Yoweri Museveni the Student Meets Yoweri the Colonizer

A critique of 'Fanon's Theory on Violence: Its Verification in Liberated Mozambique (1971), read against the political history of its author

WE THE PEOPLE OF UGANDA

RECALLING our history which has been characterised by political and constitutional instability;

RECOGNISING our struggles against the forces of tyranny, oppression and exploitation;

COMMITTED to building a better future by establishing a socioeconomic and political order through a popular and durable national Constitution based on the principles of unity, peace, equality, democracy, freedom, social justice and progress;

EXERCISING our sovereign and inalienable right to determine the form of governance for our country, and having fully participated in the Constitution-making process.

We stand where the Ugandan people stood in 1995, the year they gave themselves a constitution. The preamble opens with an act of memory and resolve. It recounts that Uganda's people had suffered national humiliation, suffering and anguish. It records the long struggle against forces of tyranny, exploitation and oppression. And then, in one of the most quietly devastating declarations in African constitutional history, it resolves that the sovereign people of Uganda would build a better future by establishing a socio-economic and political order free of oppression and exploitation. It resolves that power belongs to the people and that any attempt to remove it from them shall be unlawful. It resolves that the state shall be based not on the might of any one person, but on the democratic will of all Ugandans.

This preamble was not drafted by strangers. The government that oversaw its drafting was the National Resistance Movement, led by Yoweri Museveni. The man who signed this document into law was the same man who, twenty-six years earlier, had written admiringly of FRELIMO commanders who slept on the same beds as their fighters, ate the same food and refused the class privileges of a bourgeois officer corps.

He was the same man who in 1971, then a student at the University of Dar es Salaam, wrote a dissertation engaging with Fanon's analysis of exactly how liberation movements fail; how the nationalist leader accumulates power, how the party becomes a tool of surveillance, how the revolution is captured by the very class interests it claimed to overthrow. He named the traps, he described the pitfalls in his own words and then, he walked into every single one.

That dissertation engages with the argument that revolutionary violence is not merely a military instrument but a psychological and social one: that through organized, purposeful armed struggle, the colonized person sheds the inferiority complex installed in them by the colonial system and emerges, on the other side, as what Fanon calls the new man. Museveni took this argument to Mozambique, where he witnessed FRELIMO putting it into practice. A former house boy had become a military commander. The last had become the first. He came back convinced: the theory, he wrote, had been verified by experience.

That conviction matters because of what he did with it. He built a movement, he fought a bush war; he stood on the stairs of Parliament in 1986 and declared, in language that unmistakably echoed Fanon, that what had been accomplished was not a mere change of guard but a fundamental change. He claimed the mantle of revolutionary transformation. He asked Uganda to believe that what had happened was liberation.

Article 3 of the Constitution he signed is unambiguous. It declares that any attempt to overthrow the constitutional order is unlawful and that it is the duty of every Ugandan citizen to resist any such attempt. Not a right; a duty. The Constitution, in other words, does not merely permit resistance, it demands it. It is, in the grammar of law, a call to account.

We anchor ourselves here. We are a generation that has inherited the gap between what was promised and what has been delivered, and Article 3 is the Constitutional ground on which we stand to name that gap. In this, we do what it demands of us: we hold power to account. We read what Fanon actually says liberation requires, what it produces, what it cannot be and we hold the last forty years of Uganda up against that measure. We ask whether the man who understood the theory has delivered anything it describes.

We call him to account before the tribunal of his own theory.

Because they are known by their fruits and the fruits are before us. Let us look at them plainly.

To read Fanon on the colonial world is to feel the shock of recognition; not as history, but as a description of the present. Fanon opens The Wretched of the Earth with a portrait of a world cut in two. The colonial world, he writes, is a Manichaean world. It is divided into compartments; the settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town whilst the native's town is a hungry town, a town of niggers and dirty Arabs, crouching and cowering, a town on its knees.

Now drive through Uganda.

Drive from Kololo to Kamwokya. From Senior Quarters to Konypaco. From Nkokonjeru to Byafura. The distance is sometimes no more than a few kilometres but distance in every other sense; in the security of the body, in the quality of water and road and air, in the proximity of power and its protections, is a world entire. In Kololo, the embassies sit behind manicured hedges, the generator hums when the grid fails and the security guards are paid on time. In Kamwokya, the drainage is broken, the landlord is a politician and the child walks the street when they ought to be in school. This is not incidental, it is not the ordinary inequality that all cities contain. This is the Manichaean geography of colonial administration reproduced, upheld and defended by the same logic Fanon named: this is a system built and maintained by violence.

The colonial system does not rule by consent, it does not rule by persuasion or by the gradual assent of a population that has been convinced. It rules by the immediate presence of violence; the police, the army, the roadblock, the cell, the threat. The colonial world is a world without doctors, administrators, engineers or teachers but what it does have in abundance, is soldiers and policemen. The primary institution of the colonial state is the coercive one. Everything else; schools, courts, hospitals, exist to manage the colonized, never to serve them.

Let us be honest about what Uganda is. Let us not hide behind the language of a developing nation still finding its feet or behind the achievements of macroeconomic stability or the argument that things were worse before. Let us look at the structure. Uganda today is a country where the primary function of the state apparatus in the lives of most Ugandans is not to deliver services but to extract from, manage and, when necessary, suppress the population. The Uganda Revenue Authority is present, the Uganda Police Force is present, the Uganda People's Defence Forces is present. What is absent, in most of the country, in any meaningful form, is the state as a provider of human flourishing.

This is what Fanon means when he says the colonial world is a world where the native is always presumed guilty. Guilty of taking up space that someone with more power might want, of organizing, of demanding. The native's town, Fanon writes, is a world with no space; people are piled on top of each other, the streets are narrow and airless and the air is thick with the smell of hunger and futility. The native knows this; he does not know it as a theory but as the structure of his daily life.

We know it as the structure of our daily life.

The beauty of Fanon's work is that he does not stop at the material conditions of the colonized; he goes further, into the psychic interior of a person who has been told from birth and by every instrument of the world around them that they are lesser, that they are animal-adjacent and that the measure of their humanity is how closely they approximate the colonizer. Fanon calls this the inferiority complex of the colonized, a structural production manufactured by an entire system and then presented as natural fact.

What then does this produce? Among other things, it produces a particular relationship with violence. Fanon describes the colonized native as a person who is always tense, hungry and coiled. The energy of rebellion that cannot find its true target; the settler, the system, the structure, does not simply dissipate. It turns inward and sideways and finds its expression in the dances, ceremonies and rituals that colonial anthropologists patronizingly catalogued as evidence of primitive culture, but which Fanon reads as something altogether more urgent: the release of a people who have nowhere else to go.

The native dances in a circle. In the circle she is free and experiences the ecstatic release of a body that is otherwise permanently disciplined by colonial fear. In the circle, the hierarchy dissolves; the degraded native becomes powerful and his muscles that are otherwise used to carry another man's load are used to express something that has no other language. The dance is not entertainment, it is the pressure valve of a people who have been told they cannot speak.

We know this dance. On weekends in Bandali Rise and Lugogo, we dance from dawn to dawn. We descend into the dark of the club and we dance as though our lives depend on it, and perhaps, they do. We dance with the abandon of people who must, because the week has been what it has and the body needs what the mind cannot provide and the system will not give. We are, in these moments, Fanon's native in the circle. We are performing, with our whole selves, the only freedom that has not yet been successfully policed. And we should not be ashamed of this, we should understand it as it is: not decadence but colonial pressure finding the only exit it can.

But there is another exit, one Fanon describes with equal clarity and greater horror. The violence that cannot reach the settler does not only go into dance, it goes into each other. Fanon writes of the alarming rates of crime in the colonial territories not as moral failure of the colonized but as a structural consequence of a system that has sealed every other outlet. The colonized attacks the colonized, brother turns against brother, spouse against spouse. The man who cannot touch the source of his suffering redirects that suffering toward the man beside him, who is also suffering, sealed in and coiled.

We know this too. When a crowd gathers in Uganda to bludgeon a man to death, a thief, a suspect, a person who has supposedly offended some code, we are watching Fanon's analysis in motion. We call it mob justice and we shake our heads but it is not justice, it is the colonized exerting upon each other the violence that the system has made impossible to exert upward. The man being beaten is not the enemy, he is the nearest available body. The people doing the

beating are not monsters, they are the wretched of the earth releasing what has been building since the last time they were humiliated by a system that treats their humanity as optional.

And then there is the UPDF soldier in the bar.

There is a particular image that recurs in Uganda: a member of the Uganda People's Defence Forces, in or out of uniform, turning arms against an ordinary citizen in a place of leisure. A soldier draws a weapon in a bar, beats a boda boda rider or shoots into a crowd at a large gathering. These incidents are documented and, this is the important thing, entirely predictable. When a system arms one segment of the population and gives it authority over another and when that authority is organized not around service but around domination, the violence that results is not aberration, it is the system functioning as designed.

The soldier in the bar, turning his weapon on the civilian, is us. He is also colonized, he has absorbed the logic of the system; that authority is expressed through force, that the body of the ordinary Ugandan is available to be disciplined and he has reproduced it. He is not the settler but he has been given the settler's instrument and told to use it and so he does. We are the colonized exerting the logic of colonialism against each other. This is not metaphor; it is the daily architecture of our lives.

Who, then, are the colonizers?

Fanon's colonial world has, at its structural centre, a settler; a figure who does not just live in the country but who has organised the country around their own survival and prosperity, who has drawn the lines of access and exclusion, who has made themselves permanent through violence and continues to maintain that permanence through its threat. The settler is not a character, she is a position within a system defined by her relationship to power, land, security and the institutions that distribute all of these.

Can we not claim to be colonized as Fanon described? Are we not the native and they, the settlers?

Consider the evidence. In Uganda today, land, the primary means of production, the ground on which most of us build our entire social existence, is being alienated from its occupants through mechanisms that combine legal ambiguity, political connection and the implicit or explicit threat of force. The land question, which Fanon identified as absolutely central to any genuine decolonization, has not been resolved in Uganda. In fact, it has been made more acute; the politically connected acquire title to land that communities have occupied for generations, the eviction notices arrive, and behind them, eventually, the police.

In Naguru, the development pressure: the hotels, apartment blocks and commercial complexes that have been rising on land that once held a people, makes the body of the poor urban dweller literally precarious, liable to displacement by the stroke of a pen signed in proximity to power.

Bwaise continues to flood every season. Every season, there are proposals and committees and allocations. Every season, the water rises, the people wade through it and the committees produce another report. This is not incompetence, incompetence is random; this is systemic. The people of Bwaise do not have the political weight to compel the state to solve their problem because the political system has been organized to extract from them; their votes, labour, taxes, their silence and definitely not to serve them. They exist to be managed. They are not governed in any democratic sense but administered by an apparatus whose primary concern is its own reproduction.

These are the colonizers: not white men with pointed noses but a class of people who have organized the state around the protection of their own position, who deploy the coercive apparatus of the state against anyone who threatens said position, who live in a different Uganda from the one that most of us inhabit, who speak the language of national development while practicing the logic of personal accumulation. They look like us, pray in our churches, are buried in our soil but they relate to the rest of the population exactly as the settlers related to the native: as a problem to be managed, a resource to be extracted from or a potential threat to be preempted.

Fanon tells us the settler keeps the native in a zone that is not just physical. It is a psychic enclosure, a set of possibilities and impossibilities that the native internalizes and which then governs their behaviour more effectively than any overt coercion. The Ugandan young person who does not apply for the government job because they know it has already been decided, the journalist who self-censors not because anyone called but because they know how the call ends, the opposition politician who calculates, each morning, how much freedom they can exercise before the arithmetic of reprisal makes the day dangerous. We have not accepted it as right but we experience it as real, which, from the perspective of daily life, is the same thing.

And this is where the harder question of Uganda's political fault lines comes in. Uganda has never been mapped neatly onto social class; what independent Uganda inherited and then reproduced were not just simplistic resource based class divisions but entrenched identity divisions too; North versus South, Buganda versus the rest, Catholic versus Protestant versus Muslim. Our original colonizer did not merely steal land and extract labour, he constructed the categories through which Ugandans would understand themselves and fight each other. Tribe, religion, region; these were made into the primary units of political identity precisely because class consciousness, the kind that would allow a Munyankore peasant and a Muganda taxi driver to recognize their shared condition, was the thing that colonial and post-colonial power most needed to prevent.

The failure to build social and political consciousness that we identify in Museveni's rule is therefore not simply his failure alone, it is the continuation of a colonial project whose deepest achievement was to ensure that Ugandans would contest for power along lines that could never produce structural transformation. When Miria Matembe, herself a Munyankore, from Museveni's own ethnic heartland, is charged with sectarianism targeting fellow Banyankore for speaking against the government, you are watching this logic in operation. The identity categories that should have been dismantled by genuine liberation are instead weaponized by those in power against anyone who threatens them, regardless of which identity they carry. The manifestation continues; the 1995 Constitution, the very document we anchor ourselves in, was never translated into Ugandan languages as the law requires. The majority of the Ugandan people for whom it was supposedly written could not read what they had been given. Instead, power speaks for them and the people are managed rather than informed.

There is a particular cruelty in rereading a revolutionary text written by a man who became what he once despised. The cruelty is not in the reading but in the fact that the text, whilst marked by borrowing and a shortage of original thought, was contextually good. The young Museveni of Dar es Salaam, the undergraduate who travelled into the liberated zones of Mozambique in 1968, who knelt before the lessons of a former house boy turned military commander, who wrote with genuine fire about the cleansing of colonial psychology through revolutionary struggle; that young man put up a brave fight to understand Fanon. He inhabited the argument and used Fanon's categories with the precision of someone who had not just read the book but felt the problem it described in his own skin.

This is what makes the reckoning necessary. We cannot, in good conscience, treat the 1971 dissertation as an intellectual curiosity, a minor historical document produced by a student. It was written as a program; it declared what decolonization required, specified the conditions of authentic liberation and named precisely the traps that would swallow any revolution whose leadership was not ideologically correct, not rooted in the people and not willing to commit class suicide. It evaluated other liberation movements by these standards and found them wanting when their petty bourgeois leaders chose comfort over transformation.

The question the fifty-plus years of Museveni's political life pose to that text is not a question from outside; it is the text's own question, turned back upon its author.

What happens, Fanon asks across every chapter of The Wretched of the Earth, when the leaders who speak the language of liberation become the new custodians of the very structure they claimed to overthrow? What becomes of a revolution when its vanguard, having committed class suicide as students and cadres in the bush, is resurrected as a ruling class in the capital? What does it mean when the man who quoted Mao's discipline about not taking a needle or thread from the masses becomes the man whose family controls the land, the military, and the line of succession?

Fanon had answered this. Museveni already knew the answer; he wrote it down.

Fanon does not celebrate violence for its own sake. This must be said clearly, because the misreading of Fanon on violence is one of the most persistent distortions in political discourse. Fanon is not writing a manual for brutality, he is writing a phenomenology of liberation, an account of what happens, at every level of human existence when a people who have been told they are not fully human discover, through organized collective action, that they are.

The 1971 dissertation opens with a defense of Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence, and it is, taken on its own terms, a competent and earnest reading. Museveni understands that Fanon does not celebrate violence for its own sake. He grasps its dialectical function; not merely military but psychological and social, dissolving the colonial inferiority complex, rehumanizing the native who has been constructed as subhuman and creating through the act of armed resistance a new kind of person, the new man.

Museveni writes in paragraph fifteen that violence is not only the effective instrument of bringing about the real overthrow of colonial rule but also a laxative, a purgative, an agent for creating new men. In the course of violent struggle, all the psychic complexes arising out of the colonial situation dissolve, disappear in thin air. He records this with the excitement of a man who has watched it happen; a former house boy becoming a commander, giving lessons in guerrilla craft to university undergraduates, the last becoming the first.

Violence, in Fanon's analysis, performs several simultaneous functions. At the material level, it dismantles the colonial structure; it removes the settler, breaks the administrative apparatus, seizes the land and the means of production. But Fanon is more interested in what it does at the psychological level. The colonized native carries within themselves a double consciousness organized around inferiority; they begin to see themselves through the colonizer's eyes. They perform docility, deference, the elaborate theatre of submission that the colonial system requires.

Revolutionary violence breaks this. Fanon describes it as a cleansing force; a catharsis in the original therapeutic sense. When the colonized person picks up a weapon and aims it at the structure that has dehumanized them, something shifts that cannot be shifted any other way.

The inferiority dissolves, the psychic enclosure breaks open and the person who emerges from collective armed resistance is a new person. This new man is not defined by the colonizer's categories but has stepped outside them through the act of refusal that violence represents at its most fundamental.

Furthermore, Fanon argues that revolutionary violence liberates the colonized from the very thirst for violence that colonial oppression has produced. The mob, the bar fight, the brother turned against brother, all of that displaced rage finds, in revolutionary struggle, a legitimate target. The consequence is that after genuine revolutionary violence, the society is not more violent, it is less. The purgation has been completed, the channel has been opened and the people emerge purified.

Revolutionary violence also serves as the birth pangs of a new world. Through it the last becomes the first, not in the trivial sense of a change of personnel at the top, but in the structural sense of a world reorganized from the ground up. A world in which the categories of settler and native have been abolished not just politically but psychically. A world in which the new man is building genuinely new institutions from the materials of genuine liberation.

This is what Museveni declared that he had done. He used the exact language: what he had accomplished was not a mere change of guards but a fundamental change. This is Fanon's language and if Museveni was making that claim honestly, then it came with everything Fanon attached to it; the transformed populace, the abolished inferiority, the restored dignity, the thirst for violence spent in the act of liberation and not recycled into new forms of domination.

We must ask then, what went wrong?

In the Pitfalls of National Consciousness, Fanon makes a surgical distinction that Museveni's dissertation conveniently does not follow through to its conclusion. Nationalism, Fanon warns, is not a political doctrine and it is not a program. If we really want to safeguard our countries from regression, paralysis or collapse, we must rapidly switch from a national consciousness to a social and political consciousness. The nation can only come into being in a program elaborated by a revolutionary leadership and enthusiastically and lucidly appropriated by the masses. Crucially, if nationalism is not explained, enriched and deepened, if it does not very quickly turn into a social and political consciousness, into humanism, then it leads to a dead end.

Museveni cites this passage nowhere. He stops at the part of Fanon that justifies the gun. He is silent about the part that demands the gun be put away and replaced by a program of genuine democratic transformation. This is the first and most fundamental contradiction; a revolutionary violence that does not flow immediately into popular democratic governance, does not cleanse the native of the colonial psychic complex. Instead, it relocates that complex and transfers it upward into the hands of the new leader, where it reconstitutes itself as the same Manichaean world Fanon described, now redrawn not between settler and native but between the revolutionary elite and the people the revolution was supposed to serve.

The consequences of this failure are not abstract. In Uganda, the absence of social and political consciousness, of a genuine ideological formation reaching into every village and home, meant that the categories people used to understand their political lives remained the colonial categories: tribe, religion, region, not class or structural interest. The Ugandan who should have been asking who truly owns the land instead asked whether the man taking it was a Munyankore or a Muganda. The contest remained organized around identity rather than social position and this is not an accident, it is the predictable consequence of a leadership that deployed

nationalism as a mobilizing force and then refused to deepen it into the social consciousness that would have eventually turned on the leadership itself.

The answer to whether transformation happened is visible in what Uganda looks like forty years later. The psychic liberation Fanon describes does not need to be announced, it does not need to be invoked in every speech, plastered on billboards or worked into the "patriotic" curriculum. Revolution does not need to be touted in every speech, it shouts from the rooftop on its own. Ideological grounding is identifiable in the actions of the state and the character of its institutions.

When Museveni's UPDF, the heir of the NRA that fought the Bush War, is deployed not against imperialists but against Ugandans in Kasese, in the north, in Bugisu, in the Rwenzori region, against Bobi Wine's supporters, against Besigye's convoys, the cleansing violence of liberation has become the contaminating violence of occupation. The settler's army has not been destroyed, it has been repainted. Its commander now speaks Runyankole instead of English, carries a herdsman's philosophy instead of a colonial charter, but the bayonets perform the same function: the dehumanization of the Ugandan, the delimiting physically of the place of the native. That is what Fanon said colonial violence does.

Fanon, in his writing, pays particular attention to the peasant. The peasant, in his analysis, is the natural harbinger of revolutionary violence; not because the peasant is more virtuous than the urban intellectual, but because the peasant has nothing to lose. The urban petit-bourgeois intellectual has a salary, a career, a small foothold in the system; enough to make compromise attractive. The peasant has only the land that is being taken from them and the body that is being ground into service. The peasant has, in the most literal possible sense, everything to gain and nothing to lose. This is why Fanon places the peasant at the centre of genuine liberation struggle.

Museveni understood this; his NRA drew from the peasantry of western and central Uganda. The fighters who carried the bush war were not intellectuals or technocrats, they were people whose daily existence had already made the logic of revolutionary sacrifice comprehensible because the alternative, life under Obote's second terror, was not a life the body could sustain. They gave their food, children, blood, sweat and tears. They believed in the program; that what was being built in the bush would not be for one man but for all of them.

In hindsight, what Museveni did was make mercenaries out of them.

Forty years later, it turns out he sold them a lie and termed it revolution. He and his forces unseated their oppressor and became that himself. The peasant who carried the revolution was not liberated by it. The bush war produced not the new man Fanon described but a new ruling class, which looked from one angle like liberation and from every other angle like the old structure with different faces at the top.

This is the mercenary revolution: a revolution that mobilizes the genuine revolutionary energy of the most oppressed for the ambitions of a leadership that evidently had no intention of relinquishing power once it is seized but one cannot call something a revolution and then spend forty years battling the next one. The vanguard, Fanon wrote, exists to make itself unnecessary; the authentic revolutionary leadership works toward the condition in which the masses no longer need it. What Museveni built is a leadership that has made itself indispensable by systematically dismantling the institutions through which it could be replaced.

What replaced genuine ideological formation was the management of Uganda's dependency on foreign capital and international institutions. The structural adjustment programs of the late 1980s and 1990s, accepted under pressure from the IMF and World Bank, dismantled the very state capacity that any genuine program of social transformation would have required. The conditions attached to that aid; privatization, deregulation, the retreat of the state from service provision, were not designed by or for Ugandans. They served the logic of international capital and Museveni accepted them, positioned them as pragmatism and used the economic stability they produced as evidence of governance. The peasant who had nothing to lose gave everything to the revolution. The revolution, in turn, handed the terms of his economic existence to the IMF. This is what the comprador bourgeoisie does: it manages the relationship between foreign capital and a domestic population, extracting from the latter to satisfy the former, and calling the arrangement development.

Can it be that a man who once committed this analysis to paper cannot recognize it in his own governance? The answer Fanon provides is unsparing: the national bourgeoisie, with no misgivings and great pride, revels in the role of agent in its dealings with the Western bourgeoisie. It cannot recognize itself in Fanon's portrait because self-recognition would require precisely the kind of political consciousness that bourgeois ascendancy systematically destroys.

He read Fanon on violence and deployed it. He did not read, or chose not to follow, Fanon on social consciousness, on ideological grounding, on the absolute necessity of the revolution deepening into genuine democratic transformation. Or perhaps he read it and concluded that it applied to other people, that he was the exception, that his continuity was the revolution's continuity.

This is the oldest lie in the history of power.

There is a layer of this problem that even Fanon does not fully address, though he gestures toward it. Fanon's colonial world assumes that the colonizer is recognizably racially marked, externally placed, legible as enemy. The psychological mechanism of liberation that Fanon describes depends, in part, on this legibility. The native can eventually see through the myth of invincibility once the first dead Portuguese soldier has been displayed to the peasants.

What happens then when the colonizer is African? What happens when he wears your clothes, speaks your languages, shares your continent, fought your earlier colonizers and frames his domination as liberation from what came before? What happens when your colonizer is your hero?

This is not a hypothetical. It is the precise political and psychological condition that Museveni, as a ruling figure, has imposed on the Ugandan people, and particularly on the youth who constitute over seventy percent of the population. He presented himself, and for a generation was sincerely received, as the man who ended Amin's terror and Obote's terror. He was, or appeared to be, exactly what Fanon described: the intellectual who commits suicide as a bourgeois and integrates with the people.

This is precisely why the betrayal is so totalizing; Amin was monstrous, but he was recognizably monstrous. His violence did not wear the costume of liberation theory. Obote's violence was crude, naked, and factional. But Museveni arrived clothed in philosophical architecture. He came with citations, with the correct ideology, as he himself had described in paragraph seventy-five of the 1971 essay, the Marxist-Leninists, the only authentic nationalists

in the last analysis, must either assume leadership or have a group of their own that can act any time to seize state power.

He seized state power in 1986, forty years ago.

When the colonizer is your hero, the psychological mechanism Fanon described in the colonial native avoidance, internalization of inferiority, the displacement of anger from the true enemy onto fellow natives does not disappear. It is reproduced. It is reconstructed around the figure of the liberator turned ruler. The Ugandan who protests the election of 2021 is told that she is ungrateful, that she has forgotten the bush, that she does not understand what it took to build the country. The anger that should flow toward a system that has stolen her future is redirected toward herself, toward her generation's supposed impatience, toward tribalism and divisiveness the same displacement mechanism Fanon described as the colonial native attacking his brother because he cannot attack the settler.

Museveni understood this mechanism well enough to write about it in 1971. He has deployed it consciously as a tool of governance for four decades.

Fanon names the figure responsible for this. He calls him the leader who was the incarnation of the people's will, who later arrogates to himself the sovereignty of the nation. He describes this leader with cold precision, a the leader around whose powers and ancestry there is a knowing and slightly admiring tone. The leader inspires awe in his close collaborators. The nation becomes an affair run by a big boss. And Fanon poses a devastating question: ***What will happen to the country if the leader dies?*** When a nation's entire political architecture has been organized around the question of one man's survival, it has already ceased to be a nation in the Fanonist sense, it has become an estate.

Uganda is an estate. The question of what happens after Museveni is already answered by the dynastic logic that surrounds him, his son Muhoozi Kainerugaba commands the army and his family controls the principal levers of state. The Constitution's preamble spoke of power belonging to the people, but the structural reality of Ugandan governance as of 2026 is that power belongs to a family, deployed through an institution the military that Fanon explicitly warned must never become an autonomous body that sooner or later, idle and aimless, will go into politics and threaten the authorities. In Uganda, the military did not threaten the authorities, it became the authorities.

In paragraph seventy five of the 1969 essay, the young Museveni writes one of the most inadvertently prophetic sentences in the literature of African political thought. He says; the Marxist-Leninists, the only authentic nationalists in the last analysis, must either assume the

leadership or have a group of their own that can act any time to seize state power after the colonial power is defeated. The petty bourgeoisie show the signs of betrayal even before the defeat of the colonial power because they will always be too eager to accept a political settlement which will usually be in the interests of the enemy.

Now hold this against what has happened in Uganda.

Museveni's NRM began with genuine ideological content. The Ten-Point Program of 1986 was a serious document. Its commitments to democracy, popular participation, elimination of sectarianism, national independence and improvement of the living standards of ordinary Ugandans were not mere rhetoric; they were, for a moment, a program. The early years of the NRM government produced real improvements in security and economic stability, this is not disputed. The question Fanon asks is not whether the revolution produced some good

outcomes, it is whether it produced structural transformation or merely exchanged personnel at the top.

The answer is visible in the amendment of Article 105(2) of the constitution in 2005, which removed presidential term limits. It is visible in the amendment of Article 102(b) in 2017, which removed the age limit preventing anyone over seventy-five from standing for president. It is visible in the 2021 elections in which the incumbent received figures that leaned precisely into the scenario Fanon described in the Pitfalls chapter: a single party and the government candidate receives ninety-nine percent of the votes. It is visible in the Wine case; Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, a musician from the ghetto, a man who emerged from the very Wretched of Uganda being met by the full force of a state security apparatus deployed to protect a man who once wrote that the only way to authentic decolonization is through organized, educated people's violence directed at the oppressor.

The north of Uganda knows what it means to inhabit the zone assigned to the native by a government that speaks the language of national unity. The Acholi, Langi and Teso who survived the bush war period, who were corralled into internally displaced persons' camps in the name of protection, who saw their land stripped and their communities fractured; they did not experience their oppressor as European. He was black, he was African, he carried a cattle herder's mythology and a guerrilla's biography and he named his policies Operation North.

The colonized psyche's complex does not dissolve when it meets a black face, it mutates; It becomes harder to name, to organize against, to bring to international attention because the language of racial solidarity and Pan-African consciousness is weaponized by the very person reproducing the colonial structure. Museveni speaks at African Union gatherings of African sovereignty, of resistance to Western conditionality, of the dignity of African self-determination. Meanwhile, inside Uganda, the conditionality he imposes on his own people is more exacting than anything the IMF has ever demanded: conditionality of silence, deference, of not calling the theft of elections by its name.

We ask again then, can we not claim to be colonized as Fanon described? Are we not the native and he the settler? The evidence does not require ideological conviction to read; it requires only honesty about what the structure produces and who it protects.

If, in 1971, Museveni concluded that revolutionary violence was not only justified but necessary, then we must ask the same question of ourselves.

We are living in a colonial system; we have named the colonizer, described the Manichaean world he maintains, shown that the violence that was supposed to have liberated us was redirected into the service of new domination. We are the native, he is the settler. Are we not justified to choose the same course of action that the young Museveni concluded was the only way?

This is the question that the argument so far demands we ask. And we must ask it honestly, without the comfortable evasion of either blanket pacifism or unexamined rage.

It is not the only question though. Our of Museveni does not merely take the form of saying that he used violence illegitimately, it is more fundamental and carries greater complexity; If what was enacted in 1986 was not, by Fanon's own definition, revolutionary violence then the question is not just whether we should do what Museveni did, but whether we can do what Museveni claimed to have done and actually accomplish it.

Fanon's answer to this, whilst not simple, is not evasive. He insists that the violence which liberates must be organized, ideologically grounded and directed by a leadership that is genuinely accountable to the masses. He insists that without this grounding, violence reproduces the colonial structure rather than dismantling it. He insists that it would take a leadership willing to keep organizing after victory, not merely to have organized in order to win it. What has to follow is a party genuinely rooted among the peasantry rather than floating above it; one that treats political education as a permanent task, not a wartime slogan to be scraped away once power is secured. This education has to reach the countryside first, not the capital, because it is the peasant and the unemployed man, not the urban elite who inherits the colonial civil service, who were the actual motor of the struggle and who stand to lose the most if the old structure simply changes hands. He insists, too, on real decentralization of decision-making, so that authority does not collapse back into a single leader or a small circle around him, because a revolution that recreates a single commanding figure has, in his view, already begun to recreate the settler's position, however native the face now occupying it. Where this is missing, Fanon says plainly, independence produces not liberation but a new administration: the same extraction, the same hierarchy, now defended in the people's own name rather than the colonizer's.

We began this with the preamble of the Ugandan constitution because it is the most honest place to begin a reckoning of this kind. Honest not because of what it says, but because of the gap it names between aspiration and reality.

The people of Uganda resolved in 1995 to build a society based on democratic principles, to prohibit sectarianism and to establish a government founded on popular will. They resolved that any attempt to remove constitutional power from the people shall be unlawful. The amendments of 2005 and 2017 did this. They were unlawful in the exact sense the preamble intended. They were accomplished through parliament, through constitutional procedure, through the very instruments that Fanon warned can be captured by a bourgeois leadership that has lost any genuine connection to the masses it once claimed to represent.

What does Fanon say to this? He says that no leader, whatever his worth, can replace the will of the people and the national government, before concerning itself with international prestige, must first restore dignity to all citizens, furnish their minds, fill their eyes with human things and develop a human landscape for the sake of its enlightened and sovereign inhabitants. Museveni has, by any serious accounting, not done this. He has built a country in which dignity is distributed according to proximity to power, in which the mind of the citizen is furnished with fear rather than possibility, in which the human landscape is surveilled rather than developed.

He has restructured the colony.

Fanon ends The Wretched of the Earth with an appeal: let us not imitate Europe, let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth. The whole man, not the man who holds power by accumulation, not the man whose son inherits the military, not the man whose photograph hangs in every government office because his face has replaced the flag as the symbol of the state.

The Wretched of Uganda are not wretched because of colonialism alone, they are wretched because the man who once read Fanon well decided somewhere between the bush and Nakasero Hill that he was the exception Fanon's analysis had not accounted for, that he was the correct ideology made flesh, that his continuity was the revolution's continuity.

This is the oldest lie in the history of power. It is also, as Museveni himself understood in 1971, the final proof that the revolution has been hijacked.

He wrote that word. He knew what it meant. He hijacked it himself.

WE THE PEOPLE

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