



WORKS

seen through ethnic prisms. In Nigeria, when the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) called a general strike in 1994 to demand an end to military dictatorship, the leadership of NUPENG branches in the northern part of the country resisted the strike. Their reason? They felt an ethnic identification with the military dictator, who is a northerner.

Religious and Cultural Factors

Religion is a profound feature of African life. Long before the earliest contact with Europeans, Africans had developed religious belief systems and ritual practices. This religious belief pattern was culture-based to a great extent, and it found expression in myths surrounding life and death questions. As we saw in Chapter three, certain beliefs and rituals actually solidified the communal nature of traditional African societies. But, like all religions, traditional African religions had conservative/reactionary aspects. The preeminent place accorded the supreme being or god in the affairs of men required every member of society to act and think in prescribed manners; holding beliefs perceived to run contrary to mainstream societal mores and values led to dire consequences.

Despite the compatibility of anarchism and the traditional African way of life, African culture still frowns on any set of ideas that conflict with religious beliefs or that promote values that lie outside the so-called mainstream, especially if they involve the overthrow of the existing system. This is not surprising, however, given the close affinity between spiritual and temporal powers.

Religion will continue to be an inhibiting factor despite such material factors as capitalist exploitation, social and economic inequality, and governmental tyranny — all of which inspire despair, upon which religion, especially imported Western religion, feeds. If war is the health of the state, despair is the health of religion. Until African workers and peasants find belief systems that provides them with real hope of happiness in the here and now, they will continue to grasp at religion's false hope of happiness in the hereafter.

International Solidarity

As stated earlier, anarchism as a systematic body of thought is only now beginning to find adherents in Africa. Much remains to be done. High in priority is the need to make people aware of the theoretical bases of anarchism, and to understand that anarchism is at the least as credible as other ideologies. In Africa today, as in too many other places, the word anarchism is synonymous with violence and chaos. But the image of anarchism will change if sufficient literature becomes available on the subject. To this end, anarchist groups in Africa need to set up a press to produce leaflets, pamphlets, and newsletters. There is also the need for alternatives

