

4-1-1979

Fanon and the African Revolution: A Critical Study

Sulayman S. Nyang

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dh.howard.edu/newdirections>

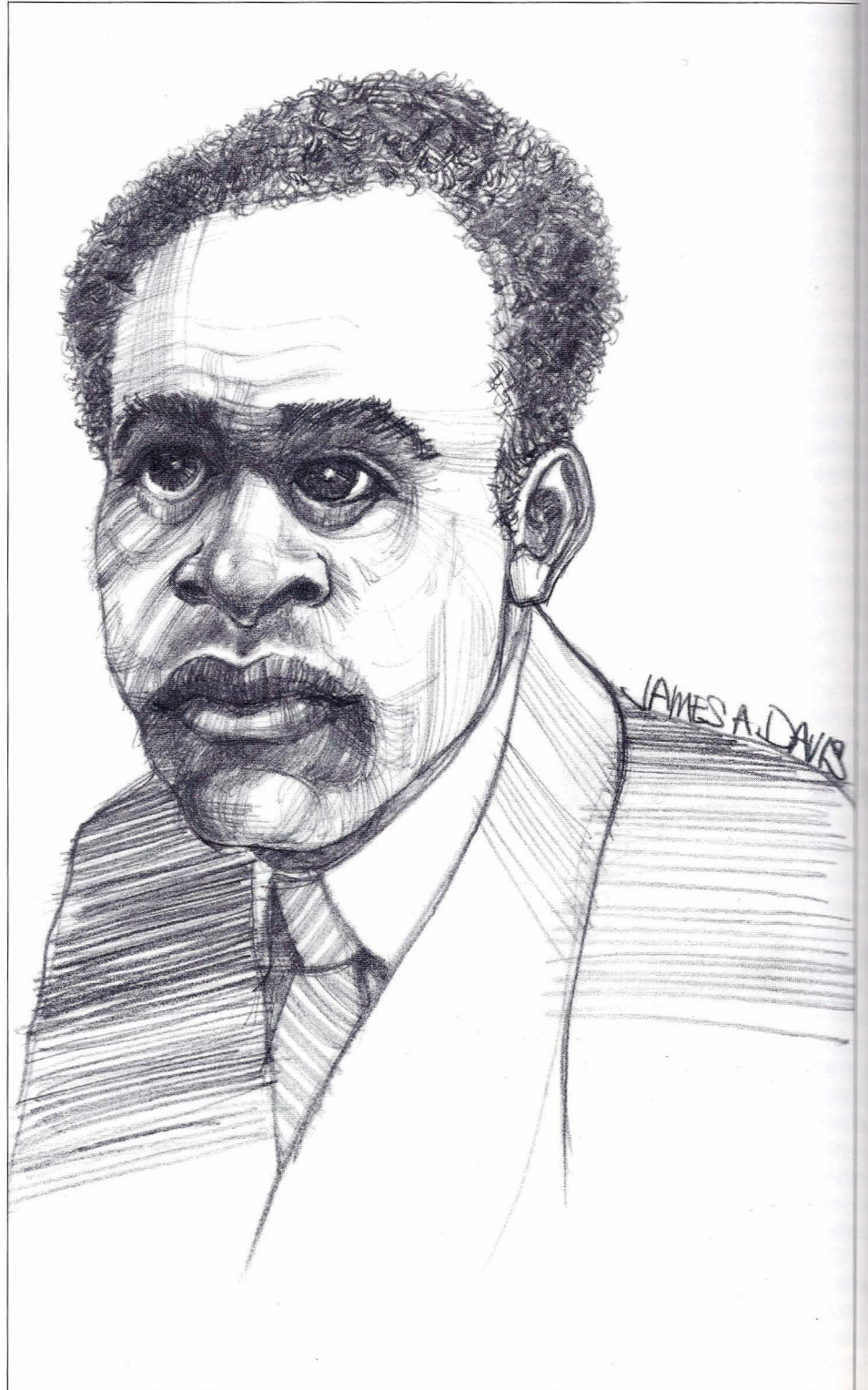
Recommended Citation

Nyang, Sulayman S. (1979) "Fanon and the African Revolution: A Critical Study," *New Directions*: Vol. 6: Iss. 3, Article 7.
Available at: <http://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol6/iss3/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Directions by an authorized administrator of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact lopez.matthews@howard.edu.

20

Fanon and the African Revolution



A Critical Study

By Sulayman S. Nyang

The encounter between Europe and Africa gave rise to numerous problems for the people of the continent. It exposed their cultures and economies to the aggressively expanding forces of capitalism and the attendant racist ideology which rationalized the emerging political and economic relationships between the peoples of the Northern Hemisphere and those of the Southern Hemisphere. Also, it opened up a deep psychological and psycho-cultural wound in the mental estate of the African as well as other Third World peoples. This psychological injury, along with the political subordination that resulted from the technological superiority of the colonizing forces, combined to create the Manichean world which Frantz Fanon poetically portrayed in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

The African's attempt to wiggle out of this historical position of colonial dependency led to a series of revolts, uprisings, labor strikes and other minor instances of anomic violence. This drive to assert one's pride and dignity before the arrogant imperial powers put the nationalist leaders and the masses on a collision course with the watchdogs of the European colonial territories in Africa.

Regardless of how one may feel about the Europe-Africa encounter, the fact remains that the efforts at liberation constitute what scholars and political commentators around the world now call the African Revolution. Of course, there are numerous meanings for the term, but for the sake of clarity, the African Revolution can be defined as the total efforts of the African peoples to *liberate* themselves from the yoke of foreign rule and to *make history* in the capacity of *free men* who can *act par excellence* of the African Revolution. Fanon was not as prolific as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana or Leopold Senghor of Senegal, but the limited number of works he left behind have conferred upon him the mantle of greatness which the other two thinkers now enjoy in the Third World. The reason that Fanon became the darling of the Third World radicals was that he articulated effectively what most of them felt for so long but could not find the proper time, place or words to make them known to other members of the colonially-created community of suffering. Added to this was the fact that Fanon practicalized his politics by joining a revolutionary force at the height of its battle against French rule in Algeria.

Scholarly interest in the works of Fanon has also been motivated by the unique characteristics of this intellectual from Martinique. The Fanon legend has not only attracted scholars who are trying to understand the processes of change in the developing countries; it also captured the imagination of those scholars who are interested in groups and identity formation. This second group of scholars found that the influence of the man from Martinique goes beyond the Black World. He has been the mentor of Bengalis in their battle to create Bangladesh out of Pakistan; he is the idol of the nationalists in Ireland, the star of the Palestinians and the ideological guru of the French Canadians who see some similarities between their subordinate role in the Canadian federation and that of the colonized as described by Fanon.

As it should be evident by now, Fanon was admired largely because of his success as a man of action. He was not an intellectual engaged in the theoretical analysis of human oppression from the safety of his academic ivory tower, but a committed and sincere activist who derived and lived his theories of liberation from one of the corners of the battlefield where the Algerian revolutionary struggle raged.

Ironically, a good number of African intellectuals are still undecided about

Fanon's ideas. This fact was noted by Paul A. Beckett when he asked in a recent article whether "in the situation of post-independence uncertainty Fanon's thought will become more significant in West Africa than heretofore."¹

African intellectuals, whom Fanon often attacked in his writings, have not rallied enthusiastically around his ideas partly because they are not the chosen people in the gospel of Fanonian liberation. This special role has been assigned to the peasantry. In Fanon's view, the intellectual class can only contribute to the liberation of their colonized people, not only by cutting that umbilical cord that ties them to their European fellows in the metropole, but also by disassociating themselves completely from the politics of collaboration with the imperialist powers.

Such a task has been deemed difficult by some of the African intellectuals. As Amilcar Cabral once stated, these bourgeoisie must commit class suicide in the interest of the revolution if they are to contribute to the liberation and transformation of their society. Such a state of mind has not been manifested in most, if not all, of the newly independent African and Asian countries.

I. Theory of Violence

Fanon's theory of violence has been one key aspect of his political thought that has generated a lot of comment. Emmanuel Hansen, in an article, "Frantz Fanon: A Bibliography Essay," listed numerous articles that addressed themselves to this matter.²

This part of Fanon's thought cannot be properly understood unless and until one follows the arguments of Fanon on colonialism and its evils. To Fanon, colonialism did not only give rise to unequal relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, but it also shattered the very psycho-cultural and psychohistorical foundations of the colonized society. This is to say, according to Fanon, the life of the colonized in a colonial society was that of a series of historical and cultural abuses and humili-

22 ations whose totality constituted the phenomenon of colonial alienation.

It was Fanon's attempt to deal psychotherapeutically with this problem of alienation that led him to the theory of violence. Though this theory has been scrutinized, distorted, misrepresented and lauded by all kinds of reviewers and commentators, there is still room for its examination and analysis again—just to decide whether Fanon is relevant to Africa today.

Fanon's thesis on violence is based on the following premises: (1) that the colonial society is based on force (2) that the colonized people are kept on their knees because they are terrorized and inferiorized into submission (3) that violence is the only language comprehensible to the colonizers (4) that logic and reason are inadequate tools in the fight against colonialism (5) that violence is cathartic and self-purifying for the colonized who employ it against their colonial oppressors.

Decolonization, Fanon argues, can only come about when the colonized people take to violence. He puts forth the logic that since violence is the instrument used by the colonizer to destroy the society of its colonial subjects, then for the colonized to stand on their own psychological feet, vis-a-vis the colonizer, they must not only slough off the yoke of inferiority and fear, but must also seize control of the colonial state apparatus used against them. They must also take advantage of the psychic dividends derived from their investment in violence during the colonial struggle against the enemy.

In discussing the relevance of Fanon's theory of violence to present day Africa, I would like to argue that the historical record of the African states do not by any means fulfill Fanon's dream. Indeed, so dissimilar were the actual processes of decolonization from what Fanon has painted as desirable in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, that Professor Aristide Zolberg could write:

The discrepancy between this statement and the actual historical record in Africa provides a clue to the tone of the

entire work. It is not concerned with providing an empirical description or a sociological explanation of political phenomena, but with shaping reality in accordance with "historical necessity" before it is too late.³

That the historical record does not correspond with the aspirations expressed in Fanon's writings does not necessarily destroy the validity of his thesis. Zolberg himself recognizes this fact when he says that for Fanon "decolonization is not the establishment of a new state or the achievement of sovereignty but the replacement of one species of men by another species of men."⁴ It is this last statement that explains the Fanonian position. Violence, according to Fanon, is the tool with which the colonized people could kill two birds with one stone.⁵ They could employ it to rid themselves of the colonialists who had imposed themselves willy-nilly on the colonized society; they could also use it to purify themselves from the virus of colonial alienation.

Actually, there is a paradox in Fanon's theory of violence and I tend to believe that this paradox is the root cause of the confusion about Fanon. The paradox, as I see it, is that Fanon knows very well that the violence of the colonizer served two main purposes: first, it provided the colonizer with the opportunity to thingify the others; second, it degraded the vanquished and his society by placing him and his society in the position of objects to be used, exploited and thingified.

On the other hand, Fanon finds that when the table is turned against the colonizer, violence works miracles for the colonized. It does not only dethrone the self-deified man, but it also brings about a revelation. This revelation is the knowledge that violence and its agents are not the respectors of self-styled men-gods. Indeed, the mere fact that the inferiorized man could spill the blood of members of this community of self-deified men means that the common denominator he shares with these colonizers is their mutual mortality.

This understanding of Fanon sheds adequate light on the psychological significance he attaches to violence. Fanon is cognizant of the psycho-therapeutic nature of violence and for this reason he says *Violence alone, violence, committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them.⁶*

When this statement is related to developments in Africa, we find that independent African states did not resort to violence to win their freedom from Europe. Only Algeria among the African independent states travelled along the path of revolutionary violence. Yet, if one is to accept the contention of Professor L. Adele Jinadu, one would have to agree that "there is no indication that the FLN (Algeria's revolutionary party) had a better bargaining position at Evian than, say, the Nigerians or Kenyans, or Ghanaians, (then the Gold Coast) in London."⁷

Though Jinadu himself concedes the fact that without violence Charles De Gaulle might not have re-entered the French political scene again, his argument still remains convincing. Algeria has attained independence by following the course of violence, but the language of violence learned by the Algerian revolutionaries—particularly the peasantry—has not wrought that miracle which Fanon expected to take place. B. Marie Perkinbaum, in an article, "Fanon and the Revolutionary Peasantry," writes:

With few notable exceptions—most of which come from the autogestation sector—the post independence reactions of the peasants have been less than revolutionary. The war-time violence so skillfully directed into revolutionary channels has given way to the pressures of daily routines. War-time ideological indoctrination may temporarily have transformed peasants into 'leaping wolves' and 'rising gusts of wind', but did not inoculate them against the other side of the peasant

*paradox, the fruitless inertia and rural obscuratism Fanon feared.*⁸

This observation reveals the other side of the paradox of the Fanonian theory of violence, and indeed it is this aspect of his thought that exposes him to very telling blows from his critics.

The point which Fanon's critics have repeated over and over again is the fact that Fanon naively assumes that violence is the golden road to true liberation, and that once violence is properly utilized in the name of the revolution, all of its participants would continue to live up to the ideals of the revolution even after the new state is established.

To Fanon, violence has a cleansing effect, because it "frees the native of his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."⁹ Again, violence serves as a social adhesive because, as Fanon argues, such a violence "constitutes their only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities."¹⁰ In relating this idea of Fanon to Africa, I can say that his notion of individual violence as a cleansing act has not been concretized. Most of his commentators have not been impressed by it. Even the Algerians express some reservations.

In analyzing the relevance of this aspect of Fanon's thought to Africa, one needs to remember that in the newly independent African states, the type of violence that is common is far from Fanonist in quality. Coups and rebellions have been reported in Africa, but no Fanonist type of violence has emerged yet. There are at present guerrilla movements in the settler states, but all the evidence available seems to suggest that in some of these groups, ethnicity, regionalism and petty rivalry have to a certain extent eroded the foundations of national unity which Fanon associated with the use of violence.

Amilcar Cabral, while accepting the unifying character of the armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial enemy, never felt that violence by itself could do

the trick in situations of national rivalry. Like the Vietnamese Nguyen Nghe, Cabral places emphasis on political education and national development. During an address before a group of revolutionary peasants, the late revolutionary said:

*The armed struggle is very important. But the most important is to have an understanding of the conditions of our people. Our people support armed struggle. We must give them the certainty that those who have arms in their hands are the sons of the people and that arms have no superiority over working tools. If one carries a rifle and the other a tool, the most important of the two is he who carries a tool. For one takes up arms to defeat the Portuguese, but if we want to chase out the Portuguese, it is to defend those who use tools.*¹¹

Cabral's statement touches an important aspect of the paradox of the Fanonian theory of violence. After the colonized have liberated themselves, what then are they going to do with the techniques of violence they have acquired over the years? In response to this question Cabral and Nghe would suggest that without proper political education, nothing concrete and revolutionary would take place.

Guy Martin-Kane of Indiana University, in an article, "Fanon on Violence and the Revolutionary Process of Africa," has tried to defend Fanon by suggesting that to Fanon violence is not only for the liquidation of the enemy, but for the repossession and acquisition of land and bread.¹²

This claim is obvious to most of Fanon's commentators, but what is confounding is the fact that Fanon's theory of violence suffers from political cretinism—meaning Fanon did not develop and tie this idea to a broader and more comprehensive theory of past colonial national development. It is indeed this political retardation or oversight on the part of Fanon that led Paul Beckett to write: "Fanon contributes

virtually nothing to a solution of the problem of creating and maintaining a popular and socialist state organization."¹³

Fanon thought that the armed struggle would set the stage for the newly liberated men to play their revolutionary role in the human historical drama. But what he failed to realize was the fact that violence is a drug that could either kill its user or put him temporarily in a state of revolutionary ecstasy, and that once its hangover effects are gone, the user is willy-nilly forced by the concatenation of circumstances to face the reality of economic deprivation once again.

In an African World that is divided into states and whose leaders have deceived or convinced themselves that they are really independent, any appeal to violence as the royal road to liberation is bound to face serious opposition.

Fanon writes articulately about the African bourgeoisie that seized power with the departure of the ex-colonialists. He knows how corrupt and inconsiderate they are. He also notes their arrogance. But the application of Fanon's theory of violence is not the issue here. The point in dispute is the applicability and the necessity of such an approach to liberation. To this question, Aristide Zolberg gives an answer. The veteran American Africanist, reflecting upon the hope of the African revolution, writes:

*Rulers will change, their rhetoric will differ, their emissaries will travel to other capitals. At home, however, the most likely outcome will be "more of the same": a regime with flimsy structures of authority, ill-equipped to cope with the immense task of modernization, hiding beneath a ritualistic authoritarian facade, and devoting much of its skimpy resources to the maintenance of an oligarchy. Perhaps new spokesmen are coming who will invoke Fanon as the prophet of the second revolution.*¹⁴

Since the picture which is painted above has already been prophesied by

"the prophet of the Second Revolution" and is being fulfilled in many of the Third World countries, can we expect a band of believers of the kingdom of Fanonian liberation to launch their struggle in the manner of all political movements that have ever wished to change the world? The answer to this question cannot be given here. It will, however, be attempted in the next section where Fanon's theory of the revolutionary peasantry will be the main focus.

The other important point is: Fanon's theory of violence assumes that the revolutionary cadre would emerge out of the intellectual class. The theory also entrusts the important task of political education to the "illegalist intellectuals" who are willing to abandon their collaborationist colleagues in the urban areas and move out to the countryside where they would join forces with the rural masses.

It can be said, briefly and in passing, the new African leaders are so latched on to their newly acquired powers that one wonders whether political matrimony is the newest African innovation over the traditional form of polygamy. This phenomenon, which I describe as "political monogamy," is generally characterized by the intense jealousy of African politicians towards their ministerial portfolios. Each minister seems to take his newly acquired power as a bride from the political kingdom which Nkrumah advised them to seek.

In light of these recent developments in African politics, I would argue that Fanon's theory of violence would be logical for those who share his view that decolonization is incomplete so long as the peasantry is not building the foundations of the new society, where their interests will not be at the mercy of a corrupt and unconcerned bourgeoisie. For those who are more realistic about the facts of African life and politics, the chances for a Fanonian revolutionary use of violence is far-fetched, not because the idea is absurd and impractical, but because of the un-

availability of Fanonian missionaries who are ready to take the doctrines of the deceased prophet to the chosen people.

II. The Revolutionary Peasantry.

The most important contribution of Fanon to political thought in the new Africa is his theory of a revolutionary peasantry. In his view, this body of men constitutes the chosen people who certainly have a rendezvous with the national destiny. This national destiny is the state of affairs whereby psycho-political and psychosocial balances are observable, not only in the ideas and thought patterns of the members of the emerging nations, but also in the activities undertaken within this newly established nation.

In light of the above statements, one question comes to mind: Why does Fanon single out the peasantry for this important historical role? The answer is provided in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, where Fanon argues that within the colonial society the peasantry is at the bottom of the pecking order and is the most exploited. On top of this externally superimposed social/economic hierarchy, Fanon tells us, is the African bourgeoisie.

Next to this small fraction of the African population is the working class, followed by the lumpen-proletariat. This last social category consists of those landless peasants who have found their way to the urban centers of the colonizer.

Fanon implicitly compares this group to both the African middle class of the towns and the peasantry in the following passage:

The landless peasants, who make up the lumpen-proletariat, leave the country districts, where vital statistics are just so many insoluble problems, rush toward the towns, crowd into the tinshack settlements, and try to make their way into the ports and cities founded by colonial domination. The bulk of the country people for their part continue to live within a rigid framework, and the extra mouths to feed have no other alternative than

*to emigrate toward the centers of population.*¹⁵

In the passages following the one cited above, Fanon idealizes the African peasantry as the defender of traditions. In fact, to use his own words, "the peasantry in a colonized society stands for the disciplined element whose interests lie in maintaining the social structure."¹⁶

Though Fanon is realistic enough to recognize the dangers of a mummified tradition, his analysis suggests that the peasants could be disciplined and altruistic in their spontaneous movements. This Fanonian faith in the revolutionary potentials of the peasantry is part of his general belief in the role of a chosen people. Though many commentators and reviewers have attacked him on this issue, several of these works are either too polemical or too unpersuasive to be accepted.

A close look at the train of events in Africa during the post World War II period reveals that the African peasantry has been used for electoral purposes rather than for violent overthrow of colonial regimes. In Ghana, under Nkrumah, the Convention Peoples Party proved to be more successful than its rivals simply because Nkrumah took his campaigns to the rural folks. It was this clever technique of electioneering that gave him the support of both the so-called "Verandah boys" of Ghana's big towns and cities and the rural voters in the countryside.¹⁷

The Ghanaian record does not show Nkrumah as an organizer of the African peasantry for a violent overthrow of British colonialism. What really took place in Ghana was the attempt by young politicians to seize power from older and more conservative leaders. In fact, when one talks about Ghana's evolution to independence, one can maintain that Nkrumah's positive action was more constitutionally accommodationist than blantly violent.

In the pre-independence era, Nkrumah was more Gandhian and more accommodative; in the post colonial period, he

came to see the pitfalls of neo-colonialism of which Fanon writes so eloquently.

At the second stage of his ideological development, Nkrumah revised his previous position on a united front of all Ghanaians in the name of national unity and developed a class analysis of African society. The following statement sums up his post-1966 position:

Class divisions in modern African society became blurred to some extent during the pre-independence period, when it seemed there was national unity and all classes joined forces to eject the colonial power. This led some to proclaim that there were no class divisions in Africa and that communalism and egalitarianism of traditional African society made any notion of a class struggle out of the question. But the exposure of this fallacy followed quickly after independence, when class cleavages which had been temporarily submerged in the struggle to win political freedom reappeared, often with increased intensity, particularly in those places where the newly independent government embarked on socialist policies.¹⁸

When compared to the Fanonian formulation, this second position of Nkrumah is significant on two grounds. First, prior to his death, Nkrumah came to share the Fanonian contention that the national bourgeoisie is bent on feeding parasitically on the labors of the downtrodden of African society. Like Fanon, he again came to the realization that:

Unlike the bourgeoisie of developed countries, which may be termed a business bourgeoisie, the African bourgeoisie is mainly bureaucratic and professional. It is in general not engaged in production, nor does it control production. For its survival it depends on producers, and their production is controlled by imperialism.¹⁹

The second point about Nkrumah's post 1966 position is that though he shares

Fanon's view of the national bourgeoisie, he still persists in his Marxian belief that the African revolution has an important role for the proletariat. It is here that the two African theoreticians part company. Nkrumah's chart on page 11 of his *Class Struggle in Africa* classifies the African peasantry as one of the partners of the workers in their collective oppression, but he refuses to take the bold Fanonian stand that the African revolution is to be carried out by the peasantry.

When one looks at other African countries one easily notices that the peasantry has not yet lived up to the prophet's expectations. The record seems to suggest that the national bourgeoisie for whom Fanon reserves only bitter and harsh words are still using this same peasantry for their own good. In some areas, Fanon's warning that tribalism or regionalism would be used to divide the peasantry seemed to have been vindicated; in others, the mass parties that emerged to forge a multiethnic foundation for the emerging state proved to be in the post-colonial era a neo-colonial Trojan horse that was presented to the countryside by the urban politicians and their rural counterparts. Such a Trojan horse is, however, very dangerous for it is manufactured by international capital.

Reading through the massive collection of articles, books and monographs, one finds that Fanon's understanding of the African peasantry is more emotional than systematic and scientific. As some Africanists have pointed out in their publications, the African peasantry varies in membership from region to region. This understanding is lacking in Fanon, and when we talk about the historical record on African politics, it becomes very clear to most of us that the Fanonian hope of spontaneous peasant revolution is more normatively prescriptive than historical.

The turn of events in Africa since 1961 definitely proved Fanon all wrong, and there are certainly reasons for such a rapid evaporation of the Fanonian hope.

The national bourgeoisie did not share the Fanonian vision of the peasantry. To the bourgeois leaders, the peasantry has been a tool to forge electoral victories rather than an instrument to dismantle the colonial apparatus in the name of national development.

In a world dominated by men who are armed with science and technology, Fanon fails to see that the peasants can only be led to action after a long period of political education. He did read the handwriting on the colonial wall, and missed the fact that the peasants were already sold to the neocolonial regime. This point is crucial. Since the independence of Ghana, not a single African state has attained freedom without a leadership that is part of the collaborative bourgeoisie. Even the Algeria for which Fanon did so much has not escaped this phenomenon completely.

The African revolution, under peasant leadership, will come about only when peasants have developed a higher degree of consciousness of their individual as well as collective deprivation and exploitation. This, however, is not likely to happen without help from the outside. Fanon himself is very much aware of this fact. In fact, he recommends the political instruction of the peasantry by what he calls the "illegalist militants" from the urban centers. This group of political mentors must be men of ideas, commitment and zeal. They are of course the intellectuals whom Fanon has ceaselessly pleaded for help in the painful transformation of colonial society.

In analyzing the prospects of a Fanonian revolution, therefore, let us outline the major factors that are likely to promote or inhibit the Fanonian cause. First of all, in addition to a heightened sense of peasant consciousness, there must develop a body of illegalist intellectuals who are ready to organize the peasants for the "new beginning" which decolonization was expected to initiate. Such a body

26 could be effective only if its members are dedicated guerrilla missionaries who share the Fanonian vision. Without such fanatical enthusiasm and faith, these men may "use Fanon's arguments as temporary accouterments in their effort to break into the developing establishments."²⁰

The record of the last decade has shown that many African students from European and American universities have toned down their militancy and joined the ranks of the ruling caste which, in Fanon's view, is "preoccupied with filling its pockets as rapidly as possible."²¹ Such an opportunistic turnabout is sacrilegious in the Fanonian gospel, and no sober observer of the African scene should discount its frequency among aspiring young Africans.²²

Another point that is worthy of attention is the fact that a Fanonian type revolution cannot be accomplished easily in the post colonial era. The reason for this is quite simple: the new caste that Fanon attacks so severely does not only come from the same African background as the "illegalist intellectuals" who are supposed to challenge them, but they also know more than their departed colonial mentors about the very weaknesses of their people. This knowledge is often used in a very destructive and opportunistic manner, and the illegalist who wishes to organize the peasantry against such an African bourgeois caste must recognize these limitations.

Another point which is crucial to any discussion on the possible role of the peasantry in a Fanonian revolution in Africa is the fact that Fanonian guerrilla missionaries would have to revise some of their positions on the role of the proletariat and national bourgeoisie. It is true that their prophet debunks the possible role of the proletariat in a revolutionary armed struggle; but at the same time, it must be noted that the peasantry would be able to confront the challenges and hazards of a technological and scientific world only with the help of all those social groups whose members are possessors of industrial skills and techniques.

Fanon's claim that the proletariat is a privileged member of the colonial system is a half-truth in the sense that, on one hand, this African proletariat receives a greater slice of the colonial cake than the peasantry, but on the other hand, suffers the same psychic injury of which Fanon himself writes.

Fanon admonishes the peasant revolutionaries and lumpen-proletariat counterparts to stand on their own feet economically, politically and ideologically. He warns them not to be without an ideology as other African states have been since independence.

Fanon does not only recommend to his followers a political organization that bridges the gulf between town and country, but he also calls for a redistribution of wealth between the town and the country. He goes further by telling his followers not to beg abroad for foreign aid, but to press for reparations. This Fanonian teaching has been dismissed as a moral threat without any force behind it. But, in all fairness to Fanon, such a simplistic dismissal of the Fanonian plea does a gross injustice. Fanon's plea is made in the light of recent world history. Germany's atrocities against the Jews of Europe was, as Aime Cesaire points out elsewhere, the application of perfected European colonial techniques on a European minority. If the Jewish victims of Hitler were paid indemnities and reparations, why not the poor wretched of the earth who only need technology and capital to regain their dignity as free men and to make use of science and technology in their own countries?

III. Conclusion

In the preceding paragraphs I have tried to clarify the issues concerning the relevance of Fanonian teaching to the post-independent era in Africa. I have shown that Fanon's conception of violence is paradoxical and that those who wish to follow his gospel must be prepared to deal with the consequences of his call for violence. In concluding this analysis, I would argue that the available evidence

at present does not suggest any peasant attempt to use violent means for the purpose of forming a new nation in the Fanonian tradition.

The kind of violence that seems to be pervasive in African societies today is that which flows from the barrels of guns of African army officers, settlers, and African guerrillas. The former's bullets are directed against rival army officers and corrupt or ineffective politicians; the latter's are aimed at colonial settlers who refuse to recognize the simple democratic principle of majority rule.

Fanon's emphasis on the peasantry is both realistic and naive simultaneously. It is realistic in the sense that for Africans to regain their humanity they must spend time, money and intellectual energy on the political education and economic upliftment of their rural people. If the rural man remains in his "cave" or "medieval world," such a state of affairs could then become an affront to the African peasantry.

Fanon is correct in saying Africans cannot take their rightful place in the human drama if the overwhelming majority of their people are languishing in the chains of peasant poverty, ignorance and hunger.

However, he was naive in believing that the African bourgeoisie would abandon its position of privilege in the name of national interest. To expect an underdeveloped bourgeoisie to forfeit its privileges voluntarily is to exaggerate the goodness of an advantaged human creature.

But Fanon's naivete was not very severe, for though he calls upon the African bourgeoisie to use their acquired intellectual and technical skills and resources for the betterment of their less fortunate brothers, he recognizes their greed and frantic frenzy to maximize their easy gains at the expense of their rustic and illiterate brethren.

Related to the above is the point that Fanonian revolutionaries in the future must be able to differentiate between those profiteers who ride on political and bureaucratic horses and those who try to maximize profits by being middlemen for

international capital. Such a differentiation will be necessary if the Fanonian revolutionaries are to deal effectively with these enemies against whom their master has warned them.

The last point of importance is: Though Fanon's dreams have yet to be fulfilled in their totality, many of his prophecies have come to pass. He has warned about one-party states and the evidence of the last decade seems to vindicate him. He has admonished the African people about the possibility of military coups, and today the presence of 18 military governments in the continent proves him correct. He has said watch out against political leaders who talked about independence and justice during the colonial period and then discredit themselves by their blatant hypocrisy.

The historical record certainly bears testimony to the accuracy of his words and it is now clear that the fathers of African nations are shamelessly millionaires when millions of their fellow countrymen are barely making a living.

Fanon has also taught the lesson that some of us would worship the idols of tribalism and regionalism, and the set of facts on African political developments seem to prove him correct as a prophet of the African revolution.

These prophetic remarks of Fanon put him in a special place in African intellectual history and for this reason I think his writings will continue to capture the attention of reviewers, commentators and readers. □

Suleyman Nyang, Ph.D., is an associate professor of government, African Studies and Research Program, Howard University.

REFERENCE

1. Paul A. Beckett, "Frantz Fanon and Sub-Saharan Africa: Notes on the Contemporary Significance of His Thought," *Africa Today*, p. 60. Vol. 19, No. 2. (Spring, 1972)
2. See his article in *Pan-African Journal*, Vol. V, No. 4 (Winter, 1972), pp. 388-405.
3. Aristide Zolberg, "Frantz Fanon—A Gospel for the Damned," (November, 1966), p. 60.
4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1963), p. 47.

7. See "Some Aspects of the Political Philosophy of Frantz Fanon," *Pan African Journal* (Vol. V, No. 4) Winter, 1972, p. 502.

8. See "Fanon and the Revolutionary Peasantry," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11, 3 (1973), p. 444.

9. *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 94.

10. *Ibid.* p. 93.

11. Quoted in Jack Woodis, *New Theories of Revolution* (NY: International Publishers, 1972), p. 29.

12. See article in *African Insight*, No. 2, 1974, p. 15.

13. Paul Beckett, *Op. Cit.*, p. 67.

14. Aristide Zolberg, *Op. Cit.*

15. *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 111.

16. *Op. Cit.*

17. Though this may be a simplistic analysis of a more complex problem one can still maintain that the CPP of Ghana was not a Fanonist model of the political party. For details on the rise and development of the CPP, see David E. Apter, *Ghana in Transition* (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

18. See *Class Struggle in Africa* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 10.

19. Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), p. 152.

20. Paul A. Beckett, *Op. Cit.*, p. 71.

21. *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 165.

22. Jean-Pierre Ndiaye, the Senegalese sociologist recognized the dangers of this trend when he admonished African students to dress modestly and not to entertain bourgeois notions. See *La Jeunesse Africaine Face a L'imperialisme* (Paris, Maspero, 1971).