

us to have built this variable strictly as an historical experience variable uncontaminated by the respondent's current situation. Unfortunately, the prior-self-employment questions were only asked of people currently not self-employed.

17. Only eleven dummy variables are needed, since the twelfth category corresponds to a value of zero on all of the others. In the simple case of a dichotomy—which is a typology with two cells—only one dummy variable is needed, for example men = 0 and women = 1. It would be redundant to have a complimentary variable with the values reversed.

18. In this table we have combined people who spontaneously say that they are in the working class in the open-ended version of the question with those who say that they are in the working class in the closed-ended follow-up.

19. In the United States, expert managers are slightly more pro-capitalist than the bourgeoisie itself, but the difference between them is not statistically significant. It should be remembered in this context that most respondents in what I am calling the 'bourgeoisie' are still fairly modest capitalists. 83 per cent of these capitalists employ less than fifty employees. Only 8 per cent of expert managers, on the other hand, work for businesses with less than fifty employees. It is to be expected that if we had data on a sample of large capitalists, the results would be somewhat different.

20. These estimates are based on the following aggregations from table 7.1: Swedish bourgeois coalition = cells 1, 2, 4; US bourgeois coalition = cells 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10; Swedish working class coalition = cells 6, 9, 10, 11, 12 (low estimate) and also 7, 8 (high estimate); US working class coalition = cells 9, 11, 12. Note that in neither country is the petty bourgeoisie—category 3—part of either coalition.

21. For an explanation of the procedures used to calculate the adjusted means and their interpretation, see the discussion of statistical procedures on p. 258 above.

22. In calculating the adjusted means in table 7.6, we depart from the procedure discussed earlier in one respect: for the union-membership dummy variable it does not make sense to 'adjust' the means of capitalists by the socially average contribution of this variable to consciousness, since none of them can be union members. The counterfactual question implicit in the procedure used to adjust the mean values—what would be the expected consciousness of capitalists if the socially average proportion of them were union members—does not make sense. I have therefore evaluated the union membership dummy variable at zero (i.e. the appropriate value for capitalists) when calculating the adjusted means for owners of the means of production.

23. If the intervening variables included in the regression in fact measured all of the mechanisms which translated class location into class consciousness, then the adjusted means would all be identical.

24. There is a further ambiguity with this variable, referred to in the note to table 6.18, since some self-employed respondents regarded all of their income as income from investments, whereas others treated the question as referring only to investments other than in their own businesses. Only about 55 per cent of the US capitalists in the sample stated that they had any investment income.

25. The US age coefficient is statistically significantly larger than the Swedish coefficient at the .002 confidence level.

Conclusion

This book began by arguing that contemporary Marxist class analysis has been attempting to bridge the gap between the abstract, polarized structural map of classes and the concrete conjunctural analysis of class formation and class struggle. In this study our main preoccupation has been to approach this problem by systematically rethinking the structural categories themselves in a way suitable for incorporation into middle-level theories and empirical research. While we have explored many diverse problems, three overarching conclusions seem particularly important: the first concerns the viability of the proposed reconceptualization of class structure; the second involves the salient features of contemporary capitalist class structures using this reconceptualization; and the third is about the role of politics in class analysis.

The Exploitation Centred Concept of Class

My earlier work on class structure suffered, I have argued, from the tendency to displace the concept of exploitation from the centre of class analysis. This weakened the sense in which class relations were intrinsically relations of objectively opposed interests, and posed a series of specific conceptual difficulties.

These difficulties, combined with my empirical research on class structure and my encounter with the theoretical work of John Roemer, have precipitated the reconceptualization of class relations in terms of the multidimensional view of exploitation elaborated in chapter three. Classes in capitalist society, I now argue, should be seen as rooted in the complex intersection of three forms of exploitation: exploitation based on the ownership of capital assets, the control of organization assets and the possession of skill or credential assets. While I have some reservations

about the class character of the third of these categories, this reconceptualization nevertheless resolved many of the difficulties I had encountered with my previous approach to class structure.

The empirical investigations we have explored add considerable credibility to this reconceptualization. First, in chapter five when we formally compared the exploitation-centred concept to two rivals—the manual-labour definition of the working class and the productive-labour definition—the exploitation-centred concept fared considerably better. While the results were not without some ambiguities and are thus subject to alternative interpretations, in general where the alternative definitions disagreed about the class of particular positions, the data supported their class placement according to the logic and criteria of the exploitation-based concept.

Second, when we examined the relationship between class structure and income inequality in chapter six, the results were almost exactly as predicted by the exploitation-centred concept. This was a complex prediction, since it involved specifying the way income would vary across the three dimensions of the class structure matrix. The patterns followed these expectations very closely: income increased essentially monotonically as we moved along all of the dimensions of exploitation taken singly or together.

Finally, in chapter seven, the investigation of the relationship between class structure and class consciousness has added further to the credibility of the reconceptualization. The patterns of variation of consciousness across positions in the class structure matrix conform closely to the theoretical expectations. The results seem to be relatively robust and, at least on the basis of the variables we have considered, do not appear to be artifacts of certain possible sources of spuriousness. Furthermore, the same basic pattern is observed in two countries which are dramatically different in their general political complexion.

Taken together, these diverse empirical results lend considerable support to the new conceptualization of class structure. Empirical results of this sort, however, can never provide definitive judgements. Alternative explanations of the observed patterns are always available and the conclusions I have drawn are inevitably open to both theoretical and methodological question. But until a more compelling rival conception of class enters the fray of theoretical and empirical adjudication, there are compelling reasons to adopt some variant of the approach proposed here.

The Class Structure of Contemporary Capitalism

Using this new conceptualization of class structure, we have systematically explored the contours of the American and Swedish class structures. Leaving aside all of the details of that analysis, there are two broad generalizations that we can make.

First, in both countries, in spite of the technical and social changes of contemporary capitalism, the working class remains by far the largest class in the labour force. Even if we adopt a narrow specification of the working class, which excludes various holders of 'marginal' exploitation assets, around forty per cent of the labour force is in this class. If these marginal categories are added—and there are good reasons to do so, particularly in the case of the 'semi-credentialed employee' category—then the working class becomes a clear majority in both countries.

Second, and equally important, while the working class is the largest class, a substantial proportion of the labour force occupies exploitative locations within the class structure. Even if, again, we exclude all possessors of marginal exploitation assets from this designation, somewhere around one quarter of the labour force in Sweden and the United States are exploiters. Looked at in terms of families rather than individuals, an even higher proportion of families have at least one person in an exploiting class within them, probably around forty per cent of all households. This is not to say that such individuals and families are *net* exploiters. The central argument in the reconceptualization of the 'middle class' is that such positions are *simultaneously* exploiters and exploited. This is precisely what defines the complexity of their class interests and puts them into what I have called 'contradictory locations within exploitation relations'. My guess is that most of these individuals and families are still more capitalistically exploited than they are exploiters through other mechanisms. Nevertheless, this does not obliterate the fact that they are exploiters and that, as a result, they have material interests which are fundamentally different from those of workers.

Class Structure and Politics

Class structure is of pervasive importance in contemporary social life. The control over society's productive assets determines the fundamental material interests of actors and heavily shapes the

capacities of both individuals and collectivities to pursue their interests. The fact that a substantial portion of the population may be relatively comfortable materially does not negate the fact that their capacities and interests remain bound up with property relations and the associated processes of exploitation.

Nevertheless, in spite of this importance, the effects of class structure are mediated by politics. Class relations may define the terrain upon which interests are formed and collective capacities forged, but the outcome of that process of class formation cannot be 'read off' the class structure itself.

In the empirical investigations we have discussed, political factors have entered in two central ways. First of all, in the structural comparisons of classes in Sweden and the United States, the differences in their class structures seem largely attributable to political processes. The size of the state itself has a significant impact on the class distributions of the two countries, contributing to the greater number of non-managerial experts in Sweden than in the United States, and explaining almost entirely the smaller number of small employers and petty bourgeois in Sweden. More subtly, political dynamics are probably implicated in the much higher levels of supervision of the American than of the Swedish workforce, and of the much closer association between expertise and authority in the United States than in Sweden. While the broadest contours of the two countries' class structures are shaped by the level of economic development and the fundamentally capitalist character of both societies, the variations in their class structures are certainly significantly affected by political processes.

The second crucial way that politics have entered our empirical investigation is in the process of consciousness formation, and by extension, class formation. Although the same basic linkage between class structure and class consciousness exists in both countries, the ideological consequences of this link are contingent on their political and historical differences. The higher degree of polarization in Sweden and the much broader ideological basis for a working class coalition are the results of this political mediation of the consciousness-formation process.

Political Implications

The preoccupation throughout this book has been on conceptual problems in the analysis of classes, and the theoretical and empirical implications of a proposed solution to those problems. Except

in passing, relatively little attention has been given to the implications of the analysis for socialist politics. Three such implications seem particularly important: the centrality of radical democracy in the political agenda for socialism; the necessity of conceiving the process of class formation in contemporary capitalism as a problem of class alliances; and the importance of creating the political mediations which will make such alliances possible. Let us briefly look at each of these in turn.

So long as Marxists believed that socialism was the only possible future to capitalism, to be militantly anti-capitalist was equivalent to being pro-socialist. Destroying capitalism was both necessary and sufficient for creating the conditions for socialism. Once capitalism is viewed as having multiple futures, once it is admitted that post-capitalist societies are possible with new forms of class structures, new mechanisms of exploitation and domination, then this simple equation of anti-capitalism with socialism breaks down. It then becomes necessary to think through rigorously what it means to struggle positively for socialism rather than simply against capitalism.

The reconceptualization of class proposed in this book suggests that the heart of the positive struggle for socialism is radical democracy. Socialism, as it has been defined in this book, is a society within which control over capital assets and organizational assets are no longer significant sources of exploitation. For this to occur, private ownership of capital assets and hierarchical-authoritarian control over organization assets must be eliminated. Taken together, this implies that socialism *means* radical democratic control over the physical and organizational resources used in production.

This is, of course, not a novel conclusion. The increasing awareness of the importance of democracy has been one of the hallmarks of recent political debates on the left.¹ Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that, at least in the American context, the problem of democracy has tended to displace the problem of socialism from the centre stage of leftist political discourse. Instead of displacing socialism by democracy as the core political agenda of the left, the arguments in this book suggest that the struggle for socialism and the struggle for democracy are two sides of a single process. Without a redistribution of organization assets through a democratization of the process of control and co-ordination of production, organization-asset exploitation would continue and upon that exploitation a new structure of class relations would be

built. Democracy is not simply a question of how the political institutions of the state are organized; it also bears directly on how class relations themselves are constituted.

If the importance of radical democracy as an objective of struggle is one of the basic political implications of this study, the problematic character of the process of class formation needed to accomplish that goal is another. If it were true that the class structure of contemporary capitalism was basically polarized between a massive working class and the bourgeoisie, then the problem of class formation would be much simpler than it is. Basically the task would be one of forging collective organizations of individuals all of whom share the same fundamental class interests. But, as I have argued, the class structures of 'actually existing capitalism' are not simple polarized structures. A substantial proportion of the population, at least in the advanced capitalist countries, occupy contradictory locations within exploitation relations, locations in which they are simultaneously exploited and exploiters. It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which socialism would become a real possibility in these societies without the co-operation of a significant segment of the people in such contradictory locations. Yet, at least in terms of their material interests, the incumbents of these contradictory locations are either directly threatened by socialism, or at least have relatively ambiguous material interests in a socialist transformation.

This poses a deep dilemma for socialists: socialism is achievable only with the co-operation of segments of the population for whom socialism does not pose clear material advantages.² How can this dilemma be dealt with? There are basically two kinds of approaches that are implicit in socialist arguments. The first is to basically deny the problem. Socialism, it is argued, will so radically eliminate the massive waste in capitalism (excessive military spending, advertising, conspicuous corporate consumption, etc.) that the vast majority of the population will be better off in a socialist society. In terms of the analysis in this book, real productivity of useful consumption would expand so much that many people in contradictory locations within exploitation relations would actually be better off, and only a very few would be worse off, if capitalist and organization exploitation were eliminated. In effect, this argument implies that most of the labour-time liberated by the reduction of capitalist waste could be redirected towards useful material consumption, thus significantly raising the average standard of living. This would mean that even if consumption levels

were substantially equalized in a socialist society this might not imply a reduction of the standards of living of most people in contradictory locations.

This kind of argument often meets with a fair amount of scepticism. A radically democratic socialism will have to devote a great deal of 'socially necessary labour-time' to democratic participation in order for the democratic institutions of production to function effectively. Much of the reduction of waste from capitalism, therefore, will be needed simply to make time available for democratic participation, rather than to produce for personal consumption. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to expect in a socialist society that quite different kinds of efficiency criteria would be instituted in production. For example, under democratic conditions workers may opt for a slower pace of work which could reduce total social productivity. It is therefore very difficult to know in advance what will happen to overall social productivity in a socialist society, and thus what will be the fate of the material interests of people in contradictory locations in capitalism.

The second solution to the general dilemma faced by socialists in trying to gain the collaboration of people in contradictory locations is to emphasize a range of interests other than individual consumption. Arguments for socialism in terms of the quality of life, the expansion of real freedom, the reduction of violence and so on, provide a basis for building class coalitions for socialist objectives.³ Such goals do not eliminate the contradictory material interests which members of such a coalition would bring to a socialist struggle, but they have the potential of neutralizing their effects.

The process of class formation through which a viable, cohesive socialist coalition is forged is not simply a question of socialists figuring out what kinds of goals will have the greatest appeal to contradictory locations within exploitation relations. As our empirical investigations have emphasized, the entire process of class formation is heavily mediated by politics and ideology. This, then, is the third general political implication of the analysis: in order to create the conditions under which a democratic-socialist class coalition is possible, these mediations themselves have to be transformed.

This is not a new idea in Marxism. Lenin's classic call for 'smashing' the capitalist state was based on the view that this state apparatus was organized in such a way that it prevented the working class from becoming the 'ruling class'. Only by destroying this

apparatus and replacing it by a qualitatively distinct kind of apparatus would socialism be possible.⁴

Even if we reject Lenin's rather monolithic view of the structure of the capitalist state and see greater possibilities for political action within its apparatuses, the basic intuition behind Lenin's thesis remains sound. The political and ideological context within which struggles for socialism occur significantly shapes the potential for different kinds of class formations. This means that it is important for socialists to identify those features of capitalist political and ideological institutions which play particularly important roles in defining this 'terrain of struggle' and thus most pervasively curtail or enhance the long-term possibilities of creating radically democratic socialist coalitions. To take just a few examples: the differences in labour law between the United States and Sweden explain, in part, why the levels of unionization are so dramatically different in the two countries, and this in turn has significant implications for the class coalitions between workers and contradictory locations. The differences in electoral institutions between countries can make it extremely difficult for radical parties to gain any political presence (as in the United States) or relatively easier (as in West Germany). The extent to which social welfare programmes are primarily organized around means-tests, in which recipients are sharply distinguished from non-recipients, or as universal programs, in which everyone receives benefits (but different people pay different amounts of taxes) may have a large impact on the level of support for such programmes in particular, and the broader political coalitions that are formed around such support.

In each of these cases, political reforms have the potential to enlarge the social space for socialist struggles. This is the core of what was called 'nonreformist reforms' in the 1970s: reforms within the existing society which transform the conditions of subsequent struggle and potentially expand the very horizon of historical possibilities.

Class structures may determine the limits of possible class formations and class struggles, but within those limits a wide range of different kinds of struggle can occur. Such struggles may largely reproduce the existing class structure, or may set the stage for new forms of post-capitalist exploitation, or open the possibilities for socialism. Whether or not the left will be able to forge the conditions in capitalism which make democratic socialism possible depends, in part, on its ability to identify the kinds of institutional reforms of existing society that enhance the potential for class formations engaged in struggle for such a future.

Notes

1. Two important and lucid examples of discussions of the problem of democracy and socialism are Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, *On Democracy*, London 1983, and Samuel Bowles, David Gordon and Thomas Weiskopf, *Beyond the Wasteland*, Garden City, New York 1984.

2. The problem of the 'transition costs' of any feasible process through which capitalism would be transformed into socialism (discussed briefly in chapter four) makes this dilemma even deeper. If the transition costs are high and prolonged, then even the material interests of workers who would clearly benefit from socialism might still be insufficient to motivate them to struggle for socialism.

3. Adam Przeworski has argued that the shift towards such 'cultural' goals is also important as a way of mitigating the effects of transition costs on support for socialism. See Adam Przeworski, 'Material Interests, Class Compromise and the Transition to Socialism', *Politics & Society*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1981. Claus Offe and Helmut Weisenthal have made a similar argument, emphasizing the ways in which treating the full range of human needs as the object of struggle can change the trade-offs people experience in deciding whether or not to support a given struggle. See their 'Two Logics of Collective Action', *Political Power and Social Theory*, vol. I, edited by Maurice Zeitlin, Greenwich 1979.

4. For a discussion of Lenin's views that is pertinent to the present analysis, see my *Class, Crisis and the State*, chapters four and five.