Third World Nationalism by Sam Dolgoff

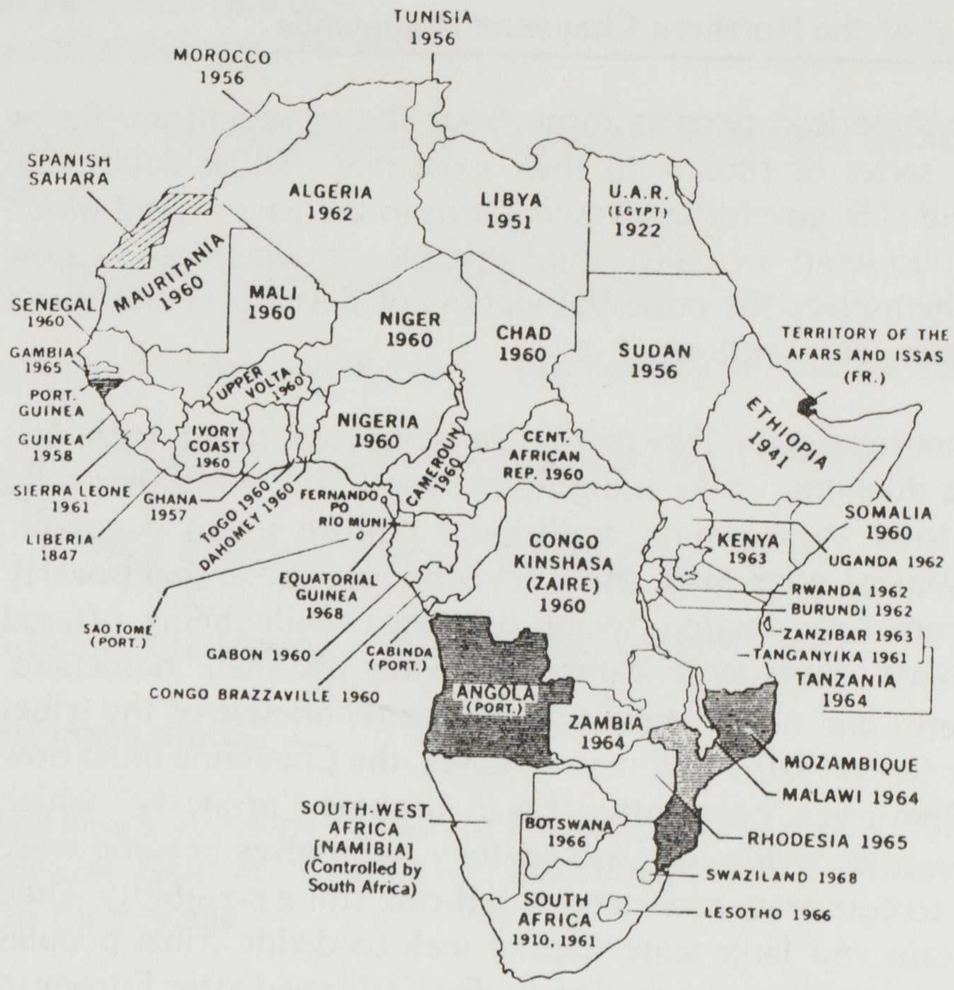
This pamphlet is the third in a series published by the Anarchist Communist Federation of North America. It briefly explores the notion that third world nationalism offers an alternative form of national identity to that of the nation-states of the western and eastern blocs. It takes the position that in the third world, no alternative is offered that in any way improves upon the forms of government under which the developed world suffers. In a telling geographical argument, Dolgoff points out that the independent African states that have emerged out of the struggles for liberation on that continent follow in large part the same boundaries established by European colonialists. The carving-up of territory, with its accompanying separation and destruction of tribal groupings which occurred under the colonizers, has been perpetuated and consolidated. National liberation has led to brutal civil wars, e.g. the Biafran conflict, with horrendous loss of life and the creation of thousands of homeless refugees.

The conclusion that national self-determination is by no means synonymous with social revolution is amply borne out by the continuing bloody strife occurring in the third world. That this at times genocidal conflict is supported and encouraged by the "world powers" for their own ends, and provides ample opportunity for profits from the sale of arms and ideology, places on concerned anarchists a responsibility to educate themselves on the complex history of the region, and this pamphlet offers a useful first step.

Dolgoff quotes liberally from a number of excellent sources: Rudolf Rocker's *Nationalism and Culture*, Robert W. July's *A History of the African People* (second edition), and Jean Lecoutre's *The Demi-Gods*. His facts and figures should lead the reader toward more serious study of the painful struggle from tribalism to nationhood taken by emerging African nations — a process seen by most observers as necessary to "progress".

I have some difficulty, however, in accepting Dolgoff's contention that the natural community of tribal groupings, "a system of lineages, whereby a body of kinsmen ... maintained collective claims to resources, cooperating ... with similar groups for various ends" (p. 19), while a form of social organization superior in its potentialities for freedom to the nation state, is so automatically an example of "free assocation". The distinctive and diverse cultures of the African continent offer a variety of associations and among that variety are communities based on hierarchy and domination, tribes that follow strict elder-son division of authority, that keep their women in a subservient role, and see their children as community resources. We cannot assume so easily that to do away with the nation state will bring about a new realm of freedom. The basis of community and individual freedom that anarchists espouse lies in rejecting hierarchy and opposing domination wherever it appeears, be it in "lineage" or "state" association.

C.W.



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