

**ALIENATION OF LABOUR IN KARL MARX: A PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION OF  
WORKERS CONDITION IN NIGERIA**

**AGU SUNNY NZIE (PhD)**  
**Centre For General Studies**  
**Cross River University of Technology**  
**Calabar, Cross River State**

**Abstract**

*In the annals of history, philosophers especially the existentialists, historians, political scientists and sociologists have in one way or the other occupied themselves with the universal problem of man and the world. This could be because they see man and the world as objects of (philosophical) enquiry, and man, according to Protagoras, the measures of all things (homo mensura). Issues pertaining to man in his concrete existence thus become an enterprise that draws both sympathetic and intellectual attention of scholars. In the history of thought, Karl Marx is regarded as one of the foremost figures who have sought to define the ideal status of man in the society and equally correct the anomalies thereof. He made his mark by identifying the existing class struggle and wanton domination of one class by the other. This domination is evidenced in the politics of the state and the abysmal alienation of labour. This research work therefore aims at unearthing Karl Marx's theory of alienation of labour. The theory is based on stabling equal human equal right aimed at destroying the existing social class and enthrones a classless. Despite its apparent shift in thinking pattern, the researcher will apply Marx's theory of alienation in evaluating the condition of workers in the present day Nigeria where workers are packed in factories. Ministries, commissions and parastatals but poorly treated and extremely underpaid. The research work will in the end offer a pragmatic panacea towards making the condition of workers in Nigeria better.*

**Introduction**

Human nature, as a social being and political nature is an entity that is indispensable through the act of participation. It is the matter in which man realizes himself, in which he is active, out of which and through which he produces. This relation to nature therefore, is intimate and both man's physical and mental capabilities share in the intimacy through his existence in inorganic nature. In accordance with this; C.C. Ezeka quotes Pope John Paul II thus: "work bears a particular imprint of man and occupies his existence on earth." The alienation of labourers from nature manifests in the fact that their labour affords a means of life in a very narrow sense. (Torch Magazine 18). As man accepted to live together, problems still exist, problems like domination. One class trying to dominate the other, Class struggle of individuals in the society: deprivation of right and in-treatment of workers by the Bourgeoisie(capitalist).this inherent problem is what Marx (1818-1883) inherited. As a 17<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher who knows the fact of the time, he ardently delves into addressing problems that hinder the growth of the society, to which he refers as Alienation of Labour. Thus, Karl Marx (1818-1883) in his theory of alienation of labour explains the social alienation of people from aspects of their human nature as a result of living in a society split into social classes. In one of his books entitled Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx describes alienated (estranged) labour as undesirable condition. He equally associates the elimination of this condition with the abolition of market exchange and the development of communist society. In general, to be alienated from something is to lack wholehearted identification with it and instead to regard it as strange or alien and perhaps as an obstacle in one's way or as menacing to oneself. One speaks of alienation only where there is a prior expectation that one will identify with the thing in question as one's own or as closely connected to or continuous with one's self. Alienation of labour is central in this project; it poses a serious concern for man. The 17<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy, the enlightenment period, is significant for so many reasons. It did not only witness the emergence of many vigorous thinkers, but it also shifted the attention of philosophy from the

cosmos (ancient period) and God (medieval period) to the appreciation of man as both the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem of all reality (starting point and finishing point of all reality). In a pleasant way, the philosophies of the German idealist, Hegel (1770-1831) and the materialist, Feuerbach (1829-1880) respectively contributed to the shaping of the philosophical views of another great thinker, the founder of Historical Materialism, Karl Marx. Hegel formulated the main principle, law and categories of dialects, showing that ideas develop progressively from lower to higher form and that in the course of such development, there is a transformation of quantity into quality and internal contradictions are the source of development. This in a special way depicts Marx's methodology in exclusion of idealism, in place of the cognition and revolutionary transformation of the existing world. In the same vein, Feuerbach's (1829-1880) materialism, which portrayed that philosophy, should study nature and man as a product of protracted development of nature purged out of its metaphysical and contemplative approach, in place of socio-political sphere of human life. Hence, Marx (1818-1883) puts man as:

First of all a natural being... and a living natural being, who is endowed on one hand with natural powers... these powers exist in him as aptitudes and instincts, on the other hand as an object, natural, physical, dependent and limited being... that is the object of his instincts exists outside him, independent of him, but as for the object of his need, indispensable and essential for the realization and confirmation of his substantial powers.

In line with the exposition of the above points, this has always been manifested in the relationship between the capitalists and the workers everywhere in Nigeria. (D.McClellan:3) seeing the condition of Nigerian workers, their ill-treatment, how they are packed in factories, ministries, private and public sectors, how many of them are not being cared for, and underpaid. The researcher was inspired by the Marxian concept of alienation of labour to proffer some solutions to the condition of Nigerian workers. This research work will create the lacking awareness among the workers, this can serve as a means for the workers to equip with the right tools with which to pursue their course. This research work sets to create an awareness and further research towards ensuring that workers in Nigeria enjoy the fruit of their labour. The problem of alienation of labour in Karl Marx (1818-1883) centers around one fact: that matter is the basis of reality. A link with the economy and thought, Marx posits "economy is based on labour, which specifically is the human activity that puts us in touch with reality." Therefore, when human being is alienated from labour, the necessary implications include extinction of life, nature, self, relationship and the conception of human being as tool, which in every instance remain unjust and unnatural. In Nigeria the situation is heart-rending and alarming. The relationship between the capitalists and the labourers is anything but cordial. There is no or at most very low appreciation of labour, which can lead to unhappiness of the worker. This view is substantiated by the ill-treatment of workers, poor payment of salaries or total non-payment, inadequate remuneration, et cetera. Looking at it from a philosophical standpoint, one sees dehumanization of workers in Nigeria both in the private and public sectors through the lenses of egoism occasioned by capitalism. The effect of such egoism is not far-fetched. The researcher is thus faced with the task of advancing Karl Marx's principles in solving the problems of workers in Nigeria. Its conviction lies in the fact that the Nigerian context is not totally different from the 17<sup>th</sup> century experience. However, the questions that beg for answers are: what is the basic problem of workers in Nigeria? Are they underpaid? Or are they subject to high cost of living? Is there job security for the workers? These and many more are the questions which this research will provide answers for. The study focuses on Karl Marx (1818-1883) theory of alienation of labour which according to him hinders the growth of the society. As such, the researcher thereby restricts himself to the relationship between the labour and capital. This relationship is not one of cordiality. It is rather a relationship of alienation of labour. The researcher will also extend his research to the meaning of work, obligations of the workers and the implications of the alienation of labour in the Nigerian setting. There will be a cursory look into the existing classes, its cause and attendant effects on the economy and a proffer workable solution to the situation of workers in Nigeria.

The study is based on library research where reliable textbooks, journals and articles will be consulted and cited when necessary. The approach to this work will be expository, deductive, critical and evaluative. The

researcher will also use words that are peculiar to Marx such as cost value, exchange value et cetera which describe the relationship between labour, wage and alienation. It will finally document its data on the classical style.

Thus, Marx (1818-1883) posits the object of cognition to be of three types: (1) the things, phenomena, processes of nature and nature in its unity and integrity. (2) Diverse social relationships, processes and phenomena of social life and integral social organism, society as a whole, the historical process of its development and transformation. (3) Man himself, his origin and evolution in the surrounding reality, his inner world, consciousness, laws of cognitive activity and its results. Thus, the essence of the cognition of the adumbrated objects of cognition seems to be a scientific consideration and reconsideration of the socio-historical nature and the active character of the interaction between men, the knower and the surrounding reality.

The researcher observe that, one of the failures of some philosophers who delved into human work before Marx was that, philosophers took little or no recognition of the personality within the human work. Distinguishing himself from others, Marx took a considerate account of the personal influence of man through his work. In line with this, he conceives labour as a basic activity of man, which determines his thought and his socio-political and economic value that inalienably connects individuals to the making and remaking of the historic-materialism and the history of the world as a whole. Bringing the effect of the alienation of labour to the limelight, Marx posits the case of exploitation in the human work as a situation whereby the beingness of human being remains alien to him. Consequently, he observes the imprint and uniqueness of individualism in labour, which are eliminated through the alienation from the specie, self and others. Perhaps, the restitution of this lost self appears to be target of the envisage communism in Marx. Although Marx (1818-1883) rejected religion, the issue of the dignity of the human person undertaking human work could also be spotted in the Christian understanding of work. For the Christians, work is conceived as a participation in God's creative activity. Thus, both Marx's and Christian's conception of as work dignified labour and consequently elaborate on work as a self-actualizing endeavor. From the very fact that human work dignifies man, seals self and satisfies his living appear to prove the goodness of human work. However, the goodness of work could not be restricted to the usefulness alone; instead if incorporates the integral parts of human and his life. In concomitant with the goodness of human work, one may ask if work is good, why a division of labour, class struggles and alienation in work? Work in itself is to be good, though there could be some lacuna in its means. The possibility of lacuna in human work, of course, could be attributed to the egoistic tendency in man. Nevertheless, Marx's interest in this egoistic tendency could be traced in his attempt to expose the existence of class, its struggle, causes and effects as alienation. Imagining the situation whereby man could be free from egoism he proposed communism as an ideal state. On the other hand, the ethical value of human work could be seen in Marx's view against using human being as a means to an end. Thus, he portrayed the limit of one's duty as an employer or employee. In view of this, one's right as either employer or employee ends where the other's duty begins. Due to the existence of classes and its struggles, Marx also observes the gap between the capitalists and the labourers, which conceals the awareness of different obligations of either capitalists or the labour. Hence, ethical norms demand consensus as a practical measure, which as a matter of evidence involves both parties.

Marx (1818-1883) affirms that, one cannot talk of freedom in the capitalist's state, since the society is characterized by conflict and exploitation of different kinds. Hence, the issue of freedom can only be thought of in the communistic society, where for him freedom reigns in its totality. This view seems erroneous because one can only think of freedom in what belongs to him as an individual and the way the person uses that. Contrarily, freedom in the communist society and trade union movement represent a kind of "alienation", the restriction of freedom to individual and the subordination of man to his social role. (Collected Works 132).

Civilization has been conceived in different ways by different authors under a steady common features and characteristics. However, it seems pertinent to point out that, from series of historical works of the last century the concept 'civilization' reflected the stage of social development, which replaced the stage of savagery and barbarism. In line with this, Marx conceived this term 'civilization' as mentioned above. Following this idea, Marx in his work "The Poverty of Philosophy" wrote "The very moment civilization begins, production begins to be founded on the antagonism of orders, classes and finally on the antagonism of accumulated labour and immediate labour. No antagonism no progress. This is the law that civilization has followed up to our days." (The Treasury of Quotes 57)

Although civilization has a link with socio-economic formation, yet civilization cannot be identified with economic formation. In the first place, the concepts, socio-economic formation and civilization, perform different functions and are not equal in extension. In a sense, the concept of the formation is broader than the concept of civilization; all factors and manifestations of civilization are present and take place within whereas not all phenomena considered by the theory of economic formations are included in the concept of civilization.

In another context, civilization could be singled out according to religious factors, like when upon art, literature and psychology, upon the views of people, upon the totality of public life in certain periods and upon the socio-economic formation. Upon all said, it seems obvious that civilization being characterized by the peculiarities of culture, relations existing among people, their axiological attitude towards nature are quite stable, moving nations from a higher stage of historical development to a new socio-economic formation.

### **Biography On Karl Marx**

In line with this natural power and its instinctive manifestation in man that explain historical movement in Karl Marx, but a fundamental question arises at this juncture: who is Karl Marx? Karl Marx, son of a famous German lawyer of Jewish descent, was born in 1818 in Trier, Germany. Although a Lutheran, he was educated in Catholic schools and at the University of Berlin, where at twenty, he wrote his doctorate thesis on Democritus and Epicurus, under the influence of Hegelian thought. However, the Hegelian triadic or dialectical method suddenly captured his interest and he conceived history as a process of overcoming opposition and at the same time being reconciled to it, incorporating it within its being. He lost focus in Hegelian idealism and opted for a more materialistic and economic interpretation of man and history with the same dialectical method. In 1842, he became a journalist for the liberal Rheinische Zeitung and distinguished himself as an erudite and vibrant thinker. Thus, he was described as one who "combines the deepest philosophical seriousness with the most biting wit". Marx was married to Jenny Von Westphalen, and later became radically involved in politics, which underlines his emigration to London where he came in contact with the French socialists Friedrich Engel (1820-1895) who later became his lifelong friend. "Through Engel, Marx gained insight into British economic theory and the economic and social conditions of Britain," which contributed much in his philosophical works. His principal works are "*Economic and Philosophical manuscripts*" of 1844, "*The communist manifesto*" (Stumpf and Fiesser 374). In the manuscripts of 1844, he critically observed that under capitalism, the workers (proletariats) are wage-slaves (not free), exploited by the capitalists and as such are alienated beings.

### **Alienation Of Labour In Karl Marx**

Karl Marx (1818-1883) in his book titled "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" which was first published in 1932; the core of the manuscripts is alienation. Marx affirms that, if people are alienated, that is, estranged or separated—we must be alienated from something. In Christian theology, people are alienated from God through sin and the fall of Adam. From Marx view, alienation means selling or giving something away, or as Kant says, "the transference of one's property to someone else is its alienation" (Stumpf and Fiesser 415). Marx is of the opinion that, there is something crucial within our human nature from which we can be alienated, namely our work.

Marx exposes four aspects of alienation. He asserts that, we are alienated (1) from nature, (2) from ourselves, (3) from our species-being, and (4) from other people. Marx begins with the fundamental relation between workers and the product of their labour. From the material world, shape them, and make them our own. Capitalism, though, breaks this relationship by forcing workers to forfeit the products of their labour in exchange for money. In the productive process, a person's labour becomes as much an object as the physical material that is worked upon, since labour is now bought and sold. The more objects I produce, the fewer I can personally possess and therefore the greater is my loss. To the extent that I myself am embodied in my labour, I become alienated from the natural world in which I work. According to Marx (1818-1883), "the worker puts his life into the object, and his life then belongs no longer to himself but to the object". The object is appropriated and owned by someone else. In this way, the original relation between people and nature is destroyed.

We become alienated from ourselves by participating in capitalist labour. This comes about because work is external to the workers, and not part of our nature. Work is not voluntary but is imposed upon us. We have a feeling of misery instead of well-being. Rather than fulfilling ourselves, we must deny ourselves. We do not freely develop our physical and mental capacities but are instead physically exhausted and mentally debased. We feel like human beings only during our leisure hours. Most important of all, we are alienated from our work because it is not our own work but rather work for someone else. (Value Meaning and Social Structure of Human work 157). In line with this notion, workers do not belong to themselves but to someone else, and we have more or less become prostitutes. The effect is that a worker "feels himself to be freely active only in his animal functions and-eating, drinking and procreating-or at most also in his dwelling and personal adornment-while in his human functions he is reduced to an animal.

Another level, people are alienated from their species-being –that is, from our truly human nature as a result of living in a society split into social classes the character of any species reside in the type of activities it expresses. The species-character of human being is "free, conscious activity. "By contrast, an animal cannot distinguish itself from its activity. Marx (1818-1883) affirms that, a person "makes his life activity. Animals are limited in their activity to the standard of the species to which they belong. We, on the other hand, know how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species. For these reasons, the whole object of our labour is to impose upon the world of nature our species life-our free, spontaneous, and creative activity. In this view we reproduce ourselves in the things we create, not only intellectually in the realm of ideas, but also actively, seeing our own reflection in the physical world that we have created. This unique character of human species-life is lost when our labour is alienated.

This leads to alienation from other people. The breakdown in my relation to other people is similar to my alienation from the objects of my labour. In an environment of alienated labour we look upon other people from the point of view of workers. We see other workers as object whose labour is bought and sold, and not as full members of the human species. To say, then, that my species nature is alienated or estranged from me means that I am estranged from other people. Marx (1818-1883) asserts that, the alienated product of labour can belong only to some human beings. If it does not belong to the worker, it must belong to a person other than the worker. Thus, as a result of alienated labour workers produce a new relationship between themselves and another person, and this other person is the capitalist. The final product of alienated labour is private property, in the form of capitalist business, is both a product alienated labour and also the means by which labour is alienated. In the wage system entailed by private property, labour finds itself not as an end but as the servant of wages. Marx concludes that the freeing of society from private property involves the emancipation of the workers, which in turn will lead to the emancipation of humanity as a whole. (Stump and Fiesser ).

### **Forms Of Alienation**

From the exposition of alienation, it will also be nice giving an insight on the term labour; as a necessary condition in the understanding of alienation of labour. In the words of Marcuse, "Labour is grasped as basic

phenomenon of human existence and as a constant influence in human existence, where simultaneously something happens to man's world."<sup>4</sup> In line with this notion that Marx shared in his theory when he designated labour not as a temporally limited productive involvement, but as a transformation and transformation of human existence to its end, through which man is for himself what he is for himself and what he is in himself.

Furthermore, alienation of labour is a theory, which Karl Marx (1881-1883) propounds to describe the nature of the relations of product in a capitalist state, where exploitations are rooted. According to him, it is not surprising then that the generic being of man, nature, as well as his intellectual faculties, are transformed into a being which is alien to him. Hence, alienation in the context of Karl Marx could be represented in various forms.

What makes Marx's theory of alienation to be unique specially could be found in its constitutiveness and conception of relations of production. Thus, one can analyze and categorized into various forms. This remained outstanding in the very words of Marx that "labour power is a commodity, an object for sale, subject like any other to the law of value". And in transaction with the capitalist, the labourer alienates his own essential power, his general activity and reality and in effect loses his own essence, which becomes the property of another, in order to survive. Implicitly, alienation constitutes four dimensions: from nature, from themselves, from species-being and from other people.

### **Nature**

In reference to the fact that the relation to product of the labour is in consonant with their relation to the sensuous external world. Marx affirms, "nature is his body with which he must remain in continuous interchange in order not to die". (Kpim of Philosophy 380). Nature is an entity that is indispensable through the act of participation. It is the matter in which man realizes himself, in which is active, out of which and through which he produces. This relation is nature therefore, is intimate and both man's physical and mental capabilities share in the intimacy through his existence in inorganic nature. In accordance with this, C.C. Ezeka quotes Pope John II thus; "work bears a particular imprint of man and occupies his existence on earth.". (Torch Magazine).

### **From Themselves**

From the perspective of moralists an act is human only when it is performed with enough knowledge and freedom. This could be thus designated as, the greater the voluntaries, the greater the freedom and the more it becomes human, otherwise such act ceases to be human and one remains passive instead of being active. This implies self-alienation. This could come about because the act is external to, that is, not part of the person's nature.

The labourers in a capitalist state are not only alienated from the products of their labour, but also from themselves, through the process of production. The process constitutes restriction of voluntaries duly caused by imposition of labour. Workers, instead of fulfilling themselves through their labour, alienate themselves by allowing their work to belong to not themselves but to someone else. Hence, workers regard themselves to be freely active in their animal functions.

The alienation of labour from the nature, and selves, undoubtedly implies alienation from people. This is because alienation of labour presupposes existence of classes and eradicates the labour from both physical and intellectual capacities.

The bourgeois and proletariats, the capitalist and labourer with some observable class struggle being manifested in either government, private or religious employment; although this has a link from slave trade and colonialism as the originator of the existing classes.

### **The Public Employers**

Colonial system of rule, having permeated the marrows of the Nigerians, greatly influenced the system of rule and the people's attitude to work in the government territory. The country as well lost its fundamental pre-suppositions as it does not seek for the wellbeing (good) of its citizens. Instead, the presuppositions were negatively readjusted in favour of those in power, which heightened the exploitative tendency as most people in government depend in fund and resources (selfish interest). "This dependence and the vulnerability attendant to it, made many young Nigerians see in government work, even after the colonial era-service to a bourgeois institution that does not merit it". Cardinal Arinze commenting on this state of affairs said, the colonial power was not loved and was served with less than total dedication. Government business was regarded as nobody's business. Government funds were considered to be limitless...(The Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* in the African Context 211).

The government employees are not unaffected as regards this. However, the government employers create a bourgeois and exploitative relationship between the employers and the employees. Therefore, if one is in anyway employed in government affairs, the person hardly looks better than those who are unemployed. They rarely live up to subsistence level and hitherto experience a compulsory sack (dismissal) and retirement without any prior notification. An instance could be cited with Buhari's military regime, whereby a correspondent reported that "within the first three months of his getting into power, over 150,000 workers were sent on compulsory retirement and by the end of January 1985, (just one year) over three million workers were made redundant".

### **The Private Employers**

The entrepreneur organization is not even better as "employers feel free to hire and fire at will, while paying money (salary) to subsisting staff. The workers, in frustration restore to all sorts of subterfuge and subversion: thefts, graft, corruption, etc. The effect of all this is low capacity civilization and low productivity in industries, low worker morale, spreading mass poverty and social insecurity". Furthermore, "when they enter into employment, they soon discover that they have entered into a unilateral contract which is binding largely and only on them". (Fountain Magazine 18). However, it is here that capitalism exists fully in its slang's of more work for less pay syndrome. Not only that they are less paid and at times their wages delayed or denied, the private employees also hardly receive leisure time, even when such is given under difficult situations, their due emoluments like holiday allowances, over time, travels or transport allowances are denied them. The employers also set out rules and regulations to be strictly adhered to by the would-be employee, and sanctions is cases of misdeeds, carelessness and breach. These rules and regulation exonerate the employers and never assert the rights of the employees as human being. In fact, this situation could be better described as a depreciation of the humanness in man, since it restricts consciousness, deliberation and voluntaries and makes one less free (Fountain Magazine 19). The above exposing conditions of the individual employees showcase in religion under the umbrella of "God bless you" syndrome. Moreover, religion in Nigeria has become a place where hierarchy brings class distinction and conflicts amidst the classes: the deified masters (the leaders) and the faithful. Hence, it becomes unusual when one who is employed to take-up such projects like the building of a church, seats and cooking demands for his wage or an increment in his wages.

### **The Situation Of Nigerian Workers**

Alienation of labour in the Nigerian context connotes both the prerequisite and the requisite of human work that definitely demonstrates what work presupposes and shows the limit of one's duty as a worker, especially as it concerns Nigerian workers. One could affirm that, the problem of the Nigerian situation seems to be a loss of the right attitude to work and the value of work. This could be seen in an inquiry into the zeal by which the workers in Nigeria embrace any type of work, agreement between the employers and the employees. Human being is a rational and free imbued being with some fundamental human rights, which the workers are not exonerated. Hence, both the government and the private institutions for which the individuals work have the obligation not to tamper with worker's rights, such as "the rights to wage, the right to adequate rest or leave, the rights to social security of various sorts-health, education, pension, insurance".

Apart from these, there is also the right of workers to form unions who have the prerogative of the protection of their rights in the spirit of solidarity. A worker also has the right to embark on strike when all other peaceful means have been tried.

The human work from its nature and purpose imposes some moral obligations on the workers, which the theory of alienation of labour also conveys. For an instance, a worker has the duty to work. This is because work is the only legitimate source of sustenance, which one morally has the duty to earn insofar as his living is concerned. Therefore, the society has the common duty of adequate primary responsibility of the government to its citizens. To employ is one thing, and to pay just wages is a different thing which appears to be one of the necessary obligations of the employers. Furthermore, employers have a duty to provide social security and protection for their staff. Workers may not be forced to engage in actions to which they object in conscience. Even the normal time for work may not be extended to the detriment of the workers, and the health condition of the workers must be considered and adequately taken care of. In this regard, Pope John XXIII argues that a human being “has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health, disability stemming from his work, widowhood, old-age, enforced unemployment, or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood”. (Laborem Exercens, Encyclical on Human Work 1981).

Moreover, the theory of alienation of labour explicates the extent by which the above mentioned fundamental human rights are neglected and denied from the workers. In view of this unjust and dehumanizing venture, Marx (1818-1883) decried the elimination of the existence of the labour in the hands of the capitalists, who according to Marx are likely to vanish or go out of existence with time, especially when the workers, through the continuous experience of alienation acquire some knowledge so as to be able to reconcile the past and the present in anticipation of a brighter future through recognition of their rights. (Manifesto of the Communist party in Revolution thought 30). Here, it becomes pertinent for one to imagine whether Nigerian workers have any rights, and if, how do they express or implement them?

The fact that some Nigerian workers do not know or are not able to defend their rights cannot be totally accord to illiteracy. This is because majority of these workers are graduates and they allow themselves to be subjected to factitious alienation, without offering any sufficient resistance at all. A reference could be cited with the hike in fuel price, which took place few months ago, and consequently this led to increment in the prices of the commodities without any increment in the wages of the workers. Even the Labour Congress Board was silenced, otherwise they would receive a quick sack notice, and so no sound or voice was heard from the board. On the other hand, the number of both government and private employees whose monthly salaries are being confiscated by their employers continuously increase with the working hour, days, and the products, and they carry on their duties daily without any complaints or aggression. No wonder many workers in Nigeria live four or five in a room and some only feed themselves once or twice a day. What sort of alienation in a country like Nigeria.

After the era of slave trade, the amalgamation of 1914 and the colonial rule which was accompanied with incessant exploitation of the economy, the colonialists left Nigeria with an ideology; that is the existence of classes in the act of production, which was rarely common to the citizens. Work therefore, ceases to be rural or subsistent and become urban and white-collar jobs. The climax of this became obvious; as there was also a change in the motive to work, wage value and economic value. This prompted O.F. Ike to asserts that

Nigeria today is undergoing a massive change in all spheres of life, be it economic, social, and political and this situation has to very large extent also changed the original attitude to work in traditional society, it has changed the organization of work, as well as the type of work done. (Journal of Social Sciences 201).

The backdrops, without doubt brought capitalism and existence of classes.

### **Class Struggle In Nigeria**



Nigeria as a case study, the national question involves the contradictions in the Nigerian society that involves oppression of the nationalities in the forgoing issues that have continued to threaten Nigeria's unity and existence as an entity including power sharing and co-existence as an entity called Nigeria. The second dimension is the class relations. Here, the focus is on the tensions and contradictions that arise from class inequalities and antagonisms between the rich and the poor in the society. This is centered in similar issues of how to remove the fear of perpetual marginalization, domination, inequality, unfairness and injustice in poor and rich class relations. However this dimension of the national question is interwoven with and indeed over shadowed by that of inter-ethnic group dimension and is inseparable from it. Indeed, many ethnic conflicts have their foundations in class conflicts but found their expression in inter-ethnic group relations. One the major struggle in Nigeria is the Niger Delta, by which many civil society organizations are revolutionary process that keeps on unfolding themselves. The manifestations of these upheavals are more visible in the theatres of politics and movements of change. The vision and trajectory of these movements and actions are to promote a radical change in Nigeria's political configuration for better economic and political treatment.

One of the greatest challenges in the post-independence era was the struggle to end military undemocratic and authoritarian rule in Nigeria. The challenge came from popular democratic forces and the struggle by these forces for democracy shows significant improvements and advances upon the one staged during the colonial period. Most of these struggles were waged by trade unions such as National Association of Nigeria Students (NANS), Academic Staff Union of universities (ASUU), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Campaign for Democracy (CD) Alliance for Democratic Right (ADR), among others. The trade union militancy, fearlessness and dedication are struggles for rights, democracy and for better economic conditions. Initially, only the students were self-conscious and courageous enough to fight for their right and interests during the period of military rule. This wave of proletarian struggles, therefore, developed in Nigeria during July and August 1994. There was an almost uninterrupted succession of strikes and riots. The State finally put an end to the movement by using its usual arsenal of repression. In order to exhaust and then to smash proletarian action, the unions diverted strikes into demands for the replacement of one bourgeois faction by another whilst the police organized more and more widespread arrests. One of the centers of proletarian agitation was organized around the workers of the petroleum industry. This is because this sector is vital for the national economy, Nigeria representing the fifth largest producer in OPEC, with a production equivalent to that of Kuwait. Strengthened by a long experience of struggle which has regularly manifested itself by strikes and sabotage of production in the Nigerian delta (the main concentration of oil wells, refineries and terminals), the oil workers led a strike which had serious repercussions on the national economy. This strike constituted an important reaction by the working class to the aggressions they are subjected to. Moreover, it took place in Nigeria whose dominant ideology is considered as being underdeveloped. Repercussions of the struggle affected world market process; the price of a barrel of oil increased Property of International Journal of Management, Policy and Administrative Studies astronomically due to stoppage of production of Nigerian refineries and a halt on exports. Military government was then very useful form of capitalist rule in Nigeria. Because of its access to coercive force, the military acted in a more authoritarian manner towards both working class and individual capitalists than many other types of bourgeois government. (Politics and Class Analysis in Nigeria No 2).

### **The State At The Service Of The Bourgeoisie**

The state has turned out to become an apparatus for class domination. The company owners and leaders in government are now using the government policies to favour themselves and equally oppress the poor. For instance, Obasanjo's regime sanctioned the privatization of all government owned companies. By so doing, the owners acquire the liberty to dictate for the masses since they enjoy sole ownership. The Obasanjo regime clamped down on Ibeto Group of Company in order to favour Dangote's merchandise. This is in line with Karl Marx claim that instead of helping the poor, the state has become an apparatus for oppressing them. (Journal of Social Development in Africa).

Marx describes capitalist state as “modern state,” this shows his disappointment and loss in the state. The society has been split into two great hostile groups: bourgeoisie and proletariat. From all indication the bourgeoisie have become economically dominant and are in possession of the means of production. The state therefore, becomes an apparatus for the ruling class (bourgeoisie) for the purpose of suppressing the oppressed (proletariat), exploited class and ultimately serves the selfish interest of the ruling class. Engels in line with this affirms that:

As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class through the medium of the class, becomes also the politically dominant, and thus acquire new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.

Nigeria Labour Congress: Fighting The Cause Of Labourers

Following the clarion call made by Karl Marx (1818-1883) for all workers of the world, to come together, the workers in Nigeria have organized themselves into a formidable force. A central labour organization called the Nigeria Labour Congress came into existence in 1975. Unhappy with the fact those workers could not resolve their differences on their own; the Nigeria state under General Murtala Mohammed set up the Adebisi tribunal on February 12, 1976 ostensibly to re-organize the trade unions. The Nigerian state used the Adebisi Tribunal to provide grounds for banning many notable progressive and left-wing trade unionists, including Michael Imoudu, Wahab Goodluck and S.U. Bassey, from participation in trade union activities for life. The Nigerian state dissolved the new NLC formed by workers’ leaders themselves and by Trade Union (Amendment) Decree No 22 of 1978 created a new central labour organization with the same name as the Nigeria Labour Congress. The Nigerian Labour Congress has contributed immensely to the resolution of major economic issues, development of appropriate national economic policies and prevention of more severe economic consequences for the country as a result of policy and action initiatives by those in control of state power; the Nigeria Labour Congress has contributed to raising the living standards of not just workers but the entire population. The NLC has done great job in the following issues, the minimum wage, the Structural Adjustment Programme, Fuel price hikes, Negotiated Condition of Services, External Debt, Cost of living, Corruption and Globalization (GATT, Jobs and industrial capacity utilization). (Journal of Social Science 201-206).

The issue of a national minimum wage has been a continuing concern not just for workers organized under the NLC but all workers in Nigeria. A national minimum wage indicates the minimum funds required for the reproduction of labour; as such it sets limits upon the exploitation of labor and the level of surplus value that can be extracted from the labor of workers. It is thus an indirect measure of the level of crudity or otherwise of the owners of capital. It has been pointed out that but for the intervention of Nigeria Labour Congress; a national minimum wage would not have been legislated upon in Nigeria. Thus while the issue of a national minimum wage was a matter of serious concern to workers at the inception of the NLC in 1978, it was not until agitations by the new NLC on the matter, that the military regime under Obasanjo set up some panel on it. However, the military dragged its feet on the issue until it reluctantly handed over power to Shagari in 1979. The Shagari government which promptly gave huge salaries to politicians and political office holders was also unwilling to consider granting workers a minimum wage until the NLC threatened to call out workers on a national strike. It is on record that it was only after the 2-day national strike called by the NLC in May 1981 under the leadership of Hassan Sunmonu that the Shagari government was finally forced to raise its unilateral minimum wage of N12 to N125. When everything is said and done, democracy consists of a set of rights and the processes as well as procedures that are in place for guaranteeing, protecting and expanding those rights. There is agreement that the NLC has made enormous contributions to the struggle for democracy in Nigeria.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

For Karl Marx (1818-1883), the state has become a hindrance to production. Hence the state apparatus needs to be destroyed. Marx does not claim to be the first person to identify the existence of classes and class distinction but he is the first person to demonstrate that the class struggle will necessarily lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat; a claim that is often refuted by his critics. He claims that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional stage to the abolition of all classes and the abolition of all bourgeois property. Dictatorship of the proletariat will enthrone the proletariat rule /state which will serve as the lower phase of communism; and eventually into higher phase of communism when society must have attained economic maturity. This implies that the bourgeoisie state must have been destroyed during the dictatorship of the proletariat whereas proletarian state will naturally wither away into the course of time.

Marx refers to communism as the historical stage when society has attained economic maturity and has destroyed bourgeois state and all trace of class distinction. Marx divided communism into two phases: lower and higher phase. He recognized the gradual transitional nature of the proletariat rule into communism. At first, some traces of capitalism like narrow horizon of bourgeois right will be inevitable but in the course of time complete communism will be attained. Still under the ideal state, the dictatorship of the proletariat ushers in the proletarian rule during which the means of production ceases to be private property of individuals. The means of production will now be the property of the whole members of society. At this early stage, all social works are done by everybody and every worker receives a certificate from the society which proves that he has performed a certain part of the socially necessary work. With is certificate, he receives from the public store a corresponding quantity of production. By implication, equality reigns supreme in this stage but not a full expression of Marx's notion of equality.

### **References**

- Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. University of Chicago.
- Arinze, F. (2000). *The encyclical laborem exercens in the African Context*, Paper at symposium: 'From Rerum Novarum to Laborem Exercens-Towards the year.
- Craig, E. (1998) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. Vol.1
- Duncan, G. and Marx. (1978) *Two Views of social Conflict and Social Harmony*. University press.
- Edward, P. (1974) *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Chicago: Willeam Bentom Collier Macmdlian.
- Ezeka, C. (2004). *Torch magazine: The Nigerian attitude to work*. Enugu: Bigard Memorial Seminary.
- Ikerl, E. (1998). *Fountain Magazine: The Cost of Survival*. St. Joseph major Seminary.
- Ike, O. (1986) *value meaning and Social structure of Human Work*. New York: Frankfurt Main, Lang.
- Iroegbu, S. (1995) *the Kpim of Philosophy*. Owerri: Int. University press.
- Madan, S. (2001) *A History of Western Thought*. London: Routledge.
- Maritan, J. (1966) *The Person and the Common Good*. Indian: Notre dame Press.
- Maurus, j.(2001) *Path to efficiency in work*. Bandra: Dominic.
- Marx, Karl. (1885). *Collected Works*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Marx, Karl. (1984). *Labour and Capital*, in *The Philosophy of Dialectical materialism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Marx, Karl and F. Engels. (1883). ("Theses on Feuerbach") *Selected Works I three volumes, vol.1*.
- Marx, Karl. (1883). *Law and Categories of Dialectics*. Moscow: Progress publishers.
- Nwakwo, A. (1981) *Can Nigeria Survive?* Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Pope Jphn XXIII. (1963). *Pacem in Terris*
- Pope John Paul II. (1981). *Laborem exercens, Encyclical on Human work*. London: tee and White.