

FREEDOM AND REVOLUTION IN THE THOUGHT OF FRANTZ FANON

by
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The disease is alienation
The cause is colonialism
The cure is revolution
The destiny is freedom

Introduction

A number of scholars have written about revolution in Fanon. More often than not, it is not realized that revolution in Fanon only makes sense when it is viewed against Fanon's basic concern - freedom - and not freedom in the abstract but freedom for concrete human beings. For Fanon, man and freedom are synonymous. It was in the name of man that he rose against oppression; it was in the name of man that he fought against degradation; it was in the name of man that he affirmed the dignity of man.

It is the failure of certain critics to recognize this humanist dimension of Fanon's thought and to grasp the relationship between freedom and revolution that has led them to describe Fanon as "glorifier of violence", "apostle of violence", "prisoner of hate", etc. These critics fail to realize that Fanon's call for revolution is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve a more basic end of man, viz freedom. It is important to understand this, if one is to understand Fanon at all. In this essay we are going to examine freedom and revolution in Fanon's thought and the interrelations between the two.

This is primarily a work of explication. It is not a critical evaluation of Fanon's ideas. I have decided on this course because far too many critical works on Fanon seem to be based on a misunderstanding of his position. One can only be in a position to present a serious critical appraisal when one has grasped Fanon's basic position. It is this limited objective of presenting Fanon's basic position which is attempted here. Where I have touched on the critics, I have done so only to the extent to which I think a response to them helps to put Fanon's position in a clear perspective. It would be difficult to do justice to the depth and complexity of Fanon's thought which a critical evaluation demands in such a short paper of this sort. Moreover, I have already

Professor Tosquelles. It was while he was in France that he published *Black Skin, White Masks*, an examination of the ontological existence of the Black man in a white-dominated world.

In France Fanon had a number of experiences which were to have a deep effect on him: the French existential left, the influence of the negritude movement and white racism. From the French existential left comes his formulations on the notion of existential freedom. From the negritude school comes his very brief period of flirtation with negritude and his castigation of Sartre for describing negritude as a "anti-racist racism", although he was later to recognize the same limitations which Sartre recognized.

*I am convinced that it would be of the greatest interest to be able to have contact with a Negro literature or architecture of the third century before Christ. I should be very happy to know that a correspondence had flourished between some Negro philosopher and Plato. But I can absolutely not see how this fact would change anything in the lives of the eight-year-old children who labor in the cane fields of Martinique or Duadeloupe.*⁵

This statement is important not only as a serious critique of negritude and indirectly of its high priest, Leopold Senghor, but it establishes a crucial dimension of Fanon's thought: the relationship between thought and action. Not only does it carry within itself a rejection of the autonomy of consciousness but it argues that consciousness by itself does not change reality. For reality to change consciousness must be translated into social practice. The import of this for revolutionary praxis is already clear. His experience of white racism led him to complain:

*When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color, when they dislike me they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle.*⁶

He also noticed that Frenchmen could never forget his colour. He was not simply a man, but a "Black man", not simply a student but a "Black student", not simply a doctor, but a "Black doctor". As he put it,

*A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man - or at least like a nigger.*⁷

towards assimilation, that of Cesaire was moving him into another direction, that is, towards self autonomy, towards authentic self expression. From this we can see that the view of critics who look at Fanon's life in a unilineal direction early education and assimilation, higher education and self doubt and doubts about assimilation, and finally rejection of assimilation - is rather simplistic.⁴ Fanon was plagued much of his life by the demands of assimilation and the need for autonomy, the need to be one's authentic self. He embodied within himself these two contradictory positions. It is important to understand this to appreciate the complexity of his life and thought.

World War II saw Fanon interrupting his education and enlisting on the side of the Allies first to rid his country of the Vichy regime and later to fight in Europe for the "Free French". His war experiences were to have a lasting effect on him. He came face to face with blatant racism. While in the army he realized that France had a different place for its Black Frenchmen in spite of the rhetoric of *egalite, fraternite and liberte*. Fanon left the army with the rank of a corporal and he was cited for bravery. Ironically enough, the award was made by Colonel Raoul Salan who was later to become head of the Organisation de l'armee Secrete, a group of army officers bitterly opposed to the granting of independence to Algeria and prepared to use violence to attain their end.

With the war over, Fanon went back to school to complete his education. At this time, his teachers noticed him as withdrawn introspective and serious. It is possible to surmise that he was turning over in his mind his war experience. He turned his attention to the study of literature and philosophy and he studied the works of Karl Jaspers, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre and Aime Cesaire. The influence of the last two is particularly noticeable in Fanon's works.

In 1947 Fanon went to France to study medicine. He arrived in France when Sartre was at the height of his fame as a writer, a philosopher, a socialist, and an existentialist. And while at medical school he read the existentialist philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, and Jaspers. He also read Hegel, Marx and Lenin. He was greatly influenced by Sartre, especially his *Anti-Semite and Jew* and later the *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*. By 1951 Fanon had completed his medical studies specializing in psychiatry. After a brief visit to the island of his birth he returned to France to do his residency under Professor Francois Tosquelles who was then carrying out innovative experiments in sociotherapy, and his work in Algeria and Tunisia bore strongly the impact of his association with

Such incidents aroused his indignation, anger and resentment and he hated France and all it stood for. He was also deeply affected by the hypocrisy of the French, and disgusted by the self-demeaning attitude of the Black bourgeoisie who tried in every way to look as French as possible. He was angered by the oppression of man by man, by the de-humanization of man and by the fact that France was a living negation of the values it preached. As he was to say afterward:

When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man and an avalanche of murders.

He was deeply disillusioned with Europe and France in particular, and if he had one consuming passion, it was to get away from it. Thus it was that he went to Algeria.

Fanon arrived in Algeria with his wife in November 1953 as *chef de service* at a psychiatric hospital in Blida. By then the revolution which was to engulf both France and Algeria was just beginning. There were isolated incidents of violence which caused the French to isolate the *casbah* from the European quarter, and to institute check points everywhere. While in Algeria, he became sympathetic with the aims of the *Front de Liberation Nationale*, and began to work actively for it. He worked for the Algerian nationalists by night and for the French administration by day. After a time his double role was becoming too much of a strain and he resigned. In his letter of resignation he indicated the futility of practising psychiatry in such a colonial situation:

If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable a man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization..?

And to underline his own commitment to praxis he adds..."there comes a time when silence becomes dishonesty".¹⁰ There are some who see in this letter Fanon's definite, decisive and irrevocable break with his past, and his emergence as a revolutionary. The crucial statement quoted to support this position is this: "... there comes a time when silence becomes dishonesty". My own position as already demonstrated elsewhere¹¹ is different. I have maintained that Fanon was a revolutionary intellectual by the time he arrived in Algeria. Only that he became a "professional" in Algeria. I have no wish to re-open the argument here nor to belabour the point.

Let me only add that Fanon by his active collaboration with FLN was engaging in an action which if successful would negate his own class position. In the words of Cabral was committing "class suicide". This he did for a whole year before he wrote the letter of resignation to the Governor-General. Let us also remember that Fanon's conscious decision to collaborate actively with the FLN was not the result of a sudden burst of spontaneous activity or a flash of the imagination or revelation as was the case with St. Paul, but the result of a study of the existential conditions of oppressed people in Martinique, France and Algeria.

Let us go back to our story. Soon after his resignation, the Fanons were expelled from Algeria. This was in January 1957. The family left for France and Fanon later went to Tunis to work for the FLN. He now entirely belonged to the organization. The Revolution had now become his life. Whatever interests he had in psychiatry were now subordinated to the ends of the Revolution. While in Tunis he became a member of the editorial staff of *El Moudjahid*, the FLN mouth piece. He turned it into a radical paper commenting on the social, political and economic aspects of the Revolution. Fanon's chief contribution to the Algerian war while he was on the staff of *El Moudjahid* was to internationalize the Algerian Revolution. He represented it both in his writing and in his presentations at conferences not simply as an Arab independence movement, but as a social revolution and a part of the whole freedom movement in Africa and the Third World. It was also while he was in Tunis that he published *The 5th Year of the Algerian Revolution*, which, though less often read, is one of his most important contributions. Those who claim that Fanon wrote only to make a revolution and not to analyse one are advised to study this work which stands in relation to his basic propositions on revolutionary theory and practice in the same way as the *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* stands in relation to Marx's basic ideas on historical materialism, dialectics and class conflict. *The 5th Year of the Algerian Revolution* is a sociological study of the effects of the revolutionary war on Algerian society, and should be read as a sequel to *The Wretched of the Earth* if it is to be properly appreciated.

In March 1960 he was appointed Representative of the Algerian Provisional Government in Accra. Here his main interest was to open a southern flank in Mali through which arms and men could be sent to aid the Algerian war effort. He was also concerned with armed struggle in Angola and the events in the Congo (now Zaire). It was also while in Accra that he composed *The Wretched of the Earth*, the work on which his fame rests. In it he diagnoses the social and political

ills of the Africa and the Third World. He argues that there has been no effective decolonisation in Africa because colonial economic, political and social structures have not been destroyed. What happened at independence was the Africanization of colonialism. There can be no effective decolonisation and consequently no freedom so long as the colonial structures remain. And to achieve this he recommends revolutionary decolonisation, which will not only destroy the formal structures but also liberate alienated consciousness. Late in 1960 it was found that he was suffering from leukemia, and after unsuccessful trips to the Soviet Union and the United States for treatment he died at the age of thirty-six. His body was brought back to Tunis and buried in Algeria in an area under nationalist control.

After his death a collection of some of his editorials for *El Moudjahid* and addresses at conferences were published collectively as *Toward the African Revolution*.

This short biographical introduction provides a background to the study of Fanon's thought. It furnishes us not only with some information on his personality and the material conditions in which his thoughts were shaped, but also provides us with the intellectual currents which influenced his thought, viz Caribbean protest literature, Sartrean existentialism and Marxism. It is important to keep this in mind if one is to understand Fanon.

II

As we have seen from the above outline of Fanon's life his one consuming passion was freedom. For him man is only man when he is free, and the *raison d'être* of man is the achievement of freedom. As he says in *Black Skin, White Masks*, "No attempt must be made to encase man, for it is his destiny to be set free".¹² Fanon takes the same intellectual posture as Marx. We have already mentioned in our account of his life the unity of thought and action. Echoing Marx he writes:

*But when one has taken cognizance of this situation, when one has understood, one considers the job completed. How can one then be deaf to the voice rolling down the stages of history; 'What matters is not to know the world but to change it'.*¹³

Fanon has put it rather strongly to emphasize the point. It is his way of writing. Knowing the world is useful but only to the extent to which it helps us to change the world. His was not sterile explication of abstract concepts nor a blind

quest unguided by thought.

Having said this it becomes pertinent to ask what was Fanon's thought about freedom. However, before we turn out attention to this question, let us remind ourselves that freedom was not the only political ideal Fanon advocated and fought for. He was also interested in equality and justice, but freedom was basic to his life and thought, and we have decided to concentrate on it. Fanon did not direct his intelligence and efforts in the production of abstract philosophical treatises on freedom. He did not engage in linguistic analyses of "freedom" nor beat his brains about the complex of meanings between "being free" and a "free being" nor engaged in conceptual analysis of "positive freedom" and "negative freedom" which are conducted by modern academics with such ponderous profundity as would scandalize even Hegel. Such intellectual somersaults about abstract freedom which makes it possible for some of our friends to be committed to freedom and to the love of humanity without loving concrete human beings have no place in Fanon's thought. Fanon was interested in and committed to freedom for concrete human beings. He was thus more interested in trying to bring about freedom than in a philosophical reflection of its nature. Gandhi did grasp this point. He once said: "I have tried to make a revolution while others only talked about it". In spite of Fanon's concern to bring freedom into being we can discern certain basic concepts of freedom in his thought. First, there is the freedom of the state. This we shall call *political freedom*. This implies freedom from external control. It is in this sense that one can talk of a colonial territory as moving from the status of dependency to the status of a free and an independent state. It means formal political freedom for that state which is designated free. It is in this sense that most African leaders use the word when they talk of freedom from the colonialists.

The second concept of freedom which is discernable in Fanon's thought is the freedom of the individual. At the level of the individual Fanon talks of freedom in two senses. One of these we may call *existential freedom*. This refers to the freedom of the individual in the universe. It has nothing to do with his role in the state or society. It is absolute freedom and has no limitations of either time or space. Its defining characteristics are consciousness of freedom and free choice. To underline the absolute nature of this freedom Fanon writes. "The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation."¹⁴ This is as absolute as the Sartrean conception of existential freedom, and Fanon's last sentence, "I am my own foundation," if interpreted in existentialist terms comes very close to

Sartre's idea of man creating his own essence. Such a position, however, leads to serious philosophical difficulties. In the first place this notion of freedom posits a complete separation of consciousness from material conditions, and could thus logically lead to such absurd conclusions as a "free slave" or "freedom under tyranny". Furthermore, it should be noticed that since Fanon himself defines man in terms of freedom it is not possible to insist on absolute freedom since man's freedom is circumscribed by his nature which is freedom. In other words one cannot will oneself un-free. Fanon abandons his existential freedom in his later writings.

Another notion of individual freedom in the thought of Fanon is what we might call *social freedom*.¹⁵ This is the freedom of the individual in state and society. Its defining characteristics are: consciousness of freedom, self-expression and obedience to one's self. This is why in *The Wretched of the Earth* he insists that the people themselves should make decisions which affect them. This is something which no one can do for them. Decisions should be made not by the leaders but by the people, all the people.

*In an under-developed country, experience proves that the important thing is not that three hundred people form a plan and decide upon carrying it out, but that the whole people plan and decide even if it takes them twice or three times as long.*¹⁶

In doing this they are obeying themselves and in obeying themselves they are expressing their freedom. This is the ideal which Fanon holds in his ideal polity. For this type of freedom to be realized it is important that the state not only be free from external control but also that political and social arrangements should be such as to enable man to express and maintain his freedom. The human community must not only be a free state but also a free society. Put in this way, revolution becomes an instrument for the realization of this ideal.

III

But before we go on to talk about revolution let us look at another dimension of Fanon's thought. Although freedom is man's essence as Fanon postulates, concrete men Fanon encountered in his life were not free. The problem was to find out why this was so. His search for an answer brought him to the question of alienation. Alienation prevents man from expressing his authentic self, i.e. his freedom. Fanon

claims that in a colonial or white-dominated world both the Black man and the white man are alienated. The Black man is alienated from expressing his authentic existence by the claims of the norms of *subordination* and the white man is also alienated by the claims of the norms of *superordination*. Although the problem is posed in this way and one gets the impression that Fanon is preparing himself to deal with the entire problem of humanity he quickly settles down as he begins his discussion on the alienation of the Black or colonized man.

There are two basic obstacles to the freedom of the Black man. One is alienated consciousness and the other is alienating material conditions. Both of these owe their origin and continued existence to the colonial system as a whole. Now within the colonial system there are definite instruments which produce both alienated consciousness and alienating material conditions. One of these instruments is violence. Here violence has to be understood in its widest meaning. Its dimensions include physical, psychological, cultural and structural violence. What has to be stressed is that this violence is not an accidental by-product of the colonial system nor the aberration of some particular authority personell, but a necessary and intrinsic part of the colonial system. The physical violence refers not only to the wars of conquest, pillage and plunder by which in many places colonial rule was established but also refers to the day to day employment of strong arm measures to keep the colonized population in a subject state. Such acts of physical violence and brutality traumatize the colonized and render his psychic frame out of joint.

In the case of Blacks living in a white-dominated world like Blacks in the Americas one has also to note the physical violence which accompanied their forced migration to these lands. Physical violence is also used to maintain the rule of the colonizer or the oppressor. Another dimension is what we have called psychological violence. This is the way by which the colonized man is made to feel inferior. He is invested with certain psychological attributes which are a creation of the colonizer, and made to assume behaviour in line with these attributes. As Fanon says, "It is the white man who creates the Negro". This robs the Black man of his being. In addition there is also cultural violence in the sense that the cultural life of the colonized person is robbed of its essential value.

*The setting up of the colonial system
does not itself bring about the death of
the native culture. Historic observation*

reveals on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal. The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking. The apathy so universally noted among colonial peoples is but the logical consequence of this operation. ¹⁷

Fanon's argument is that African culture loses its autonomy and is tagged onto colonial rule so that it becomes one of the instruments of colonial oppression. What therefore appeared at face value as the toleration or the promotion of African cultures was nothing of the kind. It was its adaptation as an instrument of colonial rule. The argument of critics who are quick to point out that in English-speaking Africa, the British on account of their penchant for indirect rule did not destroy traditional institutions, but rather promoted them, hence Fanon's argument could not hold, does not certainly hit the mark.

Aime Cesaire, has also written about the alienating effects of colonial rule. In his *Discourse on Colonialism*, he writes:

Between colonizer and colonized, there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses...

I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations, destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out..

*I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and to behave like flunkeys.*¹⁸

Cesaire, like Fanon, as the above quotation shows did capture the two important dimensions of colonial alienation: alienated consciousness and alienating material conditions.

Structural violence refers to the way in which violence is built into the colonial system itself. Violence permeates every aspect of the structure.

Although Fanon recognizes the primacy of the colonial capitalism in creating alienation,¹⁹ he does not write about economic alienation in the way Marx does. We do not see in his works any direct discussion of the concept of economic alienation in the sense of the loss of the control of the producer over his product, or the objectification of the product and its becoming an alien to the producer or the monotonous working conditions of the urban worker. However, when we consider the role of the peasant who has to produce cash crops in response to the demands of the colonial government, the relations of the worker vis-a-vis his product are not that much different from what Marx depicted. After all we must remember that colonial society is also a capitalist society, though in a peripheral relationship to the metropolitan capitalist society, and the same mode of production operates in both societies.

Politically too, the colonized person is alienated. The colonizer controls his political destiny. He is not allowed any meaningful participation in the political processes which affect him. Hence he does not express his authentic existence. He is an alien in his own country. One has to read works like Ferdinand Oyono's, *The Old Man and the Medal* or James Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* to appreciate the physical, psychological and cultural violence of colonial rule and the alienating experience of colonized people. Fanon's great contribution was to have isolated and emphasized these very things.

The mechanisms by which this alienating experience is affected are: the state apparatus, this takes care of direct physical violence and political oppression; the economic system: this takes care of economic exploitation, separation of the worker from the product, etc.; the schools and the churches; these are responsible for the psychological and cultural

violence and they achieve this through cultural degradation. We can see from this that the totality of the Black man's existence is taken care of. Nothing is left to chance.

This alienation is expressed in terms of a feeling of inferiority, self-hatred and other directedness vis-a-vis the white oppressor. It is also expressed in immitability and the seeking of external reference, that is, white reference to validate behaviour. These manifestations of alienation on the parts of the colonized have been found among Black people in the United States as the works of Franklin Frazier and Nathan Hare show.²⁰

Having come to the conclusion that alienation is the main obstacle to freedom the question then becomes how does one remove this obstacle and achieve freedom? It is in response to this that Fanon formulates his theory of revolutionary violence to achieve authentic disalienation.

IV

Before we discuss this let us clarify one key concept in Fanon, i.e. revolution. This term is one of the most prostituted and abused words in the vocabulary of political literature. And we have to be careful here. Fanon rarely uses the term "revolution". He uses other terms to denote the idea of revolution. He often uses terms like "liberation", "decolonization" and "independence". Fanon is confusingly inconsistent in the use of these terms and what we have to do is to pay more attention to the social phenomena he describes by the employment of these concepts. For Fanon revolution which sometimes he calls decolonization, sometimes liberation and sometimes independence, implies the freeing of a territory from foreign colonial control together with the destruction of the social and political institutions of colonial power and the building of new institutions and relationships of to reflect the reality of the new nation. It is a fundamental change of economic, political and social institutions as well as a change in class structure, norms, values and consciousness of the people. In short it is the creation of new men. Indeed, it is a psychic change, for it implies a change of man's entire being. Fanon writes:

*... decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total complete and absolute substitution.*²¹

Revolution in Fanon implies a fundamental change in institu-

tions, consciousness and personality. It does not mean a very slow and incremental change over thousands of years. The time element is also important. It implies a sudden change. To say this, however, is not to say that a revolution is a one-act instantaneous change and then it is over. Fanon is here playing on the more dramatic aspects of revolutions is cataclysmic changes. He would be the last to deny that a revolution is a historical process. His own study, The 5th Year of the Algerian Revolution analyses the progress of the Algerian revolution from the historical dimension. Stressing the creative role of revolution and the emergence of a completely new being with a new consciousness Fanon writes:

Decolonization... influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally... It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself. ²²

Thus, decolonization, a veritable creation of new men is not effected by prayer or verbal exhortations but by social action. Another dimension of revolution which Fanon articulates is violence. "Decolonization", he writes "is always a violent phenomenon". ²³ Thus Fanon would have nothing to do with those who talk of a non-violent revolution.

To summarize revolution in Fanon is a violent and fundamental change of social and political institutions, class structure, norms, values, consciousness and personalities. It is the result of men's direct action in social practice.

We are now in a position to discuss the question of revolutionary violence in Fanon.

Why does Fanon argue that it is only through revolutionary violence that the colonized can achieve true decolonization, that is social freedom? Revolutionary violence frees alienated consciousness and destroys alienating material conditions. Fanon uses a number of arguments to justify his advocacy of violence for liberation. First, he argues that violence is a liberating force. It frees the colonized individual from his feeling of inferiority and humiliation and restores him to the fullness of himself as a man. It restores his dignity to him and he achieves his true essence. Fanon is not alone in this humanistic appeal to violence as

a liberating force. Sorel writes in the same vein arguing for the total destruction of capitalist society and the creation of a new man. For Sorel the agents of this were to be the urban working class. For Fanon it was to be an alliance of the revolutionary intellectuals, the peasants and the lumpen-proletariat. Other writers, namely Richard Wright and Jean Paul Sartre have also entertained this idea of the emancipatory role of humanistic violence. This aspect of Fanon's writing on violence has attracted adverse criticism. Irene Gendzier for instance writes: "It is this aspect of his concept of violence, which so graphically expresses in words, is considerably less convincing as a policy".²⁴ She writes about Algerian militants who took part in the Battle of Algiers, but who did not see the continued and agonizing violence of the war as liberating. One has to note, however, that Fanon and the militants Gendzier refers to might be talking of two different things. Fanon's argument makes sense when one relates it to the initial spontaneous violence of the colonized. Seen in this way, it is not unthinkable for such violence to have the effect of cleansing the colonized native of his inferiority complex, fear and fright, and win for the native the status of man if only momentarily. The point is that the initial violence provides the spark which is lighted into a flame by political education. Let us take the case of the colonized who for a long time has been fed on the myth of the superiority of the colonizer. Then, suddenly, in the first act of spontaneous use of violence against the colonizer, he sees for the first time the colonizer running away in fright, trembling and begging for his life and showing all the attributes of mortal beings which before belonged only to the colonized. It is at this point that almost instantaneously the myths begin to fall. This initial violence brings to the colonized person a sudden realization of what he is capable of. It does not necessarily free him at once. It only sets the preconditions or the circumstances in which he can win his freedom.

Fanon's argument for the emancipatory role of violence should be seen in this light. For this to be enduring, it has to be accompanied by political education. The Ugandan militant, Yoweri T. Museveni who did field work in the liberated areas of Mozambique writes:

Another aspect of the revolution, which I do not think could have come about except as a result of the revolutionary armed struggle, is the liberation of the peasant from not only his previous inferiority complexes, but also from his parochialism... The peasant in

Cabo Delgado has participated in killing the white man - the former 'demi-god'. He has inflicted defeat on his 'god'. The white 'god', the colonialist, has been seen and known to wriggle in an agony of death from bullets fired by guns operated by peasants. The erstwhile 'gods' have been seen to fly like startled warthogs before the automatic fire by peasant guerillas, they have put up their arms in supplication for mercy from their former slaves - the natives... The white man - the invulnerable god - will be seen vomiting, shivering and expressing anxiety about what he considers imminent death.²⁵

It is in this sense that Fanon's argument on the emancipatory role of violence should be understood. Even certain brothers on the Left - Marxist scholars - have sometimes raised eyebrows against Fanon's formulation on the emancipatory role of violence. It is important to remind them that Marx in writing about making a revolution to effect change of consciousness states:

For the creation on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, as well as for the success of the cause itself, it is necessary for men themselves to be changed on a large scale, and this change can only occur in a practical movement, in a revolution. Revolution is necessary not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because only in a revolution can the class which overthrows it rid itself of the accumulated rubbish of the past and become capable of reconstructing society. ²⁶ (emphasis in original).

Nevertheless, one has to note that Fanon's advocacy of violence for change of consciousness is not as unequivocal as some of his critics would have us believe. Even in The Wretched of the Earth, where the insistence on violence sometimes takes a lyrical form, Fanon has this to say:

If we have taken the example of Algeria to illustrate our subject, it is not at all with the intention of glorifying our own people, but simply to show the important part played by the war in leading them towards consciousness of themselves. It

is clear that other peoples have come to the same conclusion in different ways. We know for sure today that in Algeria the test of forces was inevitable; but other countries through political action and through the work of clarification undertaken by a party have led their people to the same results. (emphasis added). 27

It is clear from the above that Fanon would concede that it is possible to effect change of consciousness in ways other than violence. However, on the employment of violence for breaking the colonial social and political structures, i.e. the alienating material conditions, Fanon remains intractable.

Another argument which Fanon invokes to justify his advocacy of violence is that violence is a dialectical necessity within the framework of the contradictions of the colonial society. Initially, the coloniser introduces violence into the relationship between the native and the settler. It is employed not only in the initial stages of colonization but in the act of holding the colonial territory. And here it is necessary to bear in mind, the various dimensions of violence we have talked about. The violence of the settler which is the thesis creates its own antithesis which is the violence of the native, but the native, due to the sanctions of the colonial regime and the psychological inhibitions created by the regime, visits his violence on himself, that is, on other natives instead of on the colonizer. Such a state of affairs continues until "daily life becomes impossible." It is at this time that the native responds to the colonizer's violence with his own violence thus creating a synthesis and a resolution of the dialectic.

Another argument which Fanon uses in support of his advocacy of violence for achieving decolonization is that violence creates solidarity. As we have already pointed above, revolutionary decolonization implies not only liberation of consciousness but also the destruction of the colonial economic, political and social order, the very mechanisms of oppression and alienation. To do this it is necessary to build solidarity among the colonized who on account of alienation have come to hate and distrust each other. It is in the creation of this solidarity that violence becomes necessary as an instrument. It acts as a unifying force. Fanon writes:

The practice of violence binds them together as a whole... The group recog-

nizes each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people; that is to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction. 28

Armed conflict creates a feeling of solidarity and introduces into the consciousness of the people the idea of a "common cause, of a national destiny and a collective history".²⁹ We have to note that colonial rule is separatist rule; it sets the town people against the country people: one ethnic group against another ethnic group; one locality against the other; one clan against another; it sets one Black man against another Black man. In the armed struggle for liberation these mutual suspicions and hatreds disappear and the people gather together to face the common foe. The argument here is not that violence is the only condition for the creation of mass solidarity but it is one of the conditions for mass solidarity. Violence has the effect of heightening and bringing to the fore the contradictions within the colonial system as the recent case of Angola has amply demonstrated, and the case of Rhodesia may yet show. Violence in order to be effective has to be organized, coordinated, directed and led. It is not spasmodic or isolated incidents of violence or nihilistic acts of self destruction that Fanon talks about, but mass and purposeful employment of violence for revolutionary ends. It is in this regard that Fanon theorizes on the agencies for the use of revolutionary violence. He stratifies the African society and assesses the revolutionary potential of each class. He isolates four main classes; the national bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat.

Each social class is determined by the place it occupies in the colonial or neo-colonial mode of production. Thus of the bourgeoisie, Fanon writes:

.... The national bourgeoisie of the underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor invention, nor building, nor labour, it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket. The psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry; and it is only too true that the greed of the settlers and the system of embargoes set up by colonialism has hardly left them any other choice. 30

here that Fanon is comparing the relative positions of the urban and rural workers. He claims that whereas in the metropolitan capitalist countries the working class has nothing to lose, in the colonies it has everything to lose. Its own existence is tied to the existence of the colonial or the neo-colonial economy. Its consciousness and behaviour patterns follow closely upon that of the bourgeoisie: it has the same class interests as the bourgeoisie. Whereas the bourgeoisie is interested in taking maintaining privileges left by the departing colonialists and not in radical changes in so society, so the working class is only interested in taking and maintaining privileged positions held by alien Africans.

As a class it is also too small numerically since it represents less than one per cent of the population. For all the above-named reasons, it is not interested in promoting a revolution which will rob it of its privileged position. Fanon therefore rejects it as a class on which to base a movement for revolutionary decolonization.

It has to be stated here that his designation of the group as made up of tram conductors, taxi-drivers, miners, dockers, interpreters and nurses tends to confuse the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat proper. Of the group only the miners and dockers could be regarded as proletarians proper. The rest fall into the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie.

After eliminating both the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Fanon settles on the peasantry as the most revolutionary class on which should be based revolutionary decolonization. Fanon's reasons are three fold: first, its role in the colonial or neo-colonial mode of production; second, its consciousness and third its possession of certain characteristics. The peasantry as a class occupies a place in the productive sector of the colonial or neo-colonial economy which make it the most exploited group. It is exploited by the manifold taxations of the colonial system, the press gang, low payments for its agricultural produce etc., the authoritarianism of government officials both local and national. In short, unlike the urban working class and the national bourgeoisie it gains nothing from the colonial system. It is not integrated into the system as such. It is only on the periphery. Fanon describes the peasant as outside the class system. Its consciousness is also determined by its position in the colonial or neo-colonial mode of production. Unlike the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat it has not suffered much from the psychological violence of the colonial regime which gives rise to alienated consciousness. The peasantry as a class does not suffer from feelings of inferiority and cultural degradation which urban intellec-

It is this position which determines its consciousness, nature and function. It sees its interest as bound up with the interest of the colonial or neo-colonial economy, and since the colonial "system of embargoes" has only left it activities of the intermediary type, it is unable to perform even an initial revolutionary role unlike its European counterpart of industrial capitalism. The bourgeoisie of the underdeveloped countries cannot perform this role since it is not only conditioned to operate in the colonial mode of production but has also been subjected to colonial socialization which makes it accept such an order as natural. It manifests such qualities as intellectual laziness, lack of imagination, parasitic and corrupt nature and slavish adherence to the norms and practices of its oppressors. Other sections of the national bourgeoisie - the civil servants, the politicians and the senior army and the police officers - by their control over the state apparatus provide physical protection and help keep this economic order functioning. The intellectuals by their control of the knowledge industry provide intellectual and moral justification for such a social and political order. They also play the role of socializing future recruits to perform supportive roles in the system. It is clear from this that a group which owes its entire privileged existence to such a system will not play a prime role in its abolition. It is in this connection that Fanon argues that in the underdeveloped countries the bourgeois phase is a completely useless one.

It must not be thought, however that every single member of the bourgeois class plays the role described above and thus has alienated consciousness. The bourgeois as a class functions in terms of its position in the mode of production, that is in the way described above. But there are a few individuals - those Fanon class the "revolutionary intellectuals" who act in ways that negate their class position. Marx describes these as "a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole".³¹ These join other oppressed classes to effect the revolution.

Fanon also discusses the role of the working class. Like the national bourgeoisie, this group is also not defined. It is characterised by its role in the colonial or neo-colonial mode of production. It constitutes an important support group for the colonial economic system. "... it represents that fraction of the colonized nation which is necessary and irreplaceable if the colonial machine is to run smoothly."³² "The workers", in the words of Fanon, "are in fact the most favoured section of the population, and represent the most comfortably off fraction of the people".³³ It has to be noted

have no support for the colonial system. When their propensity for violence is given anti-colonial direction, coupled with the fact that they have no stake in the colonial system they can become active agents for revolutionary activity. As Fanon writes:

So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and the petty criminals, urged on from behind, throw themselves into the struggle like stout workingmen. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood. ³⁷

Fanon's model of revolutionary decolonization then envisages an alliance of the peasantry forming the bulk of the population and the lumpen-proletariat with the urban revolutionary intellectuals playing the leading roles. This model of revolution which is not based on the traditional revolutionary vanguard - the proletariat but rather on the peasantry and which gives no place to the bourgeoisie has attracted hostile criticism. No attempt will be made here to review the controversy in any detail, but a brief attempt will be made to delineate the nature of the argument so as to put Fanon's position in a clear perspective.

One can isolate several areas of criticism which could be directed against Fanon's theory of revolutionary decolonization. First, is his model of class analysis. It could be argued as indeed it has been by certain analysts that class analysis does not yield explanatory power to the reality of African politics. For these scholars ethnicity provides a much more useful conceptual tool for analysing the nature of African politics. To such a criticism we may counter that the use of such a static concept as ethnicity necessarily imposes a static order on a society which is undergoing rapid change. We are not here denying the objective reality of ethnicity but it has to be noted that ethnicity is not an independent variable. Its employment by both national and local elites to conceal class and sectional interests has been well studied in the case of Nigeria by Richard Sklar and we need not say more about it. ³⁸ Its usage as a basic conceptual tool for analysing the nature of the African society does not allow us to go beneath the superstructural manifestations of conflict in the way class analysis allows us to get to infrastructural bases of conflict. Some have also attacked Fanon for certain methodological weaknesses. This is specified in terms of lack of conceptual clarity and unwarranted generalizations. We have already had an occasion to point out how confusingly inconsistent Fanon is in the employment of key

tuals suffer from. In their folklore the anti-colonial struggle looms large in a way not distorted by the colonizers. The peasants also live in close contact with their traditional societies and are not corrupted by westernization. In addition, peasants have certain attributes which in Fanon's view predispose them to revolutionary action. They constitute the most "discipline element" of the population. Although he concedes that this stubborn determination may sometimes give rise to "movements which are based on religious fanaticism or tribal wars", he, however, recognises that it is in this determination and spontaneity that its strength lies. Furthermore, the peasants have pride and confidence in themselves and are "rebels by instinct". For all these reasons Fanon regards the peasants as the most revolutionary group. His idealization of the peasantry as a revolutionary force equals only to that of the anarchist Michael Bakunin and Lin Piao, Mao's former chief disciple. It has to be noted, however, that all that Fanon is entitled to claim from the logic of his own argument is that the peasants have a great deal of physical force and are potential revolutionaries, and when mobilized could be a great asset to the revolutionary movement.

In addition to the peasantry, another class which Fanon identifies as revolutionary and which should be allied to the peasantry in revolutionary decolonization of the colonial society is the lumpen-proletariat. These are the urban unemployed or unemployables. They consist of people who have left the rural life for the city but have not secured a place in the city's social system. They form in Fanon's graphic description a "hord of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan".³⁴ They comprise the "pimps, the prostitutes and the petty criminals",³⁵ and "the classless idlers". Fanon develops his argument as regards the revolutionary nature of the lumpen-proletariat in the same way as he develops his argument vis-a-vis the peasantry: their revolutionary predisposition is determined by the place they occupy in the mode of production, their consciousness and their possession of certain qualities. These determine their character. They do not occupy any place in the colonial or neo-colonial mode of production from which they could derive any personal advantage, being unemployed or unemployables. In Fanon's vivid description, "it is that fraction which has not yet succeeded in finding a bone to gnaw in the colonial system".³⁶ They live by their wits and are driven to seek their ends by any and every means. And in this violence comes handily. For Fanon their propensity for violence is a vital asset. Furthermore, they are on the fringes of the urban social system. They do not share the norms of the urban system and are alienated from it. Thus like the peasantry they

assignment is ended and my major life's work ('sic) is done. My country is now free, and I have been honoured to be its first indigenous Head of State. What more could a man desire in life? 41

The struggle has hardly started, and he has already abandoned it.

There is another group of critics, who though accepting Fanon's model of class analysis have raised certain specific questions within the framework of the Fanonist argument. We have already referred to Ngehe's complaint about Fanon's lumping nurses and miners together under the heading, proletariat. Stambouli and Nzongola have argued that the phase in Africa is not entirely useless. Stambouli claims that Fanon has under-estimated the dynamism of the national bourgeoisie.⁴² And Nzongola writes: "It is true that the national bourgeoisie is a politico-administrative bourgeoisie, but it does not follow from this that it cannot perform important economic functions".⁴³ In one sense we may agree with Nzongola. The national bourgeoisie can and perhaps do perform "important economic functions" but not for the majority of the people of the former colony. So long as the neo-colonial economic and political structures remain whatever important economic functions the national bourgeoisie may perform will only accrue to the benefit of its neo-colonial masters. The empirical studies of Judith Marshall on Ghana⁴⁴ and Colin Leys⁴⁵ on Kenya validate the position of Fanon. Fanon provides his own answer to Stambouli and Nzongola:

The bourgeois phase in underdeveloped countries can only justify itself in so far as the national bourgeoisie has sufficient economic and technical strength to build up a bourgeois society, to create the conditions necessary for the development of a large scale proletariat, to mechanize agriculture and finally to make possible the existence of an authentic national culture.⁴⁶

He might well have said that a national bourgeoisie can only justify itself only in so far as it creates capital and a revolutionary proletariat, thus providing the preconditions for a socialist revolution. His remarks concerning the rejection of the bourgeois phase notwithstanding, it is important to remember that Fanon is much more careful and less peremptory in his rejection of the national bourgeoisie than

terms like decolonization, independence and liberation. Furthermore, concepts like national bourgeoisie, proletariat and peasantry are not given precise definitions. Besides, important distinctions within each class are glossed over. Nghe is the most forceful critic in this area.³⁹ Fanon does not show much piety to the canons of linguistic clarity, and Nghe is right in complaining that he lumps together nurses, interpreters, miners and dockers into one composite group as workers. Fanon does not use the word "petty bourgeois" in any of his writings and sometimes when he uses the phrase "working class" he seems to have in mind what one would normally understand by petty-bourgeoisie. It is this which explains how, on one hand, he castigates the working class as being reactionary and, on the other hand, calls them the most politically conscious group. Clearly, he has different groups in mind. It is therefore important in reading Fanon, to go beyond the labels and try and look at the social group he actually has in mind. And it is this which provides the key to the understanding of Fanon's characterization of the working class as "pampared", and as a "bourgeois fraction of the colonized people", a comment which has attracted so much hostile criticism. When this is understood in the sense of referring to the upper stratum of the urban workers - trade union leaders and workers in certain supervisory position - Fanon's position makes sense.

The second criticism which is also related to methodology is that Fanon generated his theory from the specificity of the Algerian situation and as thus it cannot be applied to the generality of the African continent, not to talk of the Third World. If anything the theory makes sense only in areas of settler control. Such is the position of M. Pouillon.⁴⁰ Such a criticism misunderstands the nature of the African situation. The kind of social pathology which Fanon talks of, though present in a more blatant form in the areas of white settlement, also exists in all colonial countries. The two basic issues of alienated consciousness and alienating material conditions are present in all underdeveloped countries. The fact that in certain areas of Africa independence was achieved without the necessity of armed conflict does not invalidate Fanon's thesis. The struggle is not only for independence but for decolonization, a social revolution. Independence can be accepted only as a stepping stone for revolutionary decolonization. But it does not appear as if the leaders of Africa's independence movements clearly understand the nature and the dimensions of the revolutionary struggle. Nnamdi Azikiwe's remark on becoming Nigeria's first African president is very instructive:

As for me, my stiffest earthly

his critics give him credit for. He writes:

*The theoretical question that for the last fifty years has been raised whenever the history of under-developed countries is under discussion - whether or not the bourgeois phase can be skipped - ought to be answered in the field of revolutionary action, and not by logic.*⁴⁷

Although his study of the African condition led him to postulate a rejection of the bourgeois phase, he would not recommend it as a general and universal rule. Every revolution is in a sense unique, and final decisions as regards strategy and direction should be firmly based on the material conditions of each particular revolution.

Jack Woddis, arguing from an orthodox Marxist position dismisses Fanon's rejection of the proletariat and his promotion of the peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat as the authentic revolutionary classes. He argues that the peasantry by itself cannot effect a revolution, and it is only when it is in alliance with or under the leadership of the bourgeoisie as was the case with the French Revolution or in alliance with the working class as was the case with the Russian Revolution that success has come.⁴⁸ This criticism, however, like many other criticisms of Fanon is based on a misunderstanding of his position. Fanon does not say that only the peasantry can bring about the revolution. He does not spurn alliances. On the contrary, his revolutionary strategy is based on alliance of the revolutionary intellectuals, the peasantry and the lumpen-proletariat.

We may criticise Fanon for his failure to delineate more clearly the structure of the peasantry beyond the broad distinctions of rich and poor peasants and assess the revolutionary potential of each category. We can say the same of his writings about the proletariat and the lumpen-proletariat. This is important if the implications of his work for social praxis are to be taken seriously. And it is this dimension of the works of Mao and Cabral which makes their writings important sources of revolutionary activity.

Fanon is not content with presenting us with a model of revolutionary decolonization. He also paints for us a vision of an ideal society in which the colonized would express and maintain his freedom gained through revolutionary decolonization. Although he does not give a very detailed description of his ideal polity its features are clear. It is what one might call a socialist populist democracy; a non-repres-

sive socialist society which is not encumbered by bureaucratic authoritarianism; a society where political parties function as effective channels of communication between the leadership and the mass of the population, and not as mechanisms of control of the population; a society where power and bureaucratic structures are so decentralized as to give the people effective and meaningful control over their own lives; society which fuses Marx's communistic ideal with Rousseau's ideal community. By constructing the ideal polity the wretched of the earth would be opening a new chapter in the history of mankind. In this way it would succeed in creating "the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable in bringing to triumphant birth".⁴⁹ This is the free man!

Footnotes

1. Emmanuel Hansen, *Frantz Fanon: Social and Political Thought* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, forthcoming).
2. Emmanuel Hansen, *Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual, Transition*, No. 46, Oct./Dec. 1974.
3. For a detailed biographical treatment of Fanon see: Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York, Dial Press, 1971); Irene Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study* (New York, Pantheon 1973). See also my essay, "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual".
4. This is particularly noticeable in the work of David Caute *Fanon* (London, Fontana/Collins, 1970).
5. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, Grove Press, 1967), p. 230.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
8. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Penguin, 1967) p. 252.
9. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York, Grove Press, 1969) p. 53.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
11. See "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary".
12. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 230.

7. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*,
8. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
9. *Ibid.*, p.
0. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.
1. Marx and Engels, "*The Manifesto of the Communist Party*" in *Selected Works* Vol. I (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), p. 43.
2. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 86.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
5. *Ibid.*, p.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
8. Richard Sklar, "Political Science and National Integration." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vo. 5, no. 1 (May 1967) p. 6.
9. Nguyen Nghe, "Frantz Fanon et les Problemes de l'independance" *La Pensee* (Feb. 1963).
0. Jean Pouillon, "Decolonization et Revolution", *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 191, 17^e anee (April 1962), p. 1558.
1. Quoted in Micheal Echeruo, "Nnamdi Azikiwe and Nigerian Thought" *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (June 1974), p. 256.
2. M. Stambouli, *Frantz Fanon aux Problemes de la Decolonization et de la Construction Nationale*, *Institute de Sociologie Revue*, Bruxells Universite Libre 2/3, (1967) p. 532.
3. Georges Nzongola, "The Bourgeoisie and Revolution in the Congo", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 4 (December 1970) p. 529.
4. Judith Marshall, *The Political Economy of Dependence: Ghana 1945-1966*, M.A. Thesis, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Aug. 1972.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
15. These are not Fanon's words. I have categorized the concepts in this way to make the discussion analytically meaningful.
16. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 155-156.
17. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 34.
18. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1972) pp. 21-22.
19. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he writes: "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: - primarily economic - subsequently, the internalization - or better, the epidermalization - of this inferiority" (emphasis added) later in the same work (p. 202) he writes: "The Negro problem does not resolve itself into a problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white" (emphasis added) Fanon's insistence on the primacy of economic conditions in creating both alienated consciousness and alienating material conditions is clear.
20. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York, Collier Books, 1962); Nathan Hare, *The Black Anglo-Saxons* (New York, Collier Books, 1970).
21. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
24. Irene Gendzier, p. 3; see also p. 198.
25. Yoweri Musereni, "Fanon's theory of Violence: Its verification in Liberated Mozambique", in Nathan Shamuyarira, ed. *Essays on the Liberation of Southern Africa* (Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania Publishing House, 1971) p. 14.
26. T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, eds. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (Penguin, 1967), p. 80.

- 45. Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles University of California Press, 1974).
- 46. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 141.
- 47. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 48. Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York, International Publishers, 1972).
- 49. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 252.

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