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What about after independence?

*“If psychiatry is a medical technique which aspires to allow a man to cease being alienated from his environment, I owe it to myself to assert that the Arab, who is permanently alienated in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization.” (172)*

Fanon and Cabral had different exposures to revolution – Fanon went abroad and studied medicine and came to understand the struggle in Algeria, in a different country from his birth. He wrote on behalf of people who were not native brethren. Cabral made revolution in the same country where he was born and grew up. This leads me to wonder, ***should an activist from outside a community have the same weight and influence as one who has seen the community from the beginning?*** Perhaps it is more acceptable in this case because Fanon, although emphasizing concrete analysis of concrete conditions, did less of that than Cabral did. Cabral details the different classes in Guinea-Bissau and who it was most important to “convert” in order to be successful and the methods that were and were not successful when aiming to convert. Yet, whether they came at things from a psychological or an agronomic perspective, they both believed strongly in the need and function of a revolution, first to take power from colonialists, but then to build a socialist state.

This is the central theme this week, it seems. As we begin to understand the conditions that sparked revolutions and how revolutions were carried out, we look forward – to ask how to ensure that the revolutionary socialist cause remains alive after independence is achieved, because revolution is about more than just the changing of hands of power.

In this, they discuss a few strategies – they seem to agree, for instance, that the bourgeois class does not simply fade. It must be removed forcefully and publically. This would have offer two benefits – one, that the proletariat class would feel a return of self-confidence and agency (Fanon), and two, that a public overthrow (as opposed to a social suicide on the part of the petit bourgeois) reduces the likelihood of their easy return (Cabral). One point on which Fanon and Cabral interestingly disagree is so central to the discussions we have been having for weeks, about the people who enact revolution. Both agree that peasants are valuable to this effort. Yet, Cabral says, “it is difficult to convince them by means of an inexperienced explanation of a technico-economic kind that they are the most exploited people” (227). Mao, on the other hand, in his description of the Fourteen Great Achievements of the peasant association describes how the peasants had been able to run the factories without outside help and could manage all the necessary activities. Fanon says, “But if you speak the language of every day; if you are not obsessed by the perverse desire to spread confusion and to rid yourself of the people, then you will realize that the masses are quick to seize every shade of meaning and to learn all the tricks of the trade... Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to understand.” Even if we answered the first question in the negative, and had more reason to believe an activist with more on-the-ground experience in the country where they grew up, Mao passes that test just as Cabral does. ***What is the role of peasants before, during and after the revolution?***

A Few Additional Thoughts

*“…the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe.” (184)*

The status of the people of a colonized nation, in writings by revolutionaries, seems commonly described as a fate invoked by the colonizers, one that they would fight or are fighting. The colonized are thus defined in relation to their colonizers. Fanon’s description lays blame on the national middle class itself for acting selfishly or lazily to raise themselves. Is this a sense of agency owned by the middle class or a scenario of victim blaming?

Fanon, in pages 196-197, discusses the prospect of a two-stage revolution. His disagreement with that approach stems from his view that the bourgeois would “be allowed to find the conditions necessary for its existence and its growth” (197), which would make the socialist revolution increasingly difficult. I would draw parallels between the argument against two-stage revolution and Luxemburg’s critique of reform instead of revolution, both “enabl[ing] capitalism to maintain itself.”

The second sub-group of *déclassés* according to Cabral contains the youth from workers’ families in urban areas who have recently arrived from rural areas. They may or may not have a job and they usually have relatives in the city they stay with. Cabral believes this group would be useful to the revolution (224). This is interesting because youth (particularly college activists) are not usually given so much respect. They are viewed to be naïve and upwardly mobile (and therefore ignorant of blue collar concerns) or perhaps wealthy and living off their parents’ earnings. Yet, they have always been central to many movements. This also speaks to a deep connection between urban and rural areas. Cabral elaborates further on, “I would say that there is no conflict between the towns and the countryside, not least because we are only town dwellers who have just moved from the country” (229). One of the biggest separations today occurs between the urban and the rural, probably more than cross-border differences. ***How could we resolve this contradiction so that the two can unite for a cause?***

*“Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone’s head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children…” (237).*

I hope to discuss this. If I remember correctly, last week, based on Che’s book, we had established that people fight and remain active only as inspired by ideas.