

ALIENATION AND VIOLENCE: FRANTZ FANON AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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Abstract:

The paper aims at analysing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the words of Frantz Fanon. In particular, the concept of alienation developed by this author is taken into consideration, in order to try to understand the psychological effects of the colonization on native people. Moreover, the focus is put on violence as a consequence of alienation, with the purpose of highlighting some of the features of the Palestinian resistance. The paper starts with a biography of Fanon, in order to prepare the ground for the examination of his works. After that, the accent is put on that branch of Israeli historiography that began to talk about colonization, so to build the appropriate framework where to carry on the analysis. The third part explains the concept of alienation as developed by Fanon, as well as how the concept is applied to the case study taken into account. The final section deals with violence, with the aim of enhancing its relation with alienation and, thus, contribute to a major understanding of the Palestinian resistance and the whole conflict.

“When we consider the resources deployed to achieve the cultural alienation so typical of the colonial period, we realize that nothing was left to chance and that the final aim of colonization was to convince the indigenous population it would save them from darkness. The result was to hammer into the heads of indigenous population that if the colonist were to leave they would regress into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality. At the level of the unconscious, therefore, colonialism was not seeking to be perceived by the indigenous population as a sweet, kind-hearted mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather a mother who constantly prevents her basically perverse child from committing suicide or giving free rein to malevolent instincts. The colonial mother is protecting the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune”.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967), p. 168

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Introduction

The recent resurgence of the conflict between Israel and Palestine has caused, as always happens in these situations, a great number of reactions all over the world. Pro-Palestinians, human rights groups and some Arab countries have deeply criticized the Israeli bombing of Gaza and the massacre of thousands of innocent people. Conversely, Zionists and pro-Israelis have focused on Hamas terrorism as the main cause of Netanyahu's military intervention, in this particular case the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli students. Whatever the reason of all this, the disproportioned suffering caused by Israel to the Gaza population seems hard to hide. If one takes into consideration the number of casualties and the damages caused by the Operation Protective Edge, it is evident that the Palestinians have suffered the major losses.

If one looks back in time, however, this state of things repeats itself almost regularly since the Thirties, when waves of Jews fleeing from Europe reversed themselves on what the Zionists call "the promised land". In the following years, indeed, all the wars fought between Israel and the Palestinians provoked great sufferings for the latter, while the former progressively gained more strength, as well as increasingly occupied portions of land. This 'colonization' has continued until today, when harsh political battles are fought, both at national and international level, in order to stop the construction of new settlements in the West Bank².

Despite the mythology that surrounds the state of Israel, from the 1980s on a group of scholars later called "the new historians" have started deconstructing the ideological foundations of the country that, since the last decade of the XIX century, have been elaborated by the Zionists. Instead of referring to Israel as the promised land, those historians based their researches on archive documents that, contrary to what had been written until then, showed the brutal way Zionists had seized land from the original inhabitants and had forced them to move away from their houses. As a consequence, the debate shifted from the myths of *terra nullius* and promised land to the colonization Israel had operated in that area, occupying a land that was not empty and, moreover, provoking great sufferings to the local population.

² See, for example, the considerable number of UN resolutions issued on this topic.

One of the most important scholars of this movement, Ilan Pappé, has accused Israel of carrying out an authentic ethnic cleansing, while Baruch Kimmerling has overcome the old myths stating that the process of construction of the state of Israel could fall under the term of colonization³. Looking at the current events, it seems that this debate is still open to new contributions. After the recent coalition government formed by the Palestinians, Netanyahu has implemented a new plan to build settlements in West Bank and Jerusalem, which has been condemned also by the US ambassador in Israel. According to Abdelmajid Sweilem, professor at al-Quds University, “the Israelis want to increase land grab measures in case they come up with their own solution to the conflict or one is imposed on them⁴.”

Even if colonization represents a main feature of the XX century, the Israeli-Palestinian case deserves a further analysis. Indeed, while the conflict has been analysed mainly in terms of international relations and human rights, the colonization aspect seems less explored, mostly because of the myths spread by the Zionists, as well as the mainstream narrative, that tends to identify the Palestinians with terrorism. Being colonization a topic that could be examined from a huge variety of perspectives, this paper will try to focus on a specific aspect, that is, natives’ alienation. To this end, the works of Frantz Fanon, a major figure in colonialist literature, will be taken into consideration. In particular, his two main books, *Black skins, white masks* and *The wretched of the Earth*, will be used as main points of reference.

The purpose of the paper, then, consists in the analysis of the alienation that the Israeli colonization has generated in the Palestinians. First of all, a brief historical background on the conflict will be given, using mainly the “new historians” works in order to shed some light on the main aspects of colonization. After that, the article focuses on two central concepts that characterize the Israeli-Palestinian troubled relations. First of all, the alleged feeling of strangeness perceived by the Palestinians in their homeland, an aspect that Fanon has treated when analysing French colonization in Algeria and Martinica. After that, the paper tries to analyse the consequences of this

³ See Pappé, Ilan, *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, 2006, and Kimmerling, Baruch, *The invention and decline of Israeliness: state, society and military*, University of California Press, 2001. In this work the Italian translation of Pappé’s book will be used, see *La pulizia etnica della Palestina*, Fazi editore, Roma, 2008.

⁴ See Hatuqa, Dalia, *New Israeli settlement expansion condemned*, al-Jazeera online, 5 June 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/israel-announces-new-settlement-expansion-20146553145984773.html>.

perception on the population, concentrating particularly on violence, which has characterized most of the Palestinian resistance to the occupation⁵.

Fanon's life: struggling for freedom⁶

Despite its brevity, Fanon's life has been really intense, especially with regard to the battles he carried out against colonialism. Born in the French colony of Martinica in 1925 from a middle class family, he studied at Lyceé Schoelcher where one of his teachers was Aimé Césaire, one of the main figures of anti-colonialist literature. Influenced by his denouncement of colonial racism, the young Fanon agitated against the Vichy regime while in Martinica, and then moved to France, where he joined the resistance against the Nazi occupying forces. It was during his military service in France that he explicitly experienced racism, noticing how French women avoided black men that were fighting for freedom. After the war, he won a scholarship to study medicine and psychiatry in Lyon, where he met José Dublé, a French woman who became his wife in 1952 and that shared his convictions against racism and colonialism. It is in this period that Fanon started to apply psychoanalysis to the study of the effects of racism on individuals, especially on the self-perception of black people.

The cultural vivacity of the 1950s made him familiarize with the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as he became friend with Octave Mannoni, a psychoanalyst author of the book *Psychology of colonization*. Moreover, he was influenced by the publication of another important work on colonialism, *Vacation de l'Islam*, by the Algerian social philosopher Malek Bennabi. The book written by Bennabi distinguished between a country simply conquered or occupied and a colonised country. The latter, as the author explained, had lost its cultural bearings and internalized the idea of the inherent superiority of the colonizing culture.

In those years, furthermore, Fanon started identifying himself with the freedom fighters coming to France in order to seek allies against European colonialism, becoming

⁵ Violent resistance is not the only way of reaction to the occupation, although it is the one that has attracted most of the attention of politicians and academic. Other non-violent forms of resistance has developed in recent years, of which BDS is one of the most widespread all over the world. However, these are not the object of concern in this article.

⁶ The following information, except from different indication, are taken from Bhabha, Homi K., *Foreword*, in Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skins, White Masks*, Pluto Press, London, 1986, pp. VII-X.

active in the anti-colonialist struggle. In 1953, he accepted a job offer at Bilda Joinville Hospital in Algiers; therefore, he could concretely observe the fight against the Europeans. Shocked by the racist treatment the Arabs underwent, he developed a close relationship with the Algerian poor and used group therapy to help his patients.

After the brutal repression of the Algerian revolt in 1954, involving torture, killing, physical abuse and barbaric repression, Fanon secretly supported the revolutionaries and two years later, in 1956, he openly joined the National Liberation Front (FLN). He then travelled throughout Africa speaking on behalf of the movement, serving also as an ambassador in Ghana for the provisional government of Algeria. In this period, however, he was diagnosed with leukemia and, despite undergoing medical treatment in USSR and United States, he died on 6 December 1961.

His fame rose steadily in the 1960s and the 1970s, as he was considered a Third World hero. His works inspired young generations of radical students all around Europe, and they influenced the Black Power movement in the United States. At the same rapidity, his name had arisen, so it was discredited and forgotten. Conservative writers reacted against his views on violence and leftist intellectuals dismissed his revolutionary statements as outdated and naïve. However, postcolonial studies in the 1990s heralded a new interest in Fanon, whose works have undergone a large process of reinterpretation. As this paper tries to show, there is still place for applying Fanon's thought even to contemporary events, namely the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His works, indeed, can represent a good starting point to both analyse it from a historical point of view and understand the current developments.

The colonization of Palestine

The opinions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cover a wide spectrum, going from the right of Israel to live in the promised land to the genocide of Palestinians. Few times, however the term colonization has been used to define what is happening in that region. In particular, most of the historiography had not employed this term until the emergence of the so-called "new historians" that, having access to archives covering the events that developed from the thirties until 1948, started providing a different

perspective on the myths⁷ that surrounded the foundation of the state of Israel. Simha Flapan, in particular, explicitly used the term “Zionist colonization” in his work *Zionism and the Palestinians*, published in 1979.

According to the Arab version, there was a colonial dispossession of a native people by a white settler class bent on expansion at their expense. In the Zionist version, Jewish immigration to Palestine brought the benefits of development to all inhabitants of the country, but met with the resistance of the feudal landlord class whose vested interests were jeopardized by the modernisation of the country, and it was the intransigence of this class that brought calamity to the Palestinian people⁸.

Flapan, however, states “no doubt certain features of Israeli Arab relations since the establishment of the state in 1948 have resembled a colonialist pattern. [...] An historical analysis, however, is crucial to determining whether the colonialist pattern was inherent in Zionist policy during the Mandatory period”⁹.

The beginning of the Jewish colonization in Palestine could not be considered as a ‘classic’ one. This difference could find its explanation in the fact that Great Britain was the Mandatory power in that area and, therefore, it would not have allowed another actor to grow in strength. Indeed, the Balfour Declaration allowed the Jews to gradually settle in the new land. Moreover, as Kimmerling states, the Zionist project elaborated by Herzl, based on the myth of *terra nullius* and on strong nationalist elements, envisaged the formation of a separate market for Jews, which did not consider the exploitation of Palestinians¹⁰. Therefore,

the [initial] relations between Jews and Arabs were not those of the colonisers and natives. This is borne out by comparing Palestine to the [French colonies]. The structure of employment and land ownership was such as to reduce the native population to dependence [...]. By contrast, in Palestine, the Arab sector of the economy developed at a quickened pace in 1917-48; [therefore], what emerged was not the exploitation of one sector by another, but the competition between two separate national economies, each growing rapidly¹¹.

The economic separation of the two communities, which then had a profound impact on the possibilities of cooperation, was the result of two factors. First, the Zionists aimed at the establishment of a fully autonomous and independent Jewish economic sector, in order to create a new type of Jewish society. Secondly, the use of economic boycott as a political weapon by Palestinians and counter-boycott organized

⁷ The word myths is especially used by Baruch Kimmerling in *The invention and decline of Israeliness*, and Simha Flapan in *The birth of Israel: myths and realities*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1987.

⁸ Flapan, Simha, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, Croom Helm, London, 1979, p. 194.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Kimmerling, *The invention*, p. 27.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 195.

by Yishuv increased the division and, to say it with Fanon words, the compartmentation between the two communities, even in non-economic sectors¹².

One of the most important voices of the “new Israeli history”, Ilan Pappé, has given another description of the events that unfolded by the Thirties, and especially in 1947-1948. He has started from defining colonization, which could be of two types. First, exploitative, where colonizers exploit the resources for the benefit of the empire they come from. Second, as seen in Australia, North America and South Africa, where colons separate themselves from their motherland and want to live independently in the new lands, eliminating the native population”¹³. In the former category, the French and British ones could be included, while Pappé inserts Israel in the latter. Indeed, in his work *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*¹⁴, he claims that what happened in 1947-48 can fall under the definition of ethnic cleansing, because the intention of the Israelis was to push the Palestinians out of their land, in order to allow the settlers and the newcomers to live in the “promised land”. With this work, Pappé objected to two powerful myths of the Zionist ideology. First, the *terra nullius* one, which claimed that the land was not inhabited before the Jews arrival; the second, instead, consisted in the voluntary flee of the Palestinians, with the aim to organize themselves in order to reconquer the lost land¹⁵.

Another important factor underlined by Pappé, which represents a peculiar feature of the Zionist colonization, consists in the “judaization” process carried out by all Israeli governments, “especially in Galilee, [which] is a fundamental aspect from the colonialist perspective, as it leads to the alienation of Palestinians, until they become strangers in their country”¹⁶. Here, Pappé uses the keyword of the analysis carried out in this article: alienation.

Despite the various intellectuals that analysed this concept, like Marx, Weber and Tönnies, the paper will refer to Frantz Fanon works in order to treat it, as this author explicitly applies it to the colonial context. In the following paragraphs, therefore, the works – and the words – of Fanon will be used with the purpose to try to analyse the

¹² Ibid., p. 199.

¹³ <http://osservatorioiraq.it/node/9570>.

¹⁴ Ilan Pappé, *La pulizia etnica della Palestina*.

¹⁵ Avi Shlaim, *The debate about 1948*, in Benny Morris, *Making Israel*, Michigan University press, 2007, p. 131, <http://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472115419-ch5.pdf>; or in International Journal of Middle East Studies, 27:3, 1995, http://insct.syr.edu/academic_programs/Arab-Israeli%20Conflict-Tal/Shlaim%20Article.pdf.

¹⁶ <http://osservatorioiraq.it/node/9570>.

living conditions of the Palestinians both in Gaza and West Bank. In particular, Fanon will represent a useful tool in order to understand past and contemporary events, from the PLO activity to the intellectuals commitment, from the Hamas victory in 2007 Gaza elections to the last massacres that took place in summer of 2014. Indeed, the paper will also focus on violence, which, as put forth by Fanon, is strictly correlated to the feeling of alienation. Hence, a possible interpretation of the periodical resurgence of the conflict will be given.

Palestinians alienation

Although a precise definition of the term alienation is not given by Fanon, the analysis can start from the Oxford dictionary, which defines it, as “making someone feel isolated or estranged”¹⁷. What can be understood by the reading of his main works, *Blask skins, white masks* and *The wretched of the Earth*, indeed, is related to this definition.

To begin with, Fanon puts forth a very important concept that reveals itself fundamental in this article, compartmentation, which implies mutual exclusion and no complementarity between two peoples, where one of the two is superfluous¹⁸. This feature perfectly fits the Israeli-Palestinian reality. Since the beginning of the colonization, as showed by Flapan in his above-mentioned work, the two peoples developed separated economies. This division between the communities, however, has progressively reduced due to the huge migration in the 1930s, during the Second World War and after the establishment of the state of Israel. As Pappé has claimed, after the ethnic cleansing of 1947-48, which produced waves of refugees fleeing to Jordan and the neighbouring countries, Zionists began the process of “judaization” of the country, which represents the major cause of alienation of the Palestinian population.

This concept has been further elaborated by Yiftachel, who has classified Israel as an ethnocracy. This kind of political model is composed by the fusion of three forces. First, a settler society, which “pursues a deliberate strategy of ethnic migration and settlement that aims to alter the country’s ethnic structure”. The Israeli one, in

¹⁷ http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/alienate#alienate_3.

¹⁸ Fanon, Frantz, *Les damnés de la terre*, Maspero, Paris, 1961. Here the edition used is *The wretched of the earth*, Grove Press, New York, 2004, pp. 3-4.

particular, is defined as 'pure settlement colony', divided into three main ethno-classes: a) a founding charter group, that is, the first Jews that arrived after the Balfour declaration; b) a group of later migrants, such as the waves that arrived in the 1930s and the 1940s; c) dispossessed indigenous groups (the Palestinians). The second force is ethno-nationalism, which fuses the post-Westphalian division of the world into sovereign states and the principle of self-determination. Third, the ethnic logic of capital, where the dominant ethnic group occupies the highest positions in the economic scale, while the indigenous people are excluded from capital or mobility in the labour market¹⁹.

The economic discrimination is also central in Fanon discourse. Indeed, he argues that colonial alienation is fundamentally economic: "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization or, better, the 'epidermalization' – of this inferiority"²⁰.

As explained by Hansen, "originally economic, this subjection is later rationalized in cultural, psychological, and religious terms, and applied to the whole of native population, which can easily be identified because of its colour"²¹.

Discrimination, thus, plays a substantial role in enhancing alienation of the native inhabitants. To follow Fanon's discourse, the relation that develops between colonizers and colonized is based on a sense of superiority of the former with the respect to the latter. To be more precise, "colonial rule and the relations it fashioned tried to rob the people under subjugation of their status of human beings"²². Consequently, instead of feeling inferior, the colonized is pervaded by a feeling of nonexistence²³. "Because it is a systematized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: "Who am I in reality?"²⁴.

The words of Fanon, though written in the 1960s, sound particularly up-to-date when one analyses the current situation in Israel/Palestine. As the author was told by

¹⁹ Yiftachel, Oren, " 'Ethnocracy': the politics of judaizing Israel/Palestine", *Constellations: International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, Vol. 6: 3: 364-390 (1999), pp 365-367.

²⁰ Fanon, *Black Skins*, p. 4.

²¹ Hansen, Emmanuel, *Frantz Fanon: social and political thought*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1977, p. 80.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²³ Fanon, *Black Skins*, p- 106.

²⁴ Fanon, *Wretched*, p. 182.

two Arab-Israeli students, discrimination in universities is a daily reality²⁵, confirmed by the in-depth analysis carried out by Golan-Agnon²⁶. Worse, it has been calculated that discrimination can be found, directly or indirectly, in more than fifty laws of the state of Israel. As summed up by a report in 2011, inequality characterizes practically all the main fields of private and public life, such as citizenship rights, income, social welfare, employment, land, educational access, health and political participation²⁷. Furthermore, “the right to equality and freedom from discrimination is not explicitly enshrined in Israeli law as a constitutional right, nor is it protected by statute”²⁸.

Palestinians, thus, are constantly made feeling as second-class citizens or, worse, strangers, in their homeland, what produces a deep sense of alienation. In his preface of *Black Skins, White Masks*, referring to the Algerians, Sartre wrote, “the Arab, permanently alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization”²⁹.

In his analysis of Fanon’s alienation Hansen indicates two main fields where alienation is mostly perceived. First, political oppression, as

The colonizer controls the political destiny of the colonized, who is not allowed to participate in the political processes that affect him. All decisions that affect him are made by the colonizers, and thus the colonized also suffers political oppression. *He is made to feel alien in his own country* [italics mine]. Such conditions lead to feelings of humiliation, inferiority and powerlessness³⁰.

As reported by Adalah, several motions to prevent Arab parties to participate to elections has been proposed in the last decade, as well as another bill has been put forth requesting all the members of Knesset to swear loyalty to Israel as a Jewish, Zionist and democratic state³¹. Racism, thus, is contained even in the legislation, what poses Israel on the same level as former European colonial powers.

However, the law that, under the lens of this work, seems to contribute more to the enhancement of alienation is the *Nationality Law* of 1952. Indeed, article 13 states

²⁵ Interview conducted by the author in Amman, Jordan, September 2014.

²⁶ Golan-Agnon, Daphna, “Separate but not equal: discrimination against palestinian arab students in Israel”, *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 49 Number 8, April 2006, pp. 1075-1084.

²⁷ Hesketh, Katie, et al., *The inequality report: the palestinian arab minority in Israel*, Adalah, Haifa, March 2011, pp. 8-12. As regards discrimination, see also a report issued by the Mossawa Center for the US State Department, on 24th October 2013, titled *Discrimination against the Arab minority in Israel*, that can be consulted at <http://www.usacbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/US-State-Dept-2013-Report-Mossawa-Submission.pdf>, as well as the UN General Assembly *Report of the Committee against racial discrimination*, 18th session (13 February -9 March 2012, pp. 15-23, that can be consulted at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G12/428/69/PDF/G1242869.pdf?OpenElement>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7

²⁹ Sartre, Jean-Paul, preface to *Black Skins*, p. XXIII.

³⁰ Hansen, *Frantz Fanon*, p. 92.

³¹ Hesketh, *Inequality report*, pp. 53-54.

that “‘foreign nationality’ includes foreign citizenship, and ‘foreign national’ includes a foreign citizen, but does not include a Palestinian citizen”³². Moreover, “Any reference in any provision of law to Palestinian citizenship or Palestinian citizens shall henceforth be read as a reference to Israel nationality or Israel nationals”³³. The judaization process recalled by Pappe and Yiftachel is definitively evident from this provision, where the Palestinians are assimilated to Israelis. This situation can be compared to the process carried out by France with respect to Algeria, a condition that Fanon widely described in his works.

The second powerful tool that Fanon indicated as provoking and increasing alienation is cultural degradation. As reported by Hansen,

Fanon discusses in some detail the cultural factors that lead to such alienation. Of these, perhaps the most important are education and the language of the colonizer, which remain the most potent instruments for the systematic alienation of the native. In the colonial territory, the colonizer first imposes its own language on the colonized. The language of the colonizer becomes the official language, the language of commerce and business. [...] the language of the colonizer is not only a medium of communication: it is a “social artefact”. Thus, to adopt the language of the colonizer is to assume his cultural forms of thought and patterns. [...] It is the adoption of the colonizer’s language that estranges the native³⁴.

The case of Israel and Palestine provides great evidence to this statement. Despite Arabic is recognized as an official language of the state of Israel,

“Arabic speakers in Israel have little opportunity to enjoy and use their language after completing their primary and secondary schooling, except in the private sphere and within their own community. As a result of government policy, the status of Arabic is vastly inferior to that of Hebrew in terms of the resources dedicated to its use, and there is clear inequality in the opportunities granted to Arabic speakers to enjoy and use their language in official and public fora. The minimal use of Arabic in the public sphere and by public institutions stands in stark contrast to its official status”³⁵.

Hebrew language has always represented a powerful tool used by Zionist to erase the previous Palestinian-Arab culture and replace it with the new one. Since 1948, as showed by a map accessible on Zochrot website, dozens of villages and cities have been cancelled “both physically and cartographically”³⁶. Furthermore, in 2009 “the Transport Minister made a decision to Hebraize all road signs in Israel, removing the Arabic names

³² *Nationality Law*, 1952, Art. 13, <http://adalah.org/Public/files/Discriminatory-Laws-Database/English/37-Citizenship-Law-1952.pdf>.

³³ *Ibid.*, Art. 18

³⁴ Hansen, *Frantz Fanon*, p. 93.

³⁵ Hesketh, *Inequality report*, p. 46.

³⁶ Lichfield, Gideon, “Behind the politics of road signs in Israel and Palestine”, *Quartz online*, 26-08-2014, <http://qz.com/255328/behind-the-politics-of-road-signs-in-israel-and-palestine/>.

of towns and villages from the signs and replacing them with the Hebrew names of the places using Arabic letters”³⁷, although it ran counter a 2002 judgement issued by the Israeli Supreme Court. In the first chapter of *Black Skins*, Fanon effectively resumed the problems envisaged by such condition of superiority attributed to a language: “The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of French language”³⁸. If one substitutes the word ‘Negro’ with ‘Palestinian’, the result does not change. As showed by the above-mentioned reports and laws, the status of Hebrew language is, *de facto*, superior with respect to that of the Arabic one. Indeed, the former is the language of politics, culture, education, that is, those fields that are fundamental in building citizen’s conscience and background. Alienation, therefore, represents a direct consequence for the Palestinians, as their language is considered a second-class one, like every native language at the times of European colonization. Moreover, if a Palestinian aims at reaching upper-class positions, he or she is obliged to learn Hebrew, otherwise he or she will not have the possibility to choose a work, as the choice will be restricted to some fields only.

Cultural degradation or alienation, furthermore, is enforced by the State Education Law, issued in 1953³⁹. As stated in article 2, “the object of state education is to base elementary education in the State on the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the Jewish people”. Although it has been amended in the year 2000, adding, “that one of the objectives of education is to acknowledge the needs, culture and language of the Arab population in Israel”, the article has not been implemented and, thus the objective not realized⁴⁰. On the contrary, students in Arab state-run schools receive very little instruction in Palestinian or Arab history and culture, spending more time learning the Torah than the Qur’an. This hails from the fact that Arab state schools curricula are entirely determined by the state, as well as Arab educators and administrators are under-represented in the Ministry of education (6, 2%), so their decision-making power

³⁷ Hesketh, *Inequality report*, p. 47.

³⁸ Fanon, *Black Skins*, p. 8.

³⁹ *State Education Law*, 1953, <http://adalah.org/Public/files/Discriminatory-Laws-Database/English/24-State-Education-Law-1953.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Hesketh, *Inequality report*, p. 39.

is sensibly low⁴¹. Finally, a recent provision has imposed the removal of the term ‘Nakba’ from textbooks⁴².

Reaction to alienation: violence

What happens, then, when an entire population is forced to perceive itself as stranger in its land? Which are the processes triggered by the constant discrimination of one ethnic group with respect to the other? How does the colonized people consciously – or unconsciously – react to such a state of things? Taking into consideration Fanon’s works, the main answer to these questions can be summed up in one word: violence.

To begin with, alienation is not an individual question. Hansen states “since the entire group of natives of the colonized society is subject to the domination of the colonizers, the whole group is alienated. The colonized group as a whole suffers from colonial alienation”⁴³. Although violence existed in the indigenous community even before the arrival of the colonizers, Fanon states that it was the settler, or his intermediaries, that introduced violence into the relationship between the native and the settler⁴⁴. Indeed, “colonial rule was effected by a mixture of force, violence, persuasion, deceit and fraud. Whatever element was dominant depended on the particular circumstances of each case”⁴⁵. On this base, thus, it is easily understandable the reaction of the Palestinians since the 1930s, when they started struggling against Jews. Moreover, the various battles and conflicts between one part and another can be comprehended in this framework. Israel, indeed, took the Palestinians land with a mixture of force and violence (especially in the 1967 Six Days War), persuasion, deceit and fraud (see the request of 80 percent of the land to the UN committee in 1947, which led to the allocation of 56 percent of Palestine to the Israelis)⁴⁶.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 40. See also Golan-Agnon, “Separate but not equal”, p. 1079, who states that of the “of thousands of people who work in the Ministry’s administrative headquarters, not even 10 are Arab, and most of them work in the cafeteria”. For an accurate statistics on Arab participation in higher education and academics, see Ali, Nohad, *Representation of Arab Citizens in the Institutions of Higher Education In Israel*, Sikkuy, Haifa and Jerusalem, November 2013, http://www.sikkuy.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/English_final-2014_representation_higher_education1.pdf.

⁴² Hesketh, *Inequality report*, p. 40.

⁴³ Hansen, *Frantz Fanon*, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 87.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 84.

⁴⁶ Pappe, *La pulizia etnica*, p. 50. See also Khalidi, Walid, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution”, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, n. 105, Fall, 1997, pp. 5-21, and Flapan, Simha, “Israelis and Palestinian: Can

As Fanon claimed, “the colonial regime owes its legitimacy to force and at no time does it ever endeavour to cover up this nature of things”⁴⁷. “Violence among the colonized spread in proportion to the violence exerted by the colonial regime”⁴⁸. Since violence has represented the main element of Israeli relation with Palestinians, the response could not be expected to be different. The existence of various armed groups that have fought against Israel could then be clearly understood if seen from a fanonian perspective. Ethnic cleansing, forced expulsion from the land, the building of a wall, as well as the various military operations conducted by Israel can only lead to a proportionate violent response. Hence, “the violence of the colonial regime and counter-violence of the colonized balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity. The greater the number of metropolitan settlers, the more terrible the violence will be”⁴⁹. “The arrival of the colonist”, Fanon explains, “signified syncretically the death of indigenous society, cultural lethargy, and petrification of the individual. For the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist. Such then is the term-for-term correspondence between the two arguments”⁵⁰.

Furthermore, the following sentence from *The wretched of the earth*, notwithstanding its reference to the Algerian resistance against colonizers, can be effectively applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly to the Operation Protective Edge in 2014:

once the colonized have opted for counter-violence, police reprisals automatically call for reprisals by the nationalist forces. The outcome, however, is profoundly unequal, for machine-gunning by planes or bombardments from naval vessels outweigh in horror and scope the response from the colonized. The most alienated of the colonized are once and for all demystified by this pendulum motion of terror and counter-terror. They see for themselves that any number of speeches on human equality cannot mask the absurdity whereby seven Frenchmen killed or wounded in an ambush at the Sakamody pass sparks the indignation of civilized consciences, whereas the sacking of the Guergour *douars*, the Djerah *dechra*, and the massacre of the population behind the ambush count for nothing. Terror, counter-terror, violence, counter-violence. This is what observers bitterly report when describing the circle of hatred which is so manifest and so tenacious in Algeria⁵¹.

They Make Peace?”, *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol XV, No.1, Issue 57, Washington DC, Autumn 1985, pp. 19-42.

⁴⁷ Fanon, *Wretched*, p. 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵¹ *Ibidem.*

If one substitutes the Algerian natives mentioned with the Palestinians, the result is practically the same. The killing of three Israeli boys, which was used as justification for launching Operation Protective Edge, sparked indignation both in Israel and the West, while the massacres of thousands of innocent people “counts for nothing”. Moreover, no commissions has never been set up by the Israeli government to judge any single Israeli soldier, reflecting the vision of Fanon who claims that “the authorities oppression can appoint as many commissions of inquiry and investigation as they like. In the eyes of the colonized, these commissions do not exist. And in fact, [after] years of crimes committed in Algeria, [...] not a single Frenchman has been brought before a French court of justice for the murder of an Algerian”⁵².

The colonized life, trapped into this circle of violence, is thus transformed radically. Indeed, Fanon maintains that

for the colonized this violence is invested with positive, formative features because it constitutes their only work. This violent praxis is totalizing since each individual represents a violent link in the great chain, in the almighty body of violence rearing up in reaction to the primary violence of the colonizer. Factions recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people, i.e., it pitches them in a single direction, from which there is no turning back⁵³.

Consequently, violence has become an integral part of Palestinians’ life, if not the main one. Indeed, it is considered ‘positive and formative’ because it is seen both as the only way to resist the occupying force and a ‘work’ for all the alienated youngsters. Indeed, as mentioned above, the very limited social, political and economic participation allowed to hundreds of young Palestinians, as well as the scarce educational possibilities, result in a powerful mix of alienation and frustration, whose relief valve is represented by violence itself.

Conclusion

The circle is therefore closed. Alienation provoked by colonial invasion finds its relief valve in violence, as a response to the use of force by the colonizer. As a result, violence itself represents one of the causes of natives alienation, as they are forced to

⁵² Ibid., p. 50.

⁵³ Ibidem.

live in an environment that does not follow its natural course, but rather constrains people to fight against an oppressor that wants to exclude them from the political life of the country, as well as endeavours to erase natives culture imposing its own.

Fanon analysis, despite dating back to the 1960s, still proves its usefulness when taking into consideration the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Its contribution on alienation, a topic that had never been considered before when examining colonization, could well explain and allow to understand the events that have unfolded in Palestine since the 1930s. The continuous process of 'judaization' carried out by all Israeli governments, indeed, has provoked a deep sense of estrangement between the Palestinian community.

Although a solution for this state of things seems not to appear at the horizon, after the various endeavours by the international community to put an end to this conflict, two possibilities could be put forth in order to break up alienation. First, the two-states solution, with the creation of a Palestinian nation, separated from Israel, that could allow Palestinians to retake the identity that Zionists have tried to erase. Otherwise, putting aside the ethnic elements that characterize the political and cultural life of both Palestinians and Israelis would be a preferable way out to the current status quo. Indeed, in this case the bases for a future peaceful cohabitation need to be prepared, guaranteeing equality of rights and duties to Arabs and Jews alike. This implies the commitment to set up pacific relations between citizens of both ethnic groups. As Fanon has showed, violence and alienation are strictly interrelated, therefore putting an end to the former that, so far, has represented the main element of 'communication' between the two sides, could only bring positive results in order to overcome the latter.

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