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RESCUING FANON FROM THE CRITICS

Tony Martin

My real interest in Fanon dates from a night in August 1967 when, together with a couple hundred West Indian students in London, we converged on our Students' Center to listen to a lecture delivered by Stokely Carmichael. One or two of us in the audience had even been at primary school with him in Trinidad, though he probably didn't suspect it. "Can't you remember him?" asked an old classmate of mine, trying to jolt my memory. "He was always fighting!"

My recollections from that night are several--the white agent provocateur who entered the building and tried unsuccessfully to incite us to violence against him; the contingent of policemen who, transported in an assortment of vehicles, swooped down on the building from all directions as we stood talking to Stokely after the lecture; the haste with which Stokely was spirited away from the scene by his friends wishing to avoid an "incident"; the anguish with which I watched some of my friends come to within an inch of blowing their cool in the face of the police provocations--yet a riot was avoided, and though the British government still banned Stokely from the country shortly afterwards, their arguments would have looked much more plausible if we had succumbed to the provocations of that night.

But my most vivid recollection from that night was the frequency and reverence with which Carmichael quoted another West Indian, Frantz Fanon. The deference accorded to Fanon by this outstanding revolutionary of our time was the deference which some men pay to the quotations of Jesus Christ, and others to Karl Marx or Mao Tse Tung. Wherein lies the appeal of Fanon? This paper will attempt to find out by analysing some of his ideas. In the course of this analysis, it is hoped that some of the slanderous interpretations of Fanon's life and works will be discredited.

The biographical details of Frantz Fanon are fairly well-known¹--his early bourgeois upbringing in Martinique; his enlistment in the French army at the age of seventeen; his discovery of the realities of being a black man in the metropolis; his psychiatric studies at Lyon; his left-wing student politics; his involvement in Algeria, first on the staff of a French hospital at Blida, then as a member of the revolutionary government operating from Tunisia, and as an editor of El Moudjahid

¹See, e.g., Geismar 1969; de Beauvoir 1963; "Homage to Frantz Fanon" 1962, especially the contribution of Dr. Bertene Juminer; Gordon 1966.

(the Freedom Fighter), organ of the revolution; his involvement in Pan-African conferences as a representative of the Algerian Revolutionary Government and subsequent appointment as Algerian ambassador to Accra; the French attempts on his life; his death from leukemia in December 1961 at the age of thirty-seven, almost simultaneously with the publication of his masterpiece, The Wretched of the Earth--tragically cut off in his prime.

Even this brief outline of his life shows that Fanon fits into a type of character of which the last hundred years has thrown up a surprisingly large number of magnificent examples--the master theoretician who is also a man of action. Marx, Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara, Castro, and now Fanon--all these men (the list could be extended) have fused, in their own lives, thought and action. The calm of the scholar's study has become, in these men, but an appendage to the direct involvement of the political activist, even where this has meant, as in the case of Guevara, living and dying, gun in hand, in the jungle.

"The Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways," said Marx. "The point, however, is to change it."² And Fanon set out to change it. And the signs are already clear that, in spite of a thousand quibblings over minutiae by a thousand scholars betraying varying degrees of hostility, he will probably succeed.

The key to an appreciation lies in his personality. Fanon was no Draconian monster, as some have tried to paint him (see Isaacs 1965). On the contrary, he was an extremely sensitive individual, whose outstanding personality trait was probably his ability to empathize with the abject suffering which he observed being meted out to his black brothers around the world. Nor did his abhorrence of suffering stop with the plight of black people. His humanism, on which his ideas were founded, reached out to embrace all mankind, as I shall endeavour to show later in this paper. This aspect of Fanon's character is eloquently summed up in a line he quotes from Aimé Césaire's Et les Chiens se Taisent: "In the whole world no poor devil is lynched, no wretch is tortured, in whom I too am not degraded and murdered."

It would, of course, be surprising if this ability to empathize with the wretched in distant corners of the world were not to be matched by an equal earnestness to probe, to explain, and to prescribe a cure for the suffering which he himself had to endure at the hands of the inhabitants of the metropolis and that which he observed at close quarters.

"The attitudes that I propose to describe are real," Fanon announced in his first book. "I have encountered them many times" (1967a, p. 12). And I can testify to the perceptiveness of his observations and the universality of their application, since there is nothing in the experiences described by this francophone West Indian who lived in France that I can

²Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach. Fanon himself quotes part of this line approvingly, though he does not give its source. See Fanon 1967a, p. 17.

identify as alien to my own experience and observation in the anglophone West Indies, or during my lengthy sojourns and peregrinations in the Anglo-Saxon metropolis. Indeed, the similarities are so striking as to extend even to trivia. Thus, for example, the episodes he mentions of young Martiniquans returning home with French accents and supercilious airs have their exact counterparts on the Trinidad scene, where they are a favourite subject for largely apocryphal jokes and calypsoes.

Fanon's sensitivity to human suffering crops up in the most unexpected places. Despite the tendency of some critics to see him as a Sorel-type advocate of violence, allegedly for its own sake,³ Fanon abhors violence even while recognizing it as a necessary evil in some circumstances. Simone de Beauvoir in her autobiography recalls the pain which he experiences at the contemplation of the results of violence, whether inflicted by the enemy or his own side (1963; quoted in Seigel 1968). For he is too closely attuned to the desire of humanity for justice to view violence in strictly macropolitical terms. He cannot ignore the suffering of individuals. For Fanon, the individual is never lost in a mass of statistics. Who can deny the heart-rending sincerity of these words:

No man's death is indispensable for the triumph of freedom. It happens that one must accept the risk of death in order to bring freedom to birth, but it is not lightly that one witnesses so many massacres and so many acts of ignominy (1967c, p. 95).

Indeed, perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the depravity of French colonialism is provided by the fact that it could have driven a man as desirous of justice and a true humanism as Fanon was to the inescapable conclusion that violence was the only answer. Fanon the humanist, the revolutionary who didn't want to be a professional revolutionary (de Beauvoir 1963), who was willing to sacrifice the future he worked for so many years to secure to help his suffering brothers in Algeria, who in the midst of an entry in his diary concerning a hazardous mission in enemy territory (1967c, p. 185) could write, "This part of the Sahara is not monotonous. Even the sky up there is constantly changing. Some days ago we saw a sunset that turned the robe of heaven a bright violet"--yes, this was Fanon.

Not only was Fanon a sensitive humanist. He was also a West Indian. And out of these two apparently unrelated attributes his friend Aimé Césaire has come up with a thought-provoking synthesis:

Fanon probably soared to such heights and was possessed of so wide a horizon because

³See Domenach 1962, pp. 634-45. Domenach also links Fanon, through Sorel, to Mussolini. For a similar view see Barnard 1968, p. 12.

he was a West Indian, meaning that he started from so lowly and narrow a basis. Maybe it was necessary to be West Indian, that is, to be so destituted, so depersonalized, in order to go forth with such ardour to the conquest of oneself and of plenitude; West Indian, this is to say, so mystified in the beginning as to finally be able to expose the most secret motives of mystification, and with such mastery; finally, West Indian to be capable of so forcefully escaping from impotency by action, and from solitude by fraternity ("Homage..." 1962).

When one considers the formidable list of West Indians who have in recent times abandoned the stultifying atmosphere of the West Indies to make their influence felt on the international field of Pan-African involvement--Edward Blyden, George Padmore, Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, Césaire himself, Stokely Carmichael, Fanon--one wonders whether Césaire has not unwittingly stumbled upon one of the most interesting recent discoveries in the field of modern Black History.

FANON AND MARX

Fanon's writings reveal the influence of several people--Hegel, Marx, Sartre and Césaire, to name but a few. But most commentators have evaluated his philosophy around the concept of Marxism. He has been described as a "Marxist ideologist," "not Marxist...(but) populist," "(not) a dogmatic Marxist," "a Marxist," and one whose "borrowings (were) heaviest from Mao" (Brace 1965, Denis 1967, Grohs 1968, Geismar 1969, Isaacs 1965).

Certainly, there are indications of his affinity to Marx which are evident even without a close look at his philosophy--the fact, for example, that two of his three books bore titles directly suggestive of a conscious identification with Marx: Les Damnés de la Terre, which is taken from the first line of the Internationale, and L'An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne, which bears an obvious similarity to Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. These connections suffered with their translation into English. The translation of L'An Cinq into Studies in a Dying Colonialism was particularly unfortunate, however picturesque the English rendering. Translators will have to learn that sometimes a literal rendering is best, whatever they might have been taught at school!

The Eighteenth Brumaire seems to have had a special attraction for Fanon, for it provided him with the leitmotiv of his philosophy. Towards the end of his first book he includes a lengthy and famous quotation from it beginning, "The social revolution...cannot draw its poetry from the past; but only from the future..." (1967a, p. 223). This theme recurs throughout

Fanon's works and forms the basis for his controversial rejection of the Senghorian version of Negritude.

There is another quotation from The Eighteenth Brumaire which does not appear in Fanon but which also sheds considerable light on his ideas, particularly his idea of history. It is this: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." In this quotation, Marx effects a synthesis of the dialectical necessity inherent in historical development on the one hand, and human initiative, on the other. And here Fanon follows him very closely. For though he nowhere specifically discusses his theory of history, his works are scattered with numerous references to a deterministic conception of history which nevertheless requires human involvement to realize the goals to which historical necessity is pointing. "Each generation," he says, "must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it" (1967d, p. 166). In other words, the mission is there, preordained by history, but it is up to individual initiative to discover and fulfill history. Again,

The colonialist...reaches the point of no longer being able to imagine a time occurring without him. His eruption into the history of the colonized people is deified, transformed into absolute necessity. Now a "historic look at history" requires, on the contrary, that the French colonialist retire, for it has become historically necessary for the national time in Algeria to exist (1967c, p. 159; see 1967c, pp. 170, 173).

There is another similarity between L'An Cinq and The Eighteenth Brumaire, and undoubtedly the main factor which led Fanon to base his title on Marx's work. This is the fact that both books are conceptually similar. For they both are analyses of a given stage in a revolutionary situation (see Grohs 1968).

It follows from the foregoing that it is wrong to argue, as one commentator does, that Fanon's position in Black Skin, White Masks was non-Marxist because he declared that he was not a prisoner of history (Seigel 1968). This conclusion is based on a faulty appraisal of Marx and a superficial understanding of Fanon's theory of history.

Fanon can be considered a Marxist. This is not to say that he adhered rigidly to every word that has come down to us from Marx's pen. He didn't. But he was Marxist in the sense that Lenin or Castro or Mao are Marxist. That is, he accepted Marx's basic analysis of society as given and proceeded from there to elaborate on that analysis and modify it where necessary to suit his own historical and geographical context.

Furthermore, while on a political level he speaks very often of neutrality and the necessity to stand aloof from the cold war, at the level of social organization he is quite clear as to what type of society he wants:

The concrete problem we find ourselves up against is not that of a choice, cost what it may, between socialism and capitalism as they have been defined by men of other continents and of other ages. Of course we know that the capitalist regime...cannot leave us free to perform our work at home, nor our duty in the world. Capitalist exploitation and cartels and monopolies are the enemies of underdeveloped countries. On the other hand the choice of a socialist regime, a regime which is completely oriented towards the people as a whole and based on the principle that man is the most precious of all possessions, will allow us to go forward more quickly and more harmoniously, and thus make impossible that caricature of society where all economic and political power is held in the hands of a few who regard the nation as a whole with scorn and contempt (1967d, p. 78).

Thus by 1960, with four years of high-level contacts with African leaders behind him, he could lament in his diary the fact that, based on these contacts, it seemed to him that the greatest danger threatening Africa was not colonialism and its derivatives but the absence of ideology (1967c, p. 186).

Like the good Marxist that he is, Fanon sees the economic base of most things. This includes racism and colonialism. In his discussions of the economic basis of colonialism he is, in addition, very close to the Leninist stance, which he seems to have largely adopted.

His utterances on these matters reveal a Fanon torn in two directions. On the one hand, he is struggling to be true to the orthodox Marxist position of a community of interest between the metropolitan workers and the whole populations of the proletarianized Third World. On the other hand, he is faced with the clear evidence of French chauvinism which has transcended class lines. So that in two successive weeks in El Moudjahid he appears to make conflicting statements concerning the relationship of these two groups.

About one year later, however, he is able to make a dialectical reconciliation between these two conflicting positions by utilizing a Leninist-Hobsonian analysis (1967c, pp. 76, 82, 144; 1967b, p. 55). According to his argument, it is both true that the solidarity between metropolitan workers

and colonized peoples is a theoretical verity, and also true that experience has revealed many examples of the nonviability of this thesis. The apparent contradiction is explained by the fact that the retreat of imperialism in the face of national wars of liberation is accompanied by a deterioration in the economic position of workers in the metropolis. He continues in classic Leninist vein, "The 'metropolitan' capitalists allow social advantages and wage increases to be wrung from them by their workers to the exact extent to which the colonialist state allows them to exploit...the occupied territories." The struggle against this problem must therefore be intensified. So it is not entirely correct to say, as one critic does, that Fanon is contemptuous of international class solidarity (Worsley 1969).

His position *vis-à-vis* metropolitan intellectuals is not dissimilar. For while he recognizes the theoretical bonds linking progressive elements in the metropolis to the colonized masses, and appeals for the strengthening of these bonds, he has no time for those French left-wingers, who, when the chips are down, reveal themselves in all their "egocentric, sociocentric thinking which has become the characteristic of the French" (1967c, p. 71), and their paternalism which "feeds on the ambivalent sources of kindness to the oppressed, or a thirst to do something, to be useful, etc...." (1967c, p. 100).

Fanon's elaborations on Marx begin to show themselves clearly in his discussions of the relative positions and constitutions of the main classes in society--bourgeoisie, proletariat, peasants, and lumpenproletariat.

Fanon's argument here begins with the observation that the African proletariat is both numerically minuscule and relatively pampered. This is an argument which, strangely, is repeated by Senghor, on whom Fanon frequently vents his antireactionary spleen. But whereas Senghor, in his On African Socialism, comes to the conclusion that workers' wages must be kept down, Fanon concludes that the peasant masses are the most revolutionary in the colonial situation and must be mobilized.

This does not mean, as one commentator has grotesquely suggested, that Fanon is in favour of a peasant-led Mau-Mau type *jacquerie* (Dieng 1967). Though he castigates the Kenyan nationalist leaders for not supporting the Mau-Mau uprising, he seems to favour a peasant revolution led by revolutionary intellectuals and urban militants who have rediscovered the masses. And it goes without saying that any mass uprising in Africa is likely to be a peasant uprising, since wage labourers constitute as little as 4 per cent of the population in many countries (Davies 1966, p. 24).

Fanon is aware that the role of the peasantry has proved a thorny theoretical question for Marxists for a number of years. Marx himself, in his Critique of the Gotha Programme, published posthumously by Engels, showed some awareness of the problem. There he suggested that peasant discontent could be channelled into support for proletarian-led parties. Fanon has taken this much further--"the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain" (1967d, p. 47).

Indeed, if the word "peasantry" could be substituted for "proletariat,"

then Fanon's position here is, surprisingly, identical to Marx's early position as articulated in the Communist Manifesto.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority.

Fanon's position is logically (if not theoretically) very near to this. For all he is saying is that the peasants in the colonies are the ones who comprise the vast underprivileged majority that the proletarians presented in mid-nineteenth century England. This argument, however, probably will not appeal to too many Marxists. At least one has attacked Fanon for this position (Ghe 1963). This critic argues that the Vietnamese revolution, though overwhelmingly peasant in composition, has been proletarian-led.

On the other hand, an Algerian communist who has attacked Fanon in more than one journal admits in one place that the big mistake which caused the Algerian communist party to remain aloof from the war of independence for most of the duration of the struggle "sprang from a persistent tendency to underestimate the national factor and the peasantry and to overestimate the role of the European workers" (Ali 1965; see Dieng 1967, Gordon 1966). This critic mentions in the same article that Algeria was 80 per cent peasant on the eve of the revolution. His statistics further include about one million rural unemployed, 500,000 urban unemployed, a "middle bourgeoisie" of 11,000 families, a small, weak national bourgeoisie, and about 300,000 permanent and seasonal workers of whom the majority "had one foot in the village." He does not break down the figures into settlers and others, or give the total population, but even with these crude figures, if they are correct, it can be seen that among the proletarian minority, the majority were in fact only partly proletarianized. Indeed, the migrant and semi-peasant nature of much of the African labour force has been noticed elsewhere (Davies 1966). Still, though these considerations highlight the problem of the narrowness of the proletarian base, they do not solve the problem of which class is the repository of the true revolutionary potential. The problem is intensified when it is remembered that the Soviet Union itself in the pre-1917 period manifested many of the same problems--semipeasant labour force, overwhelming preponderance of peasants in the population, migrant labour, even foreign ownership of many of the industrial establishments. Moreover, the same debates over the possibility of proletarian revolution and the feasibility of skipping the bourgeois stage were conducted, possibly with even greater vehemence than they are debated today.

Yet to return to Fanon, it is significant that even where he appears to make his greatest apparent deviation from classical Marxism, he characteristically grounds his theory in a solid base of the orthodox Marx. For as pointed out supra, he accepts Marx's analysis of the peasantry for the time and place that Marx was describing. His elaboration here, he emphasizes, is based on his analysis of the colonial situation, which has

revealed a peasantry of a fundamentally different character from the nineteenth century European peasants that Marx described. The main difference, for Fanon, is the fact that the individualistic behaviour Marx ascribed to the peasants has now become the hallmark of the colonized proletariat.

Furthermore, and this is essential for an understanding of Fanon on the peasantry, he appears to consider the lumpenproletariat as merely an extension of the peasantry, its urban arm, so to speak. He refers, for example, to "the landless peasants, who make up the lumpenproletariat." The significant role which he assigns to the lumpenproletariat is partly masked by the Marx-like rhetoric in which he appears to denounce this classless element. Compare Marx, in The Communist Manifesto,

The "dangerous class," the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution. Its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.

with Fanon,

For the lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people (1967d, p. 103).

The rhetoric is similar but the difference is clear. For Fanon, the revolutionary possibilities inherent in the lumpenproletariat have become revolutionary potential of the greatest significance, and the lumpenproletariat is but an urban extension of the peasantry.⁴ And it is for them, more than any other element, that the revolutionary violence will prove a magnificent rehabilitation:

The prostitutes too, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all the hopeless dregs of humanity, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness will recover their balance...and march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation.

However, the difference with Marx must not be overstressed, for Fanon recognizes that, if not mobilized, the lumpenproletariat will be used against

⁴This point has been overlooked by some critics, e.g. Cherif 1966. But for an interesting discussion of this point, see Worsley 1969, p. 40ff.

the revolution.

In his analysis of the colonized bourgeoisie and the process of decolonization, Fanon is at his most brilliant. He ruthlessly exposed the essential difference between a true bourgeoisie of the classical Marxist variety and the caricature that masqueraded under that name in the colonies. For the colonized so-called bourgeoisie were, and still are, insignificant as accumulators of capital and are devoid of the capitalistic ethic which, in metropolitan countries, drives the bourgeoisie relentlessly forward in a ceaseless quest for invention and expansion--"the psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry," and there must be scarcely an economic journal in the Third World which will not reveal copious lamentations over this fact. Indeed, even the bourgeois-nationalist type of reactionary leader that Fanon describes can sometimes be heard to cry out in exasperation at the effete-ness of his bourgeois-parasitic cronies (see, e.g., Trinidad 1964-1968, p.4). Whereas for a true bourgeoisie the capitalist system "exercises a psychological compulsion to boundless extension" (Sombart, "Capitalism," Encyclopedia of Social Science), for Fanon, the colonized bourgeoisie is, quite literally, good for nothing.

This bourgeoisie has a central role in Fanon's model of decolonization, a model, moreover, whose predictive aspects can be successfully demonstrated by reference to almost any random sample of countries which have become independent in the last decade or so. The model runs, in outline, as follows. Independence is achieved to the accompaniment of a wave of sterile nationalism. The national bourgeoisie soon finds its role as intermediaries for the exploitation of the economy by foreign capitalists and attempts to reinforce its position as looters of the public purse by calling for nationalization of some industries. The economy, nevertheless, continues to be characterized by the neocolonial assembly-plant type of base. Meanwhile, the country is rapidly transformed into a rest house and brothel for the foreign bourgeoisie. This process is known as tourism. The national bourgeoisie excels itself in ostentatious living. The workers and other less privileged elements get carried away by the nationalistic fervour. At their level, however, the only persons for them to turn against are foreign African traders and people like the Lebanese small-traders. Nationalism, therefore, is transformed into ultranationalism, from thence to chauvinism, and finally into tribalism. Meanwhile, protestations of African Unity fly thick and fast. Nor is the colonialist rear guard slow to exacerbate these differences. The Church takes its rightful place among the neocolonialist agents inciting division. The bourgeoisie seeks solace in a single party and takes cover behind a nationalist leader, who expects the people to live forever on the charisma he generated during the pre-independence period. The leader exposes himself as "the general president of that company of profiteers." Slowly and painfully realization dawns on the people. National flags and radio appearances by the leader can't feed empty bellies. The militants are excommunicated. Party organization dis-integrates. The army and police loom as oppressive factors. A few honest intellectuals are disconcerted. They must be mobilized. The bourgeois phase in the Third World must be resolutely opposed and where possible

prevented from appearing. To effect this, the middleman sector of the economy must be nationalized and given over to cooperatives of the people. "True liberation is not that pseudo-independence in which ministers having a limited responsibility hobnob with an economy dominated by the colonial pact" (Fanon 1967c, p. 105).

On the political level, a true neutralism must be achieved, aloof from the cold war, and most of all from "the United States (who has) plunged in everywhere, dollars in the vanguard, with Armstrong as herald and American Negro diplomats, scholarships, the emissaries of the Voice of America..." (1967c, p. 178).

There is one interesting theatre of the struggle against neocolonialism which Fanon identifies in several places but which seems to have escaped the attention of all the commentators. This is the more surprising since this subject has already emerged as the cause of much strident debate. This is the question of the role of Africanist scholars from the metropolis. In A Dying Colonialism, for example, he points out that "it is on the basis of the analyses of sociologists and ethnologists that the specialists in so-called native affairs and the heads of the Arab Bureaus co-ordinated their work" of systematically attacking Algerian cultural resistance. Psychologists and sociologists seem to be the Africanists he singles out for most abuse. His vehemence on this subject gives a clear indication that he harbours no illusions about the potency of academic weapons if enlisted in the struggle against the Third World (1967b, p. 37; 1967d, pp. 109, 111, 229).

It is inevitable that a model of decolonization as fiercely uncompromising as this should attract at least an occasional backlash. This "historic mission," as Fanon might have called it, was duly performed by the French author of a Christian Socialist review, who came to the defense of colonialism by affirming, in between strident denunciations of Fanon and Sartre, that colonialism, contrary to Fanon, had preserved native culture and made decolonization possible by refraining from exterminating the natives! Nor was there any trace of humour in this article, which was severely condemned in a later issue of the same magazine by, of all persons, an unnamed "French cleric working in black Africa" (Domenach 1962, pp. 454-463, 634-645; "A Propos..." 1962, p. 349).

TOWARDS A TRUE DECOLONIZATION

Just as the process of decolonization outlined above shows the course that will be taken by those who accept the constitutionalist version of independence based on compromise with the colonial overlord, Fanon also explicitly maps out the course that will need to be taken by those who desire true decolonization. There is only one way for this to be achieved--through violence. Colonialism itself is the incarnation of violence. It

is imposed and sustained by fire and sword, and Fanon can't bring himself to believe that such a situation can be changed fundamentally by inviting the Queen to preside over a flag-raising ceremony. The only road to real freedom is by making a clean break with colonialism. And a clean break necessitates violence.

Several of Fanon's interpreters suggest that he became aware of the necessity for violence as a result of his Algerian experience. This does not seem to be the case. For as early as his first book, written in 1950 but published in 1952, Fanon had unmistakably arrived at this conclusion by way of Hegel. In a section of that book devoted to "The Negro and Hegel," Fanon used the plight of the Negro to elaborate a theory of the conditions under which the Negro could liberate himself. Quoting Hegel's The Phenomenology of Mind, Fanon established that freedom of the human spirit can only be established by a dialectical progression in which the subjected individual imposes himself on the other in a violent demand for acceptance. In his own words, which at this point assume a Hegelian ponderosity,

When it encounters resistance from the other, self-consciousness undergoes the experience of desire--the first milestone on the road that leads to the dignity of the spirit. Self-consciousness accepts the risk of its life, and consequently it threatens the other in his physical being. "It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence..." (1967a, p. 218; quotation from Hegel 1949, p. 233).

Furthermore, the peculiar influence of The Eighteenth Brumaire on Fanon has already been mentioned, and here the message is the same, "... unheroic as bourgeois society is, it nevertheless took heroism, sacrifice, terror, civil war and battles of peoples to bring it into being." And Fanon's endearment to this work dates, as has been mentioned, from his first book.

As usual, here as elsewhere, Fanon is on the lookout for ways in which the peculiarities of the colonial situation must call for a modification of the traditional line. This time it is Engels whom he collides with. He explains, as against Engels' view that the poorly armed cannot defeat the mighty, that the new features of the cold war, support from socialist countries, and competition for spheres of influence among capitalist countries, not to mention the new techniques of peoples' war and guerilla warfare, all militate in favour of the weak and poorly armed in their struggle against the powerful. Further, he is fully aware of the deleterious influence of protracted struggle on the economic and political situation within the metropolitan countries themselves. And he can hardly be wrong when he says that no power can indefinitely occupy a subject

country which has gone over to a peoples' war. But perhaps most important of all for him is the example of Korea, Indochina, Cuba, and his own Algerian struggle. He constantly reminds his African brothers that now is the time to strike--now, while France is already weakened to the point of exhaustion by the Algerian conflagration. He points out that the preferring of the Loi-Cadre as a palliative to Africa is evidence of France's weakness and fear. His arguments here are at one with Che Guevara's "many Viet Nams" thesis. He even goes so far as to spearhead the formation, at the Accra Conference of 1958, of an African Legion to liberate the continent.⁵

But Fanon can never forget the price that the damned must pay for their freedom. The 45,000 innocent victims of French bombing at Sétif in 1945, the 90,000 slaughtered in Madagascar in 1947, the fact that no Frenchman has ever been disciplined for the torture of Algerians, the perpetration of frighteningly unethical practices on Algerians by French doctors--all these are considerations which return to trouble him again and again.

Yet the fight must go on. For without a violent break, only suffering and neocolonialism lie ahead. And the brotherhood of revolutionary violence cleanses, purifies, unifies, as Sartre claimed to have realized when viewing the new man produced by the Cuban revolution (de Beauvoir 1963, p. 619).

Here, as elsewhere, Fanon's critics have not been at a loss for wildly ridiculous arguments to oppose to his thesis. One critic, who should know better, concludes that

He has not freed himself from the White Mask and still believes that the blacks are less than men. Terrorism and murder are necessary because unless European institutions are totally destroyed they will prevail and corrupt the new world (Zolberg 1966, p. 62).

This quotation contains almost as many misconceptions as words. It ignores the history of French brutality in Algeria and presents the violence of the damned as an action rather than a reaction. It fails to take cognisance of (or disbelieves) Fanon's own words:

Having to react in rapid succession to the massacre of Algerian civilians in the mountains and in the cities, the revolutionary leadership found that if it wanted to prevent the people from being gripped by terror

⁵1967c, pp. 130, 145, 156; 1967d, pp. 50, 55-59, 62. For a sterile and inaccurate attack on Fanon for his position vis-à-vis Engels, see Dieng 1967.

it had no choice but to adopt forms of terror which until then it had rejected. This phenomenon has not been sufficiently analyzed... (1967b, p. 54).

It presents the violence of the damned as a confirmation of the White Mask, whereas for the Hegelian basis of Fanon's thinking, revolutionary violence constitutes the very rending of the mask, the decisive action by which, to use Hegel's terminology, self-consciousness wrings acceptance from the other. It uses the term "European institutions," which can mean anything--the Church, Westminster-type government, racism, European-owned factories. It skillfully opposes the words "terrorism and murder" to "European institutions," thereby making a thinly-veiled allegation that Fanon was possessed of a blind indiscriminating hatred of Europe per se. This was not the case as I shall endeavour to show.

Though Fanon's violence is usually to be taken quite literally, there seems to be at least one situation in which a violent break may be made with the colonial past without any blood being shed. This conclusion is being deduced here by inference from his often-expressed admiration for Sékou Touré. It would appear that Sékou Touré, by mobilizing a revolutionary intellectual elite in communion with the masses, and by taking a step against French colonialism which at least exposed him to the very real risk of a violent retort, may have fulfilled the requirements for a violent break. Fanon seems to be saying here that if, once you have showed your determination for a fight, colonialism withdraws without a violent confrontation, then there is no necessity to pursue the retreating enemy and pick a fight simply for the sake of shedding blood (1967d, pp. 66, 161, 166).

NEGRIITUDE, PAN-AFRICANISM, AND RACE

Fanon's thought has often been presented in the form of an evolutionary process culminating in The Wretched of the Earth. While there is nothing inherently wrong in this approach, it occasionally leads to misconceptions. It has already been shown that Fanon's theory of violence was stated clearly as early as his first book. The same is true concerning his position on Negritude and Negro-ism, contrary to the view, sometimes expressed, that he started with an acceptance of the concept of Negritude and ended by rejecting it in his final work.

From the mass of material, especially in his first and last books, on this subject, the following picture emerges. Fanon appreciates the necessity to rehabilitate the past--"this tearing away (from European cultural domination) painful and difficult though it may be, is, however, necessary." He nevertheless moves on to an apparently contradictory position against Negritude. This is because he perceives the adherents of

Negritude overreaching themselves and going to the other extreme of completely whitewashing the past, so that what emerges tends uncomfortably towards a blind mystification of the past and a "banal exoticism." Furthermore, the Negritude school is in danger of living in the past, which violates Fanon's Eighteenth Brumaire philosophy. For important as knowledge of the past is, progress for the present generation must be made in terms of contemporary realities. Culture should thus be subordinated to this goal. On a cultural level, the heterogeneity of black cultures should be recognized. This does not rule out the possibility--in fact, the necessity--for cooperation on a political level. And as long as exponents of Negro-ism like Senghor and Rabemananjara can vote with France against the Algerian revolution, then something must clearly be wrong somewhere.

Thus unravelled (and the mass of scattered detail makes unravelling difficult), his apparently contradictory acceptance-rejection of Negritude is resolved. That Fanon's arguments were often expounded in a dialectical fashion (he uses the world itself continuously) often masks his meaning to the superficial reader.

His rejection of Negro-ism is influenced, further, by the fact that the generic term "Negro" is the creation of the white man. It is a term, nevertheless, which was created to designate the white man's conception of the "quintessence of evil" and bestiality. Therefore, he cannot see why black people should revel in the fallacy of an undifferentiated Negro-ness created for them by their oppressors.

This analysis he backed up, characteristically, in action. Through the pages of El Moudjahid there poured a steady stream of exhortations to African Unity. And he frequently expressed pain at the obscurantism and chauvinism of people like Senghor, and, most of all, the "traitor Houphouët-Boigny," who was "objectively the most conscious curb on the evolution and liberation of Africa."

He was at pains to point out, in this regard, that his advocacy of national culture was not the same as nationalism. It was, on the contrary, the only real basis for a solid universalism which would include all humanity.

The Negro is not. Any more than the white man.
Both must turn their backs on the inhuman
voices which were those of their respective
ancestors in order that authentic communication
be possible (1967a, p. 231).

This quotation is a succinct statement of the ideal to which all of Fanon's work pointed--the ideal of a new humanity.

This statement also throws considerable light on Fanon's attitudes towards race relations. His sensitivity, his inability to separate an overview of social relationships from relationships at the level of the individual, his dialectical approach to most problems--all of this made it

logically necessary that his unrelenting hatred of racism, and his uncompromising struggle to lift the black man out of the quagmire of psychological complexes into which racism had induced him, should be strictly divorced from a hatred of white people per se. For Fanon, there was no logical connection between the struggle against white racism and neo-colonialism and the indiscriminating hatred of white people. Any white person who proved his sincere desire for a true humanism was a friend for Fanon, just as a traitorous black reactionary like Houphouët-Boigny would remain an implacable object of detestation. This is why Fanon's books are replete with expressions of concern for the Frenchmen working undercover for the revolution, for the French soldiers who deserted to the Algerian side, for an end of the egocentric paternalism of the French left (see 1967a, p. 12; 1967b, 149). This is why, as Simone de Beauvoir (1963) tells us, he could jokingly say that he would pay 20,000 francs a day to converse with Sartre for a fortnight (p. 619).

This is why, too, he sets out with such honesty in Black Skin, White Masks to analyze the pathetic complexes which exposure to white racism has induced in the black people who come under his keen observation. All this is admirably borne out in the much misunderstood chapter "The Man of Color and the White Woman." Here, because he starts the chapter in the first person, superficial critics have been eager to associate him with the condition he describes.

The chapter revolves around the character Jean Veneuse, in René Maran's novel Un Homme Pareil Aux Autres, whose love affair with a white woman displays all the negative qualities that Fanon would like to eradicate. His conclusions concerning Jean Veneuse leave the careful reader in no doubt as to where Fanon's own position lies:

...there would be a...lack of objectivity...
in trying to extend the attitude of Veneuse
to the man of colour as such....

This sexual myth--the quest for white flesh--
perpetuated by alienated psyches, must no
longer be allowed to impede active under-
standing.

It is clear to me that Jean Veneuse, alias
René Maran, is neither more nor less than a
black abandonment-neurotic...who needs to be
emancipated from his infantile fantasies...
but let us remember that our purpose is to
make possible a healthy encounter between
black and white.

And the way to this healthy encounter, in characteristic Fanon fashion, is through "a restructuring of the world."

We are now in a position, therefore, to demolish perhaps the most

slandorous piece of inaccurate superficiality that has emerged on Fanon's personal life. This particular opinion is all the more unfortunate because its author seems to have interviewed Fanon's wife,⁶ and his facile misconception can hardly be calculated to induce the lady to view with equanimity the inquiries of future, perhaps more genuinely motivated, researchers. For this gentleman, in one undocumented sweep of the pen in what is otherwise a reasonable article, assures us that Fanon's marriage to a white woman, though possibly occasioned by the absence of black people in Lyon where Fanon lived and studied, is more probably due to a desire on Fanon's part "to become white through love of a white woman" (Geismar 1969, p. 24). It can only be hoped that this bit of defamation is indeed based on superficial scholarship rather than malice. Certainly there is a discernible tendency in some critiques to subtly denigrate the man while grudgingly acknowledging the greatness of his ideas.

The impact of Fanon's ideas on Algeria (where, nevertheless, some critics suggest he may have been disappointed with the results of the revolution), on the student left in Europe, and on the black liberation struggle in the United States, has been documented in several places (Gordon 1966, Worsley 1969). But the greatest battles over the applicability of Fanon's ideas are still to be fought. They will be fought in Africa and the Caribbean, the areas in which Fanon was most interested and where disenchantment with the results of the black versions of bourgeois nationalism is already plain to see.

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⁶Geismar 1969, p. 24. It is not entirely clear from the article whether he had yet spoken to Mrs. Fanon, though the fact that he had already interviewed Fanon's French acquaintances and is working on a Fanon biography means that she must have been on his list for interview; see also Armah 1969.

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