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Fanon and Cabral: a Contrast in Theories of Revolution for Africa

by ROBERT BLACKKEY*

LENIN set the tone for most successful revolutions in the twentieth century when he altered traditional Marxism to suit the conditions of Russia. Mao Tse-tung followed Lenin's example when he too adjusted Marxism (and Leninism) to a Chinese environment. It seems to follow, therefore, that attempts at revolution everywhere should not be mere imitations of previously successful upheavals but should, instead, be tailored to fit specific circumstances. Thus, African revolutions should be made on the basis of African conditions. But such conditions are not, in general, always easy to discern, nor are separate analyses of those conditions certain to be similar. This is especially true of the theories of revolution of two of the most important and influential figures in recent African history: Frantz Fanon (1925-61) and Amilcar Cabral (1925-73).

Although a native of Martinique, Fanon's ancestry was African. He studied medicine in France, became a psychiatrist, and then practiced in Algeria where he soon found himself involved in the Algerian Revolution. Fanon's thoughts on revolution were based mainly upon his knowledge of and experience in much of Africa, especially Algeria.¹ Cabral was the organiser and leader of the revolution in the country of his birth, Guinea-Bissau (formerly Portuguese Guinea). His theories were a result of his experiences, beginning as a student in Lisbon, continuing as an agronomist who surveyed the agricultural resources

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¹ Fanon's life and thought may be surveyed in the following: G. K. Grohs, 'Frantz Fanon and the African Revolution', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), vi, 4, December 1968, pp. 543-56; David Cauter, *Frantz Fanon* (New York, 1970); Renate Zahar, *L'Oeuvre de Frantz Fanon* (Paris, 1970); Peter Geismar, *Fanon* (New York, 1971); Pierre Bouvier, *Fanon* (Paris, 1971); Philippe Lucas, *Sociologie de Frantz Fanon* (Algiers, 1971); Paul A. Beckett, 'Frantz Fanon and Sub-Saharan Africa: notes on the contemporary significance of his thought', in *Africa Today* (Denver), xix, 2, Spring 1972, pp. 59-72; Emmanuel Obiechina, 'Frantz Fanon', in *Ufahamu* (Los Angeles), iii, 2, Fall 1972, pp. 97-116; Irene L. Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: a critical study* (New York, 1973); and L. Adele Jinadu, 'Some Aspects of the Political Philosophy of Frantz Fanon', in *African Studies Review* (East Lansing), xvi, 2, September 1973, pp. 255-89.

of his country for the Portuguese Government, and concluding as a nationalist and revolutionist.¹ Both Fanon and Cabral dealt with many of the aspects of revolution, the former more as an abstract theorist, the latter more as a party organiser. They examined the nature of revolution in Africa, the social structure, the utility of party and leadership, the value of violence, and the rôle of culture, while they also speculated upon post-revolutionary society.

The purpose of this article is to discuss and illustrate the differences and similarities between the theories of these outstanding and original revolutionists. While it will be the task of others to determine where the ideas of one or the other, or of anyone else for that matter, are especially applicable to a given African situation, it is hoped that this attempt at contrast will be a contribution towards understanding African revolutions and the continent's search for identity.

NATURE OF THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION

Fanon and Cabral were essentially men of peace. Neither plunged immediately into the troubled waters of revolution without first trying more tranquil currents. Fanon practised at a hospital in Algeria and tried to work through legitimate channels before he felt compelled to join the rebels. He explained his position in his letter of resignation from the hospital at Blida in 1956: 'The function of a social structure is to set up institutions to serve man's needs. A society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a nonviable society, a society to be replaced.'² In the same year a handful of men led by Cabral formed the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (P.A.I.G.C.) – the Cape Verde Islands are some 600 miles off-shore and considered part of Guinea-Bissau. Earlier attempts at reform had failed, but for three years the P.A.I.G.C. employed peaceful means to gain independence. When this also proved unsuccessful other means had to

¹ Although there is no biography of Cabral his ideas are discussed in the following: Ronald H. Chilcote, 'The Political Thought of Amílcar Cabral', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vi, 3, October 1968, pp. 373–88; Gérard Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa: with the guerrillas in 'Portuguese' Guinea* (New York, 1969); Basil Davidson, *The Liberation of Guiné: aspects of an African revolution* (Baltimore, 1969); Bernard Magubane, 'Amílcar Cabral: evolution of revolutionary thought', in *Ufahamu*, II, 2, Fall 1971, pp. 71–87; Eduardo Ferreira, 'Theory of Revolution and Background to his Assassination', in *Ufahamu*, III, 3, Winter 1973, pp. 49–68; Maryinez L. Hubbard, 'Culture and History in a Revolutionary Context: approaches to Amílcar Cabral', in *Ufahamu*, III, 3, Winter 1973, pp. 69–86; and Charles McCollester, 'The Political Thought of Amílcar Cabral', in *The Monthly Review* (New York), xxiv, 10, March 1973, pp. 10–21.

² Frantz Fanon, 'Letter to the Resident Minister' (1956), in *Toward the African Revolution* (New York edn., 1969), p. 53.

be employed. 'In the beginning', wrote Cabral, 'we thought it would be possible to fight in the towns, using the experiences of other countries, but that was a mistake. We tried strikes and demonstrations, but . . . realized this would not work.'¹ At these points both men became revolutionists.

On the nature of the African revolution Fanon and Cabral were in general agreement, differing only over emphasis and detail, some of which, however, is very important. Of the two, Cabral was far more explicit, but both expected revolution to be more than just a struggle for independence. For Fanon, revolution was part of the process of the regeneration of man and society, of self-liberation and rebirth. Only through revolution could a suppressed people undo the effects of colonisation. As a psychiatrist, Fanon was particularly interested in the psychological effects which revolution would have on the colonised man. For true liberation to occur, he asserted, independence must be taken, not merely granted; it must be the work of the oppressed themselves. It was through the actual struggle that liberation would come, restoring integrity and pride, as well as the past and the future. 'True liberation is not that pseudo-independence in which ministers having a limited responsibility hobnob with an economy dominated by the colonial past. Liberation is the total destruction of the colonial system.'² The oppressed must bring all their resources into play because the struggle is at once total and absolute.

The African revolution, and the larger liberation struggle of colonial people everywhere, is the fundamental characteristic of the advance of history in this century, according to Cabral.³ Such a revolution means the transformation of life in the direction of progress which, in turn, means national independence, eliminating all foreign domination, and carefully selecting friends and watching enemies to ensure progress. 'The national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected.'⁴ A people must free the process of development of the national productive forces. Thus the struggle is not only against colonialism, but against neo-colonialism as well.

¹ Quoted in David A. Andelman, 'Profile: Amilcar Cabral', in *Africa Report* (New York), May 1970, p. 19.

² Fanon, 'Decolonization and Independence' (1958), in *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 105.

³ Amilcar Cabral, 'Guinea and Cabo Verde Against Portuguese Colonialism' (1961), in *Revolution in Guinea: selected texts by Amilcar Cabral* (New York, 1969), p. 14.

⁴ Cabral, 'The Weapon of Theory' (1966), in *ibid.* p. 102.

Cabral possessed a vision that encompassed the broad spectrum of revolution; he had an appreciation of the crucial everyday work of the struggle that Fanon lacked. He stressed that revolutionists must not fight for ideas alone, but for material benefits, improved conditions, and a better future for children. The fight must not be merely for abstract ideas of liberty and independence, but for local and pressing grievances and problems.

National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, working for peace and progress, independence – all these will be empty words without significance for the people, unless they are translated into real improvements of the conditions of life. It is useless to liberate a region, if the people of the region are then left without the elementary necessities of life.¹

In other words, it is through gaining supporters by arguing for local grievances that revolutionists will open the prospect for a better future wherein the more abstract ideas could be incorporated.

Proceeding further, Cabral emphasised that although the goal of national independence was unquestionably vital, the struggle itself, to be truly successful, must continue on three levels: political action, armed action, and national reconstruction. This means: (i) that political work must be maintained at all levels of society to establish and preserve national unity; (ii) party organisation and discipline must be strengthened and adjusted to the evolution of the struggle to correct mistakes and hold leaders to proper principles and goals; (iii) the armed forces must be strengthened and the enemy isolated; (iv) liberated areas must be defended, kept tranquil, and developed for the benefit of the people there; (v) more cadres of complete revolutionists must be trained to be able to go out in the countryside and educate the people; and (vi) ties must be strengthened with other African nations, and with anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist forces everywhere.²

Cabral was thorough as he linked the revolution to the daily needs of the people. But this might have come to nothing without sufficient education and preparation beforehand. Here Cabral's contribution to the concept of revolution is especially valuable and, perhaps, unique. He used his position as a government agronomist during 1952–4 to travel about his country and acquire an intimate knowledge of the life of his people, thus laying the groundwork for a later time when he would combine the theory and practice of revolution: 'nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory',³ he said, echoing

¹ Cabral (1965), quoted in Lars Rudebeck, 'Political Mobilisation for Development in Guinea-Bissau', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, x, 1, May 1972, p. 3.

² Cabral, 'The Development of the Struggle' (1968), in *Revolution in Guinea*, pp. 125 f.

³ Cabral, 'The Weapon of Theory', p. 93.

Lenin. Before the armed struggle was launched, Cabral and his fellow leaders made a careful analysis of their society; they came to understand the position of the tribal chiefs *vis-à-vis* the villagers; they examined the social structure in the towns; they investigated the views of those who lived without chiefs; and they studied the ways in which Portuguese colonial exploitation actually affected the every-day life of the population. This earlier political preparation made the struggle possible. The tireless work of listening and talking, of directing and explaining, of relating the P.A.I.G.C. to the people, and vice versa, was what apparently made the difference between success and failure.

By 1960 P.A.I.G.C. members were out in the countryside explaining their aims and mobilising the people; Cabral had come to believe that their struggle would need massive rural support before the revolution began. The small guerrilla band, or *foci*, as espoused by Che Guevara and Régis Debray, would not have been enough to spark the struggle. Instead, a period of two years preparatory political work was undertaken. This was especially difficult since Guinea-Bissau had an illiteracy rate of some 99 per cent, a shockingly small number of university trained men (only 14 prior to 1960), and no military academy to teach tactics and strategy. A political school was founded in Conakry (in the neighbouring Republic of Guinea) in which, at first, party members received political instruction and were trained how to mobilise the masses. Then those peasants and youths who had been recruited went to the school, whereupon they embarked on an intensive education programme so that they too could return to the countryside to convince others to join the struggle. The attempt to gain followers avoided generalisations and pat phrases, using instead questions and information that would relate directly to those involved.

We started from the concrete reality of our people. We tried to avoid having the peasants think that we were outsiders come to teach them how to do things; we put ourselves in the position of people who came to learn *with* the peasants, and in the end the peasants were discovering for themselves why things had gone badly for them.¹

This political preparation was probably the hardest work of the revolution, but it was also the most useful. By 1962–3 the P.A.I.G.C. was ready to fight, and the years of preparation proved invaluable.

Fanon, as indicated above, paid little attention to the details of making a revolution; he was more interested in encouraging their occurrence. Analysis for the sake of analysis was for intellectuals; Fanon wrote to arouse, to anger, and to warn against the dangers of

¹ Cabral, 'Practical Problems and Tactics' (1968), in *Revolution in Guinea*, p. 159.

exploitation. But he expected the African revolution to proceed along two stages. First, there would be a period of physical struggle during which a national programme has to emerge to act as a unifying element in order to achieve independence. (This was no easy task, and Fanon, unlike Cabral, did not give it much attention.) Secondly, after independence the energies of the revolutionists must be directed into building a socialist state. Fanon did not encourage a chauvinistic type of nationalism; as a pan-Africanist he recognised that it was necessary to hold a people together. But he did favour a nationalism based upon the genuineness and individuality of the indigenous culture which would, in turn, unite with other anti-colonial and socialist movements; such a nationalism, however, has proved elusive.

Fanon's affinity for socialism was, like Cabral's, primarily the result of circumstance; he was not doctrinaire about it, nor did he feel that traditional Marxism-Leninism was completely suitable to Africa. Specifically, neither Marx nor Lenin dealt with the question of race, probably because it never occurred to them. Fanon took aspects of Marxism-Leninism and injected the race factor: 'you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich'.¹ Although he did not consider himself a Marxist he was sympathetic with the Marxist approach to revolution. But Fanon emphasised 'underdeveloped countries' as the agency for change, not 'social class'. Moreover, not only did Fanon wish to be free from capitalism, but also from any institutionalised form of communism as well. In fact, it was with sanguine – though it seems unrealistic – expectations that he looked to the Third World to create a humanistic society, apart from and independent of capitalism and communism.

Cabral similarly did not consider himself a Marxist and modified Marx on the subject of class in a way only slightly different from Fanon. 'We agree that history . . . is the result of class struggle, but we have our own class struggles in our own country; the moment imperialism arrived and colonialism arrived, it made us leave our history and enter another history.'² Therefore, while the class struggle has continued it has done so in a modified way. Africa's struggle is against the ruling class of the imperialist countries; this has given the class struggle another connotation, and has meant a different evolution for the African people. 'In colonial conditions no one stratum [or class] can succeed in the struggle for national liberation on its own, and

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York edn., 1968), p. 40.

² Cabral, 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea' (1964), in *Revolution in Guinea*, p. 68.

therefore it is all the strata [or classes] of society which are the agents of history.'¹ Thus, in colonial countries traditional Marxism does not work; the class struggle does not command history – the entire colonial state does.

CLASS STRUCTURE

It is in their analysis and discussion of classes where we find the sharpest contrasts between Fanon and Cabral. It is here that their fundamental differences lie, and where students of the African revolution must devote most of their attention, not only in order to make or understand revolutions, but also because of the foundation 'class' provides for post-revolutionary society.

There is no doubt that in Africa the peasantry comprises the largest single group in society. For most of recorded history, as well as for traditional Marxism, peasants have been the poorest revolutionists. Fanon recognised their conservatism, and accepted the premise that in industrial countries they were, generally, the least aware, the worst organised, and the most reactionary class. Even in the Third World the peasants were often retrograde and prone to religious fanaticism and tribal warfare. But in the twentieth century, especially in China and Vietnam, the peasantry has become revolutionary when provided with an appropriate ideology, capable leadership, and efficient organisation. Fanon was aware of this, and believed that under stress or provocation the peasants were capable of uncontrollable rage. Peasants, he said, had 'bloodthirsty instincts' and were capable of brutality and violence. Because of this Fanon concluded that they must be an integral part of the African revolutionary élite since they were the only true and spontaneously revolutionary force. 'It is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain.' Peasants would answer the call of revolution, thinking of their liberation only in violent terms. '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.'²

Fanon also selected the peasants as part of the revolutionary élite because, in the absence of a significant African proletariat, they were in

¹ Ibid. p. 69.

² Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 61. For an evaluation of his views on the peasantry, as well as on class in general, see B. Marie Perinbam, 'Fanon and the Revolutionary Peasantry – the Algerian Case', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, xi, 3, September 1973, pp. 427–45; and Martin Staniland, 'Frantz Fanon and the African Political Class', in *African Affairs* (London), LXVIII, 270, January 1969, pp. 4–25.

the majority. In addition, the other classes had to be evaluated and utilised in terms of the peasantry, whose thinking is 'pure' and unhampered by the inconsistency and compromise of the urban proletariat and bourgeoisie. For Fanon, even in the post-revolutionary society the peasants must be central and pivotal; when they become the politically decisive arm of the revolution the nation will become a living reality to all its citizens.

Like Fanon, Cabral recognised the importance of the peasants because their very numbers provided the main strength of the opposition to foreign domination. Experience taught the P.A.I.G.C. that the rural masses would 'be the principal force in the struggle for national liberation'.¹ Also, more than other groups, they have kept their culture and identity intact. But the peasants in Guinea-Bissau proved to be most difficult to convince that they were being exploited. Therefore, although the struggle must be based upon the peasants, Cabral did not see them as a revolutionary force *per se*. Here he distinguished between a physical force, which the peasants are, and a revolutionary force, which they are not. Admittedly, they comprise most of the population, control most of the nation's wealth, and do most of the producing. But to convince them to fight was difficult because, unlike in China, the peasants of Guinea-Bissau had no tradition of revolt and therefore did not welcome the revolutionists readily.² Thus, Fanon and Cabral both saw the peasants as perhaps central to any African revolutionary movement although, as we shall see, unable to lead a revolution themselves. Where they differed, however, was in the relative faith each had in the peasants: Fanon saw them as a spontaneous revolutionary force, whereas for Cabral they were a vital, but difficult to persuade, physical force.

The two men also differed concerning the rôles played by the proletariat and the *lumpenproletariat*. (Since they did not consider themselves Marxists, it is doubtful that they used these words, along with 'bourgeoisie', because they believed in them. Rather, it is suspected, they employed them symbolically as a basis for comparison with European revolutionary theory and because they were writing, in large measure, to a western audience familiar with such terminology.) The urban or colonial proletariat Cabral preferred to call 'wage-earners'. Although they were hardly a traditional proletariat, many became committed to the revolution because, in comparing their

¹ Cabral, 'At the United Nations' (1962), in *Revolution in Guinea*, p. 38. Also see Cabral, 'Identity and Dignity in the National Liberation Struggle', in *Africa Today*, xix, 4, Fall 1972, p. 47.

² Cabral, 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure', p. 61.

status to that of European workers doing the same job but earning more, they developed a consciousness of their exploitation.¹ They are a 'little proletariat' and helped to make up the backbone of the revolution. Nevertheless, the cities themselves are strongholds of colonialism, and revolutionary activity there must be of a limited and clandestine nature.² Fanon, however, had absolutely no use for the colonial proletariat; in fact, he was contemptuous towards African workers who, he insisted, were like the bourgeoisie in industrial countries: a favoured class. 'In the colonial territories the proletariat is the nucleus of the colonized population which has been most pampered by the colonial regime.'³ They were in a 'comparatively privileged position', and thus reluctant to attack a system which both created them and guaranteed their existence. '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.'⁴ To rely on the proletariat, said Fanon, is to try to transpose European conditions on Africa.

Fanon and Cabral are equally far apart on the question of the *lumpenproletariat*. Marx thought this group was incapable of any constructive action. Cabral agreed to the extent that they were not to be trusted because of the assistance they usually give to the colonialists. But Cabral distinguished between two categories of *lumpenproletariat*. He expected nothing from the traditional *déclassés*, the beggars, prostitutes, pimps, and petty criminals. But the other group of *déclassés* are those 'young people who are connected to petty bourgeois or workers' families, who have recently arrived from the rural areas and generally do not work'.⁵ This group is astute enough to compare its standard of living with the colonialists and, with the close relations it has with both the rural areas and the towns, has the potential for revolutionary consciousness.

Fanon did not draw a similar distinction between categories of *lumpenproletariat*. After beginning in the countryside, he said, the African revolution would filter into the towns through the *lumpenproletariat*, 'that fraction of the peasant population which is blocked on the outer

¹ Ibid. pp. 62 f.

² Cabral, 'At the United Nations', p. 37.

³ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 108.

⁴ Ibid. p. 109. Fanon's position on the proletariat, especially in its relationship with the peasantry, has made subject to criticism by Marxists. See Nguyen Nghe, 'Frantz Fanon et les problèmes de l'indépendance', in *La Pensée* (Paris), 107, February 1963, pp. 22-36; and Jack Woddis, *New Theories of Revolution: a commentary on the views of Frantz Fanon, Régis Debray, and Herbert Marcuse* (New York, 1972), pp. 25-175.

⁵ Cabral, 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure', p. 59.

fringe of the urban centers, that fraction which has not yet succeeded in finding a bone to gnaw in the colonial system'. Once politicised this group would be the 'urban spearhead' of the revolution. '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.'¹ Unlike Cabral's more precise analysis, Fanon's discussion here is highly romanticised. He expected 'the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and the petty criminals . . . all the hopeless dregs of humanity' to be able to 'recover their balance, once more go forward, and march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation'.²

The final class to be evaluated by both men as they formulated their theories of revolution was the bourgeoisie (i.e. the merchants, businessmen, civil servants, professional people, and a few agricultural landowners). To Fanon it was a useless, parasitical class, not even a true bourgeoisie, but a 'greedy caste, avid and voracious . . . It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even a replica of Europe, but its caricature.'³ And unlike in European countries, the bourgeois phase in the history of underdeveloped countries is a useless one, not even promoting an economy to make a socialist revolution possible. The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the revolution is underdeveloped itself, and is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country. It is engaged neither in production, building, nor labour. 'It is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket.'⁴ Because the national bourgeoisie

is strung up to defend its immediate interests . . . sees no further than the end of its nose, [and] reveals itself incapable of simply bringing national unity into being, or of building up the nation on a stable and productive basis . . . [it] should not be allowed to find the conditions necessary for its existence and growth.⁵

The bourgeoisie only tries to replace the colonial class that had been removed by the revolution, whereas for Fanon the aim is to redistribute the productive energies of the nation, not to substitute black bourgeoisie for white.

Fanon wrote that the bourgeoisie must betray its classical rôle and not act like selfish, national bourgeoisie; it must think of the nation

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 129.

² *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 150.

³ *Ibid.* p. 175.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 159 and 174 f.

above itself and join with the revolutionary forces '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'. But Fanon was not hopeful that the bourgeoisie would 'follow this heroic, positive, fruitful, and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways . . . of a traditional bourgeoisie'.¹ Therefore, it must be replaced since by exploiting the country it is endangering the future.

Fanon resented the national bourgeoisie for another reason. As a pan-Africanist he was ambivalent towards nationalism which he viewed as a tool of liberation only. He wanted revolution to overflow national boundaries to create a new humanism in all of Africa. But the national bourgeoisie, he feared, put obstacles in the path of his dream. 'This is why we must understand that African unity can only be achieved through the upward thrust of the people, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say, in defiance of the interests of the bourgeoisie.'²

Cabral saw the same alternative facing the bourgeoisie – i.e. joining the revolution or betraying it – but he expected different results. Fanon's 'national bourgeoisie' is Cabral's 'native petty bourgeoisie'. This group emerges out of foreign domination and is indispensable to the system of colonial exploitation. It stands midway between the masses and the local representatives of the foreign ruling class. Even though it is native, the petty bourgeoisie strives to be like the foreign minority and become integrated with them. But the colonial system is such, observes Cabral, that this is impossible. Those of the African middle class 'do not succeed in overcoming the barriers thrown up by the system. They are prisoners of the social and cultural contradictions of their lives. They cannot escape their role as a marginal class.'³ The petty bourgeoisie is the class which inherits power as a result of their European education and service to the colonial régime; their rôle in the African bureaucracy is indispensable. From this situation a feeling of bitterness and frustration develops which leads to them questioning their marginal status and rediscovering their identity. This group among the petty bourgeoisie (as opposed to those committed to, or compromised with, colonialism) is the only one capable of leading the revolution, since the peasants are a non-revolutionary force and the working class is in an embryo state.

The revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must then return to the masses

¹ Ibid. p. 150.

² Ibid. p. 164.

³ Cabral, 'Identity and Dignity', p. 42.

and completely identify with them. This process is slow and uneven, with many among the bourgeoisie being indecisive. But it is only through the struggle that they can hope to identify with the masses; from the African bourgeoisie there arises 'the first important step toward mobilizing and organizing the masses for the struggle'.¹ With the success of the struggle the petty bourgeoisie must continue to lead. 'The moment national liberation comes and the petty bourgeoisie takes power we enter, or rather return to history, and thus the internal contradictions break out again.'² When this happens 'the petty bourgeoisie can either ally itself with imperialism and the reactionary strata in its own country to try and preserve itself as a petty bourgeoisie or ally itself with the workers and peasants'.³ This, finally, means that for the petty bourgeoisie to fulfil its rôle in the revolution it 'must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong'.⁴ This, said Cabral, is the dilemma of the petty bourgeoisie in the struggle. It is also the fulcrum upon which turns the success of the revolution.

Thus, although both men could agree on the nature of the dilemma facing the indigenous bourgeoisie, the results of their respective analyses pointed in opposite directions. Fanon's bourgeoisie would fail the revolution and try to use the struggle for its own selfish ends; other groups would have to ensure the success of the struggle. But Cabral's bourgeoisie, in sufficient numbers, would – no, must – join forces with the masses, and become reincarnated in the condition of workers and peasants to bring about a successful revolution. This is one of the most important differences between their theories.

PARTIES AND LEADERSHIP

Lenin made a distinctive contribution to the theory and practice of revolution when he substituted party for class as the motive force. The party, he said, showed the masses the way.⁵ Virtually all revolutionary theorists since then have utilised Lenin, in one way or another, in their analyses of parties and leadership. Fanon and Cabral each recognised

¹ Ibid. p. 47.

² Cabral, 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure', p. 69.

³ Ibid. p. 70.

⁴ Cabral, 'The Weapon of Theory', p. 110.

⁵ For a discussion and evaluation of Lenin's theory on, and contribution to, the concept of revolution, as well as those of others, see Robert Blackkey and Clifford T. Paynton, *Revolution and the Revolutionary Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass., forthcoming).

the value of efficient leaders for a successful revolution but, as with the other factors we have surveyed, there are both similarities and differences in their considerations.

Fanon, as emphasised above, recognised the conservative nature of the peasants, as well as their potential for collective and spontaneous violent action. But peasants lack adequate intellectual leadership without which the revolution would fail. Such leadership, according to Fanon, will come from the revolutionary élite in the cities who otherwise have no base for action. It is crucial for revolutionary leaders to intervene at the precise moment when peasant hostility erupts against the colonial force. With outside leadership, momentum can be maintained and the insurrection of the peasants can be transformed into a revolution.¹ Thus, Fanon hoped to turn peasant violence into an angry awareness of injustices by merging it with revolutionary leadership. When peasant revolts occur it is the duty of revolutionary leaders to move in and direct them.

What Fanon found wrong with most national political parties in colonial countries was that they were reformist and alienated from the peasants. He opposed single-party régimes as 'the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical'.² Instead, he urged the more radical and militant members of those national parties to join with the peasants, and together become the basis for the political organisation of the revolution. Although he was not especially specific regarding this organisation, he did develop the idea of a minority or illegal party, composed of the urban radicals acting as the ideological vanguard and the masses as their numerical base.³ This illegal party, then, is led by deviant nationalists who have reacted against the enclosed character and limited nature of the traditional national party. They are pushed out of the city to the countryside where they discover that the peasants, unlike the urban proletariat, are not indifferent. In this way the rôle of the peasants in the illegal party is crucial; the party is the product of the fusion of the peasants with the urban revolutionary élite (to which the galvanised *lumpenproletariat* are later added).

Perhaps because he was in more of a central leadership rôle in his revolution than Fanon was in Algeria, Cabral employed greater precision in discussing the rôle of party and leadership. Like Fanon he shared a fear of élites but the P.A.I.G.C. had a real structure that

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 'Spontaneity: its strength and weakness', passim.

² *Ibid.* p. 165.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 125-8.

Fanon's vaguer illegal party lacked. 'In our circumstances the Party equals the State because there is no other means of making the State a truly national, truly liberating organism',¹ wrote Cabral. He sought a government that would emerge during the struggle, grow from village roots, and avoid the perils of becoming a privileged minority or an oligarchical network. 'The Party is the people', said Cabral. 'For us the people's opinion . . . is extremely important, because the Party is fighting for the people.'² Cabral's study of the social structure of his country indicated that for victory to be achieved *all* the groups of Guinea-Bissau would have to be united, and not just Fanon's peasants, *lumpenproletariat*, and urban leadership. Therefore, one of the primary functions of the P.A.I.G.C. would be to minimise the conflicts and contradictions among the various groups and classes making up the struggle. Only a politically aware, revolutionary party can distinguish between true national independence and fictitious political independence, and then make it known, through the struggle, to the masses.³

During the struggle, liberated areas must be organised so that colonial rule can be replaced effectively. Autonomous regions must be eliminated to prevent local potentates from exercising power, selfishly, over the people. Everything must be tied to the party's central organisation, with military leadership a part of (and not separate from, nor superior to) the political. But military effectiveness is vital because the revolutionists must show the masses that they are at least as powerful as the colonial army; otherwise they might lose the support of the masses. Therefore, the party must also train and organise forces to follow-up the political groundwork. Simultaneously, care must be taken to keep the guerrillas in contact with the masses and to encourage local participation. All this is the task of the party for Cabral.

REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

Fanon is probably best known for his views on violence and revolution, a subject about which there is considerable debate.⁴ Although he was not especially consistent in his pronouncements on violence,

¹ Quoted in Davidson, *op. cit.* p. 138.

² Quoted in Chaliand, *op. cit.* p. 68.

³ Cabral, 'The Weapon of Theory', p. 105.

⁴ See A. Norman Klein, 'On Revolutionary Violence', in *Studies On The Left* (New York), VI, 3, 1966, pp. 62-82; Barbara Deming, 'On Revolution and Equilibrium', in *Liberation* (London), XII, 1, February 1968, pp. 10-21; Louis Coser, 'Fanon and Debray: theorists of the Third World', in Irving Howe (ed.), *Beyond the New Left* (New York, 1970); Horace Sutton, 'Fanon', in *Saturday Review* (New York), 17 July 1971; Gendzier, *op. cit.*; and Jinadu, *loc. cit.*

much of what he said can be understood if *all* of his views are considered. Cabral's thoughts on the subject were somewhat similar, although he was not as preoccupied with violence as Fanon.

During the revolutionary process of seizing freedom, violence, according to Fanon, is necessarily applied because the very structure of colonialism is fundamentally violent.

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder . . . [Colonialism] is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.¹

Decolonisation involves 'vomiting up' foreign values and this produces new men. Through violence Africans come to realise that the colonialists are no different from themselves, that their lives and their skins are the same. This discovery, according to Fanon, 'shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance of the natives stems from it.'² Thus, violence 'makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them. Without the struggle . . . there's nothing but . . . [the masses], still living in the middle ages.'³ Violence and revolution are not only rewards in themselves, but means to a greater end as well.

Yet, Fanon admitted that other means may be appropriate if the situation dictates it. 'If need be, the native can accept a compromise with colonialism, but never a surrender of principle.'⁴ A colonised people must win their war of liberation, he insisted, 'but they must do so cleanly, without "barbarity" . . . The underdeveloped nation that practices torture thereby confirms its nature, plays the role of an underdeveloped people.'⁵ The rest of the world, in order to accept a colonised nation setting itself up as an independent nation, must see the colonised people, in every one of its acts, as lucid and self-controlled.

Because we believe one cannot rise and liberate oneself in one area and sink in another, we condemn, with pain in our hearts, those brothers who have flung themselves into revolutionary action with the almost physiological brutality that centuries of oppression gave rise to.⁶

An explanation for this apparent inconsistency may lie in the North African context in which Fanon found himself, and in the emotional nature of much of his writing. In Algeria the French were deeply entrenched with a large *colon* or settler population, and were determined to hold on, whatever the cost; the Algerian revolutionists had no

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 36 and 61.

² *Ibid.* p. 45.

³ *Ibid.* p. 147.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 143.

⁵ Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York edn., 1965), p. 24.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 25.

alternative to violence. Therefore, when Fanon wrote of violence as 'a cleansing force . . . [freeing] the native from his despair and inaction',¹ he was probably referring to Algeria only; he was not celebrating violence *per se*. In fact, he acknowledged that while 'in Algeria the test of force was inevitable . . . other countries through political action and through the work of clarification undertaken by a party have led their people to the same results'.² Thus, Fanon wrote only of a reactive violence that was an integral part of justice and non-compromise.

Cabral did not devote very much attention to violence, though like Fanon he realised that it was the essential instrument of imperialist domination. Revolution and national liberation, he believed, cannot occur

without the use of liberating violence by the nationalist forces, to answer the criminal violence of the agents of imperialism . . . Imperialist domination implies a state of permanent violence against the nationalist forces. There is no people on earth which, having been subjected to the imperialist yoke (colonialist or neo-colonialist), has managed to gain its independence (nominal or effective) without victims.³

Violence needs to be used not only in response to the violence of imperialism, but also to ensure true national independence. Compromises with imperialism, as experience taught Cabral, do not work. But, as opposed to the French in Algeria, who were well settled, there have been other colonialists who have not been interested in establishing that kind of colony. Therefore, in such a situation, as in Guinea-Bissau with the Portuguese, terrorism need not be employed. A military struggle is often enough.⁴

RÔLE OF CULTURE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

As with most of the components of revolution we have considered, especially where the two theorists tend to share similar ideas, Cabral was more organised and attentive to detail than Fanon. But when both men defined the rôle of culture in a revolutionary situation, and speculated about the future, the differences between them are less pronounced. Each employed more generalisations than usual – though Cabral still less than Fanon – and each was essentially optimistic.

One of the greatest evils of colonialism, according to Fanon, is that 'it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures,

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 94.

² *Ibid.* p. 193.

³ Cabral, 'The Weapon of Theory', p. 107.

⁴ Cabral, 'Practical Problems and Tactics', p. 135.

and destroys it'. It warns Africans that if the settlers depart then they 'would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality'.¹ Colonialism had 'generously' lightened their darkness. But this negative situation can only be countered when the native turns backwards towards his unknown roots – then he 'turns himself into the defender of his people's past; he is willing to be counted as one of them, and henceforth he is even capable of laughing at his past cowardice'.² The purpose of culture is to utilise the past to open the future, to be an invitation to action and a basis for hope. 'To fight for national culture means . . . to fight for the liberation of the nation, the material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible. There is no other fight for culture which can develop apart from the popular struggle.'³ Thus, culture aims not only to counteract the evils of colonialism but to construct the future.

A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on.⁴

Culture is a vital part of a people's identity in its struggle for freedom.

Cabral agreed. In fact, he went so far as to assert that it is impossible to create and develop a revolution unless a people keep their culture alive in the face of continued organised repression of their way of life. 'It is cultural resistance which at a given moment can take on new forms – political, economic, military – to fight foreign domination.'⁵ Cabral further observed that in the colonial situation the cultural influence of the imperial power is limited to the capital and other urban centres, and then only to small numbers of petty bourgeoisie and urban workers. As for the masses, they are either completely or almost untouched by the culture of the colonial power. Since foreigners are not even interested in promoting culture for the masses, the latter, in turn, 'find that their own culture acts as a bulwark in preserving their identity'.⁶

The future, to Fanon's mind, would be bright. Every victory in the revolutionary struggle 'is a defeat for racism and for the exploitation of man . . . [inaugurating] the unconditional reign of Justice'.⁷ Fanon

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 210 f.

² *Ibid.* p. 218.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 41.

³ *Ibid.* p. 233.

⁵ Cabral, 'Identity and Dignity', pp. 40 f.

⁷ Fanon, 'Algeria Face to Face with the French Torturers' (1957), in *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 64.

did not elaborate upon what would happen after the success of the revolution. His emphasis was on redistribution rather than upon material creation. Moreover, he viewed the struggle for liberation as part of a larger African-wide movement for a democratic and social revolution. But in pursuing this goal, Fanon warned, none of the African nations could afford to imitate western and capitalistic ways of life; in fact, none should *dare* imitate the West because it would only lead to a similar moral and spiritual debasement. He tried to minimise the differences between Arab Africa and Black Africa because they, as well as the other divisions of the continent, in no way reflected tribal differences, geographic realities, or economic and social factors. They were, instead, the 'gift' of Europe to Africa. Fanon believed that common interests should bring Africans together in order to 'try to set afoot a new man'.¹

Cabral also believed in looking to the future, beyond the struggle for national liberation, to the economic, social, and cultural evolution of the people on their road to progress. He, too, opposed 'narrow nationalisms which do not serve the true interests of the people' and favoured instead an 'African unity, on a regional or continental scale, insofar as it is necessary for the progress of the African peoples'.² Although he expected tribal differences to disappear with the success of the struggle as they were absorbed by the new social order, he still recognised that everyday conditions must also be changed. The most important thing of all, he said, 'is an understanding of our people's situation . . . We must assure [them] that those who bear arms are sons of the people and that arms are no better than the tools of labor.'³ The purpose and goal of the revolution is to protect the man with the tool.

EPITAPH

Fanon was more concerned with making the revolution than with predicting the future in much detail. His writings were intended to be a part of the war against colonialism and imperialism. He saw hope for Africa in all the people of the continent coming to grips with the problems of unity and solidarity, so that they could collectively pursue the best interests of all concerned, especially those of the masses, in the quest for total liberation. Fanon was a brilliant propagandist of revolution, a prophet of hope for the oppressed.

¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 316.

² Cabral, 'Guinea and Cabo Verde Against Portuguese Colonialism', p. 17.

³ Quoted in Chaliand, *op. cit.* p. 35.

Less emotional than Fanon, Cabral was also a prophet of hope. He, too, was primarily concerned with making the revolution, but he placed it under the microscope of analysis in a way Fanon did not. More than any other revolutionist in this century, with the exception of Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, Cabral lived, breathed, and thought through his people's revolution as a unique event. He was laying down a cardinal principle when he said that 'it is necessary for each people to find its own formula for mobilizing for the struggle'.¹ Each country entering upon a path of revolution must look to its own internal contradictions and problems.

Our own reality – however fine and attractive the reality of others may be – can only be transformed by detailed knowledge of it, by our own efforts, by our own sacrifices . . . However great the similarity between our various cases and however identical our enemies, national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities.²

He was a high-principled but practical and far-sighted revolutionist.

In lieu of Cabral's advice no conclusion that unequivocally decides in favour of either revolutionist would be in order. Fanon, to be sure, is the better known and more widely read. His words pound on the doors of consciences; what he says comes from the heart and swells the body to action. But Fanon, as we have observed, is sometimes contradictory and his generalisations often lack supportive evidence. However valuable Fanon may be, he should not be taken as the sole guide for the African revolution. Cabral is more an excellent companion than an alternative, while their differences can be overcome by following his advice to find the proper formula for a given situation.

Both Fanon and Cabral fell victim to a cancer, the former to the kind medical science is attempting to conquer, the latter to the variety for which revolution seeks a cure. The differences in their theories of revolution are important to evaluate, but it must also be noted that they were seeking a similar future for their people.

¹ Cabral, 'Practical Problems and Tactics', pp. 159f.

² Cabral, 'The Weapon of Theory', p. 92.