

ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CLASS IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

Harri MELIN

Tampereen yliopiston sosiologian ja sosiaalipsykologian laitos (Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere), Box 607, SF-33 101 Tampere, Suomi (Finland)

Presented by P. Järve

Received 7 October 1995, accepted 22 May 1996

Baltic countries are living between two different eras and between two different societies. Baltic states are nation states but in Latvia and in Estonia more than one third of the population belong to ethnic minorities. In the article the relations between social class and ethnicity are discussed in the Baltic context.

Baltic societies are working class societies. Working class is the biggest class group in every country. The share of the petty bourgeoisie is very small in all these countries. On the other hand, wage labouring middle classes are substantially large. Middle classes can be structurally determined, but as social actors they are not existing.

Ethnic relations and the social position of ethnic minorities are of great importance for the future development of the Baltic countries. In Estonia and in Latvia there are large minority communities based on language, culture, and ethnic origin. Minority groups fall more often into the working class than the native population, while indigenous population is more often in middle class positions. During the Soviet period these differences were smaller.

The concept of social closure has been used in sociology to explain status, action, and their consequences. The concept helps us understand uneven social possibilities. Social closure may develop around status defined circumstances such as gender, generation, place of residence, subculture, or socio-political identification. Also ethnicity can be a key factor of social closure. Structurally ethnicity is forming a social closure in the Baltic countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

A profound social change is taking place in the Baltic countries. Old state socialist structures are vanishing and capitalist social relations are being built. As a consequence, new social actors and new social (power) relations are emerging, and new class groups are developing all the time. What does the Baltic class structure look like today? How can we describe contemporary Baltic societies? What kind of a role does ethnicity play in class relations? In the following paper I shall discuss the relations between social class and ethnicity in the Baltic countries.

Class analysis has been one of the key areas in sociological research. Especially during the late 1970s and early eighties sociologists discussed and

analysed classes quite intensively in the developed capitalist countries¹. However, class theory and class research tend to mean different things in different contexts. Classes may be described at the level of production relations as bearers of the functions of capital or wage labour, as categories or strata determined by statistical criteria such as educational level and income, or as categories based on purely subjective criteria².

Classes were also present in the state socialist societies. This implies that during the Soviet period the Baltic countries were class societies, having social divisions that were based on different positions in the social division of labour. How the Baltic societies were internally differentiated e.g. 10 or 15 years ago is a very difficult question to answer. What was the role of the nomenclature? Which kind of power resources did industrial workers have? What kind of role did ethnicity play in Estonian or in Latvian society? All these questions are of vital importance in understanding the contemporary Baltic societies, but no relevant sociological research has been done to tell us what the situation actually was.

To analyse and to understand the existing social structures, we must be aware of the historical, cultural, and economic development of the Baltic countries. In these respects the former 'Baltic republics' were among the most developed parts of the former Soviet Union. Though the social structures of the Baltic republics were moulded into a similar form with the rest of the Soviet Union, these republics did not form a homogeneous part of the imperium. Indeed, there existed really big differences also between the Baltic countries in terms of cultural and economic structures. For example, Estonia was an industrialized society, while in Lithuania agriculture was the main branch of economy.

During the last four years social change has been conspicuously rapid in the Baltic countries. Governments have adopted market-oriented policies. Many profound institutional reforms have been made. Privatization has changed the structure of the ownership relations, and new private firms are being established. The Baltic countries have their own currencies. New laws are regulating economic activities. In spite of many radical changes the process of social transition is still going on. Though small-scale privatization has been successfully administered, large-scale privatization is still an unsolved question. Legislation concerning the labour markets is not functioning. Corruption is a serious problem in every Baltic country. These are only some examples of tasks facing governments and parliaments.

There are currently about 83 000 registered economic organizations in Estonia, of which some 30 000 are actively functioning. A vast majority of these are 'one-man enterprises', more than 80% of the companies have only one employee³. Only 3% of all the enterprises have more than 50 employees. At the same time these 3% provide jobs to more than 66% of all the employees. The share of state-owned enterprises is less than 2% of all the enterprises, but the share of workers they employ is substantially bigger.

Capitalist social relations are young in the Baltic context. It is very difficult to speak about classes in the meaning standard western sociology understands classes and class relations. Capital/labour relations are in the process of their making. People do not consider themselves belonging to social classes. New structures are still very weak.

¹ Blom, R., Kivinen, M., Melin, H., Rantalaiho, L. *The Scope Logic of Class Analysis*. Avebury, Aldershot, 1992, 4–34.

² Ibid, 3.

³ Lihto, K. *Entrepreneurial transition in post-Soviet Republics: The Estonian path*. – *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1996, 48, 1, 121–140.

2. ETHNICITY

The Baltic countries gained their independence for the first time after World War I. They all were nation states, which also had some important ethnic minorities. In the thirties 8% of the Estonian and 6% of the Latvian population were of Russian origin. At the same time Lithuania had quite a big Polish minority, about 15% of the population. During the Soviet period there were three principal demographic changes in Estonia and Latvia:⁴

1. There was a very rapid increase of the nonindigenous population. (In Estonia from 3% in 1945 to 39% in 1989.)

2. The shift in ethnic minorities was civilizational in scope. (Today over 90% of the non-Estonians living in Estonia are Slavs from the eastern regions.)

3. There was a stratificational shift of the nonindigenous population. After the incorporation of Estonia and Latvia into the Soviet Union, industrial workers comprised the majority of the immigrant labour force.⁵

The nonindigenous societies in the Baltic countries lived in very different cultural worlds compared to the local cultures. Soviet immigrants lived in their own regions and areas. They had their own kindergartens, schools, restaurants, and they spoke only Russian. In regions where immigrants were, and still are, in a minority position their knowledge of the local language is rather good. But in regions where they form a majority, e.g. in northeastern Estonia, they do not speak the local language at all.

A truly extraordinary situation has arisen, where many generations of immigrants and their descendants know practically nothing about the history, culture, and mentality of the land and nation in which they live. One can even claim that during the Soviet period Estonia and Latvia were countries with two societies. The immigrant society lived its own life side by side with the local society, but these two societies had very little to do with each other.

The majority of Russians consider the country they are now living in to be their homeland. In a survey conducted in Estonia more than half (56%) of the respondents maintained this view unequivocally and a quarter (29%) with some reservations. Other questions revealed that more than half of the Russians see their future clearly bound to Estonia. About 75% of the Russians living in the rural areas or in small towns are, or will become, Estonian citizens. At the same time only a quarter of Russians from the northeastern industrial towns of Estonia have decided in favour of Estonian citizenship.⁶

This implies that the immigrant population is culturally in a strange position. They do not know the language and culture of the society they are living in. However, in practice they have no alternatives to the present situation. Their jobs and homes are in the Baltic countries. They are a part of the Baltic reality.

3. SOCIAL CLASSES

Soviet understanding of classes and class analysis was very different from that of western sociology. Now, when the Baltic societies are in the midst of rapid social transition, the question of social class has to be raised in a new context. Sociologists have to rethink their theoretical approaches. People in the Baltic

⁴ Blom, R., Melin, H., Nikula, J. and Ruutsoo, R. Vem är medborgare? Nationalitet och social klausur i Baltikum. – Nordisk Östforum, 1995, 9, 1, 60.

⁵ Kirch, M. and Kirch, A. Ethnic relations: Estonians and non-Estonians. – Nationalities Papers, 1995, 23, 1, 43–59.

⁶ Ibid, 48–50.

countries must also rethink their relations to markets, money, industrial production, etc. The case is that people in the Baltic countries do not understand "the language of class". We asked our respondents whether they thought they belonged to any social class. In Latvia and in Lithuania more than half of the respondents said no. They did not consider themselves as members of any social class. The figures were even higher among Russian minorities.

My following empirical analysis is based on nation-wide representative surveys (interviews) conducted in every Baltic country in the autumn of 1993. We had 1500 respondents in each country. Data are representative in terms of age, sex, ethnicity, and urban/rural dimensions. The research was funded by the Nordic Social Science Council, see⁷.

The role of the class relations is changing in all post-socialist societies. Old structures are being destroyed and new are emerging. In the field of class theory, there are many different approaches to classes, the relevance of classes, and the future of classes. In the following analysis, Erik Olin Wright's class theory is used as the conceptual tool⁸. His theory of class structure represents the neo-Marxist tradition of class theory and it centres on the social relations of production. Wright attempts to define his position through a critique extending in two directions: he rejects stratification analysis and Weberian class theories on the one hand, and various traditional Marxian class concepts on the other.

Wright sets out his theorizing from the relations of appropriation (ownership) prevailing in production, which at the same time are relations of domination (control). He also takes into account the separation of economic ownership and possession in modern capitalism as well as the functional differentiation of complex hierarchies within capitalist enterprises. Thirdly, a central starting-point in Wright's theory is the existence of different modes of production. Simultaneously there exist capitalist commodity production and simple commodity production, the dominant form of production and the subordinated form of production.

According to Wright, there are three kinds of locations within class relations:

- 1) Basic class locations: bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and working class;
- 2) Contradictory locations within a mode of production: managers and supervisors;
- 3) Contradictory locations between modes of production: small employers and semiautonomous employees.

Basic and contradictory class locations can be determined on the basis of the structural relations of domination and subordination prevailing in production. These, in turn, can be specified according to the matter or resource controlled (investments and capital accumulation, physical means of production, labour power).

Though Wright's theory is in the first place constructed to analyse classes in contemporary capitalist societies, it can also be used in the context of socialist and post-socialist countries. It explains the class structures of all industrial societies, being in this sense over-historic. In Wright's theory, there are some problematic features, which we should be aware of. First all analysis based on survey data is in many respects always ahistorical. Behind the figures describing e.g. Sweden and Lithuania there are very different social realities. For example, authority relations are developed in very different ways in the contemporary Baltic and Nordic countries. In the Baltic countries old state socialist forms of domination are still existing, while in the Nordic countries domination is based on capitalist social relations. In the same manner autonomy of work has a

⁷ Blom, R., Melin, H., Nikula, J. (eds.). *Between Plan and Market*. De Gruyter, Berlin, 1996 (in press).

⁸ Wright, E. O. *Class, Crisis and the State*. New Left Books, London, 1978.

different meaning in the Nordic context than in the Baltic context. Secondly, real ownership relations are just in the process of their making in every post-socialist country. Bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie, as social forces, are still more or less nonexistent. Thirdly, the managerial structures are formally very similar in all industrialized countries. However, under socialism these structures were based on different ideas than the very same structures in the capitalist countries.

In spite of the above-mentioned problems, Wright's⁹ typology is useful when we are analysing social transition in the Baltic countries, because Wright's theory is sensitive in analysing organizational decision-making and authority relations. What will the Baltic countries look like if we use Wright's class typology?

Table 1

Classes and strata in the Baltics according to Wright*, %

Class/stratum	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Petty bourgeoisie	6	8	9
Managers	11	14	11
Advisor-managers	5	4	3
Nonhierarchical decision-makers	7	10	9
Supervisors	5	5	4
Working class (workers)	58	54	60
Semiautonomous employees	8	6	4
Total	100	100	100
N	724	791	944

* Operationalization of Wright's typology:

Petty bourgeoisie: owner of a firm/farm, under 10 hired employees, control over (minor) investments and physical capital and workers' labour power;

Managers: wage earners with decision-making authority in matters concerning the whole organization (including authority to suggest approval of matters);

Advisor-managers: authority to give advice in matters concerning the whole organization;

Nonhierarchical decision-makers: decision-making authority in matters concerning the whole organization but no control over other people's labour;

Supervisors: no decision-making authority but influence on the pay, promotions, and discipline of other workers;

Working class: excluded from control over investments, use of physical capital and other people's labour power;

Semiautonomous employees: as above, but have control over their own work process.

(See Wright, E. O. *Class, Crisis and the State*, pp. 61–86, and Blom et al. *The Scope Logic*, p. 46).

Table 1 takes into account economically active population only. The Baltic societies are wage labour societies. Less than one out of ten gainfully employed persons belong to entrepreneurs or petty bourgeoisie. In Estonia only 6% fall into the category of entrepreneurs. In Lithuania the share of the petty bourgeoisie is the biggest (9%) in the Baltic context. The majority of this group in Lithuania are farmers.

⁹ Wright, E. O. *Class, Crisis and the State*, 61–86; Blom, R., Kivinen, M., Melin, H., Rantalaiho, L. *The Scope Logic of Class Analysis*, 46.

Today it is far too early to speak about bourgeoisie in the Baltic countries. Though there are almost 30 000 enterprises in Estonia, and about 80% of the enterprises are privately owned, still a vast majority of the firms are 'one man companies' selling and reselling consumer goods¹⁰. There are only very few 'real' private employers and some small employers, but in general the group of entrepreneurs is undergoing the process of formation.

In Estonia and Latvia about one third of the gainfully employed population falls into contradictory locations within the 'capitalist mode of production'. In Lithuania the share is somewhat smaller. Managers, with all criteria, form the biggest contradictory group in every country. In general, managerial groups are the largest in Latvia. There are more actual managers and nonhierarchical decision-makers in Latvia than in the other Baltic countries. Compared to Finland the size of the managerial groups seems to be bigger in the Baltic countries. In Finland only one fourth of the economically active population belongs to the managerial groups.

There seem to be quite few semiautonomous employees in each country. This result is very surprising. All the studies concerning the Soviet-type work organizations indicate that workers' autonomy at the shop floor level was great, and still is under the conditions of transition¹¹. It is also surprising because the educational level of economically active population is relatively high. This result could be explained with our empirical tools. We have asked a series of questions where the level of autonomy is discussed. There is certainly a discrepancy between official rules and everyday practices. Respondents have answered according to the rules (no autonomy), but in reality their everyday behaviour may be something else (wide autonomy).

More than half of the economically active population belongs to the working class in every country. If we use a broad definition of the working class, that is we include also semiautonomous employees into the working class, the working class will be still bigger. According to Wright's criteria the working class is the biggest in Lithuania (60%) and the smallest in Latvia (54%). Compared with the Nordic countries all the Baltic countries seem to be real working class societies. For example in Finland about 35% of the economically active population belonged to the working class in 1994.

4. CLASS AND ETHNICITY

In many respects the Soviet Union was a homogeneous country. Educational differentials or wage differentials were smaller than they were in the capitalist countries. The ethnic origin was supposed not to play any important role in citizens' lives.

Now the world is changing, both indigenous population and immigrants from various parts of the former Soviet Union think that the role of the ethnic origin is becoming more and more important. Only a quarter of the Estonian managers said in 1988 that ethnic origin played an important role for people when getting ahead in the society. The respective figure for the year 1993 was 56%. Less than a quarter of the workers of Russian origin thought in 1988 that the ethnic origin was important, in 1993 the respective figure was 84%.

How does ethnicity then change the picture of the class structure in the Baltic countries? Does ethnicity form some kind of a social closure? In Estonia the majority of the petty bourgeoisie are of indigenous origin; in Latvia and in Lithuania there are no big differences between different ethnic groups in this respect (Table 2).

¹⁰ Liuhito, K. Entrepreneurial transition.

¹¹ Burawoy, M. Why coupon socialism never stood a chance in Russia: The political conditions of economic transition. – *Politics & Society*, 1994, 22, 4, 585–594.

Distribution of classes in the Baltic countries by ethnic groups, %

Class	Native	Rus ^a	Other ^b
ESTONIA			
Petty bourgeoisie	7	4	0
Managers	17	8	12
Advisor-managers	9	3	3
Nonhierarchical decision-makers	6	9	8
Supervisors	5	7	8
Workers	47	59	62
Semiautonomous employees	9	10	8
Total	100	100	100
N	743	298	77
LATVIA			
Petty bourgeoisie	7	8	7
Managers	16	11	12
Advisor-managers	4	4	1
Nonhierarchical decision-makers	10	10	8
Supervisors	6	5	5
Workers	52	56	60
Semiautonomous employees	5	6	6
Total	100	100	100
N	458	236	95
LITHUANIA			
Petty bourgeoisie	9	7	6
Managers	12	9	6
Advisor-managers	3	6	4
Nonhierarchical decision-makers	9	12	9
Supervisors	5	2	0
Workers	58	58	72
Semiautonomous employees	4	6	3
Total	100	100	100
N	745	108	88

^a Rus = Russian immigrants;

^b Other = immigrants from other countries than Russia.

Managerial groups are playing an important role in the social transition. Compared to the former Soviet model the power resources of different managerial groups have grown quite much. Managers are agents of social change, they promote new ideas of market economy, profits, and self-interests. Nevertheless, some of them resist any changes towards market economy.

In Estonia there are clearly more Russians among workers than there are Estonians. In Latvia there are only a bit more Russians in a working class position, and in Lithuania the relative size of Lithuanian and Russian working class is the same. There are more top managers of native origin than of Russian or other minority origin in every Baltic country. If we count together all the managerial groups, then the difference is smaller, especially in Latvia (36 vs. 30) and in Lithuania (29 vs. 29), though the difference is still quite big in Estonia (37 vs. 27).

What kind of a role is ethnicity playing in the work organization? How are managerial positions divided between ethnic groups? It seems that work organizations are supervised mainly by indigenous population. In Estonia a little more than 75% of all supervisors are of Estonian origin. In small work places (less than 50 employees) the share of Estonian supervisors is even higher, 84% of the supervisors are Estonians. In bigger firms (more than 50 employees) slightly more Russians work as supervisors with 69% of the supervisors being Estonians.

How about men and women, how will the picture change if we take gender into consideration? In Table 3 the class structure is analysed by ethnicity and sex in the Estonian context. There is a clear distinction between male and female structures. In both ethnic groups entrepreneurial and (top) managerial positions are male dominated, while females predominate among workers. On the other hand, there are more women than men in lower managerial positions and in semiautonomous positions.

Table 3

Estonian class structure by ethnicity and sex (Estonians and Russians, %)

Class	Estonians		Russians	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Petty bourgeoisie	10	4	7	1
Managers	20	14	13	5
Advisor-managers	12	7	5	1
Nonhierarchical decision-makers	5	7	7	10
Supervisors	3	7	7	7
Semiautonomous employees	8	9	4	15
Workers	41	52	57	61
Total	100	100	100	100
N	355	379	129	165

It seems that male Estonians are more often in managerial positions than any other group. At the same time women of Russian origin belong more often to the working class than any other group. So it is not only ethnicity that is playing an important role in the determination of class position. Also sex is of significance in this respect.

All in all we can say that class and ethnicity are linked together in the Baltic countries. If we put together sex and ethnicity, we have a lot of information on the distribution of class locations. Ethnic minorities are more often in working class positions than native population, while native population is more often in entrepreneurial and in managerial positions.

The reasons behind these structural features are beyond the scope of this article. However, we can briefly name some processes that have produced the present situation:

- 1) The majority of the immigrants in Estonia and Latvia moved to the Baltic countries to work as industrial workers in factories of all-Union subordination;
- 2) After the collapse of the Soviet Union nationalist voices have become louder in the Baltic countries. Native experts and native intelligentsia are strongly favoured instead of 'aliens';

3) Russians with a higher education are mainly technical intelligentsia, while the most rapidly growing branches of the economy are trade, marketing, business services, etc.;

4) Both Western-oriented market economy and new state structures need staff who can speak the native language as well as other languages.

5. CLASS SITUATION

In the previous sections I have analysed relationships between classes and ethnic groups on the level of class structure. Formal class location does not tell us much about people's actual class situation. What then is the relation between the formal position and the actual situation? How do the class position and the class situation of different ethnic groups match with each other?

Wages and salaries are often used as an important indicator of the class situation. It seems that in the Baltic countries wages and salaries are in general determined by class positions (see Tables 4 and 5). Working class' wages are lower than the salaries of managers or petty bourgeoisie. In this respect a great change has taken place since the Soviet times. During the Soviet period differences in the pay between different social groups were quite small.

As to wages and ethnicity, there seems to be a clear discrepancy between the formal position of ethnic groups and their wage levels. Wages of different ethnic groups do not follow the same line as relations between class and ethnicity. The wages of ethnic minorities are in general better than the wages of the indigenous population. In this respect we must be aware that our question concerned only the main job, not all possible incomes of the respondents.

If we assign the wages of the working class an index 100, and relate the mean monthly incomes of the different ethnic groups to this, the result shows that in Estonia the Russian minority has clearly the best incomes. The situation is quite similar also in Latvia and in Lithuania.

To have a closer look at the class effect, the relations between class, ethnicity, and wages are further elaborated in the Estonian context. The analysis shows that Russian entrepreneurs have the best incomes in Estonia. Their incomes are almost three times as big as the incomes of Estonian workers. Russian managers' incomes are also bigger than the incomes of their Estonian counterparts. The situation is similar with the working class groups as well.

Table 4

Wage index (working class = 100) by ethnic groups in the Baltic countries, %*

Ethnic groups	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Est/Lat/Lit	118	115	127
Russian	130	127	138
Other	113	119	138
Total	121	119	129
N	1084	770	918

* The question concerning the wages was: What is your average monthly salary in your main job?

Wage index (working class = 100) by class and ethnicity in Estonia

Class	Estonian	Rus ^a	Other ^b
Petty bourgeoisie	181	297	(-)
Managers & semiautonomous employees	127	156	148
Working class	100	103	89
Total	118	130	112
N	719	290	75

^a Rus = Russian immigrants;

^b Other = immigrants from other countries than Russia.

As Table 5 shows there seems to be a discrepancy between the respondent's ethnic origin, class position, and his/her incomes. Incomes of Russians are surprisingly high in Estonia. There are several reasons for this situation. First, immigrants live more often in urban areas than the natives, especially in the capital area. Wages are in general higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas and very few immigrants live in the countryside. Secondly, immigrants often work in such branches of the economy where wages are higher than the average. Finally, their educational level is higher than the average, and this has also an effect on wages.

However, we must remember that wages are not the only source of income. Native population can benefit through different kinds of social networks more often than immigrants. They have contacts with rural areas, where many of them have their own plots or possibilities to buy cheap food. In most cases immigrants do not have such networks.

Education is another indicator of class situation. It is self-evident that people in managerial or other middle-class positions have better education than the working class. It is also commonly known that the former Soviet Union had quite an extensive educational system. In general people had good opportunities to educate themselves, and educational opportunities did not depend on one's ethnic origin.

Our results suggest that Russian minorities in the Baltic countries have in general better education than the indigenous population. Especially in Lithuania there are more Russians with secondary and university education than among the native population. The differences between the ethnic groups are however quite small.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Baltic countries are living between two different eras and between two different societies. On the one hand, the Soviet Union and the socialist system have collapsed. On the other hand, these countries are still on their way towards a market economy and western democracy. Baltic states are nation states with their own legislation, passports, and currency. In spite of all this almost 30% of the population in Latvia and in Estonia¹² are aliens without citizenship and the ensuing rights.

¹² Latvia. Human Development Report 1995. Riga, 1995, 22; Estonia. Human Development Report 1995. Tallinn, 1995, 32.

In conclusion, we can say the following about ethnicity and social classes in the Baltic countries:

1. Baltic societies are wage labour societies. The share of the petty bourgeoisie is very small in every country. This special feature has an impact also on the formation of the middle class(es).

2. Baltic societies are working class societies. The working class is the biggest class group in every country. Wage labouring middle classes are also substantially large, compared e.g. with the Nordic countries. However, the Baltic countries are not middle class societies. Middle classes can be structurally determined, but as social actors they do not exist. There are also some important differences between the countries in this respect. The surveys showed that in 1993 the share of the petty bourgeoisie was bigger in Lithuania than in Estonia or Latvia. In Latvia there are more people in managerial positions than in the two other Baltic countries. In Estonia there are more people in autonomous/professional positions than in the other countries.

3. Ethnic relations and the social position of ethnic minorities are of great importance for the future development of the Baltic countries. In Estonia and Latvia there are large minority communities. In both countries more than one third of the population belongs to a minority community based on language, culture, and ethnic origin.

Ethnicity is playing an important role in the Baltic countries. There are quite large ethnic minorities in Estonia and Latvia. Minority groups fall more often into working class than the native population, while indigenous population is more often in middle class positions. During the Soviet period the differences were smaller. In their evaluations concerning their future position ethnic minorities are more pessimistic than the indigenous people. In Estonia, the Russian minority believe that they will have to cope with downward social mobility, while Estonians believe more often in upward social mobility.

4. The concept of social closure has been used in sociology to explain status, action, and their consequences. The concept helps us understand uneven social possibilities. Social closure may develop around status defined circumstances such as gender, generation, place of residence, subculture, or socio-political identification. Also ethnicity can be a key factor of social closure¹³. We can say that structurally ethnicity is forming a social closure in the Baltic countries. The reason may be in language or in culture, but all together they form different kinds of networks which are closely interconnected. Different kinds of mechanisms and aspects support each other.

However, if we look at the class situation of ethnic groups, the picture will be somewhat different. The educational level and income level of ethnic minorities, especially those of Russians, are better than the levels of the respective native groups. In spite of this there is a threat that minority sub-cultures with their own norms and values may emerge. This in turn may cause growing social differentiation and aggravate social problems.

5. It has often been argued that there are great tensions and conflicts between the native populations and immigrants who have moved to the Baltic countries from different parts of the former Soviet Union. However, ethnicity is not such an important issue as it is said to be. Though there are class differences between ethnic minorities and the native population, these differences do not play an important role in social transition. People do not see ethnic conflict as an important social issue in the Baltic societies. For example poverty, environmental problems, or crime are considered much more dangerous for the future development of their countries than ethnic relations. Ethnicity is playing an important role in the politics and in the cultural sphere, but in everyday life social class is a more important determinant.

¹³ Weber, M. *Economy and Society*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, 341–343.

How about the future of ethnic minorities in the Baltic countries? It seems that in the near future, there will still be visible differences between the indigenous population and the immigrants. Estonia and Latvia have to solve the problems connected with citizenship legislation and language legislation. Immigrants have to accept that they are no more living in the Soviet imperium. For their own sake they will have to learn the language and culture of the country they are living in. There are no easy solutions to these problems. It will certainly take many years before the ethnic cleavages disappear. To achieve this, a lot of joint work and joint efforts are urgently needed from all social groups in the Baltic countries.

RAHVUS JA SOTSIAALNE KLASS BALTI RIIKIDES

Harri MELIN

Artikkel on kirjutatud Eestis, Lätis ja Leedus 1993. aasta sügisel korraldatud sotsioloogilise uuringu materjalide alusel. Uuringuks oli saadud Põhjamaade Sotsiaalteaduste Nõukogu grant. Igas Balti riigis intervjueriti 1500 isikut, kes esindasid üleriigilist valimit vanuse, soo, rahvuse ja elukoha (linn või maa) lõikes.

Balti riigid elavad kahe ajastu ja kahe ühiskonna vahel: ühelt poolt on Nõukogude Liit ja sotsialismisüsteem kokku varisenud, teiselt poolt liigutakse turuühiskonna ja Lääne demokraatia suunas. Võttes teoreetiliseks aluseks E. O. Wrighti neomarksistliku klasside teooria, mis Baltikumini üleminekuühiskondi autori arvates hästi kirjeldab, on jõutud järgmistele seisukohtadele.

Balti riigid on palgatööle rajatud ühiskonnad, väikekoodanluse osakaal on kõigis neis vähene (Leedus 9%, Lätis 8% ja Eestis 6%). See asjaolu mõjutab ka keskklassi kujunemist.

Võrreldes Põhjamaadega näivad Balti riigid olevat tööliklassi ühiskonnad, kõigis kolmes on tööliklass kõige arvukam. Ka palgatööst elatuv keskklass on suhteliselt laia levikuga.

Etnilistel suhetel ja vähemusrahvuste positsioonil on suur mõju Balti riikide tulevasele arengule. Rahvuslus mängib tähtsat osa Baltimaades eelkõige seepärast, et Eestis ja Lätis on suured rahvusvähemuste grupid.

Toetudes sotsiaalse suletuse kontseptsioonile ja rõhutades eriti rahvuse osa selles protsessis, kinnitab autor, et Balti riikides võib rahvuslus hakata etendama tähtsat osa sotsiaalse suletuse kujunemisel. See ilmneb eelkõige keele ja kultuuri valdkonnas, kuid on täheldatav ka laiemas sotsiaalses kontekstis.

Rahvustevahelised pinged ei etenda Baltikumis negatiivset osa ja uuringu käigus selgus, et küsitletud inimesed ei pea mitte etnilist konflikti, vaid klassidevahelisi erisusi väga oluliseks probleemiks. Arengu jaoks peetakse ohtlikumaks vaesumist, keskkonna kahjustusi või kuritegevust. Rahvuslusel on tähtsus poliitikas ja kultuurisfääris, aga inimeste igapäevase elu tähtsaimaks mõjutajaks on sotsiaalne seisund.

ЭТНИЧНОСТЬ И СОЦИАЛЬНО-КЛАССОВЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ ПРИБАЛТИКИ

Харри МЕЛИН

Статья написана на основе крупномасштабного социологического опроса, проведенного осенью 1993 г. в Эстонии, Латвии и Литве при поддержке Совета социальных наук Северных стран. В каждой стране было проинтервьюировано по 1500 человек, а выборка построена с учетом четырех признаков – возраста, пола, национальности и места жительства респондента (город или село).

Сейчас Прибалтийские государства живут в переходный период между двумя историческими эпохами и между двумя обществами: с одной стороны, рухнули Советский Союз и система социалистических стран, с другой – Эстония, Латвия и Литва начали движение в направлении рыночного общества и западной демократии. Приняв за основу теоретической части исследования положения неомарксистской теории Е. О. Врайта, которая, по мнению автора, хорошо описывает суть социальных процессов в переходных обществах стран Балтии, он приходит к следующим выводам.

Общества в Прибалтийских государствах – это фактически общества наемного труда, удельный вес мелкой буржуазии в них весьма незначителен: в Литве 9%, в Латвии 8% и в Эстонии 6%. В отличие от Северных стран в социально-классовой структуре стран Балтии преобладает рабочий класс, к тому же и в среднем классе доля работников наемного труда тоже велика.

Этнические отношения и позиция национальных меньшинств могут помешать темпам развития рассматриваемых трех стран. Дух национализма в Эстонии и Латвии силен именно из-за многочисленности национальных меньшинств. Принимая концепцию социальной замкнутости и выдвигая при этом национальный фактор, автор считает, что национализм может сыграть в этом процессе свою роль. Пока это имеет место только в сфере языка и культуры, но может проявиться и в более широком социальном контексте. Не следует забывать, что сейчас в Эстонии среди рабочего класса преобладают представители русскоязычных, а среди среднего класса – эстонцы.

В ходе исследования выяснилось, что напряженность в межнациональных отношениях люди не воспринимают как возможную причину дестабилизации общества. К опасным для развития государства факторам они относят межклассовые различия и социальное положение, а также нищету, загрязнение окружающей среды и преступность.

¹³ Weber, M. *Economy and Society*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, 341–343.