

SOCIAL STUDIES (HISTORY)

CHAPTER 02: SOCIALISM IN EUROPE AND RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

(Notes)

Social Changes in Europe

Many social changes were taking place in Europe in the eighteenth century. The French Revolution inspired the people with the ideals of liberty, equality and justice. Many people had different views about how the Government should work and about the rights of people. While some people wanted the establishment of democratic principles, the others supported the monarchical form of the government.

The three main groups of people at this time were:

The Liberalists

- They wanted a change in society. They wanted nations to be tolerant of all religions.
- They believed in safeguarding the rights of people against the Government. They also argued for elected Parliamentary Government.
- The liberals however were not democrats as they did not favour the principle of universal adult franchise. They were in favour of voting only by men and the propertied class.

The Radicals

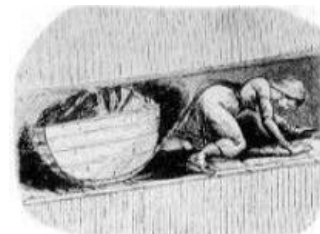
- The radicals wanted a government duly elected by the majority of the country's population.
- Many radicals supported women's movements to achieve voting rights.
- They opposed the privileges enjoyed by landowners and wealthy factory owners.
- They were not against the notion of private property but were against the concentration of money in the hands of few sections of society.

The Conservatives

- The conservatives opposed the views and ideologies of the liberals and the radicals.
- They believed in the privileges enjoyed by the nobility and the wealthy class. However, after the French Revolution, conservatives believed in bringing changes at a slow pace in society.
- The conservatives believed that the past should be respected and changes in society should be made gradually.

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution first began in the eighteenth century in England. Later, it spread to the other parts of Europe. Industrialisation also resulted in large-scale migration of people from the villages to the cities in search of work opportunities. Workers worked for long hours at extremely low wages. Housing and sanitation facilities were not given to workers. Unemployment was also growing.



Many workers worked in very dangerous situation during the Industrial Revolution.

The Coming of Socialism in Europe

- By the mid-nineteenth century, ideas of socialism had become well known in Europe. Socialists believed that factory owners earned profits because of the hard work being put in by workers, but the factory owners did nothing to look after the welfare of workers.
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were well-known socialists who believed that the profits earned by factory owners are produced by workers. Marx

contented that all property should be owned by society. Such societies would be communist societies.

- These ideas spread to Europe by the mid-nineteenth century. Socialists over different regions formed the Second International to coordinate their efforts to spread socialist ideas.
- In Germany, the *Socialist Democratic Party* was formed. In 1905, *Socialist Party* was formed in France and *Labour Party* was formed in Britain. These parties were however not able to form governments in their countries.



The Russian Revolution

Condition in Russia and the Eve of Russian Revolution

Fall of monarchy in February 1917 and events of October normally called the Russian revolution. Tsar Nicholas II from Romanov family ruled Russia in 1914.



Figure 1 - Tsar Nicholas II

(i) Economy and society of Russian empire

- Almost 85% of Russian were agriculturists and were major exporter of grains.
- Industry was found in pockets mostly located in St. Petersburg and Moscow
- It was in the 1890s that many industries began to be set up in Russia. Example - Russian railway extended and investment in industry increased, coal production doubled and iron and steel outputs were magnified.
- Most of the industries were private property of industrialists. Government supervised large factories to ensure minimum wages and number of working hours but the same rules were not followed by industries for all the categories of works.
- Conditions of Craft unit workers were relatively worse than factory workers in terms of increased working hours 10-12 hours against 5 hours for others, shared dormitories instead of rooms for other workers etc.
- Considering this, workers were divided in small groups on the basis of village they came from, and their skill sets. Women formed 31% of factory labour in 1914 but were paid very less than men.

(ii) Working population in Russian was different from other countries in Europe before 1917

- Russians had no respect for nobility; nobles got their power through their services to Tsar, not by local authority.

- Most of the lands in Russia belonged to the nobility and the Church. Russian peasants had no respect for the nobility and wanted the lands of the nobles to be given to them. They refused to pay rent and even murdered landlord.
- They pooled their land periodically and their community divided it according to their individual families. This strategy brought a feeling of socialism in peasants.

(iii) Socialism in Russia

- Before 1914, all political parties were illegal. Russian Socialist Democratic Workers Party was founded in 1898 by socialists who favoured Marx's idea.
- Socialist, in 1900 formed Socialist Revolutionary Party who struggled for peasants' rights and demanded that land belonging to nobles be given to them.
- The Social Democrats differed from the Socialist Revolutionary Party on the issues of farmers. The latter under Lenin believed that peasants cannot be part of the socialist movement as some peasants were poor, some were rich and some even employed workers on their fields.
- Vladimir Lenin (who led the Bolshevik group) felt that peasants were not one united group and divided as rich, poor, laborers, capitalist etc.
- Lenin thought that the party should be disciplined and control member and quality of its members. Others (Mensheviks) thought that party should be open to all.

The Revolution of 1905

- Russian was an autocracy. Tsar was not subject to parliament. Liberals wanted to end this state of affairs.
- Both, social democrats and socialist revolutionaries demanded a constitution during the revolution of 1905.

Bloody Sunday



- 'Bloody Sunday' marked the beginning of strikes in the cities with students, lawyers, doctors and engineers staging walkouts complaining about the lack of civil liberties.
- Lawyers, doctors, engineers and other middle-class workers established the Union of Unions and demanded a constituent assembly.



Figure 2 - Bloody Sunday Massacre

- Tsar allowed the creation of elected consultative parliament or *Duma*. Due to political instability, he dismissed 1 duma within 75 days and re-elected second one.



Figure 3 - Duma of Russian Empire

Impact of the 1st World War

- In 1914, the First World War broke out between Germany, Austria and Turkey (central forces) on one hand and France, Britain and Russia (allied forces) on the other hand. Initially people of Russia supported the Tsar but as the war progressed, the Tsar refused to consult the Duma.
- During the war, anti-German feelings ran high which made the autocracy unpopular in Russia.
- Russian armies lost badly in Germany and Austria between 1914 and 1916. There were 7 million casualties and 3 million refugees in Russia.
- The First World War impacted the agricultural production and industries in Russia.
- As they retreated, the Russian army destroyed crops and buildings to prevent the enemy from being able to live off the land.
- Russia's own industries were few in number and the country was cut off from other suppliers of industrial goods by German control of the Baltic Sea.
- As a result, there were labour shortages and small workshops producing essentials were shut down.
- This war adversely affected industries; railway line began to break in 1916. Small workshops producing essentials were shut down due to labor shortage and as a result by winters 1916, bread and flour become scarce.



Figure 4 - Russia in WW-I

The February revolution in Petrograd

- Petrograd was given in the winter of 1917. There was heavy food shortage in workers quarters. Parliamentarians wishing to preserve elected government were opposed to Tsar's desire to dissolve Duma.
- On 22 February, a lockout took place at a factory followed by a strike in 50 factories most of which were led by women. Demonstrating workers crossed from the factory quarters to capital. No political party organized this movement.
- Government imposed curfew and later suspended the Duma. Police headquarter were ransacked. People raise slogans about bread, better hours and democracy. Back-up called out by government to control the crowd.
- Petrograd soviet was formed by soldiers and striking workers on advice of military commanders, Tsar abandoned Soviet and Duma leaders formed a provisional government to run the country.



Figure 5 - February Revolution of 1917

- Russian's future was to be decided by a constitution assembly elected through universal adult suffrage. Petrograd had led the February Revolution that brought down monarchy in 1917.

After February (Effects)

- Provisional government influenced army officials, landowners and industrialists, liberals and socialists to work towards an elected government. Restriction on public meetings was removed, soviets were setup everywhere but system of election was not followed in common.
- In April 1917, Vladimir Lenin (Bolshevik leader) returned to Russia. He had earlier demanded that the war should be ended, land should be distributed among the peasants and banks should be nationalized. This came to be known as Lenin's '**April Theses**'.
- During this time in Russia, the committees of workers were formed to look into the working of the industries. Similarly, peasants under the Socialist leaders formed their own groups and land committees were formed to handle the distribution of lands to peasants.
- Workers' movement spread and factory committee were formed which began in questioning the way industrialists ran their factories. Trade unions increased. Soldiers' committees were formed in the army.
- Provisional government saw its power declining and Bolshevik influence grew. It decided to take measure against this discontent. It resisted attempts by workers to run factories and arrested leaders.
- Peasants and the Socialist Revolutionary leaders pressed for redistribution of land. Land committees formed and peasants seized land between July and September 1917.



Figure 6 - Vladimir Lenin

October Revolution (1917)

Lenin feared the provisional government would set up a dictatorship. He persuaded Petrograd soviet and Bolshevik party to agree on socialist seizure of power.

- The uprising began on 24 October. PM Kerensky had left the city to summon troops. Military men loyal to government seized the building of two Bolshevik newspapers.
- Military revolutionary committee ordered to seize government offices and arrest the ministers in response. The "Aurora" ship bombarded the winter palace. Other vessels took over military points.
- The city was under committee's control and ministers had surrendered. The majority of All Russian Congress of soviets approved the Bolshevik action. There was heavy fighting in Moscow and finally Bolsheviks controlled the Moscow-Petrograd area.



While the February Revolution led to the end to monarchy in Russia, October Revolution led to an end of provisional government. Russia was declared as a socialist country after the October Revolution.

After October (Changes/Effects)

- Bolsheviks were opposed to private property. Most industries and banks were nationalized by 1917. Land was declared social property. Peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility.

- Bolshevik enforced the partition of large houses according to families, banned use of old titles. New uniforms were designed for army and officials. They conducted the elections to the constituent assembly but failed to gain majority support.
- In 1918, Assembly rejected Bolshevik measures and Lenin dismissed the assembly. Bolshevik become only party to participate in the election to the all Russian congress of soviet.
- Russian becomes one party state. Trade unions were kept under party control. The secret police punished those who criticized Bolsheviks.
- Many young writers and artists rallied to party because it stood for socialism and change. This led to experiments in arts and architecture but disillusioned because of censorship encourage by party.

The Civil War

- Russian army broke when Bolshevik ordered land redistribution. Non-Bolshevik socialists, liberals and supporters of autocracy condemned the Bolshevik uprising. During 1918-19, the ‘greens’ (socialist Revolutionaries) and ‘whites’ (pro-Tsarists) controlled most of Russian empire backed by French, American, British and Japanese troops.
- Civil war took place between these troops and Bolsheviks. Supporters of private property among ‘whites’ took steps with peasants who seized land.
- Such actions lead to the loss of support for non-Bolshevik and by 1920, Bolsheviks controlled most of the Russian empire. They succeeded due to cooperation with non-Russian nationalism and Muslim jadidists.
- Bolshevik colonists massacred local nationalists in the name of defending socialism in central Asia. Many were confused about Bolshevik government.
- Most non-Russian nationalities were given political autonomy in Soviet Union (USSR) combined with unpopular policies that Bolshevik forced the local government to follow.



Mensheviks



Bolsheviks

Making a Socialist Society

- Bolshevik permitted peasants to cultivate the land that is socialized. A process of centralized planning was introduced. Officials assessed working of economy and set targets for 5 years period and hence 5-year plans were made.
- Government fixed all prices to promote industrial growth leading to economic growth. Industrial production increased, new factory cities set up, however rapid construction led to poor working conditions.
- An extended schooling system developed and arrangements were made for factory workers and peasants. Crèches were established in factories, cheap public health care was provided, and model living quarters were set up for workers.

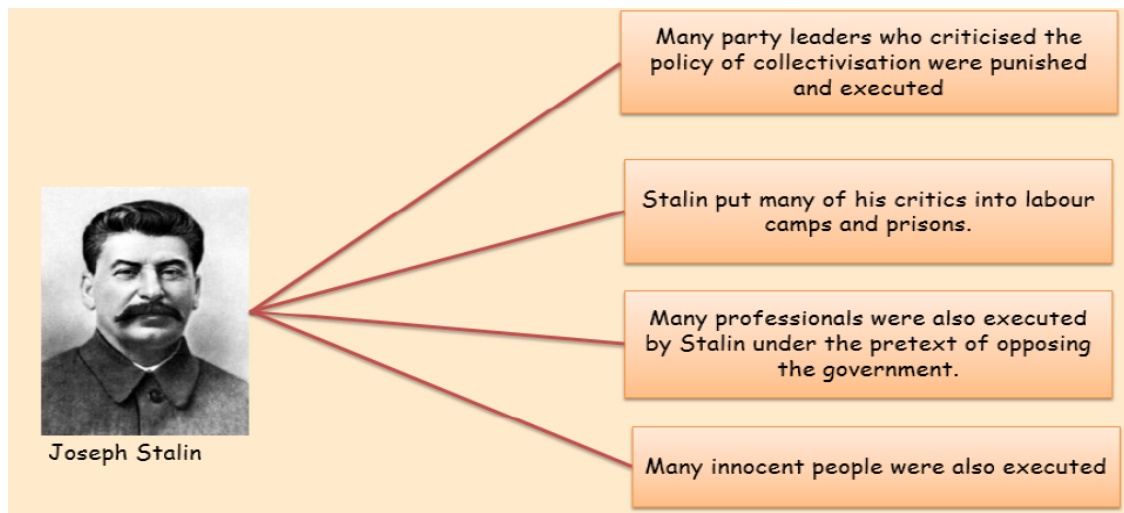
Stalinism and Collectivization

- Russia was facing a crisis of shortage of food grains. The peasants refused to sell grains at the prices fixed by the Government, resulting in the shortage of grain supplies in many cities.



Figure 7 - Stalin

- Stalin took over the reins of the party after the death of Lenin. He introduced strict measures. In 1928, the party members visited many villages and raided rich peasants known as the 'kulaks'.
- The party converted small landholdings of many peasants into one collective large farm. All large collectivized farms were cultivated by the farmers with the help of tools pooled together. The profits of the farms were shared among the cultivators.
- Many peasants resisted the policy of collectivization. They were severely punished by the state. Many of them were deported and exiled. Stalin allowed only some independent cultivations.



Russian Revolution and the World

- Many people across the globe criticized the capture of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks. However, many workers and peasants in other parts of the world supported the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks founded Comintern—an international communist union of people supporting the Bolsheviks.
- Many non-Russians from outside the USSR participated in the Conference of the Peoples of the East (1920) and the Bolshevik-founded Comintern.
- By the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, the USSR had given socialism a global face and world stature
- By 1950, it was realized that the Russian Government was not working according to the principles of socialism.
- Although Russia had become an industrial power and agricultural activities improved, it was contended that basic freedoms of the people, such as the right to speech, were denied and that development was a result of repressive policies of the Russian Government.

Russian Revolution and India

- India was also impacted by the Russian Revolution. Several people in India attended the Communist Universities.
- The Communist party was formed in India by mid-1920s.
- Jawaharlal Nehru and Tagore wrote about the Soviet Socialism.
- Several prominent Indian political and social leaders visited Russia to understand the principle of Socialism.
- Various writer wrote about the Russian Revolution.
- In Hindi, R.S. Avasthi wrote in 1920-21 Russian Revolution, Lenin, His Life and His Thoughts, and later The Red Revolution. S.D. Vidyalkar wrote The Rebirth of Russia and The Soviet State of Russia. There was much that was written in Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu.

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