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History IB HL  
11 A

Outline the teachings of Marx and state whether you think Marxism has any relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

750-1000 words

Marx summarized his ideas into four steps, which he believed already occurred, were occurring, or were going to occur in the future. He saw history as a struggle and conflict between the have, and have-nots. The rulers had land, food and goods, while the other lower classes had almost nothing. The haves had exploited the have-nots and so he believed they would revolt against the rulers. The rulers were making the lower classes work hard, and give them almost nothing for their hard work. He believed the lower classes would defeat the ruling ones, and then they would all co-operate for the good of each other. There would not be any governments and specific rulers, every person would be a ruler of his own.

The first step of Marx's four step theory was feudalism. Feudalism meant that the higher your status, the more important you were, and the more you could speak out. Most people lived just by farming, if you would have land, you would have had power too. Feudalism could be compared to a pyramid. We have the Monarch at the top, then the barons and noblemen. After them the church and its members. Then the "protectors of the people", the soldiers would come. Then the bourgeoisie and finally the poor peasants, the working class. This would mean that the peasants are the oppressed class of "Have-Nots". This means they do not have anything which is a luxury etc. The ruling class is then the monarch and the nobles. Middle class or bourgeoisie, are the new class, revolutionary ex-lower class descendants. So the monarch would rule all, would have most land, and everybody would obey him and the nobles. This was until capitalism started.

Just as Marx predicted, capitalism started because of the bourgeois revolution. It was not necessarily a violent revolution, but the big landowners and monarch's power was taken away. When capitalism did start, the Bourgeoisie was holding all the

cards in their hand. Most people would live in towns by now and after their revolt, they got into power and were the rulers. The proletariat, or the lower class was still the ones being oppressed. Now that the bourgeoisie are in power, elections to a parliament have been set up. The bourgeoisie were thus rulers and all industry was in their hands. They also took over all trades, and soon became wealthy. The industry grew a lot because the bourgeoisie thought that agriculture was not as important as their industrial plans. This made the peasants even poorer, since more money was given to industry workers, and less was given to the proletariat peasants. As the stage before, this one was also to come to an end.

Socialism was the next stage to arise. Now that the Socialist revolution has taken place, and the proletariat has overthrown the bourgeoisie, everybody is equal, and there are no ranks or titles. The revolution took place because the proletariat was angry about them not getting enough for the work they did. The wages were now shared out fairly among all workers; no one was making more than another for the same job. The state now ran agriculture and industry on behalf of the workers and so everybody was happy. Land and houses are owned by everybody and everybody is an important part of the community. The state is very keen with its inhabitants and protects the workers from attacks, mainly from the middle classes who are trying to get their power back. This stage also comes to an end after a certain amount of years. No state or government is needed to control people. This is how Communism starts.

Now that communism has started, there are no more classes. Everybody is equal and get the same reward for no matter what work. The people work according to their abilities, and get what they need to live. People with kids would get more than people without, to share equally over all the family.

“As a prophet of socialism Marx may be kaput; but as a prophet of the ‘universal interdependence of nations’ as he called globalization, he can still seem startlingly relevant... his description of globalization remains as sharp today as it was 150 years ago” write John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge of *The Economist*, in their book *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Hidden Promise of Globalization*.

As this quote states, Marx’s teachings are not all relevant for us today, but some of them still stay relevant and useable. As we see today, Marxism can still be found in many of our countries today. Some of these countries are China, Cuba and Libya.

Which all have corrupt governments. When the USSR was in that state it was also corrupt. Marx's ideas are just guidelines to history now; it would not be possible to achieve his ideas today, since the world is too advanced. His ideas do work though in small communities, such as in Israel, in the kibbutz. In the kibbutz it works because people really work for the good for each other, and since there is a small community everybody gets a lot of what they need.

-- Word count: 890