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FANON'S RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY

AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT*

by

GUY MARTIN

Introduction:

The purpose and problems of social research in Africa have recently been the object of increasing attention by both Western and African scholars. There has been, in particular, an increased concern in so-called 'policy-relevant' or 'applied' research, namely research designed not only to offer a diagnosis, but also to propose a remedy (or a variety of alternative remedies) to the situation under scrutiny. Such a concern grew out of a debate on whether social science could and should be ethically neutral, i.e. whether the study of society should be distinct from society itself. This is not the place to review the arguments and implications of such a controversy; however, it might be useful to our purpose to point to some of the conclusions that a number of so-called 'post-behavioralist' political scientists have reached.

In their effort to redefine the basis and purpose of political science, the 'post-behavioralists' have come to propose definitions of politics which depart significantly from the conventional views in the profession. Indeed, they have gone a long way in pointing towards an entirely new direction for further political research. Consider for instance the following statement by a leading proponent of the 'post-behavioral' tendency:

*I propose as a normative basis the proposition that politics exists for the purpose of progressively removing the most stultifying obstacles to a free human development...with priority for those individuals who are more severely oppressed.*¹

*I am greatly indebted to Professors Sheldon Gellar, Department of Political Science, and Emile Snyder, Department of French and Italian, Indiana University, for their useful comments and criticisms on this article. The views expressed herein are, of course, my sole responsibility.

The 'Caucus for a New Political Science' was even more specific on this point. In its Manifesto of April 1969, it defined its purpose as being essentially

the creation of ... a political science which can serve the poor, oppressed, and underdeveloped peoples at home and abroad in their struggles against the established hierarchies, elites, and institutional forms of manipulation. . .²

If one attempts to apply such concerns to the field of social research in Africa, one is immediately faced with either of the following alternatives:

In the last analysis, relevant social research in Africa (and elsewhere) can be of two types. It can be a handmaiden to the government and the class it represents. That type of research...is typically pedestrian because it is conducted within a narrow conceptual and empirical framework.... Alternatively, relevant social research can be based on a fundamental questioning of the social order, as indeed all social research should be, at least to some extent...^{3a}

If one accepts the latter alternative, the problem becomes that of the choice of a conceptual and empirical framework adapted to that specific purpose, i.e. to a fundamental and systematic questioning of the social order.

As will soon become evident, such a framework is yet to be worked out. We do not mean to say that no currently available political theory is adapted to an understanding of the political phenomena in Africa. Quite the contrary, a number of able political scientists have developed and refined theories designed to explain not only the development and progress, but also the "breakdown" and "decay" of African societies.

Whether conducted within the framework of Structural-functionalism or Pluralism, political research on Africa has been extremely prolific recently, and there is no lack of 'models' to apply to any conceivable circumstance. The trouble with such theoretical structures is that too often, while purporting to explain everything, end up explaining nothing. To be more specific, they are not very helpful in an attempt to understand the intrinsic reality and inner workings of African politics.

Part of the problem is that, on the whole, traditional political science is ill-equipped to undertake the study of complex and 'non-western' societies such as the African societies. This is so essentially because western concepts and tools of analysis simply do not apply in the African social context. In order that western methods of analysis may be made applicable to the African situations, they need not only a refining but also a remodeling. Much is yet to be done in this respect. Another more important problem is that there has been a continuing tendency on the part of Western (and African) political science to focus on the wrong African institution, or the wrong African actor as a result of ethnocentric biases.

Thus, in the immediate post-independence period, there was a unanimous consensus to take the emerging Nation-State as the main point of focus for analysis in international affairs, and so was the single party taken within each state. The behavior and public statements of the leaders of the emerging states also became the focus of world attention in the atmosphere of constant competition and outbidding between East and West which characterized the Cold War period. All too often, statements by African leaders tended to be taken at face value.

In view of such a situation, it would seem that one of the main tasks of any concerned African political scientist would be to try to develop a conceptual and empirical model which is specifically adapted to the African social context so as to theoretically facilitate a political redemption of the oppressed in Africa.

If one starts from the simple observation that the peasantry represents about 90% of the total African population and is, by any standards, the most underprivileged class in Africa, it would seem that the time has come for African political scientists to ask more relevant questions: 'What is the actual situation of the peasantry in Africa today and what can be done to improve this situation?' In such a quest, there are few places to which one can turn for inspiration. The work and prophecy of one man, however, stands out as being particularly well-suited to such a task. This man is Frantz Fanon. His main work, to which frequent reference will be made, is appropriately entitled *The Wretched of the Earth*.^{3b}

As a controversial writer, Fanon has been sharply criticized both from the extreme right and from the extreme left.⁴ Not only has he been alternatively compared to Sorel⁵ and to Rousseau⁶, he also has been repeatedly dubbed a Marxist and/or an anti-Marxist. And others have (unjustly) accused him

of being an unconditional advocate of violence: they see him as the revolutionary prophet of the oppressed masses of the Third-World. Consequently *The Wretched of the Earth* is viewed by some of these critics as 'A Gospel for the Damned'.⁷

Thus, much of the already abundant literature on Fanon suffers from two main deficiencies; it is both partisan and repetitive. It is partisan because most of his critics set out to analyze Fanon's work from their own particular philosophical standpoint. The *peace-loving* liberal criticizes Fanon's emphasis on the need for violence in a revolutionary process.⁸ The "orthodox" Marxist criticizes Fanon for a political thought which is against that of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky.⁹ It is also repetitive because, as is rightly pointed out by Emmanuel Hansen, "too often writers are content to reproduce or restate Fanon's argument without any further discussion or analysis".^{10a}

A frequent (and to some extent justified) criticism of Fanon is that he never had a prolonged experience of Sub-Saharan Africa. He came into contact with 'Black' Africa only for a short period late in his short life, when he was appointed an FLN Ambassador to Ghana in March 1960. It is also often argued that Fanon tended to unduly generalize from his experience in the Algerian liberation struggle. Although both criticisms are well-taken, it is nonetheless true that Fanon had a clear understanding of the problems facing emerging African states, and, as will be argued later, his intellectual acumen and insightful analysis enabled him to transcend his limited first-hand knowledge of Africa.

My concern in this article is to apply certain elements of Fanon's political thought which might be useful in creating a better understanding of the current political situations in Africa. More generally, it is hoped that a critical analysis of the essence of Fanon's political thought will provide some useful indications as to which concepts are better adapted to a thorough understanding of the African socio-political environments.

If the study of political science is to give "priority for those individuals who are more severely oppressed" as has been suggested earlier, then it would seem that a study focusing on 'The Wretched of the Earth' would prove most fruitful indeed.^{10b} In this paper, I first examine to what extent Fanon's political thought is relevant to the study of a Revolutionary process; next, I apply his thought to class formation and to other contemporary developments in Africa.¹¹

Fanon and The Revolutionary Process in Africa

Fanon has developed some provocative hypotheses about the role of violence in a revolutionary process. He starts out with a specific definition of the purpose of any liberation struggle in a colonial context. To qualify as a "Revolution", such a liberation struggle must aim at giving the 'people' the two items they need most: land and bread:

For a colonized people, the most essential value, because the most concrete is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity. (p. 44)

The people...take their stand from the start on the broad and inclusive positions of 'bread and the land': how can we obtain the land, and bread to eat? And this obstinate point of view of the masses which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure. (p. 50)

the mass of the people have no intention of standing by and watching individuals increase their chances of success. What they demand is not the settler's position of status, but the settler's place. The immense majority of natives want the settler's farm. For them, there is no question of entering into competition with the settler. They want to take his place. (pp. 60-61)

Quite obviously, in order to do so it is necessary to engage in violent actions of one form or another. For Fanon, the use of violence to free oneself from colonial rule is simply using colonialism's own arms against itself:

colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence. (p. 61)

But Fanon goes even further in his advocacy for the use of violence. Not only does he see it as necessary for the overthrow of a colonial regime, but he also thinks that it should be the main component of a nation-building process:

The uprising of the new nation and the breaking down of colonial structures are the result of one of two causes: either of a violent struggle of the people in their own right or of action on the part

of surrounding colonized peoples which acts as a brake on the colonial regime in question. (p. 70)

the second phase, that of the building-up of the nation, is helped on by the existence of this cement which has been mixed with blood and anger... Violence is an action all-inclusive and national. It follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and tribalism. (pp.93-94)

As Sartre rightly observes in the Preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, violence for Fanon, at one and the same time purifies and liberates the colonized who makes use of it:

no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them. The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms... to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man. (pp. 21-22)

Fanon himself says:

This assumed responsibility for violence allows both strayed and outlawed members of the group to come back again and to find their place once more, to become integrated. Violence is thus seen as comparable to a royal pardon. The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. (pp. 85-86)

Aristide Zolberg laments, with some justification, that Fanon "does surround his concept of violence with a great deal of ambiguity" noting further: "It would seem that 'violence' encompasses almost the entire range of political pressure."^{12a} Martin Staniland points to the same kind of problem when he says that

Fanon's reliance on the notion of violence prevents its clearer definition as a dynamic within decolonisation: violence, used to explain everything, explains nothing.^{12b}

Fanon's views on violence have influenced some authors to identify his ideas with ideas of people who glorify violence for its own sake. While Sorel and Pareto see him as

one motivated by hatred of society¹³, other authors regard his early existential view of violence as a form of non-violent violence.¹⁴

Peter Worsley has offered one of the best answers to the charge of "apostle of violence" which has been unjustly leveled against Fanon by restating Fanon's main argument thus:

Fanon is commonly spoken of as an 'apostle of violence', one who elevates violence into a mystique as an end in itself. This is a travesty of Fanon. For him, violence is no absolute: its significance is relative and situationally determined. It is legitimate, indeed sacred, where it is used instrumentally as the means of revolution, and through revolution leads to the beginning of a higher social order and the development of new human potential. But one must emphasize that he looks to the transcending of violence, and of its replacement by national collective decision-making in a way that is, far from celebrating violence as an absolute - as fascists did - sees it as a temporary phenomenon to be displaced by higher forms of social organization in a liberated society.¹⁵

Another plausible explanation of Fanon's ideas on violence is offered by Adele Jinadu who says

one important reason for this apparent inconsistency lies in the special colonial situation of Algeria with its sizable and politically powerful white settler community.¹⁶

Although Fanon drew his lessons from the special Algerian colonial situation, his conclusions appear to be of particular relevance to the colonial situations now prevailing in African countries still under white minority rule. In Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), South Africa, Namibia (Southwest Africa) and in the Portuguese colonies, as in colonial Algeria, the means (violence) and the end (independence) are inseparable. In such a context, it seems by now evident that

Nothing short of a large-scale use of physical violence and armed rebellion will bring about the total demolition of the existing exploitative and oppressive sociopolitical and economic systems.¹⁷

Fanon does not, however, figure among the major theoreticians of guerilla warfare. As one author observes,

*He confines himself to insisting that spontaneous insurrection must rapidly be replaced by systematic organization and strategy, and that scattered guerrilla units must be ultimately welded into a national army guided by a central strategy.*¹⁸

The main question, as far as we are concerned, is to see if Fanon's generalizations on violence can be applied to all revolutionary struggles in general. Nguyen Nghe has challenged Fanon on this point, and Fanon himself was clearly hesitant to extend the conclusions he drew from his observations of Algeria to the rest of Africa. But Jinadu's comments on this point seem to be accurate:

*The attempt to generalize by formulating hypotheses that are nomothetic in nature is not bad in itself. The problem comes with the grounds for such generalizations. In this respect Fanon is indeed on shaky grounds, for his experiences of revolutionary struggle are limited to Algeria only.*¹⁹

Thus it can be argued that Fanon's ideas on the application of violence in a revolutionary process suffer essentially from a lack of conceptual precision. While his concept of violence would be useful in colonial situations, it seems that it would not be applicable in neo-colonial settings.

Another problem to which Fanon has given a great deal of attention is that of class formation in the newly independent African states.

Fanon and Classes in Africa

For Fanon, colonialism violates the homogeneity of African society, creating favoured and deprived groups (and areas), thereby reducing the chances of successful decolonisation. Thus, colonialism tends to foster the development and polarization of the following social classes:

- (1) a lumpen-proletariat;
- (2) a peasantry;
- (3) a working class (or proletariat); and
- (4) a national bourgeoisie (or middle-class).

In offering these class categories, Fanon was not particularly concerned with proposing specific definitions, but with providing an explanation of the post-colonial African society as he saw it. Our first task in this respect will be to try and specify the content of each of the four classes isolated by Fanon to see to what extent they constitute useful analytical categories.

1. The Lumpen-proletariat

Detachment from the peasantry, 'shanty-town' dwelling, chronic unemployment, hooliganism, and the committal of petty crimes characterize the class which Fanon has referred to as a lumpen-proletariat. It is this class to which Fanon attributes the most revolutionary tendencies among colonized people:

It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpen-proletariat that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the "lumpen-proletariat", 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. (p. 129)

Fanon is, however, quick in warning us about the unreliability of this class. He sees the lumpen-proletariat as susceptible by whomever is best capable of appealing to and organizing it:

Colonialism will also find in the "lumpen-proletariat" a considerable space for maneuvering. For this reason any movement for freedom ought to give its fullest attention to this "lumpenproletariat" ...the oppressor, who never loses a chance of setting the niggers against each other, will be extremely skillful in using that ignorance and incomprehension which are the weaknesses of the "lumpen-proletariat". If this available reserve of human effort is not immediately organized by the forces of rebellion, it will find itself fighting as hired soldiers side by side with the colonial troops". (pp. 136-37)

Hence, one of the main tasks of the revolutionary vanguard will be to channel the revolutionary potential of the lumpen-proletariat into a strong organizational structure.

There are conceptual problems which arise from the ambiguity of the term 'lumpen-proletariat'. Criteria of determining who belongs to this class is one of such problems:

The term "lumpen-proletariat" is itself vague and may not be empirically manageable. What is one to include in it? What criteria is one to use in determining what to include in it?20

Another problem is raised by the fact that

While it may be true that "pimps" and "prostitutes", "hooligans" and the "unemployed" have a revolutionary struggle will turn them into productive citizens.²¹

And the last major problem is that

Fanon fails to distinguish between the hard core, corrupted "lumpen-proletariat", and the migrant peasants who move to and fro between town and village, and who are more capable of the revolutionary activity he describes and desires.²²

Taking a retrospective look at the political history of Africa since Fanon, one observes that not only have the unemployed been the main source of support for many anti-colonial movements, but they also have been the principal source of instability in post-colonial states.²³

Despite the vagueness of the term 'lumpen-proletariat', it is to Fanon's credit that the revolutionary importance of this social class has been recognized by social scientists.

2. The peasantry

Fanon claims that the authentically revolutionary group in the Third-World is the poor peasantry:

it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms... (p.61)

On the other hand, Nguyen Nghe has observed that left to himself, the peasant cannot develop a revolutionary consciousness. Without the essential political leadership by the urban militant, Nghe contends that a peasant revolution often becomes a *Jacquerie* without a future.²⁴

In terms of a specific definition of who the peasantry are, Fanon is unclear. This lack of clarity, as L. Adele Jinadu correctly concludes, poses a serious dilemma to a research in terms of what information would be relevant to a study of peasantries:

*If a concept like "the peasantry" is to be useful empirically, one must be clear about what it refers to... If one were to test Fanon's hypothesis that "it is clear in the colonial countries that the peasants alone are revolutionary", one must be sure about what one was trying to research, so that one would know what type of data to collect.*²⁵

What is clear is that most of rural Africa today still practices a system of communal ownership of land.²⁶ But it seems that more research which should help in 'differentiating peasants from other rural people'^{27a} is needed before one can appreciate the usefulness of Fanon's generalizations in an African context.

Whether Fanon is right or wrong in seeing in the peasantry an authentic revolutionary force is not really what we are concerned with here. What is important for our concern is to note that, once more, Fanon focused his analysis on the essential level, the micro-level of the peasantry who, as it was yesterday, is overwhelmingly the largest single group in Africa today. This appears today as an extremely significant achievement, especially when viewed in contrast to the contemporary political scientists' tendency to focus on the macro-level of African politics.^{27b} Hence, one must agree with Jina-du that

More light can be thrown on our understanding of African politics and of the problems of modernization on the continent by a more systematic examination of peasant movements and, above all, of the relationship between the rural and urban populations in terms of rapid socio-economic and political changes.^{27c}

3. The working-class (or proletariat)

It is obvious that Fanon does not hold the African proletariat in great esteem:

...in the colonial territories the proletariat is the nucleus of the colonized population which has been most pampered by the colonial regime. The embryonic proletariat of the towns is in a comparatively privileged position... In the colonial countries the working class has everything to lose; in reality it represents that fraction of the colonized nation which is necessary and irreplaceable

if the colonial machine is to run smoothly: it includes tram conductors, taxi drivers, miners, dockers, interpreters, nurses, and so on. (pp. 108-109)

Defined thus, the working-class is given a false homogeneity:

Fanon should have made a distinction between types of proletariat, between genuinely proletarian elements such as dockers and miners and petty-bourgeois groups such as interpreters, taxi drivers, and clerks. What Fanon did in effect was to lump all of them together as one homogeneous group: the proletariat.²⁸

Another significant point is that Fanon, like Marcuse, writes off the working class from revolutionary forces. Furthermore, Fanon presents a picture of an absolute gap between the workers and the peasants, with each class immersed in its own struggles, cut off from and largely indifferent to the fate and efforts of the other. Fanon's views on this point clearly contradict the classic marxist analysis. Nghe, one of the Marxist writers, denies that the proletariat is a privileged class in the colonies.²⁹

Fanon, however, recognizes that despite its centrality among the colonized people, the working class (through organized trade unions) occupies a position of strategic importance in the struggle against colonialism:

During the colonial phase, the nationalist trade-union organizations constitute an impressive striking power. In the towns, the trade unionists can bring to a standstill, or at any rate slow down at any given moment, the colonialist economy. (p. 121)

Fanon was one of the first authors to recognize the existence of an African proletariat, a fact which was generally denied by most African leaders and commentators at the time.

4. The national bourgeoisie

Fanon has offered one of the most scathing criticisms of the national bourgeoisie ever to be found in the social science literature on Africa:

The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate

with the bourgeoisie of the mother country...The national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labor; 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 the colonialism have hardly left them any other choice. (pp. 149-150)

Some distant echoes of his views resound from certain recent political science works on Africa:

as the colonial imported oligarchy perceived the acculturation of African modernisers to metropolitan socio-economic values, it was realised that by this means expatriate socio-economic and strategic interests..could be sustained, even advanced, in the post-colonial society.³⁰

The indigenous bourgeoisie's interest in and dependence on the neocolonial economic system facilitates the exercise of political control by metropolitan governments and investors. Opportunities for political control are further extended by the neo-colonial regime's need to call upon foreign aid to protect itself from the internal unrest engendered by their own inability to solve the recurrent crises of the neocolonial economic order.³¹

Furthermore, Fanon's views seem to be quite consistent with those of the "neo-marxist" economists such as André Gunder Frank and Samir Amin, who essentially view the neo-colonial situation as a center-periphery relationship:

The political alliances between the local ruling class and the foreign ruling capital have delayed and are still delaying vital agrarian reforms...A bourgeoisie of the periphery, that is set up in the wake of foreign capital cannot envisage inward-looking development which implies separation from world markets.³²

Whatever its shortcomings, the national bourgeoisie could have an historical role to play in a process of liberation:

it would seem that the historical vocation of an authentic national middle class in an underdeveloped country is to repudiate its own nature in so far as it is bourgeois, that is to say in so far as it is the tool of capitalism, and to make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people. (p. 150)

In other words, the national bourgeoisie should

"put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities". (p. 150)

Unfortunately, if one looks at the contemporary political situation in Africa, one is led to believe that the national bourgeoisie has betrayed the historical mission that Fanon had prescribed to it. But how could one expect a national middle class in an underdeveloped country to repudiate its own nature and to turn over its 'share of the plunder' to the people? This is more of the realm of wishful thinking than of realistic political analysis. And that might well be where the use of violent means comes in again:

In underdeveloped countries, the bourgeoisie should not be allowed to find the conditions necessary for its existence and its growth. In other words, the combined effort of the masses led by a party and of intellectuals who are highly conscious and armed with revolutionary principles ought to bar the way to this useless and harmful middle class. (pp. 174-175)

Fanon's devastating criticism of the African national bourgeoisie has been judged too harsh by a number of authors. Some of them have argued that "civil servants (bureaucrats) ... have been and are still positive forces for modernization", for "in functional terms, they serve a useful purpose..."³³ Whatever useful function they perform, remains to be seen. So far, it seems that the bourgeoisie constitute one of the main obstacles to major socio-economic changes and development. Their function has been to maintain the status-quo.

In this respect, Fanon's class analysis remains highly relevant to an understanding of the situation prevailing in most African countries today. As Woddis puts it,

It is a special merit of Fanon that he was able to see that an understanding of the future of Africa required an analysis of the class forces. It is

further to his credit that his motivation in seeking his way through the complexities of class formation and class action in Africa was to assist the liberation of Africa from imperialism, and to hasten the social revolution which alone can emancipate the millions of peasants to whom he expresses such attachment. 34

It is certainly in his criticism of the national bourgeoisie that Fanon's insightful observations have proved accurate.

What he has also said about the one-party states, the role of the military in politics, and the place of Africa in a neo-colonial world is equally insightful.

Fanon and Contemporary Political Forces and Trends in Africa

1. The African One-Party State

Fanon sees a single party in a state as an instrument of exploitation of the people by the national bourgeoisie:

standing on the principle of its domination as a class, the bourgeoisie chooses the solution that seems to it the easiest, that of the single party ... The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical. (pp. 164-165)

Fanon clearly demonstrated that a) a single party simply transmits orders from the top down; b) a party constitutes a screen between the masses and the leaders; and c) a party becomes so bureaucratized that it soon fails to differentiate itself from the state government. At such a stage, there is total confusion between the party and the administration:

today, the party's mission is to deliver to the people the instructions which issue from the summit...the party has made itself into a screen between the masses and the leaders..the party becomes an administration... The party is becoming a means of private advancement. (pp. 170-171)

Such weaknesses contribute to the single party's anti-democratic and even totalitarian character:

The party, a true instrument of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the machine, and ensures that the people are hemmed in and immobilized.

The party helps the government to hold the people down. It becomes more and more clearly anti-democratic, an implement of coercion. (pp. 171-172)

From the preceding criticisms emerges Fanon's coherent view of what the party should be. He insists that a party and an administration should be separate entities. Only in this way can a party, i.e. a decentralized party, be a means of discovering and formulating the needs of the people.³⁵ In other words, Fanon, like Rousseau, thought that the Party should represent the collective will of the people, for, in the final analysis, 'the people' is the sovereign:

"...the people legislates, finds itself, and wills itself to sovereignty". (p. 132)

Most importantly, the democratic process must be a two-way flow from the people to the leaders, and back:

There no longer exists the fruitful give-and-take from the bottom to the top and from the top to the bottom which creates and guarantees democracy in a party. (p. 170)

With this in mind, it is now evident that Fanon arrived at accurate conclusions about single-party states in Africa. In some African countries, such as Senegal, the Ivory Coast or Kenya, the problem has become acute. Clearly, much more critical studies in this area need to be undertaken before the usefulness of Fanon's views can be demonstrated. But the direction towards which he pointed appears, without question, to be a correct one.

It is more difficult to find concrete evidence in support of Fanon's views on the ideal party. Some developments such as those occurring in Tanzania since the "Arusha Declaration" (1968) would seem, however, to point to the direction indicated by Fanon. The process of social and political reeducation, as well as the meaningful choice among competing candidates from the ruling party which are observable in this country are particularly significant in this respect.

2. The Role of the Military in African Politics

Fanon gave a great deal of attention to the problem of the military in African politics. He was aware, before many people were, that the military would increasingly play a significant role in African politics:

In the absence of a parliament it is the army that becomes the arbiter: but sooner or later it will realize its power and will hold over the government's head the threat of a "pronunciamento". (p. 174)

Care must be taken to avoid turning the army into an autonomous body which sooner or later, finding itself idle and without any definite mission, will "go into politics" and threaten the government. (p. 202)

In order to avert military threats to civilian governments, Fanon proposes a 'politicization' of the army for collective public interest:

The only way to avoid this menace is to educate the army politically, in other words to nationalize it...It should be possible to carry out large-scale undertakings in the public interest by using drafted men. (p. 202)

It is significant to note in this respect that such measures are being taken in Tanzania today.

In a real sense, Fanon predicted the coming of military *coups d'etat* and counter-*coups* in Africa. Since the time Fanon wrote about the military, seventeen successful coups have taken place within Africa.^{36a} This fact alone speaks for itself, and once more demonstrates the correctness of Fanon's analysis.

3. Africa in a Neo-colonial World

Fanon has often been criticized by economists for having given little consideration to the economic problems which have now beset many African governments. Although this criticism can be held as valid, it is nonetheless true that Fanon had a clear view of the international context in which the African countries have to operate. In particular, he succeeded in identifying the manner in which the economies of African countries are dependent upon external stimuli and influences:

The national economy of the period of independence is not set on a new footing. It is still concerned with the groundnut harvest, with the cocoa crop and the olive yield. In the same way there is no change in the marketing of basic products, and not a single industry is set up in the country. We go on sending

out raw materials; we go on being Europe's small farmers, who specialize in unfinished products. (pp. 151-152)

The economic channels of the young state sink back inevitably into neo-colonialist lines. The national economy, formerly protected, is today literally controlled. (pp. 166-167)

This throws a new light on the role of the national bourgeoisie as an agent of neo-colonialism:

(the national middle class 'mission') consists, pro- saically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism. (p. 152)^{36b}

This analysis is quite consistent with the concept of 'inheritance situation' developed recently by some political scientists. This concept focuses attention on the extent to which the colonial experience continues to shape and define the problems of state-building and nation-building in the post-colonial era.³⁷

Not only the national bourgeoisie, but also the army according to Fanon, are the agents and instruments of the neo-colonial policy of the former metropole:

the former mother country practices indirect government, both by the bourgeoisie that it upholds and also by the national army led by its experts, an army that pins the people down, immobilizing and terrorizing them. (p. 174)

Most importantly, Fanon also observed for us the subtle, but nonetheless vicious prevalence of neo-colonialism in the form of cultural neo-colonialism:

The colonialist bourgeoisie, when it realizes that it is impossible for it to maintain its domination over the colonial countries, decides to carry out a rearguard action with regard to culture, values, techniques, and so on. (p. 44)

Hence, Fanon advocates for authentic national culture, completely free from any form of foreign influence:

this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate

reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped...The unconditional affirmation of African culture has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European culture. (pp. 209, 212-213)

This again is very reminiscent of the concept of 'inheritance elite' referred to above:

*In stressing the importance of socio-political and cultural dissociation, the concept of the inheritance situation suggests that an important aspect of state-building and even nation-building during the early phases of decolonization must be dissociated from the colonial past. The new national identity must be dissociated from the colonial identity.*³⁸

It is interesting to note in this respect that Fanon's observations are consistent with some of the most recent political science concepts developed for a better understanding of the political reality in the developing countries. This clearly attests to Fanon's relevance to contemporary African political thought.

Conclusion

There are three main lessons to be drawn from Fanon's political thought for the future of Africa. First, Fanon contends that, since the people *is* sovereign, leaders of the underdeveloped countries should not detach themselves from the masses. Political parties should be transformed into true instruments of popular will. The essential problem at this stage is to educate the people, in order 'to uplift the people; we must develop their brains, fill them with ideas, change them and make them into human beings.' (p. 197)

The insistence on the necessity of the political education of the masses must be paralleled with another major concern of Fanon, the need for decentralization; since the masses live in the countryside, that is where, according to Fanon, the attention of the government should be focused. If the party is to be a true expression of the popular will, the main initiative in this respect should be to "desacralize" the capital city, which is all too reminiscent of the colonial period and privilege the rural areas by moving the capital into the bush.

Fanon cites the founding of Brazilia in the hinterland of Brazil as an example, although ultimately it did not prove successful. A much more relevant recent development along these lines is the recent decision by the Tanzanian government to move the capital city from Dar-es-Salaam to the central town of Dodoma within the next ten years.³⁹ The Tanzanian leaders demonstrate thereby that Fanon is by no means an 'utopian' thinker as many commentators have come to view him.

The last lesson to be drawn from Fanon's political thought might well be his emphasis on the necessity for Africans to start thinking within a frame of reference more specific to them. The first step is to reject drastically and systematically European culture and values, for

We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe....If we wish to live up to our people's expectations, we must seek the answer elsewhere than in Europe. (pp. 512, 315)

More specifically: 'the underdeveloped countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them.' Ultimately, the choice of a political regime should be made not with reference to either Capitalism or Socialism, but to specifically African values, considering that the final goal is the well-being of the people.

We hope to have demonstrated in this essay that Fanon's political thought is highly relevant to the most pressing problems faced by African countries today, the number one priority in this respect being the improvement of the condition of the peasant masses. Furthermore, the realization by the Tanzanian government of many of Fanon's proposed solutions is a clear demonstration of the fact that his ideas, whatever their conceptual shortcomings, are essentially correct and workable: they can and should be applied in a greater number of countries if the Third World is really to start a new history of human societies.

Footnotes

1. Christian Bay, "Politics and Pseudopolitics," *American Political Science Review*, LIX, 1, (March, 1965), p. 50.
2. T. J. Lowi, "The Politics of Higher Education: Political Science as a Case Study," in *The Post-Behavioral Era*, G. J. Graham, Jr. & G. W. Carey (eds.), (New York: Mc Kay, 1972), p. 16.
- 3a. P. Van den Berghe, "Research in Africa: Knowledge for What?" *African Studies Review*, XIII, 2 (January, 1971), pp. 334-35.
- 3b. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), translated from French by Constance Farrington, with a Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre. It should be noted that this translation is inadequate in many respects. I therefore felt it necessary to slightly modify it in a number of cases.
4. For a comprehensive bibliography of Fanon, see: Emmanuel Hansen: *Frantz Fanon: A Bibliographical Essay*. Paper presented at the Annual African Studies Association Conference, Philadelphia, November 8-11, 1972.
5. Aristide Zolberg, "Frantz Fanon: A Gospel for the Damned," *Encounter* (November, 1966), pp. 56-63.
6. Francois Bondy, "The Black Rousseau," *New York Review of Books* (March 31, 1966).
7. A. Zolber, op. cit.
8. One of the best examples of such a literature is, again, A. Zolber, op. cit.
9. For "orthodox" Marxist criticisms, see Nguyen Nghe, "Fanon et les problemes de l'indépendance," *La Pensee* (January/February, 1963); Amady Aly Dieng, "Les damnés de la terre et les problemes d'Afrique Noire," *Presence Africaine*, 62 (1967), pp. 15-30; Jack Woddiss, "Fanon and Classes in Africa," *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972) pp. 25-175; For a 'trotskyite' criticism, see: M. Pablo, "Les Damnés de la Terre," *Quatrième Internationale*, 20, 15 (February, 1962), pp. 57-63.
10. For some general considerations on the need for an authentically African political science, see: Guy Martin-Kane, "Towards an African Political Science," *African Insight*

(Bloomington, Ind.: African Students Association), no. 1 (1973), pp. 6-8. For an overview of the political thought of Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure, see: Guy Martin: *Ideology and Politics in West Africa A Comparative Study: Ghana and Guinea, 1957-1966*. M.A. thesis, University of London (S.O.A.S.), October 1970. For a thorough study of the social and political thought of Frantz Fanon, see: Emmanuel Hansen, *Frantz Fanon: Social and Political Thought*, Ph.D. diss., Indiana U., 1973.

11. For that purpose, we shall use mainly *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), which contains the essentials of Fanon's political thought. The other works by Fanon have been neglected here because we think that they are of lesser relevance to our purpose. Therefore, unless otherwise indicated, all references in the text are to *The Wretched of the Earth*.
- 12a. Aristide Zolberg, "Frantz Fanon: A Gospel for the Damned," op. cit., pp. 61-62.
- 12b. Martin Staniland, "Frantz Fanon and the African Political Class," *African Affairs*, LXVIII, 270 (January, 1969), p. 12.
13. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1969), p. 65.
14. David Caute, *Fanon* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1970), p. 81.
15. Peter Worsley, "Revolutionary Theories," *Monthly Review*, 21,1 (May, 1969), p. 36.
16. L. Adele Jinadu, "Some Aspects of the Political Philosophy of Frantz Fanon," *African Studies Review*, XVI, 2 (September, 1973), p. 258.
17. L. Adele Jinadu, op. cit., p. 264.
18. David Caute, *Fanon*, op. cit., p. 74.
19. L. Adele Jinadu, "Some Aspects...", op. cit., p. 269.
20. Jinadu, op. cit., p. 274.
21. Jinadu, op. cit., p. 274.
22. David Caute, *Fanon*, op. cit., p. 74.
23. As is exemplified by the political histories of Senegal, Dahomey, the Republic of Congo and Nigeria.

24. Peter Gutkind, "The Energy of Despair," *Civilizations* 17, (Brussels, 1967); "The Poor in Urban Africa: A Prologue to Modernization, Conflict and the Unfinished Revolution," *Centre for Developing Area Studies* (Mc Gill University, Montreal), n.d.; G. Williams, "Political Consciousness Amongst the Ibadan Poor," mimeographed (British Sociological Association Conference, 1972). See also Joan M. Nelson, *Migrants, Urban Poverty, and Instability in Developing Nations* (Harvard University: Center for International Affairs), Occasional Papers in International Affairs, 22, (September, 1969).

"Seule, la paysannerie est revolutionnaire!...Le paysan, de lui-meme, ne peut jamais avoir une conscience revolutionnaire; c'est le militant venu des villes qui devra detecter patiemment les elements les plus doues dans la paysannerie pauvre, faire leau education, les organiser, et c'est seulement apres une longue periode de travail politique qu'on peut mobiliser la paysannerie." (Nguyen Nghe, *La Pensee* (February, 1963), p. 29.

25. L. Adele Jinadu, op. cit., p. 276.
26. Martin Staniland, op. cit., pp. 20-21.
- 27a. John Saul and Roger Woods, "African Peasantries," in T. Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971).
- 27b. For a post-fanonian emphasis on the importance and role of the peasantry in African societies, see Seydou Badian, *Les dirigeants d'Afrique noire face a leur peuple* (Paris: Maspero, 1965). For a pre-fanonian such emphasis, see Abdoulaye Ly, *Les masses africaines et l'actuelle condition humaine* (Paris, 1956).
- 27c. Jinadu, op. cit., p. 276.
28. Jinadu, op. cit., p. 277.
29. Nguyen Nghe, op. cit., p. 31.
30. Martin Kilson, "African Political Change and the Modernisation Process," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, I, 4, p. 433. Under the conventional political science jargon, one can clearly recognize some similarities of views with Fanon.

31. Gavin Williams, "Social Stratification of a Neo-Colonial Economy," in C. Allen and R. W. Johnson, (ed.), *African Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 235.
32. Samir, Amin, "Development and Structural Changes: African Experience," in Barbara Ward (ed.), *The Widening Gap* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 323, 332.
33. Jinadu, op. cit., p. 279.
34. Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 40.
35. David Caute, *Fanon*, op. cit., p. 93.
- 36a. See Claude E. Welch, Jr., *Radical and Conservative Military Regimes*. Paper presented at the 1973 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, September 4-8 (especially table p. 9).
- 36b. One should note again the similarities of these views with those of the African economist Samir Amin, op. cit.
37. The concept of the inheritance situation and its application to the developing countries is the formulation of J. P. Nettl and Roland Robertson, *International Systems and the Modernization of Societies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968). For an interesting attempt to apply the concept to the West African situation, see Sheldon Gellar, *State-Building and Nation-Building in West Africa* (Bloomington: International Development Research Center), Occasional Papers 2, (December, 1972).
38. Sheldon Gellar, *State-Building and Nation-Building in West Africa*, op. cit., p. 27.
39. See the article by I. M. Kaduma, "From Dar to Dodoma" in *Africa* (London), 27, (November, 1973), pp. 72-74.

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