

## Dan Leahy's Book Outline On:

### *The Wretched of the Earth*

by Franz Fanon, 1961

**Background.** France invaded Algeria in 1830 eventually ruling it as a Department of France until losing the war of independence in 1961. Although there were numerous revolts against the French throughout this time period by indigenous Islamic forces, the war for an independent nation began in 1954 and lasted seven years. Fanon worked as a Psychiatrist in an Algerian hospital during the war, joined the FLN, but died of cancer in December, 1961 at the age of thirty-six.

**The Ideology of Lies and Alibis for Aggression.** “I have written a preface in order to bring the argument to a conclusion; for we in Europe are being decolonized: that is to say the settler which is in everyone of us being savaging rooted out. Let us look at ourselves, if we can bear to, and see what is becoming of us. First, we must face the unexpected revelation, the strip tease of our humanism. There you can see it, quite naked, and it's not a pretty sight. It was nothing but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage; its honeyed words, its affectation of sensibility were only alibis for our aggressions.” – (From Sartre's Preface)

**Concerning Violence.** Decolonization is always a violent phenomenon, a replacement of one species of men by another species of men. The governing class comes from elsewhere and are not the original inhabitants. The native is declared insensible to ethics, the negation of ethics, the quintessence of evil. For the native, however, the most essential value is first and foremost the land. How can we attain the land and bread to eat. The native does not want to compete with the settler; they want to take his place. Colonialism is violence in its natural state and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence. This native's violence is what unifies the nation.

**Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness.** Fanon talks about the division of the town and the rural areas and how the nationalist parties organize the towns' working classes but don't know the rural areas. But, as repressive police action forces secondary political leadership into the rural areas, these leaders realize that political action in the towns will never overthrow the colonial regime. It is at this point armed struggle begins. They have no program other than: the foreigner must go. The other dynamic leading to overthrow of the colonial regime is the rural people forced into the towns, the lumpenproletariat, that will become the urban spearhead of the revolt. These two forces united by politics that are national, revolutionary and social. “Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them.”

**The Pitfalls of National Consciousness.** The politics of nationalist parties made up the colonized middle classes wish to replace the mother land's bourgeoisie. To them, nationalization means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are the legacy of the colonial period. They become intermediaries, managers for the Western bourgeoisie. The only worthwhile dogma they espouse is the union of the nation against colonialism. A political party armed with revolutionary principles and highly conscious must

bar the way to this useless middle class. Nationalism dies away on the day independence is proclaimed and rapid steps taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness.

**On National Culture.** How to legitimize the claims of a nation. Fanon sees attempting to find culture in the distant past, before colonization and outside of the national context, such as in African culture in Arab culture or the awakening of Islam, leads up a blind alley. Culture is first and foremost national; it cannot become cut off from the events of the day. You do not show proof of your nation in its culture but you substantiate its existence in the people's fight against the forces of occupation.

November 2021