

Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution | Easy Notes

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Introduction:

The [French Revolution](#) led the people towards new ideas about how the structure of society should be. Many Europeans and people from different parts of the world began shaping their own ideas. People discussed about individual rights and demanded several changes in the society. Personalities like [Raja Rammohan Roy](#) and [Derozio](#), in India, talked of the significance of the French revolution. The wave of change reached to Russian people also. So, in this chapter, we will understand which ideas brought Revolution in Russia and how it influenced people across the world.

Liberals, Radicals and Conservatives:

In Europe, there were different views or ideas regarding transformation of society. Some people favored radical changes whereas some people wished for gradual shift. Among them, the three major groups

were of **liberals, radicals** and **Conservatives**.

1. Liberals:

- Liberals wanted a nation which **tolerated all religions**.
- They **opposed the uncontrolled power** of dynastic rulers.
- Also, they wanted to **safeguard the rights of individuals** against governments.
- Moreover, they argued for a **representative, elected parliamentary government, subject to laws** interpreted by a well-trained **judiciary** that was **independent** of rulers and officials.
- However, like democrats, they **did not believe in universal adult franchise** and denied voting right to non-propertied men and women.

2. Radicals:

- Radicals wanted a nation in which **government was based on the majority** of a country's population. (they favored Democratic principles).
- Also, many supported women's [suffragette](#) movements.
- Unlike liberals, they opposed the privileges of great landowners and wealthy factory owners.
- Lastly, they disliked concentration of property in the hands of a few.

3. Conservatives:

- Conservatives wanted changes in the society through a slow process.
- They believed that the past had to be respected.

Industrial Society and Social Change:

- In 18th century, these political trends brought **social and economic changes** in Europe.
- New cities came up and **new industrialized regions** developed.
- Railways expanded and the [Industrial Revolution](#) occurred.
- However, the **process of industrialization** affected the workers badly.
 - Industrialization brought men, women and children to factories.
 - Work hours were often long and wages were poor.
 - Moreover, Unemployment was common, particularly during times of low demand for industrial goods.
 - Workers had lack of housing and sanitation facilities due to rapidly growing towns.
- Thus, **Liberals and radicals searched for solutions** to these issues.
 - Almost all industries were owned by individuals. Many **Liberals and radicals** were also among these individuals who **owned property and employed workers**.
 - They **made their wealth through trade or industrial ventures**. Thus, they felt that such effort should be encouraged.
 - They believed that they would be able to achieve benefits only with **healthy workforce** and **educated citizens**.
 - In addition to that, they firmly believed in the **value of individual effort, labor and enterprise**.
 - According to them, societies would develop only when poor would **labor and capitalist** could operate without restraint.
 - Therefore, **they rallied** for such changes in the early nineteenth century.

Revolutionaries Vs Conservatives:

- The nationalists, liberals and radicals wanted revolutions to put an end to the kind of **governments established in Europe in 1815**.
- In France, Italy, Germany and Russia, **revolutionaries began to plan secretly** against monarchs.
 - *For Example:* After 1815, **Giuseppe Mazzini**, an Italian nationalist, secretly formed two societies.
- **Nationalists too started revolution for creating a nation** in which each citizen would get equal rights.

The Coming of Socialism to Europe:

- By the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, socialism was well-known body of ideas that attracted widespread attention.
- **Socialists:**
 - Socialists were against private property, and saw it as the root of all social ills.
 - They wanted a society where more attention would be paid to collective social interests.
 - Socialists has different visions of the future. Some believed in the idea of cooperatives.
 - *For Example:* **Robert Owen** (1771-1858), a leading English manufacturer, sought to build a cooperative community called **New Harmony** (in Indiana, USA)
 - Whereas, other socialists felt that in order to build cooperatives on a wide scale, they would need the initiation of government.
 - In France, for instance, **Louis Blanc** (1813-1882) wanted the government to encourage cooperatives and replace capitalist enterprises.
 - Two prominent writers; **Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels** also added other ideas.
 - According to Karl Marx, society had two classes; **Bourgeois** (Capitalist) and **Proletariat** (workers). Capitalist class owned all resources like land, factories and exploited the working class. Capitalists accumulated all the profits produced by working class. Marx believed that workers could free themselves from exploitation by constructing a **radically socialist society** where all property was socially controlled. This would be a **communist society**.

Support for Socialism:

- With the spread of socialist Ideas (by 1870s), supporters of socialism formed an international body- namely, **the Second International**.
- Many workers in **England and Germany began forming associations** to fight for better living and working conditions.
 - They set up funds to help members in difficult times.
 - Also, they demanded a reduction of working hours and the right to vote.
 - In Germany, these associations worked closely with the **Social Democratic Party (SPD)** and helped it win parliamentary seats.
- By 1905, socialists and trade unionists formed a **Labor Party** in Britain and **Socialist Party** in France.
- Even though the **ideas of socialists did shape legislation** but till 1914, they did not get success in forming their own government in Europe.

The Russian Revolution:

- In Russia where the industrialization was least had the Socialists government.
- This government got control in Russia through the October Revolution of 1917.
- There were two major events; **February Revolution** and **October Revolution** normally called the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Empire in 1914:

- In 1914, **Tsar Nicholas II** ruled Russia and its empire.
- Besides the territory around Moscow, the Russian empire included current-day **Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.**
- The **majority religion** was Russian Orthodox **Christianity**. Although, there were some **other religions** too. These were of **Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists.**

Economy and Society:

- In the beginning of 20th century, **85% people** were agriculturists.
- Russia was a **major exporter of grain.**
- Many industries were **concentrated in small area.**
- There were two prominent industrial areas; **Petersburg and Moscow.**
- Usually, at that time, Craftsmen undertook much of the production. Although, there were large factories too alongside craft workshops.
- In 1890s, with the **expansion of railway networks** and **increase in foreign investment**, many **factories** set up in Russia.
 - **Coal production doubled** and **iron and steel output quadrupled.** Thus, by 1990s, the workers in factories and craftsmen became equal in number.
- At that time, **most industries** were the **private property** of industrialists. **Government supervised large factories** to ensure minimum wages and limited hours of work. Yet, many times, rules were broken.
- Usually, people working in **craft units** would spend **15 hours** whereas **factory workers** would work for **10 or 12 hours.**
- **Accommodation** varied from **room to dormitories.**

Workers and division:

- Some workers had **strong links with their villages** whereas some workers **settled in cities permanently.**
- There was **division** among workers **on the basis of skills.**
 - For instance, A metal worker of St. Peters burg recalled, **“Metalworkers considered themselves aristocrats among other workers. Their occupation demanded more training and skill”**
- Even though, **women** (31% strength by 1914) too started working in factories, they were **paid less than men** (between half and three-quarters of a man's wage)
- Besides, **dress and manners** of labors also showed division among workers.

- **Some workers formed associations** (which were small in number) in order to help members in times of unemployment or financial hardship.
- Despite divisions, **workers did unite to strike work** when they disagreed with employers about dismissals or work conditions.
 - **For Example:** During 1896-1897, the textile industrial workers began strikes. Similarly, during 1902, such strikes took place in the metal industry.

Peasants in Russia:

- In the countryside, **peasants** cultivated most of the land but the **nobility**, and **clergy** owned the large properties.
- Like workers, **peasants** too had **divisions**.
 - **For Example:** According to Lenin, some were poor and others rich, some worked as laborers while others were capitalists.
- Moreover, these peasants were different from other European peasants.
 1. Peasants were deeply religious but unlike France, they had **no respect for the nobility**. Nobles got their power and position through their services to the Tsar only.
 2. In Russia, **peasants wanted the land of the nobles** to be given to them. Frequently, they refused to pay rent and even murdered landlords.
 - **For Example:** In 1902, in the southern part of Russia, peasants did such acts on a large scale. Till 1905, such incidents took place all over Russia.
 3. Russian **peasants pooled their land together periodically** and their commune (mir) divided it according to the needs of individual families.

Socialism in Russia:

- Before 1914, all political parties were illegal in Russia.
- Although, socialists founded **the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party** in 1898 but government policies made them work as an illegal organization.
 - The **Party set up a newspaper, mobilized workers and organized strikes.**
 - **Note:** Later, R.S.D.L.P got split into **Mensheviks** and **Bolsheviks** due to differences in thoughts.
- According to some socialists, the custom of dividing land periodically made the peasants natural socialists. Therefore, only they (peasant) would become the main force of the revolution in Russia. Also, they felt that Russia could become socialist more quickly than other countries.
- In the late 19th century, Socialists actively worked towards the promotion of the ideas of socialism in countryside.
 - They even formed the **Socialist Revolutionary Party** in 1900.
 - This party **struggled for peasants' rights** and demanded for the **transfer of land from nobles to peasants.**
- However, the views of **Social Democrats** (about peasants) were quite different from **Socialist Revolutionaries**.

Bolsheviks Vs Mensheviks:

Bolsheviks

Mensheviks

1. **Vladimir Lenin** led the Bolshevik group.
2. According to Bolsheviks, the party should be **disciplined** and should **control the number** and **quality** of its members.

1. **Julius Martov** led the group of Mensheviks.
2. Whereas the Mensheviks believed that party should be **open to all**.

A Turbulent Time: The 1905 Revolution:

- In Russia, the Tsar enjoyed his autocratic rule till the beginning of the twentieth century.
- So, all the groups who opposed autocracy joined their hands against such rule.
 - **For Example:** Liberals worked with **peasants** and **workers** during the revolution of 1905 to demand a constitution.
 - They (Liberals) also got support from nationalists (in Poland) and jadidists (in Muslim-dominated areas).
- **1904:**
 - Due to war, the prices of essential goods increased and **real wages of workers declined**.
 - Apart from that, four members of the Assembly of Russian **Workers were dismissed** at the Putilov Iron Works. As a consequence, many workers **went on strike**.
 - **For Example:** 110,000 workers in St Petersburg went on strike demanding a **reduction in the working day** to eight hours, **an increase in wages** and **improvement in working conditions**.
- **1905:**
 - On January 22, 1905, enraged workers, carrying a petition, marched towards the Winter Palace. (The procession was led by Father Gapon).
 - However, when they reached (Winter Palace), the police and the Cossacks attacked on them.
 - Over 100 workers were killed and about 300 wounded.
 - This incident, known as **Bloody Sunday**, started a **series of events** that became known as the **1905 Revolution**.
 1. Strikes took place all over the country.
 2. Students refused to attend classes and universities closed down.
 3. Beside that, Lawyers, doctors, engineers and other middle-class workers established the Union of Unions and demanded a constituent assembly.

Creation of an elected consultative Parliament or Duma:

- By seeing situation, the Tsar allowed the creation of an elected consultative Parliament or Duma.
- However, after that, he (Tsar) imposed various restrictions on political activities, did not tolerate criticism and **changed Duma thrice**.
 - **For example:** The Tsar dismissed the **first Duma** within 75 days. Then the re-elected **second Duma** within three months. At last, he installed the conservative politicians in **the third Duma**.

The First World War and the Russian Empire:

- The first World War occurred in 1914. It was fought between two **European alliances**.
 1. **The Central powers:** Germany, Austria and Turkey.
 2. **The Allied powers:** France, Britain and Russia (later Italy and Romania).
- Initially, the Russian people supported Tsar Nicholas II in the world war.
- However, as war continued, The **Tsar lost support due to several reasons**.
 1. When *Tsar refused to consult the main parties* in the Duma, support wore thin.
 2. Beside that, the *German origin of Alexandra* (Tsar's wife) and Rasputin like *poor advisers* made the king unpopular.
 - **For Example:** The hatred for Germany (the opponent country) was so much that the Russian people renamed *St Petersburg*- a German name- as *Petrograd*.
- **French army on the western front** fought from trenches that helped them prevent large casualties. Whereas, the **Russian army on the eastern front** fought in the open fields and faced over 7 million casualties by 1917.
- Another wrong move the Russian army took was to destroy the crops and buildings while retreating. Although, their plan was to prevent the enemy from being able to live off the land but this attempt made over **3 million people refugees in Russia**.
- Thus, the situation discredited the government and the Tsar. Soldiers did not wish to fight such a war.
- The war also had a **severe impact on industry**.
 1. **Shortage of Industrial equipment:** Russia had limited industries. So, mostly, it relied on the foreign suppliers for industrial goods. However, when Germany blocked the route (Baltic Sea), they had to face many problems.
 - For example: By 1916, railway lines began to break down.
 2. **Shortage of Labor:** Since, able-bodied men were called up to the war, many workshops producing essentials were shut down.
 3. **Scarcity of food grains:** In the city bread and flour became scarce due to large supplies of grain for the Russian army.
 4. Furthermore, **riots at bread shops** became common by the winter of 1916.

The February Revolution in Petrograd:

- The city (Petrograd) was divided by the river Neva into two parts.
 1. **Right bank:** On this bank, there were several factories and quarters of workers.
 2. **Left Bank:** This bank had fashionable areas, the Winter Palace, official buildings, and palace for the meeting of Duma.
- In February 1917, **food shortages** were deeply felt in the workers's quarters which were on the right bank of the river.
- To add this problem, **on 22 February**, a lockout took place at a factory on the right bank.
- As a consequence, workers in fifty factories called a strike in sympathy.
- In many factories, women led the way to strikes which came to be called the **International Women's Day**.
- Moreover, demonstrating workers reached to the centre of the capital- the **Nevskii Prospekt** and surrounded the fashionable quarters and official buildings on the right bank.
- In response, the government imposed curfew. So, demonstrators went back to their homes.
- However, on the **24th and 25th**, the workers came back on the left bank for demonstration.
- So, the government called out the cavalry and police to keep an eye on them (demonstrators).

- Also, on 25 February, the government suspended the Duma.
- **On 26th**, workers came out on streets, damaged police headquarters and **on 27th** they raised slogans about bread, wages, better hours and democracy.
- Once again, the Government called out the cavalry for controlling the situation. However, this time, **cavalry refused to fire** on the demonstrators. Instead, soldiers **joined the workers** and formed **â??sovietsâ??** or **â??councilsâ??**.
- Next day, Military commanders went to Tsar and advised him to abdicate.
- Thus, on **2 March**, he abdicated the Russian throne. And on **15 March**, Soviet leaders and Duma leaders (liberals) formed a **Provisional Government** to run the country.

After February:

- The **provisional government** took the responsibility of conducting war and governing the country (on temporary basis).
- The provisional government was not elected by the people. Only the people in higher positions were influential such as **Army officials, landowners** and **industrialists**. So, the liberals and socialists wanted an elected government.
- While governing, the **provisional government made several changes.**
 - **Restrictions** on public meetings and associations **were removed.**
 - **Soviets were setup** everywhere. And these soviets followed **different system of election.**

The Advent of Lenin after February:

- In **April 1917**, the Bolshevik leader **Vladimir Lenin returned to Russia** from his exile.
- Bolsheviks were **against** the **involvement** of Russia **in** the world **war** since 1914. Thus, now Lenin felt it was the time for **soviets** (workers) **to take over power.**
- Lenin, in his [April thesis](#), stated **three demands.**
 1. He declared that war be brought to a close.
 2. Land be transferred to the peasants.
 3. And banks be nationalized.
- Also, Lenin **wanted to rename** the **â??Bolshevik Partyâ??** as the **â??Communist Partyâ??** for indicating its radical aims.
- Initially, the party members did not feel the need of radical changes. They were instead in a favor of supporting provisional government.
- Subsequently, **several changes in Russia** changed the attitude of members in the party.
 1. Workersâ?? movement spread.
 2. The factory committees and soldiers committees were formed.
 3. Also, trade unions grew in number.
 4. Moreover, About 500 soviets sent representatives to an [All Russian Congress of Soviets.](#)
- Provisional government began to observe reduction in its power. Consequently, it decided to take **stern measures:**
 1. It resisted attempts by workers to run factories and began arresting leaders.
 2. They also tried to repress demonstrations led by Bolsheviks.
- As a result, many Bolshevik leaders had to go into hiding or flee.

Note: Meanwhile, the peasants in the countryside formed Land committees and also seized land.

The Revolution of October 1917:

- Since Bolsheviks had fear of facing dictatorship of Provisional Government, they brought their supporters in the army, soviets and factories together.
- On **16 October 1917**, Lenin persuaded the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power.
- **Bolsheviks Vs Provisional Government:**

Bolsheviks

1.) The Soviet under **Leon Trotsky** appointed [A Military Revolutionary Committee](#) to organize the seizure.

2.) The Uprising began on **24 October**.

5.) In response, the Military Revolutionary Committee ordered its supporters to seize government offices and arrest ministers.

6.) After many hours of confrontation, the city was under the committee's control and the ministers had surrendered.

7.) Finally, the meeting of the Russian Congress of Soviets was convened in which the majority approved the Bolshevik action.

Provisional Government

3.) Sensing trouble, Prime Minister Kerenskii went to summon troops.

4.) Next day, in the early morning, the loyal military men of the government seized the building of two Bolshevik newspapers. And Pro-government troops took over telephone and telegraph offices and protected the winter Palace.

Note: Uprisings took place in other cities too. Especially in Moscow.

What changed after October?

- Bolsheviks, after coming to power, made all those changes which Lenin demanded in his April Theses.
 1. The government took over ownership and management.
 - **For Example:** Most industry and banks were nationalized in November 1917.
 2. Land was declared the social property and peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility.
 3. In cities, Bolsheviks enforced the partition of large houses according to family requirements.
 4. Moreover, they banned the use of titles of aristocracy.
 5. They also designed new uniforms and chose soviet hat (*budeonovka*) for the army and officials.
 6. In addition to that, the party renamed itself **The Russian Communist Party**.

Elections to Constituent Assembly:

- In November 1917, the Bolsheviks conducted the elections to the Constituent Assembly, but they failed to gain majority support.
- In January 1918, the Assembly rejected Bolshevik measures and Lenin dismissed the Assembly.
- After that, in March, Bolsheviks made peace with Germany at Brest Litovsk. (Note: Political allies opposed it)
- Later, Bolsheviks became the only party to participate in the elections to the All Russian Congress of Soviets. (RCS was the parliament of the country)
- **Several other changes** occurred in the country.
 1. Russia became a one-party state.
 2. Party kept its control on trade unions.
 3. The secret police called the Cheka first, later (OGPU and NKVD) punished those who criticized the Bolsheviks.
 4. Furthermore, the Party imposed censorship.

The Civil War:

- On hearing the news of land redistribution, many soldiers in the Russian army who belonged to peasant groups went back to their homes. Thus, during civil war, Bolsheviks had to face shortage of soldiers.
- Though, Bolsheviks managed to control the area of Moscow and Petrograd. However, still in many parts, there were liberals and conservatives in power.
- Non-Bolshevik socialists, liberals and supporters of Tsar did not want Bolshevik uprising. Thus, they organized troops to fight the Bolsheviks.
- It led to **the beginning of civil war**.

Bolsheviks (the reds)

1. Bolsheviks fought against the greens and whites.
2. They had their military.
3. They cooperated with non-Russian nationalities and Muslim Jadidists. This proved to be advantageous.
4. However, Bolsheviks' actions created confusion among people.
 - On one hand, in Khiva, in Central Asia, Bolshevik colonists brutally massacred local nationalists in the name of defending socialism and discouraged Nomadism.
 - On the other hand, in Soviet Union (USSR) non-Russian nationalists were given political autonomy.

Socialist Revolutionaries (the greens) and Pro-Tsarists (Whites)

1. They fought against the reds.
2. The French, American, British and Japanese troops helped them by giving support.
3. The whites took harsh steps with peasants who had seized the land.
4. However, such actions led to the loss of popular support for the non-Bolsheviks.

Making a socialist Society:

- Bolsheviks took **different steps** towards making a **socialist Society**.
 - Such as, Nationalization of banks and industries, permission to peasants for confiscation of land, introduction of centralized planning and Implementation of **Five Year Plans**.
- **Note:** India adopted the Five Year Plans from Soviet Union.
- During First two **Plans** (1927-1932 and 1933-1938), the government fixed all prices to promoted industrial growth.
- Furthermore, the government developed an extended schooling system, made arrangements for factory workers and peasants to enter universities and opened Creches in factories for the children of women workers.
- In addition to that, they provided cheap public healthcare. They also set up model living quarters for workers.

Positive impact of Centralized Planning:

- Centralized planning led to economic growth.
- Industrial production increased.
- New factory cities came into being.

Impact of Rapid Industrialization in Russia:

- Workers had to live in **poor conditions**.
- They lived hard lives which resulted in **550 stoppages** of work in a single year.
- In a temperature below 40 degrees, people had to **climb down** from the fourth floor **for using toilet**.

Stalinism and Collectivization:

- By 1927-1928, the towns in Russia were facing an acute problem of grain suppliers.
- In order to tackle this problem, government fixed prices of at which the peasants could sold grains.
- However, the peasants refused to sell their grain to government buyers at these prices.
- Thus, **Joseph Stalin**, who headed the party after the death of Lenin, introduced firm **emergency measures**.
 - In 1928, Party members toured the grain-producing area, supervising enforced grain collections, and raiding **kulaks**.
- As shortages continued, the government took another step and implemented collectivization programme.
 - From 1929, the Party forced all peasants to cultivate in collective farms (kolkhoz).
 - The bulk of land and implements were transferred to the ownership of collective farms.
 - Peasants worked on the land, and the kolkhoz profit was shared.
- But, peasants did not like the programme and resisted the authorities. They even destroyed their livestock due to which the number of cattle fell by one-third.
- As a result, the Stalin's government punished all those peasants who resisted collectivization.
- **What was the Reason for resistance?**
 - The use of force by the government was the foremost reason for resistance.
- **Did the collectivization programme increase production?**

- No, production did not increase. Rather, the bad harvests of 1930-1933 caused **4 million deaths**.
- **What happened with those who criticized the planned economy and collectivization?**
 - Stalin and his sympathizers charged these critics with conspiracy against socialism.
 - By 1939, Stalin's government put (over 2 million) people in prisons or labour camps.
 - Moreover, the innocent people were forced to make false confessions under torture and were executed- several among were talented professionals.

The Global influence of the Russian Revolution and the USSR:

- Globally, the supporters of socialism formed **the Communist party** in their respective countries.
 - **For Example:** The Communist Party of Great Britain.
- The Bolsheviks encouraged colonial people to follow their experiments and made global influence.
 - **For Example:** Many non-Russians from outside the USSR participated in the [Conference of the people of East](#).
 - The Bolshevik founded [Comintern](#) (an international union of pro-Bolshevik socialist parties).
 - Also, the communist International (Comintern) established the USSR's [Communist University of the Workers](#) of the East.
- **Note:** In Europe, socialists were not inspired by the way Bolsheviks took power. Rather, it was the idea of socialism (which created the possibility of workers' state) inspired them.
- Socialists (in the world) did not consider the Soviet Union a perfect example of Socialism.
 - Although industries and agriculture in USSR developed and poor people got food, the citizens did not have essential freedoms.
- Therefore, we can conclude, even though, the international reputation of USSR as a socialist country had declined, people across the world continued respecting the socialist ideals.

Category

1. Class 9th

Date

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