Class, Crisis and the State

ERIK OLIN WRIGHT



To my parents

First published by New Left Books 1978 Paperback edition published by Verso 1979 Third impression 1993 © Erik Olin Wright 1978 All rights reserved

Verso

UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1V 3HR USA: 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001-2291

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN 0-86091-719-3 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication DataA catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication DataA catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Printed in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd

Contents

Chapter 1	
Methodological Introduction	9
Linking Theory to Data in Social Research	11
Modes of Determination and Models of Determination 1. Structural limitation 2. Selection 3. Reproduction/non-reproduction 4. Limits of functional compatibility	15 15 17 18 19
5. Transformation6. Mediation	21 23
Themes of the Book	26
Chapter 2 The Class Structure of Advanced Capitalist Societies	30
Poulantzas's Theory of the Structural Determination of Class	32
General Framework	32
Structural Determination of the Working Class and New Petty Bourgeoisie	34
Structural Determination of the Bourgeoisie	41
Assessment and Critique of Poulantzas's Analysis	43

The Boundary Between the Working Class and the New Petty Bourgeoisie	44
The Class Unity of the New and Traditional Petty Bourgeoisie	58
The Class Boundary of the Bourgeoisie	59
An Alternative Conceptualization of Class Boundaries	61
Contradictory Locations within Class Relations	61
The Processes of Class Relations	64
The Analysis of Contradictory Locations within Class Relations	74
Class Interests and the Definition of Class Positions	87
Immediate and Fundamental Class Interests	88
The Class Location of Positions not Directly Determined by Production Relations	91
Extended Definitions of Classes	96
Class Structure and Class Struggle	97
Class Interests and Class Capacities	98
Class Structure, Class Formation and Class Struggle	102
Conclusion	108

Chapter 3

Historical Transformations of Capitalist Crisis Tendencies	111
Introduction	111
I. The Meaning of Accumulation	113
 Capitalist Social Relations Surplus Value 	113 114
II. Impediments and Contradictions in the Accumulation Process	124
 The Organic Composition of Capital and the Falling Rate of Profit Underconsumption Theories of Economic Crisis Theories of the Profit Squeeze State Expenditures and Accumulation 	126 138 147 154
III. The Development of Capitalism and the Impediments to Accumulation	163
 The Transition from Simple Commodity Production to Expanded Reproduction The Transition from Primitive Accumulation to Manufacture The Transition from Manufacture to Machinofacture The Rise of Consolidation of Monopoly Capital Advanced Monopoly Capitalism 	170 171 172 173 175
Chapter 4	
Bureaucracy and the State	181
Weber's Argument	183

Lenin's Argument	194
Comparisons	204
The Determinants of Organizational Structure	207
The Nature of the State and Politics: Elite-Organization versus Class-Structure	208
Organizational Form and Accountability	210
The Meaning of Contradictions and the Limits on the Possible	213
Elements of a Synthesis: Class Struggle and Organizational Structure	219
Chapter 5 Conclusion: Socialist Strategies and the State in Advanced Capitalist Societies	226
Bibliography	255
Index	261

Acknowledgements

All intellectual production is ultimately a social process, but I feel that this book has been especially shaped by the collective exchanges I have had over the past five years. Each of the chapters in this book went through many versions before completion, and each version benefited tremendously from the critical comments I received from many people. I am especially indebted to the San Francisco Bay Area Kapitalistate Collective, which has unquestionably been the richest forum for the development of many of the ideas in this book. I would also like to express my special gratitude to Michael Burawoy, Manuel Castells, Roger Friedland, David Gold, Andy Levine and Luca Perrone for the intensive debates we have had on all aspects of this work. In addition, the following people have read various pieces of the book and given me comments and suggestions which in one way or another are embodied in the final product: Daniel Bertaux, Kathy Blee, Sam Bowles, Amy Bridges, Winnie Breines, Jens Christiansen, Al Gedicks, Barbara Heyns, Alex Hicks, Rebecca Kharkov, Robert L. Kahn, Ira Katznelson, Margaret Levi, Clarence Lo, John Mollenkopf, Jim O'Connor, Claus Offe, Nicos Poulantzas, Adam Przeworski, Michael Reich. Jesse Schwartz, Michael Soref, Arthur Stinchcombe, Al Szymanski, Göran Therborn, Kay Trimberger, Alan Wolfe, Marcia Kahn Wright, Glen Yago, and Maurice Zeitlin. Finally, I would like to thank the editors of New Left Review, especially Perry Anderson, for their extremely conscientious and insightful comments on the original manuscript of this book. Most of the theoretical developments in the text over the past year were directly provoked by their criticisms.