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T. Dunbar Moodie OCT. 1975

For Marx, social classes are groups which arise in the course of the division of labour. Based on developments in the forces of production, class formation leads to inevitable conflict, as a result of which one class comes to dominate all others. Class is thus an identifiable historical actuality, an objective phenomenon, rooted in the relations of production. This is what Marx calls "class-in-itself". However precise its actuality in the relations of production, however, the reality of a class-in-itself is obscured by false consciousness. It must achieve true consciousness to become a "class-for-itself".

Marx seems to have defined "consciousness" in both a theoretical and a practical sense. If we take the German Ideology and the Theses on Feuerbach seriously, as I think we must, then it is the practical sense which concerns him most. True consciousness necessarily implies power. Prior to the attainment of power, consciousness is not necessarily false in the epistemological sense, but it cannot be true in the practical sense.

For him, the moment of truth is the moment of powerful action - the revolution. The failure of a revolution implies that the revolutionaries were inspired by false consciousness, at least in the practical sense. Their consciousness, to use Marx's terms, was not adequately related to the forces of production. "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old

society itself" (Tucker, 1972:5).

Hence the failure of revolution poses no genuine theoretical problem for Marxism; one may simply argue that the time was not yet ripe. The problem comes with the success of a revolution whose basis is manifestly different from class conflict as defined by Marx. How does one explain cases in which power is achieved by "false consciousness" in the theoretical sense. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon is of great interest precisely because it deals with such a case. Marx's analysis of the accession of Louis Napoleon salvages the class theory of history by arguing partly that the time was not ripe, partly that class factors did play a latent role in the affair, and partly by suggesting the importance of contingent factors (like the army, the bureaucracy, etc.) This final point must destroy the entire argument of economic materialism unless one introduces some concept such as Althusser's notion of "over-determination". In fact, in the Eighteenth Brumaire, Marx ultimately rescues his argument by introducing the idea of the lumpenproletariat - a class-for-itself, but not in-itself.

I wish to suggest that Marx's notion of class, in the sense of a specific relationship between group consciousness and the forces of production, however fruitful as an ideal type, is too narrow and thus misleading as the sole basis for an adequate theory of social change. It is perhaps well to notice that the argument that groups act in accordance with their economic interests is not Marxian at all. Madison might have said the same. Marx's class theory is so cogent because it links class to developments in the modes of production, thereby achieving a dynamic which is particularly seductive because it enables us to explain social change. Nonetheless, I believe that in the case of the rise of

Afrikanerdom, an explanation in class terms alone is insufficient.

I

1924 was the closest South Africa ever came to a class election. The Nationalist/Labour Pact came to power on a platform which promised protection for "civilized labour" against both Rand capitalists and urban African immigrants. Support for the Pact government came from a combination of white urban skilled workers and Afrikaans-speaking land-holders and share-croppers who continued to migrate in great numbers to the cities where they were forced to compete on relatively equal terms with urban Africans.

Once in power, Hertzog's government took immediate steps to buttress existing discriminatory industrial legislation and to ensure government jobs at "white wages" for Afrikaner urban immigrants. Even in 1924, however, a measure of Hertzog's support came from the Afrikaner rural gentry (wealthy farmers, country doctors, lawyers, ministers and schoolteachers) and the Afrikaans-speaking urban elite (mainly schoolteachers, lower-grade civil servants, the Dutch Reformed clergy and a handful of Cape Afrikaner businessmen). The Pact appealed to all Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, regardless of class, and the English-speaking aristocracy of labour on the Rand. "Civilized labour" spoke to the economic interests of the urban white proletariat and all Afrikaans-speakers. Hertzog's speech at Oudefontein on December 16, 1925, was typical of the "civilized labour" platform.

> The European [he said] must keep to a standard of living which shall meet the demands of white civilization. Civilization and standards of living always go hand in hand. Thus a white cannot exist on a native wage-scale, because this means that he has to give up his own standard of living and take on the standard of living of the native. In short, the white man becomes a wit kaffer (Die Volkstem, December 17, 1925).

Hertzog, however, had higher goals than simply to rescue white workers from black competition. Having legislated for "white civilization", he proceeded to ensure that the principle of the divisibility of the crown be constitutionally established. With the achievement of the Balfour Declaration in 1926, Hertzog believed that this had been attained and promptly disavowed any further agitation for a republic in South Africa. He began to hint at the need for a united political party made up of all those white South Africans who placed South Africa first. Only such a united party could hope to solve the "native problem", and legislation for that was next on Hertzog's agenda.

Hertzog's abandonment of republicanism and his apparent willingness to conciliate white English-speakers by playing down ethnic issues gradually began to lose him the support of the different Afrikaner elites in the Transvaal and O.F.S. and in the Cape.

In the Transvaal, the Broederbond, which had been founded in 1918 to further the interests of Afrikaans, was expanded to include the northern elite (academics, junior civil servants, teachers and clerical workers). Early in the 1920's its ideological leadership shifted to Potchefstroom, where Kuyperian Calvinism, with its doctrine of <u>sovereiniteit in eie kring</u>, reinforced early Christian Nationalism. Later in the decade, the successful expulsion of Professor Johan du Plessis from Stellenbosch University signified the inroads of Kuyperianism at the Cape. Dr. Malan was numbered among du Plessis' public defenders.

In fact, at the Cape, Christian Nationalism overlaid an earlier, more amorphous attachment to the Afrikaans language which had been the major source of support for the National Party

at the Cape since its establishment in 1913. Indeed, this language nationalism had led in the Cape to the establishment of several successful Afrikaner businesses, notably Nasionale Pers, SANTAM and SANLAM. This provided D.F. Malan, W.A.Hofmeyer and the Cape National Party with an economic base independent of both Hertzog's personal appeal and Broederbond Christian Nationalism. In the 1930's and 1940's, which the Broederbond's own economic movement got under way, there was frequent rivalry between Afrikaner companies in the north and the south. This rivalry continues today (O'Meara, 1975:40-42).

Such differences were ignored in the establishment by the Broederbond in 1929 of the F.A.K., whose appeal to Afrikaner separatism was acceptable to both factions. In December, 1933, Dr. Malan testified to the success of this "two-stream" separatism:

> ...in place of the original one-stream idea that Afrikaans and English-speaking children ought not to be separated in school, we had first the introduction of parallel classes and thereafter, in the face of great opposition, parallel schools. Thus also our universities and colleges, as by an inherent force, followed suit without state support... Thus also the original common teachers' associations in all the provinces split... The same thing happened with the originally common Art and Cultural Associations..., and with the Child Welfare Associations and the Scout-Movement. And finally, the same developments took place in the religious and student-worlds... The two-stream development of the Afrikaner has largely freed him from his inferiority feelings; has given him back his self-respect and self-confidence; has awakened in him a new and living concern in areas where he was previously dead; and has been unbelievably successful in helping him ahead in political, social and cultural spheres (Die Burger, December 23, 1933).

One might indeed question whether this establishment of separate Afrikaner cultural and social organisations was as spontaneous as Malan implied. Nonetheless it was successful. The movement was authored by Broederbond members of the Afrikaner elite. The F.A.K. provided alternative institutional networks

for Afrikaners in virtually every sphere of cultural life and imbued with ideological cogency the innumerable voluntary associations which already existed in Afrikaner towns and villages throughout the land. THe National Party seemed an outcrop on a vast array of separatist Afrikaner voluntary associations.

The narrow popular appeal of such separate institutions during the 1930's was demonstrated, however, in the devastating effects of samesmelting (fusion) in 1933-34. Generals Hertzog and Smuts formed the United Party in the face of strong opposition from Dr. Malan and "cultural" Afrikaners like N.J. van der Merwe. Virtually the entire National Party of the Transvaal followed him into fusion, as did an appreciable number of Free State Nationalists. Only the Cape Party, under D.F.Malan, W.A. Hofmeyr and D.F Erasmus, remained relatively intact. In the 1938 election, Malan's purified National Party had lost 40% of the Afrikaner vote. For the forseable future, separatism seemed doomed as a political force, although the Afrikaner cultural elite remained largely true to the separatist ideal.

Thanks to the efforts of the Broederbond-deminated Christian National elite, the end of 1938 saw the conversion of the great mass of ordinary Afrikaners to a consciously nationalist ideology. The symbols of Afrikaner exclusiveness rose suddenly to a gigantic crescendo of collective ferment. This new fervour was dramatically kindled by the celebration of the centenary of the Voortrekkers' Covenant Oath. Oxwagons, replicas of those which had trekked in 1838, left Cape Town in August 1938 for Pretoria where the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was to be laid on December 16. By the time the wagons had reached their goal, they had traversed the entire country, visiting every town and hamlet in South Africa. At the outset men were false

beards and occasional women donned Voortrekker dress; at the end the beards were real and Voortrekker garb was worn by women in their thousands. Babies were baptized in the shade of the wagons; couples were married beside them. Night after night, Afrikaners of every class and political description gathered round the wagons to sing traditional liedjies and partake the braai and coffee of brotherhood together. Almost every Nationalist politician of note spoke at one or more oxwagon gathering, but so did some U.P. Afrikaners. Political differences seemed to dissolve in the heat of "oxwagon sentiment". Volkseenheid seemed to be at hand.

However, party political bickering continued after the celebrations. The Ossevabrandwag, which had been formed to continue the experience of unity, had little hope of widespread support at this stage. Declaration of war in 1939, broke the United Party and brought Hertzog and Malan together again. The Broederbond executive jubilantly arranged a hasty meeting on the site of the Voortrekker Monument. Between forty and seventy thousand attended.

> A miracle has occured [announced Die Oosterlig]. Afrikanerdom is reunited. We cannot yet comprehend the deeper significance of these words. They are too overwhelming. In the anxious hour of crisis, the miracle occured. Out of the darkness which has dominated the past historic week, a united Afrikaner people has emerged to view; never again will it allow imperialism to divide it and take from it its freedom... The new day of Afrikaner unity for which we have all so eagerly longed and pleaded has dawned. The final complete freedom of Afrikanerdom and South Africa is assured. In the spirit of the centenary year, Afrikanerdom now preceeds united along the Path of South Africa (Die Oosterlig, September 8, 1939).

Of course, the miracle had not happened even then. Afrikaner unity would fail again and again during the war years. But if the idea of theoretical consciousness is at all valid for social groups, Afrikanerdom achieved theoretical consciousness

between August 1938 and October 1939. This Afrikaner consciousness was based not on class (not even on race) but on culture, upon language and tradition. In this sense, for Marxists, it must have been false. And yet victory for the National Party in 1948 would have been impossible without it.

Group consciousness is never pure, complete to every member of the group, unsullied by political and economic interests. Group consciousness is rooted in the everyday profanities of social life. In one sense it is transient, one risks it in attempting to realize it practically, and yet, if impractical, it is soon lost in unrealized dreams. However, once it has come into being, even theoretically, in the minds of the masses, not just in the minds of the elite who propagate it, it is a source of inspiration. It becomes available to members of the group as a rallying point for action, touching petty doings with the prospect of heroism. It becomes a resource of symbols, to be plundered for meaning in times of doubt and despondency. After 1939, the Afrikaner theoretical consciousness came to life in just this sense.

II

Thus far I have argued that cultural factors were more important than race or class in the rise of Afrikanerdom. Not that race or class were irrelevant, but rather that these as exigencies were mediated through Afrikaner cultural consciousness.

We have seen that race was a most important aspect of the Pact platform in 1924. This has been equally true of every subsequent election in South Africa. But, after 1938, the survival of "white civilization" in South Africa was held by Nationalists necessarily to entail the survival of Afrikanerdom. In a typical speech in 1942, Malan said that it was the Afrikaner people, not simply members of the white race, whom God had created on the

southern tip of Africa to be "bearer of Christian culture and civilization" (Die Transvaler, December 16, 1942).

Afrikanerdom might be chosen of God. Nonetheless, there was little in the social and economic history of South Africa since 1880 to give firm evidence for the fruits of such election. In 1932, the Carnegie Report calculated that one-third of the Afrikaans-speaking population were poor whites, "in no position to live respectably". For at least fifty years before 1934, the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape had been expressing concern about Afrikaner poverty. In November 1916, the Cape Church organized the first volkskongres on poor whiteism. Dr Malan, who had but recently resigned his Dutch Reformed ministry to become the first editor of Die Burger addressed the two hundred representatives:

> Instances have come to our attention where children of one large family wander in the veld as naked as the kafirs of the Congo. We know today of Afrikaans girls who are in service to Coolies or chinese, of white men and women, married or unmarried, who live together with coloureds. And they are our flesh and blood and carry our names. They are Afrikaners all... (du Plessis, E.P., 1964:44-45).

As a solution to Afrikaner poverty, Malan and most of his contemporaries proposed that the poor be resettled on the land. Already on the Rand, however, the founders of the Broederbond had accepted the fact that urbanization was an irrevocable step for the Afrikaner. They concentrated on ways and means by which the urban migrant might be saved for the volk. The very speed with which Afrikaners moved to the cities meant that ghettoes were established, within which, despite poverty, the Afrikaans language and the Dutch Reformed faith could be preserved entire. But in a new environment no cultural system remains quite the same. Afrikaner beliefs became more militant and ideological in the city, which nurtured the new Christian Nationalism.

Indeed, during the early thirties, Kuyperian Christian Nationalism had had grafted onto it a vigorous type of nationalism brought back by young intellectuals who had gone to Europe for further study. They led the breakaway of the A.N.S. from N.U.S.A.S. The leader of this group of young enthusiasts was Nic Diederichs, then Professor of Philosophy at U.K.O.V.S. Others included Geoff Cronje and Piet Meyer. Their most important innovation, besides their enthusiasm, was their insistence that the Afrikaner movement, so far purely cultural and political in form, must receive economic expression.

At least since 1933, Malan and N.J. van der Merwe had been expressing concern about the divisive effects of class consciousness upon Afrikaner volkseenheid. One of Malan's most important reasons for staying out of fusion was the feeling that, if union included Smuts' capitalist supporters, class division within the new party would be inevitable and would permanently destroy Afrikanerdom. Immediately after fusion, the purified National Party constantly appealed to working-class Afrikaners, proposing a wide range of welfare measures.

The new nationalists (I shall call them Neo-Fichteans) returned from Europe convinced that welfare was not enough. They combined a militant fear of communism with an insistance that the Afrikaner worker must be saved for nationalism by the organization of truly Afrikaner labour unions. In 1935, Piet Meyer returned from docteral studies in Amsterdam to become assistant secretary of the F.A.K. In May 1936, he issued two lengthy statements in the name of the F.A.K. urging cultural unity as the solution to the two major threats which faced Afrikanerdom: the conciliatory party politics of the United Party and the divisive effects of communist-inspired class conflict. In October 1936,

Meyer and Albert Hertzog, with others, founded the Nasionale Raad van Trustees to finance Christian National Afrikaner trade unions. In November, they founded the Afrikaner Bond van Mynwerkers. The extant Mineworkers' Union was dominated by English-speakers and corrupt despite its largely Afrikaans-speaking membership. The leaders quickly wrapped up a closed shop with the Chamber of Mines, thereby effectively destroying the Mynwerkers Unie. There was an organised outcry from the Afrikaans platteland but to no avail. Unabashed, Albert Hertzog began to organize a reform movement to take over the Mineworkers' Union from within. Financial aid from some wealthy Cape Nationalists saw them finally achieve their aim in 1948, although curruption continued unabated under the new Afrikaner leadership. Efforts to take over other unions proved unsuccessful until after the "revolution of 1948". Nonetheless, the biggest electoral swing in the 1948 election was on the Rand where the National Party captured 6 new seats.

The upsweep of enthusiasm for Afrikaner volkseenheid in 1938, enabled Neo*Fichtean Broederbonders to emphasize the economic issue in direct relationship to the Afrikaner theoretical consciousness. In February 1938, some months before the Ossewatrek, the venerable ds. Kestell made a plea for a great Reddingsdaad on behalf of poor white Afrikaners. He suggested that funds be collected to buy farms on which poor whites could be settled. His appeal was thus in the "back to the country mould". By the time the wagons reached Bloemfontein in October 1938, Kestell's suggestion had been taken up with enthusiasm by the Neo-Fichteans, who turned it into a plea for a Reddingsdaad on behalf of urban Afrikaners. In his speech on this occasion in Bloemfontein, Cronje expressed this new theme clearly:

> The Boer culture must be carried into the English cosmopolitan life of the city... It is an appalling struggle and more than one Boer has already been demolished in this difficult transition period in our ethnic life. But our hope is that the organized Afrikaner action in the city will day by day become more purposeful and irresistable... We must not allow the urbanization of the Afrikaner to divide our People. We must not allow the city Afrikaner to become a different kind of Afrikaner from his fellow on the farm (Fees by die Waens, 1939:40)

By 1939, over 7,000 pounds had been collected in the Reddingsdaadfonds (du Plessis, E.P., 1964:135). A volkskongres was called to decide how to administer it. At this congress, Professor L.J. du Plessis of Potchefstroom, an eminent Broer, outlined a scheme for volkskapitalisme. The roots of Afrikaner poverty, he suggested, lay not in capitalism as such, but in the fact that Afrikaners had been systematically excluded from the fruits of capitalism. What was needed was not the abolition of capitalism but that it be captured for the volk.

> As organized Afrikanerdom [said du Plessis at the volkskongres] we wish consciously to take part in the economic development of our land, naturally in order to ensure our own existence, but above all to restore our People to Prosperity and so enable it to fulfill its God-given calling... [In the past] we accepted as inevitable that the masses who were unable to adjust [to capitalism] quickly or well enough should drop to poor whiteism. Sympathetically we belittled them and separated ourselves from them, or at best offered them "alms" in a philanthropic manner... Meantime this process of adjustment was destroying our People by denationalization of its producing masses. But in the awakening of self-consciousness the People has become aware of this also, and the new ethnic movement is intended to prevent the further destruction of the Afrikaner People in an effort to adjust to a foreign capitalist system, and intends rather to mobilize the People to conquer this system and to transform it so that it fits our ethnic nature (du Plessis, E.P., 1964:104)

Fifty percent of the Reddingsdaadfonds was thus invested in the establishment of an Afrikaner investment house, which was to become Federale Volksbeleggings. In addition, a grant was made to Albert Hertzog's Raad van Trustees. The remainder was administered by the newly founded Economic Institute of the F.A.K.

to finance Afrikaner small businesses. A movement called the Reddingsdaadbond was founded under Diederichs' leadership to teach the values of an industrial economy - to make profits, to produce beyond personal need, to borrow and lend at interest, to save and to buy - all with an eye to the Afrikaner interest. In the final analysis, this movement was perhaps as important as Albert Hertzog' labour organisation in winning urban seats for the National Party.

III

In 1948, the Afrikaner theoretical consciousness achieved its practical moment. It is ironical that so important an event came so unexpectedly and dependent on so many contingent factors (Stultz, 1974:147-157). This ought hardly to come as a surprise to readers of Althusser, however. He says:

> The whole Marxist revolutionary experience shows that, if the general contradiction...is sufficient to define the situation when revolution is the "task of the day", it cannot of its own simple, direct power induce a "revolutionary situation", nor a fortiori a situation of revoultionary rupture and the triumph of the revolution. if this contradiction is to become "active" in the strongest sense, to become a ruptural principle, there must be an accumulation of "circumstances" and "currents" so that whatever their origin and sense (and many of them will necessarily be paradoxically foreign to the revolution in origin and sense, or even its "direct opponents"), they "fuse" into a ruptural unity... (1970:99)

In the case we are considering, however, the general contradiction can hardly be said to have been between forces of production and relations of production embodied in class antagonism Antagonism there certainly was, and often it was an expression of economic interests. The political victory of 1948, indeed, enable Afrikaners to appropriate a greater share of South Africa's economi wealth. But it seems to me confusing to ellide class interests and ethnic interests. Class categories cut across ethnic boundari in the case we are considering - and revolutionary consciousness is ethnic not class consciousness.

Surely in any one society there are innumerable potential

bases for militant consciousness. Race, language, religion and sex come at once to mind, along with class. Achievement of consciousness (theoretical and practical) on the basis of any of these alternative sources must involve a complex of actual patterns of repression, experiences of oppression, formulation of ideologies, leaders and parties and the passage of time. Group consciousness is surely never inevitable, always fragile, and subject to innumerable counter-pressures. One of the dangers of reifying one single base for true consciousness is that one is tempted to deny the strength of alternative bases. I believe that Marx's logic of the role of consciousness in revolution makes eminently good sense. The theory of the economic base, even in the last instance, seems more difficult to sustain, much as it would help in the explanation of events.

Postscript

My reading of Marx implies that for him consciousness is an essential aspect of revolutions. It would be profoundly unfair, however, to suggest that revolution is no more than a change of consciousness (theoretical aspect) or a simple seizure of power (practical aspect). Revolutions must also be considered in terms of their effects. De Tocqueville, for instance, implies that the French Revolution was no more than a coup d'etat, since the structure of French society remained the same, or changes that did take place would have done so anyway. Equally, Marx might have argued that the 1948 election in South Africa was no revolution at all. No-one surely would deny that it was an electoral coup d'etat. What have been the long-term effects of Afrikaner power upon South African social structure and, in particular, upon the

economy.

In criticizing Marx's theory on the level of class formation and class consciousness, this essay has overlooked the great importance of economic development in South African history. The half-century between 1925 and 1975 has seen radical change in the structure of South African society. In 1925, South Africa had a typically colonial economy, exporting raw materials (essentia gold) and importing manufactured goods. By 1975, scholars seem agreed that South Africa is one of the very few "underdeveloped" countries to have leapt the chasm from a "backward" to an "advanced economy. South Africa is no longer an economic or political satellite of the metropolitan West. In fact, recent attempts at detente may be interpreted as efforts to establish for South Africa a metropolitan relationship with satellite countries to the north.

Barrington Moore has argued that "at bottom all forms of industrialization so far have been revolutions from above, the work of a ruthless minority" (1966:506). Certainly in South Africa, primitive accumulation has implied racial oppression. Indeed, to carry Barrington Moore's argument one step further, one might argue that a generally high degree of state control in both polity and economy has been a necessary cost of advance in satellite states. Eric Hobsbawm (1968:135-138) points out that until 1873, British dominance made Free Trade a viable ideological option, although even then budding "advanced" countries like Germany and the U.S. followed a protectionist economic policy. In fact, if independent economic development, is protectionism not a sine qua non. Certainly in Afrikaner-dominated South Africa (and here one must include Hertzog's pre-fusion regime) there has been a large measure of state control in the economy and, of course, in society at large also.

The Afrikaner state in South Africa has been absolutist over against blacks and protectionist over against foreign competition. The United Party was noticeably more agreable to economic dependence upon Britain and, in its later years (e.g. the Fagan Commission) more conciliatory to blacks. Frequently it is argued that Nationalist rule has slowed economic development in South Africa. Am I wrong to wonder if it might have speeded things up?

There are other reasons for South Africa's great leap forward. One might mention the enormous mineral resources of the country, the existence of a white entrepreneurial class already imbued with the capitalist spirit, capital investment from outside, the chronological and financial relationship between diamond and gold mining, early dominion status within the British Empire, and so on. Nevertheless, it is surely difficult to ignore the large measure of state control in the South African economy as an important factor. And the Afrikaner revolution has certainl favoured protectionism in South Africa.

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