' uprising and it was to them that Marx's account does the most disservice.

Marx's recategorization of artisans as part of the petty bourgeoisie is an important theoretical innovation, because it reflects how artisans, unlike proletarians, are not subject to exploitation by a capitalist employer, and unlike capitalists do not themselves exploit wage-labour. But it has the unfortunate consequence of denying the artisans' self-understanding as workers and portraying them as ideologically and materially closer to the bourgeoisie than the proletariat (not least linguistically by calling them *petty* bourgeois). Ironically, Marx's transferral of artisans out of the category of workers mirrors the contemporaneous categorisation of the aforementioned Chamber of Commerce labour force study. As Joan W. Scott has shown, this sought to redefine artisans as self-employed entrepreneurs and thus 'reduce significantly the number of people who had come to think of themselves as workers in the Parisian population' – part of an ideological effort to present the Parisian economy and

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[69] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 37-38; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 74.
[70] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 175.
[71] The hostility Marx displays here is in line with his broader antipathy to the supposed backwardness of artisans' craft labour, see G. A. Cohen, 'Marx's Dialectic of Labor', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1974): 235–61.

labour force in terms favourable to the Chamber's conservative politics.[72] Marx's account of the 'petty bourgeois' artisans inadvertently plays into this conservative appropriation of artisans and underplays their revolutionary potential and capacity – a capacity that they clearly demonstrated in the June Days.

VII
Evaluation of Criticisms: The Class Composition of the Mobile Guard

The investigations into the Mobile Guard provide convincing, indeed overwhelming, evidence that the class background of its members was virtually indistinguishable from the June insurgents and the wider Parisian working class. Marx's thesis that they were recruited from the lumpenproletariat that was 'sharply differentiated' from the proletariat proper and that this explains their actions in the June Days must therefore be comprehensively abandoned. Whether the 'lumpenproletariat' retains wider value as a category of social analysis cannot be solely determined by a single historical episode, but the evidence from the June Days is not promising.[73]

Traugott's exhaustive investigation into the Mobile Guard is a first-rate example of historical sociology and he provides us with an impressive account of this empirical shortcoming of Marx's writings on the June Days. But Traugott is on less firm terrain when he turns to criticising Marx's theoretical framework. His critique of Marx's 'strict' class theory, where an individual's or group's class background straightforwardly and directly explains their actions and political orientation is, of course, a restatement of the familiar criticism of Marx's supposed economic determinism. Whether or not that is a fair judgment of Marx's thought as a whole,[74] a close reading of what Marx has to say about class and politics in the texts that deal with the June Days shows that he does not defend the reductionist theory that Traugott accuses him of holding.

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[72] Joan W. Scott, 'Statistical Representations of Work: The Chamber of Commerce's *Statistique de l'Industrie à Paris, 1847-48*', in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, ed. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp (Ithica, 1986), pp. 347-48. For further critical discussion of the study, see Jacques Rancière, 'The Myth of the Artisan: Critical Reflections on a Category of Social History', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 24 (1983): 8–9.

[73] For a convincing critical account, see Robert L. Bussard, 'The "Dangerous Class" of Marx and Engels: The Rise of the Idea of the Lumpenproletariat', *History of European Ideas*, 8 (6) (1987), p. 675-692. For a useful overview of Marx's evolving use of the lumpenproletariat, see Hal Draper, 'The Concept of the "Lumpenproletariat" in Marx and Engels', *Economies et Societes*, 6 (1972), pp. 2285–2312.

[74] For assessment, see Stuart Hall, 'The "Political" and the "Economic" in Marx's Theory of Classes', in *Class and Class Structure*, ed. Alan Hunt (London, 1977), pp. 15–60.

A pertinent example is Marx's account of the class basis of the three political factions of the bourgeoisie that existed in France at the time: the two royalist factions, the Legitimists and the Orléanists, and the republican bourgeoisie. Marx argued that the real foundation of the division between the Legitimists and the Orléanists was not their conflicting dynastic claims to the throne (respectively, the House of Bourbon and the House of Orléans) but their support for different sections of the bourgeoisie, with Legitimists defending the interests of the landed bourgeoisie and the Orléanists defending the interests of the industrial and financial bourgeoisie.[75] Here Marx does indeed make a clear and direct link between class and political formation.

But when Marx comes to describing the republican bourgeoisie, he specifically denies that they were based on a distinct class foundation. In *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich* he says that 'The bourgeois republicans of the *National* [their party newspaper] did not represent any large faction of their class resting on economic foundations.'[76] Marx expanded on that description in his other major work on the 1848 Revolution, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte) (1852), arguing that the republican bourgeoisie 'was not a faction of the bourgeoisie held together by great common interests and marked off by specific conditions of production. It was a clique of republican-minded bourgeois, writers, lawyers, officers and officials'.[77] Marx thus explicitly draws attention to a political formation that cannot be explained by a corresponding class basis.

Traugott's stigmatization of Marx's theory as a simplistic 'strict' class analysis is thus off the mark. Marx clearly allows for the possibility that class and political formations can and do come apart. His account is thus more flexible than the strawman of vulgar materialism that Traugott presents. That does not mean that Marx provides a complete explanatory account of why class and consciousness and collective action can diverge, including in the case of the republican bourgeoisie or the Mobile Guard. Traugott is right to emphasise the role that organisational factors play in intervening between class background and class action.[78] His account of how the working-class Mobile Guard recruits

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[75] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 58-59; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 95; *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, *MEW*, vol. 8, pp, 138-39; *MECW*, vol. 11, pp. 127-28.
[76] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 59; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 95.
[77] Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, *MEW*, vol. 8, p. 124; *MECW*, vol. 11, p. 112-13. Intellectuals and professionals, which make up the bulk of the republican bourgeoisie on Marx's account, are something of a residual category in his class analysis, for further discussion, see Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (London, 1978) vol. 2, ch. 16 and Erik Olin Wright, 'Intellectuals and the Working Class', *Critical Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1978): 5–18.
[78] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, pp. 184, 189.

were transformed in the space of just a few short months into loyal soldiers of the regime is a welcome contribution to understanding these processes and essential reading for anyone concerned with the likely actions of the state's armed forces during a revolution.

However, it is not clear that highlighting such organisational factors when explaining the actions of the state's armed forces is as alien to the Marxian approach to class as Traugott seems to think. Engels, after all, similarly analysed the replacement of the Mobile Guard's election of their own officers as an attempt to 'falsify' the Mobile Guardsmen and turn them into '*fundamentally obedient*' servants of the state.[79] Moreover, the effect of social isolation from the broader population, which Traugott identifies as a crucial organisational factor in explaining the actions of the Mobile Guardsmen, was an important reason for why Marx, across his political career, advocated for standing armies to be replaced by civic militias.[80] He thought that workers recruited into a part-time civic militias with an 'extremely short term of service' were much less likely to side with reactionary forces against their fellow workers.[81] Organisational factors, such as these, thus played a greater role in Marx and Engels's account of collective action than Traugott gives them credit for.

VIII
Evaluation of Criticism: The June Days and Class Struggle (Part One)

We can now turn to assessing whether the accumulated empirical research has undermined Marx's characterisation of the June Days as a class struggle. We saw in section V that this conclusion can be independently reached through the respective empirical criticisms of Marx's account. Firstly, that the June Days cannot have been a class struggle when economic conditions were not advanced enough for it to have been a struggle between proletarians and the bourgeoisie and it was instead an uprising of artisans in political conflict with the government. Secondly, that the June Days cannot have been a class struggle when the forces used to defeat the insurgent workers were also drawn from the same working-class background.

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[79] Engels, 'Nachrichten aus Paris. Anlass des Aufstandes', *MEGA*②, vol. I.7, p. 177.
[80] See, R. Claire Snyder, 'The Citizen-Soldier and the Tragedy of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*', *Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture & Politics* 16, no. 1 (2003): 23–37 and Bruno Leipold, 'Marx's Social Republic: Radical Republicanism and the Political Institutions of Socialism', in *Radical Republicanism: Recovering the Tradition's Popular Heritage,* ed. Karma Nabulsi, Stuart White and Bruno Leipold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 187-190.
[81] Marx, *The Civil War in France*, *MEW*, vol. 17, p. 340; *MECW*, vol. 22, p. 332.

In assessing these arguments, we should distinguish between Marx's specific account of the June Days and his wider theory of class struggle. Doing so allows us to both recognise where Marx's own application of his ideas falls short and to more carefully judge the broader adequacy and usefulness of his ideas for understanding the June Days (indeed for understanding class struggle and formation across the nineteenth century). In the following discussion, I consequently argue that though the empirical findings have shown that the June Days were not the class struggle that Marx depicted they remain a class struggle under his understanding of class struggle.

The confusion created by insufficient attention to the above distinction is particularly evident in the criticism that Marx was wrong to call the June Days a class struggle because the insurgents were primarily artisans rather than proletarians. Taken at face value, this argument is unsatisfactory, since it suggests that only proletarians engage in class struggle, when it seems uncontentious in Marx's theory that all classes, including artisans, do so. For instance, Marx notes that at the time of the February Revolution the struggle between proletarians and capitalists was, in France as a whole, a relatively minor phenomenon compared to the class struggle between peasants and their creditors and the 'struggle…[of] the petty bourgeois against the wholesale dealer, banker and manufacturer'.[82] The empirical finding of artisan rather proletarian involvement should consequently revise *which* class engaged in class struggle not *whether* it was a class struggle. This seems uncontroversial, which suggests that those making this argument are using 'class struggle' as a shorthand for the 'class struggle between proletarians and capitalists' and are actually criticising Marx for having claimed the latter.

That confusion can be straightforwardly remedied by more careful formulation of the criticism, so the more interesting question is whether the discovery that the insurgents were artisans challenges Marx's broader account of class struggle. Certainly, as was discussed in section VI, it shows that artisans were more capable of revolutionary action against the established order than Marx's denigrating comments on their involvement in June Days would suggest. Indeed, that pattern is found across nineteenth-century French insurrections, from the 1830 Revolution to the 1871 Paris Commune, where artisans reliably

[82] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW* 7, p. 20; MECW 10, p. 57.

formed the bulk of insurgents.[83] The role that Marx assigned artisans in revolutionary upheavals thus clearly merits correction.

That in turn invites reflection on whether the revolutionary role and capacity that Marx assigned to proletarians also requires revision. Traugott argues, in an updated introduction to his investigation, that Marx's misidentification of the insurgents as proletarians resulted in a false prediction about the future direction of class struggles in advanced capitalist societies, which he argues would generally not consist of the revolutionary, insurrectionary, actions typical of the artisans that fought in the June Days, but forms of '[c]ontention and protest… [which] might turn violent at times, but would tend to become more highly organized and, for that reason, more capable of effecting lasting change without resort to a fundamental reconstitution of society'.[84]

Whether one finds this critique of Marx compelling will depend on one's conclusions about the historical experience of revolution and class struggle in capitalist countries since the nineteenth century as well as one's judgment about the desirability of more fundamental reconstitutions of society than the existing social reforms achieved in those countries. These points cannot be satisfactorily resolved in this article and my more limited aim is to have pointed to where the relevant fault lines lie in assessing this critique of Marx's account. (My own view is that while class struggles in capitalist societies have proven to be less insurrectionary than the June Days would suggest, examples of revolutionary upheaval and the extent of violence used to suppress strikes and labour unrest in capitalist societies are often not given their due in such assessments;[85] moreover, more fundamental social transformation seems to me desirable, necessary even, but I claim no special insight into what forms of class struggle would achieve it).[86]

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[83] See Magraw, *History of the French Working Class*, vol. 1, pp. 48-53; Pamela M. Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution in France* (Basingstoke, 1991), pp. 61–62; Robert Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (London, 1999), pp. 111–16. For further discussion of artisan radicalism, see Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1982).

[84] Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848*, reissue with new introduction (New Brunswick, 2002), xxxii.

[85] See, for instance, Gaard Kets and James Muldoon, 'The "Forgotten" German Revolution: A Conceptual Map', in *The German Revolution and Political Theory* (Cham, 2019), 1–22; and Alex Gourevitch, 'Police Work: The Centrality of Labor Repression in American Political History', *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 3 (2015): 762–73.

[86] For a recent helpful overview of the possibilities, see Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century* (London, 2019), chap. 3.

The artisan-based criticism of Marx's identification of a class struggle arises from findings about the level of economic development in France at the time of the June Days, and is consequently sometimes (as we saw in section V) paired with a related critique focused on the other side engaged in the struggle; that the conflict was not a class struggle with capitalist employers, but was instead, if anything, a political conflict with the government. Several distinct arguments are mixed together here, which again require disaggregation.

Stedman Jones's contention that Marx was wrong to say that it was a class struggle against the bourgeoisie because the executive of the French Republic was not 'composed' of industrial employers, suggests that this criticism is based on the literal class location of individual members of the government. Yet this is an odd basis on which to criticise Marx, since this would hardly have been news to him, as he was well aware of the composition of the executive.[87] More importantly, the argument falters on the fact that Marx did not think that members of the government (or the legislature) had to themselves be members of a particular class in order for them to be representatives of that class. For instance, he notes that the petty bourgeois representatives in the Second Republic's National Assembly were not petty bourgeois because they were themselves 'all shopkeepers', but because they defended the 'material interest and social position' of the petty bourgeoisie, and he concludes that 'This is, in general, the relationship between the *political* and *literary* representatives of a class and the class they represent'.[88] (A further example, pace Traugott, of Marx pointing to someone's class location and their political orientation coming apart). An uprising could thus, for Marx, be directed against the capitalist class even if the members of the government were not themselves literally capitalists.

Stedman Jones's criticism is perhaps more plausibly supposed to refer to the fact that economic conditions had not developed to the extent that industrial capitalists could play a significant or dominating role in the conflict. That is certainly an accurate reading of economic conditions in France at the time, where, as Rudé summarizes, it was 'the banker, the merchant manufacturer, the speculator and owner of real estate, and not the industrialist, that ruled the roost'.[89] But it is not clear that this provides a successful basis on which to criticise Marx, since he explicitly and repeatedly argues in his writing on the June Days that 'the industrial bourgeoisie did not rule France' in either the economic or political sphere, and that it was alternatively subordinated to or forced to rule in

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[87] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 16-17, 30; *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 53, 66.
[88] Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, *MEW*, vol. 8, pp. 141-42; *MECW*, vol. 11, pp. 130-31. See also, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 13; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 49.
[89] Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 164.

concert with the dominant elements of France's ruling class: the landowning and financial bourgeoisie.[90] That suggests that when Marx argues that the June Days were fought between proletarians and the bourgeoisie, he means the latter in the more encompassing sense of the ruling class of property-owners, which includes employers but also extends to bankers and landlords. Undoubtably Marx's misidentification of the insurgents as proletarians easily gives the misleading impression that their primary opponents were capitalist employers and Marx definitely believed that it was this faction of the ruling class that would be central to the future direction of class struggle. But Marx's broader remarks show that he had a more clear-headed understanding of the actual composition of France's ruling class at the time of June Days than some of his critics allow.

The more fundamental theoretical point, made by both Stedman Jones and Castleton, is that Marx was wrong to call the June Days a class struggle because the uprising was sparked by the actions of the government and the National Assembly and not directly by the capitalist class. But again, it is not clear how this is supposed to challenge Marx's account when Marx clearly identifies the decision of the government and the Assembly to close the National Workshops as the trigger for the uprising.[91] This is therefore not a factual disagreement, but a disagreement about the meaning of class struggle. For Marx, a 'class struggle' did not imply the hard wedge between economics and politics that his critics suggest. As he and Engels reminded readers of the *Manifesto*, 'every class struggle is a political struggle'.[92] His conception of class struggle incorporated the possibility of the government, and the state as a whole, acting on behalf of the interests of certain classes. He called the June Days a class struggle against the bourgeoisie, even though the conflict was triggered by the state, because he believed that it was acting on behalf of the bourgeoisie's interests.

Though we might want to qualify and nuance Marx's claim, [93] it does not seem especially controversial to conclude that, by closing down an institution

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[90] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, pp. 20, 78-79; *MECW,* vol. 10, pp. 56, 116.
[91] *Ibid*., *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 31; *MECW,* vol. 10, p. 67.
[92] Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, *MEW*, vol. 4, p. 471; *MECW*, vol. 6, p. 493.
[93] Marx's claim that the June Days were a struggle against the government acting on behalf of the bourgeoisie, despite the fact that other classes sided with the government, should be read as a shorthand for what Marx took to be the principal struggle involved and the class which the government was most beholden to. Marx recognised, for instance, that the peasants also supported the government (because of the 45 centime tax that paid for the Workshops) and in his fuller remarks he described the June Days as a class struggle between the workers and all the other main classes of France, see *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, *MEW*, vol. 8, pp. 121, 192; *MECW*, vol. 11, pp. 110, 180. He also pointed to the government's imposition of the 45 centime tax as evidence that it was not generally beholden to defending the peasants' interests, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 25, 84; *MECW,* vol. 10, p. 61, 122.

that used public funds to support unemployed workers in the middle of an economic crisis, the state was decisively siding against the workers. Marx's conception also has some wider advantage, since it incorporates how class struggle involves agents apart from the principal classes in the conflict (most importantly the state), and the necessity of analysing their role and the interests they further through their actions. Stedman Jones and Castleton are in contrast implicitly advancing a more limited understanding of class struggle, which would seem to require conflicts to be literally between the relevant classes without any mediating actors.

IX
Evaluation of Criticism: The June Days and Class Struggle (Part Two)

We now turn to assessing the other main argument which holds that Marx was wrong to call the June Days a class struggle: because the conflict pitted insurgent workers against Mobile Guardsmen from the same social background, rather than the distinguishable lumpenproletariat that Marx claimed. The essence of this argument is that class struggle implies different classes struggling against each other, whereas the June Days in fact involved the same class fighting on both sides, and hence the uprising cannot have been a class struggle. As I will argue below, this argument invokes a narrower understanding of class struggle than Marx's and relies on an account of the class position of the state's military and police forces and their role in class conflict that Marx did not share. The undermining of Marx's lumpenproletariat thesis thus does not undermine Marx's judgement of a class struggle in terms of his own theory of class struggle.

The social composition of the combatants is undoubtably a central aspect of Marx's understanding of class struggle and why he judged the June Days to be an example of it. But the question of *who* fought on each side of the barricades does not exhaust Marx's conception since he also thought it mattered *why* they fought. That is clear, if we return to his central judgment on the June Days and examine the surrounding passage in full:

> The workers were left no choice; they had to starve or take action. They answered on June 22 with the tremendous insurrection in which the first great battle was fought between the two classes that split modern society. It was a fight for the preservation or annihilation of the *bourgeois* order. The veil that shrouded the republic was torn asunder.[94]

[94] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 31; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 67.

Marx here obviously refers to the class position of the participants in the struggle (a 'battle…between the two classes'). But he also specifies the stakes the conflict (a 'fight for the preservation or annihilation of the *bourgeois* order') and the cause that led the workers to take up arms (the threat of 'starv[ing]'). Marx's understanding of class struggle thus incorporates both the social composition of the participants in the struggle and the class interests that they pursued.

A similar understanding of class struggle is also revealed if we examine Tocqueville's contemporaneous judgment in greater detail. He argued that one of the crucial distinguishing features that,

> sets the June insurrection apart from all similar events of the past sixty years is that its goal was not to change the form of government but to alter the order of society. In truth, it was not a political struggle (in the usual sense of the word) but a class combat, a sort of slave war (*guerre servile*). [95]

Tocqueville thus identifies the June Days as a class struggle not primarily because it was an uprising 'on the part of the workers', but because their 'goal' was to change the social order rather than just the political system. That point is made even more explicit in the ensuing discussion, where Tocqueville squarely pins the blame for the uprising on the workers being inspired by 'socialist theories', arguing that the June Days,

> stemmed directly from those [socialist] ideas, as the son from the mother, and one should see the event as a sudden blind but powerful effort on the part of the workers to escape from the necessities of their condition, which had been described to them as one of illegitimate oppression, and with the aid of the sword to cut a path to that imaginary well-being that had been dangled in front of them as their ultimate right. It was this mix of greedy desires and misguided theories that first gave rise to the insurrection and then made it so formidable.[96]

For both Marx and Tocqueville then class struggle is not reducible to just the social background of the participants in the struggle but is also constituted by the class interests at stake in the struggle. That dimension of their thought is missed by interpreters who reduce their description of the June Days as a class struggle to an 'implication that the dividing line between insurgents and repressors was strictly one of class'.[97] Properly studying Marx and Tocqueville's remarks and not repeating an abridged formula, as some of the literature has

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[95] Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, pp. 207-208; *Recollections,* p. 97. Marx makes a similar claim about the historical novelty of the uprising in *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 32; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 69.

[96] Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, pp. 207-208; *Recollections,* p. 97.

[97] Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, p. 32.

tended to do, reveals that what they considered so significant and disruptive about the June Days was the threat it posed to the established social order.

Does this broader understanding of class struggle stack up against the June Days? One way to assess that is to examine the voices of participants and their accounts of the struggle. Starting with those who pushed for the suppression of the workers, it is no exaggeration to say that they did perceive the stakes of the June Days to be 'the preservation or annihilation of the *bourgeois* order'. Alfred de Falloux, a leading member of the Constituent Assembly's Committee of Labour, who pushed for the Workshops' closure, privately noted his disdain for what he saw as a dangerous example of socialism and the government was egged on by conservatives aiming to provoke a decisive clash with the workers, rallying around the call '*Il faut en finir!*' (It must be ended!).[98] Establishment papers also condemned the uprising as an attack on society's 'two fundamental bases, property and family', and they carried horrified reports of the red flags on the insurgent barricades and banners inscribed with 'Hatred to property! Death to the rich!'[99]

Turning to the workers, there is little dispute that the they were brought out onto the streets by the threat the closure of the National Workshops posed to their material interests in terms of unemployment and impending destitution. The class nature of this complaint was succinctly expressed by the worker who replied to a government minister's offer of mediation across the barricades with the words 'You have never been hungry; you do not know what poverty is.' [100] Yet, despite this material cause, it was not the case that the workers were largely driven by broader socialist ideas and aims, certainly not to the extent that Tocqueville claims. It was, in fact, a repeated pattern for contemporary observers to overstate the socialist consciousness of the workers.[101] In so far as the workers had an explicit broader ideal, it was to the 'democratic and social republic', which one arrested insurgent worker defined as 'free association of work, assisted by the state' and another as 'the right of workers to form associations and to take part, according to their ability, in public and private enterprises'.[102] Their

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[98] Christopher Guyver, *The Second French Republic 1848–1852: A Political Reinterpretation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 114; Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, p. 249n51. Marx cites this call in, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 30; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 67.

[99] Cited in Guyver, *Second French Republic*, pp. 124, 126.

[100] Recounted in Daniel Stern [Marie d'Agoult], *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1853), p. 170.

[101] Price, *French Second Republic*, p. 161.

[102] Respectively cited in Laurent Clavier, Louis Hincker, and Jacques Rougerie, 'Juin 1848: L'insurrection', in *1848: actes du colloque international du cent cinquantenaire, tenu à l'Assemblée nationale à Paris, les 23-25 février 1998*, ed. Jean-Luc Mayaud (Paris, 2002), p. 133; and Roger Price,

demand was thus not for socialism (except perhaps in the loosest sense of the term), but for an expansion of the state's social responsibilities, most importantly by guaranteeing the right to work through support for worker associations.

Marx's claim that the June Days was a 'fight for the…annihilation of the *bourgeois* order' might thus seem to be an exaggeration of the workers' socialist consciousness and a misreading of their actual motivations. Indeed, investigations show that few arrested workers expressed explicit '[h]ostility towards the "*bourgeois*"'.[103] Yet Marx actually provides a more clear-eyed account of the workers' consciousness and motivations than his above claim might suggest. He argued that the workers did not initially 'fight for the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie' because they were still trapped by the belief that their social emancipation could be achieved by concessions and reforms within a bourgeois republic and society; their demands were thus, he claims, 'petty [bourgeois] and even bourgeois still in content'.[104] Marx argued that those demands included, the 'clumsy formula' of the '*right to work*', which 'stood [behind] the June insurrection.'[105] Nevertheless, Marx thought the June Days were still a class struggle that threatened the bourgeois order, in part because the consequence of the struggle was a sharpening of the workers' consciousness about the limitations of bourgeois reforms and the move to more radical socialist ideas and demands. He argued that 'behind the right to work stands…the appropriation of the means of production…the abolition of wage labour'.[106] The class interests at stake in the conflict could thus, for Marx, be pursued and expressed in an inchoate form by the participants, with the struggle itself playing a role in their clearer articulation and development.

These nuances to Marx's account are missed if we only employ the narrower understanding of class struggle as solely referring to the class of the participants, since the class interests at stake in the conflict also form an important part of Marx's understanding of class struggle. Under that broader conception, the June Days would, regardless of the findings about the class background of the Mobile Guard, remain a class struggle in Marx's terms. However, because class composition still plays an important, perhaps central, role in Marx's understanding of class struggle the potential theoretical consequences of the Mobile Guard findings need to be addressed more directly.

Documents on the French Revolution of 1848, revised and expanded edition (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 94.

[103] Laurent Clavier and Louis Hincker, 'La barricade de Juin 1848: une construction politique', in *La barricade*, ed. Alain Corbin and Jean-Marie Mayeur (Paris, 1997), p. 218.

[104] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 33; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 69.

[105] *Ibid*., *MEW* vol. 7, pp. 41-2; *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 77-78

[106] *Ibid*.

When critics assert that Marx was wrong to call the June Days a class struggle because they were actually a 'civil war between workers', with 'workers on both sides of the barricades', where 'worker fought worker' and 'workers were doing the fighting against the insurgents', a silent assumption is that the members of the Mobile Guard were workers.[107] That is a more controversial point than critics assume. There is no disagreement that the Mobile Guardsmen were recruited *from* the working class and shared the same the class *background* as the insurgents. But in Marx's class theory someone's class background or origins does not necessarily equate to their current class position,[108] and the fact that that the Mobile Guardsmen were once workers does not mean that they were still workers, sharing the same class position as the opposing insurgents, when the June Days took place. By joining the Mobile Guard, they had, after all, become state employees in a paramilitary force. While Marx does not specifically discuss the class position of the Mobile Guardsmen,[109] his wider thought on the class position of the state's military and police forces, suggests he would have considered them to have transitioned out of the working class when they were recruited into Mobile Guard.

To substantiate this, we need to take a detour into Marx's discussion of productive and unproductive labourers, since it forms his most extensive engagement with the question of the class position of the state's military and police forces. For Marx, productive labourers are those that produce surplus value for a capitalist, while unproductive labourers do not. Marx refers to this differentiation as a distinction between classes, which he argues corresponds to differing class interests since unproductive labourers are paid out of the social surplus created by productive labourers. Unproductive labourers thus have an 'interest in their [the productive labourers'] exploitation [which] coincides *plus ou moins* with that of the directly exploiting classes'.[110]

Marx treats the class of productive labourers as largely coextensive with the proletariat;[111] while typical examples, for him, of unproductive labourers are

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[107] Respectively, Price, 'Holy Struggle Against Anarchy', p. 37; Clark, *Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 13; Ellis, 'Revolution of 1848-1849', p. 42; Sperber, *European Revolutions*, p. 214.

[108] That distinction is implicit in passages where Marx discusses individuals transitioning between classes, for instance: *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, *MEW*, vol. 4, p. 484; *MECW*, vol. 6, p. 509; and 'Sechstes Kapitel. Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses', *MEGA*②, vol. II.4.1, p. 23; *MECW*, vol. 34, pp. 353-44.

[109] Marx, significantly, only says that they were 'drawn from' the lumpenproletariat part of the wider proletariat, not that this was still their class location after they had been recruited, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 26; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 62.

[110] Marx, *Theorien über den Mehrwert*, *MEW*, vol. 26.2, p. 574; *MECW* 32, p. 196.

[111] For the marginal cases of commercial workers and supervisors, see Ian Gough, 'Marx's Theory of Productive and Unproductive Labour', *New Left Review* 76 (1972): 48–72.

government officials, lawyers, doctors, domestic servants, scholars, artists, musicians and, importantly for our purposes, soldiers and police officers.[112] Marx explains that though a 'soldier is a wage labourer, [a] mercenary…he is not for that reason a productive worker' because he does not produce surplus value.[113] Marx further differentiates soldiers, police officers and government officials from the wider class of unproductive labourers by describing them as 'political unproductive labourers' – a categorisation that would seem to be based on their employment by the state (and thus being paid out of taxes imposed on productive labour) and their role in providing the functions of security, protection and governance to the capitalist class.[114] For Marx then members of the military and police forces are (political) unproductive labourers who occupy a different class position from the class of productive labourers.

Marx, moreover, interestingly applies this finding to the above-mentioned distinction between class origins and current class position. He notes that members of the same family can be recruited into the 'two classes' of productive and unproductive labourers, through the 'convenient arrangement' whereby the capitalist employs a 'factory girl' as a productive labourer and then uses the surplus value she creates to 'take into his personal service her sister as maid, her brother as groom and her cousin as soldier or policeman!'[115] Individuals can thus, according to Marx, share the same class origins and then transition into different locations in the wider class structure, including by joining the police and military forces.

I raise Marx's rather contentious distinction between productive and unproductive labourers not to take a stand on whether it is a defensible way to define class boundaries,[116] but to show that Marx separated, in class terms,

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[112] For instance, Marx, *Theorien über den Mehrwert*, *MEW*, vol. 26. 1, p. 145; *MECW* 31, p. 30.

[113] Marx, 'Sechstes Kapitel. Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses', *MEGA*②, vol. II.4.1, p. 111; *MECW*, vol. 34, pp. 446. See similarly, Marx, *Grundrisse*, *MEW* 42, pp. 435-36; *MECW* 28, p. 453.

[114] Marx, *Theorien über den Mehrwert*, *MEW*, vol. 26.1, pp. 189, 200, 240, 261, 270; *MECW*, vol. 31, pp. 112, 128, 166, 186, 194. The class position of the military and police forces is thus, on Marx's account, not purely determined in terms of production relations but also in terms of their social function in maintaining capitalist relations. For further discussion of this understanding of the class location of state employees, see Erik Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis, and the State* (London, 1978), pp. 87–96 and *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis* (Cambridge, 1997), chapter 15.

[115] Marx, *Theorien über den Mehrwert*, *MEW*, vol. 26.1, p. 171; *MECW* 31, p. 96

[116] For criticism, see Alan Hunt, 'Theory and Politics in the Identification of the Working Class', in *Class and Class Structure*, ed. Alan Hunt (London, 1977), 81–111. In personal correspondence, Mark Traugott has questioned whether an implication of applying the productive/unproductive distinction to the June Days would be that the workers employed in the National Workshops might also be classed as unproductive labourers (since they were paid out of state taxes extracted from productive workers). My own view is that categorising the workers of the National

members of the military and police forces from the working class. This matters to our assessment of the June Days as a class struggle because it suggests that Marx, even when presented with the evidence about the actual social background of the Mobile Guard, would not have agreed with describing the June Days as a conflict *between* workers. The insurgents and the Mobile Guardsmen might have shared the same working-class position in February, but the latter's recruitment into the state's military and police forces meant that they no longer occupied the same class position in June.

Treating the Mobile Guardsmen as occupying a different class position from the insurgents might at first seem counterintuitive. But it is the same underlying logic that explains why it would be inappropriate to refer to those members of the regular army who were recruited from the working class as still being 'workers' when they fought in the June Days.[117] That it would seem inappropriate implies at least some recognition that members of the military and police forces recruited from the working class cannot be straightforwardly treated as still being part of the working class once they have joined those bodies. Moreover, simply describing the Mobile Guard as workers (without any qualification) and the June Days as a battle between workers, gives the misleading impression that the struggle involved one set of workers rising up against the government and another set rising up in its support; when in fact it was a conflict between workers and the state's military and police forces that had, in part, been recruited from the working class.

Workshops as unproductive labourers might help make sense of the peasants' hostility towards them, since it was the peasants' taxes that helped pay for the Workshops. However, it would also seem to matter that the National Workshop workers were in temporary state employment and that they (and the government) had every expectation that they would return to being self-employed artisans. A comprehensive account of their class position would thus also need to take into account their expected *class trajectory*, a concept discussed further in Erik Olin Wright and Kwang-Yeong Shin, 'Temporality and Class Analysis: a Comparative Study of the Effects of Class Trajectory and Class Structure on Class Consciousness in Sweden and the United States', *Sociological Theory*, 6 (1) (1988), pp. 58-84. Traugott's rejoinder has been that the Mobile Guard conferred a similarly temporary status on its members, both in the sense that that institution was very nearly as short-lived as the National Workshops, and in the sense that its members (who earned a modest, stop-gap salary, about the equivalent of an unskilled labourer's wage in normal times) would for the most part have expected to return to their artisanal roots once the economic crisis had passed. Examining the productive/unproductive distinction and the relatively temporary/enduring nature of individuals' employment status in the context of these paired institutions is an intriguing and potentially productive avenue of research which unfortunately lies beyond the scope of the present article.

[117] Roughly a third of the recruits to one representative army regiment stationed in Paris were from the working class, see Rémi Gossez, 'Notes sur la composition et l'attitude politique de la troupe', in *Bibliothèque de la Révolution de 1848*, vol. 18: L'armée et la Seconde République (La Roche-sur-Yon, 1955), pp. 87–91.

Maintaining that the Mobile Guardsmen occupied a different class position is consistent with thinking that their class origins would still have significant effect on their actions and consciousness. Marx indeed makes room for how someone transitioning into a different class can mean taking the 'habits of that [previous] class with them into their new way of life'.[118] There is no need to think that the four months spent in the state's service would completely overturn the Mobile Guardsmen's working-class background. But if we make no differentiation between origins and current position, we cannot account for how the Mobile Guardsmen's interests and relations to other classes changed after their recruitment. They were now no longer manual labourers directly engaged in production but professional members of a state paramilitary force, one which paid a premium wage (six times the wage of a private in the army), to try and secure their loyalty during insurrections (Marx claims that the state had thereby 'bought them').[119] There is a case then, on the basis of Marx's writings, for seeing the actions of the Mobile Guard during the June Days as a tension between their class origins and their subsequent class position, a tension that was settled in favour of the latter.[120]

Questioning the class position of the Mobile Guard may not convince all of Marx's critics who have rejected his judgment of a class struggle. Marx's account of the class position of the military and polices forces is, it must be acknowledged, fragmentary and theoretically underdeveloped.[121] The argument may also rely too heavily, for some, on distinguishing between class origins and class position. We therefore need to directly consider the criticism of Marx that if a conflict involves workers fighting forces recruited from the working class then it cannot be legitimately described as a class struggle.

Setting aside, for the moment, the intrinsic merits of this understanding of class struggle, we should be clear that it is not one shared by Marx. When Marx claimed that the Mobile Guard was recruited 'for the most part…[from] the

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[118] Marx and Engels, 'Rezensionen. *Les conspirateurs* par *A. Chenu*…', *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 272; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 317.

[119] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 26; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 62. House, *Controlling Paris*, p. 104. Though we should note that these wages were commensurate with the average wages of a Parisian unskilled labourer.

[120] Such an approach could, and should, incorporate Traugott's organisational explanation as the mediating factors which brought about this resolution.

[121] A modern (and in my view more convincing) account is suggested by Erik Olin Wright in *Class, Crisis, and the State*, pp. 94-96 and 'Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies', *New Left Review*, I (98) (1976), p. 40; and applied in R. Reiner, 'The Police in the Class Structure', *British Journal of Law and Society*, 5 (2) (1978), pp. 166–84. Though for an interesting contemporary application of Marx's ideas on unproductive labour to the 'guard labour' that upholds property rights, see Arjun Jayadev and Samuel Bowles, 'Guard Labor', *Journal of Development Economics*, 79, no. 2 (2006): 328–48.

lumpenproletariat…[a]nd so the Paris proletariat was confronted with an army, drawn from its own midst',[122] he unquestionably provided a flawed explanation for the Mobile Guard's actions (as well as a misleading picture of the composition of Paris's working class). But what he was trying to grapple with was the reality that the government had effectively managed to protect itself from the working class by recruiting part of it into its service. Though Marx had a poor account of how that occurred in this case, he still clearly thought that one of the ways in which class struggle could operate was for the state and the capitalist class to '*play off one part of the proletariat against the other*'.[123] The finding that the Mobile Guard had an even more similar class background to that of the insurgents than Marx had postulated, would thus not affect whether the June Days would be considered a class struggle under his conception of what that social phenomenon could entail. Class struggle, for Marx, included the possibility that a subordinate class would be confronted by forces drawn from that same subordinate class.

The criticism of Marx's judgment of a class struggle relies on substituting his understanding of class struggle with one that excludes this possibility. Perhaps that understanding is independently legitimate, but we should be careful that in the attempt to assess and criticize Marx's account we do not end up with a conception of class struggle that inhibits our wider social analysis. It is, after all, a familiar and disturbing feature of social oppression and domination that they often depend upon co-opting the subordinated group into the maintenance of their subordination.[124] We do not normally think that this dynamic excludes conflicts from being examples of that oppression and domination. Roger Magraw aptly comments that if we push the logic of this criticism against Marx, then 'one could…point to the existence of black policemen and of conflicts between Zulus and the ANC in South Africa and deny that the struggles there are about race or apartheid'.[125]

Recruiting from subordinated groups and classes has obvious military advantages but is also of ideological value. Enlisting the working class in the military and police forces, for instance, helps convince the wider public that they are bodies composed of all social classes that serve the common good rather than forces that protect the narrow class interests of an elite.[126] The state can thereby

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[122] Marx, *Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 7, p. 26; *MECW*, vol. 10, p. 62.
[123] *Ibid*. Marx's class positioning of the lumpenproletariat is somewhat ambiguous, but his wording here suggests that he thinks the lumpenproletariat is part of the wider class of proletarians rather than being its own distinct class, and he clearly takes the view that when the state recruited the Mobile Guard it was turning part of a class against itself.
[124] See especially, Ann E. Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* (Oxford, 2006).
[125] Magraw, *History of the French Working Class*, vol. 1, p. 147.
[126] Reiner, 'The Police in the Class Structure', p. 170.

more effectively blunt accusations of class bias. In the case of the June Days, one of the Republic's ministers explicitly stated that the purpose of the Mobile Guard was 'to draw from the masses themselves the elements of order and discipline; to contain, direct, and govern the people with the people!' and freely admitted that this would help show that the government did not 'separate citizens into classes'. [127] Thus if we insist that the working class background of the Mobile Guard means that Marx was wrong to call the June Days a class struggle, we are in danger of unwittingly endorsing the state's own propaganda and missing an important mechanism through which class domination is maintained.

In summary, Marx understood class struggle to mean conflict between classes pursuing their respective class interests, and which could include the state acting on behalf of the dominant class and recruiting part of the subordinate class to its cause. The June Days were a conflict between, primarily, artisan workers and the government of the Second Republic, acting on behalf of France's ruling classes and using troops recruited from the working class, and they fought over differing visions of the state's social obligations to the working class. While the June Days were thus not the class struggle that Marx presented, they remain a class struggle under his understanding of what class struggle means.

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Concluding Remarks

This article has documented the ways in which Marx's headline judgment that the June Days were 'the first great battle [that] was fought between the two classes that split modern society' has been undermined by the findings of modern historical and social research. But I have also tried to stress that if we reduce Marx's account to just that simplified statement, and neglect to properly engage with his writings, we miss his more nuanced views on the events in question and the theoretical questions about class and class struggle that they raise. Marx's view on these issues were more complicated than the somewhat purist and reductionist accounts attributed to him by his critics (no doubt encouraged by some of Marx's own more polemical statements). His more considered account shows that he did not think that class conflict required neatly divided social camps literally opposing each other across the barricades; instead he tried to incorporate the often contradictory ways in which those same classes and other social actors engaged in struggle. We may justifiably criticise his attempts to do so and seek to revise or maybe even abandon his account, but that is best served

[127] Louis-Antoine Garnier-Pagès, *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, (Paris, 1862), vol. 6, p. 44. See similarly, Alphonse de Lamartine, *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, (Paris, 1849), vol. 1, pp. 315-16.

if we start by carefully and critically reconstructing what he meant by class struggle.

Table 1
Occupational Distribution: Mobile Guard and the Adult Male Parisian Population, Aggregated (Percentage)

Sector	1. Mobile Guard: Six-Battalion Sample	2. Chamber of Commerce: Wards 1,3,4,8,10,12	3. Chamber of Commerce: All Paris
Food	4.6	4.5	3.9
Construction	22.4	22.3	19.6
Furniture	12.0	18.6	14.0
Clothing and shoes	13.2	13.1	14.8
Thread and textiles	7.2	5.5	5.4
Leather	1.0	2.9	2.1
Carriage-making	3.6	6.6	5.2
Chemicals, ceramics	2.6	2.9	3.2
Base metals	12.8	10.9	10.8
Precious metals	5.6	2.0	5.3
Cooperage, basketry	3.7	1.9	2.0
Fancy goods	4.0	4.1	8.6
Printing	7.1	4.7	5.3
TOTAL	99.8	100.0	100.2
(*N*)	(1,812)	(90,504)	(204,925)

Table 2
Occupational Distribution: Mobile Guard and June Arrestees
(Percentage)

Occupational category (Tilly and Lees)	1. Mobile Guard: Six-Battalion Sample	2. June Arrestees
Food	3.7	4.0
Construction	15.0	18.2
Furniture	8.1	6.9
Clothing and shoes	8.7	10.3
Thread and textiles	4.9	3.3
Leather	0.7	1.6
Carriage-making	2.4	1.6
Chemicals, ceramics	1.7	1.3
Base metals	8.0	12.2
Precious metals	3.7	2.4
Cooperage, basketry	2.4	1.1
Fancy goods	2.5	2.0
Printing	4.7	4.5
Transport	2.0	4.1
Services and others	14.1	13.1
Liberal professions	2.2	2.8
Commerce	6.6	7.6
Military	8.5	3.0
TOTAL	99.9	100.0
(*N*)	(2,696)	(8,371)

[128] The two tables depicted above follow the updated versions in Traugott, *Armies of the Poor*, p. 70 (Table 2.2) and p. 72 (Table 2.3) and are reproduced with permission of the author.