



and thus benefits from both continued government rule and from alliances with foreign investors and, in many cases, bribes from them.

The military itself perceives its function as protection of the state from both internal and external threats. This becomes obvious when one examines military coups. Professor Nnoli notes that in the January 1966 coup in Nigeria, the coup plotters had no intention, either stated or implied, of advancing the interests of the poor. "Their interest was [in] the reformation of the system, in other words, to achieve the interests of the privileged classes without imposing undue strains on the system." Yet some commentators have dubbed this particular military coup as "revolutionary." To dispel such illusions, all one needs to do is to look at the concrete economic, social, and human rights results of African military coups. The results are invariably enrichment of the military, continued impoverishment of the majority, and woeful abuses of human rights.

To summarize: as the radicalization of mass consciousness increases, the military intervenes under the guise of attempting to stop society from sliding into a state of "anarchy" — a deliberately misused catchword for chaos and disorder. What the military succeeds in doing is to temporarily roll back the gains of working people and peasants in their attempts to build better lives for themselves.

### **Ethnic Versus Class Consciousness**

The national question in African politics derives from Africa's colonial history and present-day neo-colonialism. The process of colonialization in Africa in which ethnic groups were arbitrarily regrouped into artificial political bodies has resulted in increased ethnic tensions and social and economic discrimination. Onigu Otite has noted that unequal access to political and economic resources among the various ethnic groups inevitably transforms ethnic divisions into antagonisms. Capitalist competition over control of the machinery of government plays on ethnic sentiments and sets groups against each other. Thus issues are distorted and simplified as ethnic- rather than class-based. In a paper presented to the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association, Dr. Inyang Eteng exposes the successes of the Nigerian ruling class in utilizing ethnicity and religion to conceal "the class basis of most of the country's basic problems." According to Eteng, "the pernicious consequence of ethnic [consciousness] is to encourage communal hatred, corruption, violence, religious manipulation, interethnic conflict and to undermine the growth of class consciousness in favour of ethnic/state consciousness."

All of this makes it difficult for anarchism to take root in Africa because the bosses find it easy to atomize the working class by fanning the embers of ethnicity. The labor movement, for instance, becomes polarized along ethnic lines, and issues are

