

Chapter- 2

Socialism in Europe and The Russian Revolution

STUDY NOTES**THE AGE OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

- The French had a great impact on the world and brought about a change in the way in which the society was formed. The French Revolution has created possibilities to bring dramatically change which includes equality, fraternity and liberty in Europe.

Not everyone in Europe however wanted a complete transformation. Some were conservatives, others were liberals and radicals.

LIBERALS

- One of the groups which looked to change society were liberals. They wanted a nation , which tolerated all religions. They were favoured religious tolerance and wanted to safe guard individual rights and argued for a representative, elected parliament. They wanted voting rights to be restricted to men of property .

RADICALS

- They supported women's right and backed the suffragette movement. Radicals wanted a nation in which the government was based on the majority of a country's population. They were not against the existence of private property, but disliked the concentration of it in the hands of a few.

CONSERVATIVES

- They were opposed to radicals and liberals. After the French Revolution , conservatives had opened their minds to the need for change. So by 19th century , they accepted that some change was inevitable, but believed that past had to be respected.

INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

- This was the time of economic and social changes. New cities, new industrial regions ,new railway lines were developed.
- Men, women and children were pushed into factories for low wages. With the Urbanisation, housing and sanitation problem were growing . Almost all industries were privately owned.

Most of the factory owners were often liberals and radicals and they felt that worker's effort must be encouraged. They felt that benefits would be achieved, if the workforce in economy was healthy and citizens were educated.

THE COMING OF SOCIALISM IN EUROPE

- By the mid 19th century, socialists ideas spread through Europe attracted widespread attention. Socialists were against private property and claimed that it was the root of all social evils.
- Robert Owen (1771- 1858), a leading English manufacturer, sought to build a co-operative community called New Harmony in Indiana (USA).
- French socialist Louis Blanc (1813-1882) wanted the government to encourage cooperatives and replace capitalists enterprises.
- Karl Marx (1818- 1883) wrote about socialism in his famous book 'Das Capital', saying that industrial society was capitalist, under which labourers do not get full share of the profits based on their contribution and so their condition could not improve.
- Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) joined with Marx to suggest that workers have to overthrow capitalism.

SUPPORT FOR SOCIALISM

- Socialists formed an international body called Second International to coordinate their efforts and their ideas spread through Europe by the 1870s. In England and Germany, workers formed associations to fight for better living and working conditions. In Britain, a labour party was formed. However till 1914, the socialists did not succeed to form government in Europe and their ideas did not shape legislation.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- The government in Russia was taken over by the socialists through the October Revolution of 1917. The fall of monarchy in February 1917, in Russia and the events of October Revolution are normally called the Russian Revolution.

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN 1914

- In 1914, Tsar Nicholas II ruled Russia and its Empire. The Russian Empire included Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus. The empire stretched to the Pacific comprised of Central Asian states and Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan.
- The major religions of Russia were Russian Orthodox Christianity, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists.

ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

- At the beginning of the 20th century, 85 % of the Russian Revolution were agriculture. In France, 40% and in Germany, 50% people were agriculturalists.
- In the empire, cultivators produced for the market as well as for their own needs and Russia was a major exporter of grain.

INDUSTRIES IN RUSSIA

- In Russia, industry was found in some specific areas like St. Petersburg and Moscow. Craftsmen undertook much of the production, but large factories existed alongside craft workshop.
- In 1890s, many factories were set up due to the expansion of railway network and there was an increase in the foreign investment.
- Workers were divided into social group. They were divided by skill. A metal worker of St. Petersburg recalled metal workers considered themselves aristocrats among other workers Women made up 31% of the factory labour force by 1914, but they were paid less than men. Workers were sometimes united and they participated in strikes.

PEASANTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

- In the countryside, peasants cultivated most of the land. The nobility, the crown and the Orthodox Church owned large properties. Peasants were divided and they were deeply religious.
- Unlike France, peasants in Russia had a tussle with the nobles and wanted the land of the nobles to be given to them. They refused to pay rent and sometimes murdered landlords.
- In 1902, this occurred on a large scale in South Russia, later it spread to all over Russia.

SOCIALISM IN RUSSIA

- All political parties were illegal in Russia before 1914. The Russian Social Democratic Workers Party was founded in 1898 by socialists who respected Marx's idea.
- Some Russian socialists recognised that, the Russian peasant's custom of dividing land periodically made them natural socialists.
- The Socialist Revolutionary Party was formed in 1900 by the socialists who struggled for peasants' rights. They demanded that land belonging to nobles be transferred to peasants.
- The Social Democratic was later divided over the strategy of the organisation. The party split in to two wings, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.
- Bolsheviks:- It was the majority group of the workers of Russia. Under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, they believed in revolutionary methods for bringing about changes in the society and the state. The Bolsheviks were able to bring about a successful revolution in Russia in 1917 and they changed the whole structure of Russia and Russian society.

Mensheviks:- It was the minority group of the workers of Russia. They believed in Parliamentary methods and participation in elections.

A TURBULENT TIME :- THE 1905 REVOLUTION

- In the beginning of the 20th century, Russia was still an autocracy and the Tsar was not subject to Parliament. During the 1905, social democrats and socialist revolutionaries worked with the peasants and workers to demand a Constitution.

- The year 1904 was bad for Russian workers . Increasing prices of essential goods, so that real wages declined by 20%. The workers went on a strike demanding a reduction in eight hours working duty, an increase in wages and improved working conditions.
- In 1905 , on one Sunday, the workers of Russia, led by Father Gapon, reached the Winter Palace of the Tsar in order to present a petition. But they were attacked by police and the Cossacks.
- They were fired at indiscriminately, resulting in the death of more than 100 workers and about 300 were wounded. This incident started a series of events that became known as the 1905 Revolution or 'Bloody Sunday'.
- Effects:- (i) Universities closed down when student bodies staged walkouts, complaining about the lack of civil liberties.
 - (ii) Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers and other middle class workers established the Union of Unions and demanded a Constituent Assembly.
 - (iii) During the 1905 Revolution, The Tsar allowed the creation of an elected consultative Parliament or Duma.
 - (iv) After 1905,most committees and unions worked unofficially, since they were declared illegal. Severe restrictions were placed on political activity.
 - (v) The government dismissed the first Duma within 75 days and re-elected the second Duma within three months.
 - (vi) Tsar did not want any questioning of his supreme authority. He changed the voting laws and packed the third Duma with conservative politicians, keeping out liberals and revolutionaries.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

- In 1914, the first world war started between two European Alliances- Germany, Austria and Turkey (the Central Powers) and France, Britain and Russia.
- Initially the war was popular in Russia and the people supported Tsar Nicholas II. The Tsar had decided to take the command of the Russian army into his own hand. So, he left his court and went to the battlefield.
- Russia's army lost badly in Germany and Austria between 1914 and 1916. By 1917, there were over 7 million casualties. As they retreated, the Russian army destroyed crops and buildings to prevent the annexation of enemy. The situation discredited the government and the Tsar, and soldiers refused to fight such a war.
- Impacts of the war :- (i) The war had a severe impact on industry. Russia had very few industries.
 - (ii) The country was cut- off from other suppliers of industrial goods.
 - (iii) By 1916, the railway lines began to breakdown due to the war. Able- bodied men were involved in the wars.
 - (iv) It led to acute labour shortage and small workshops producing essentials began to shut down.
 - (v) Large supplies of grain were sent to feed the vast army. Food scarcity became common which sometimes led to riots in bread shops.

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION IN PETROGRAD

- In the winter of 1917, conditions in the capital, Petrograd, were awful. On the right bank of the river Neva, workers' quarters and factories were located and on the left bank were the fashionable area, the Winter Palace and official buildings.
- In February 1917, there was acute shortage of food in Russia. The winter was very cold with the heavy snow frost which made the life of workers very difficult.
- Workers crossed from the factory quarters to the centre of the capital, the Nevskii Prospekt. On the left bank of the river Neva, the government imposed a curfew.
- All the demonstrators came back on 24th and 25th Feb 1917 evening. The government tried to control the situation and called out the cavalry and police to surveillance them. The Duma was suspended on 25th February.
- On 26th February, demonstrators returned in force to the streets of the left bank of the river Neva. On 27th, the police headquarters were ransacked. Workers demonstrated in the streets, raising slogan about bread, wages and democracy.
- The government tried to control the situation and called out the cavalry once again, but it refused to fire on the demonstrators. The cavalry soldiers joined the workers and jointly formed a Soviet or Council which was called as Petrograd Soviet.
- On 2nd March, the Tsar was abdicated, the Soviet leaders and Duma leaders formed Provisional government to run the country. The Petrograd Soviet had led the February Revolution that brought down the monarchy in February 1917.

AFTER FEBRUARY

- In Provisional Government, army officials, land owners and industrialists played an important role. But liberals and socialists worked for an elected government. Restrictions on public meetings and associations were removed.
- The Bolshevik leader, Vladimir Lenin, returned to Russia from his exile in April, 1917. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had opposed the war since 1914.
- Lenin gave his 'April Thesis' and made three demands:-
 - (i) The war to be brought to a close
 - (ii) The land to be transferred to the peasants
 - (iii) The banks to be nationalised.
- Lenin argued that the Bolshevik Party rename itself the Communist Party to indicate its new radical aims. Soldiers committees were formed in the army. In June, 500 Soviets set representatives to an All Russian Congress of Soviets.
- The power of the Provisional Government reduced and the Bolshevik influence grew. Provisional Government decided to take control of the spreading discontent. It resisted attempts by workers to run the factories and began arresting leaders.

THE REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917

- The conflict between the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks grew. In September, Lenin decided for an uprising against the government.
- Bolshevik supporters in the army, Soviets and factories were united. Lenin persuaded the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power on 16th October, 1917.
- The Soviet appointed a Military Revolutionary Committee under the leadership of Leon Trotskii to organise the seizure.
- The uprising began on 24th October, Prime Minister Kerenskii had left the city. Pro- government troops seized the buildings of two Bolshevik newspapers and sent to take over telephone and telegraph offices and protect the Winter Palace.
- The Military Revolutionary Committee ordered its supporters to seize government offices and arrest ministers. The ship 'Aurora' shelled the Winter Palace.
- Bolshevik's action was approved by the All Russian Congress of Soviets. There was heavy fighting between Pro- government troops and the Bolsheviks. By December, 1917, the Bolsheviks controlled the Moscow- Petrograd area.

WHAT CHANGED AFTER OCTOBER?

- The Bolshevik Party was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). They nationalised the banks and industries. All lands owned by the church and Tsar were confiscated.
- Land was declared a social property and the peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobles. They banned the old titles of the aristocracy and in big cities enforced partition of big houses according to family needs.
- 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
- measure and Lenin dismissed the assembly. Lenin believed that All Russian Congress of Soviet was more democratic than a an assembly.
- The Bolsheviks entered a treaty with Germany at Brest Litovsk and ended the war with Germany. The Bolsheviks became the only party to participate in the elections to the LL Russian Congress of Soviets.
- The secret police called Cheka punished those who criticised the Bolsheviks.

THE CIVIL WAR

- When the Bolsheviks took power and ordered the redistribution of land, the soldiers, mostly former peasants, deserted the army to take their share of land. The Pro- Tsarists (the whites) and the Socialist Revolutionaries (the greens) opposed the Bolsheviks and fought a Civil War with the Bolshevik (the reds) troops during 1918 and 1919.
- The Bolsheviks took the help of the non – Russian people and Muslim jadidists to take control of most of the former Russian empire by 1920. They were given political autonomy in the USSR created by the Bolsheviks in 1922.

MAKING A SOCIALIST SOCIETY

- During the Civil War, the Bolsheviks kept industries and banks nationalised. They permitted peasants to cultivate the land that had been socialised.
- A process of centralised planning was introduced. Officials assessed how the economy could work and set targets for a five – year period.
- The government fixed all prices to promote industrial growth during the first two plans (1927-1932 and (1933 – 1938).
- Centralised Planning led to economic growth . Industrial production increased (between 1929 and 1933 by 100% in the case of oil, coal and steel). New factory cities came into being.
- Other measures taken to develop a socialist society were:-
 - (i) An extended schooling system developed and arrangements were made for factory workers and peasants to enter universities.
 - (ii) Creches were established in factories for the children of women workers.
 - (iii) Cheap public healthcare was provided. Model living quarters were set up for the workers.

STALINISM AND COLLECTIVISATION

- Joseph Stalin became the leader of the Soviet Communist Party after the death of Lenin in January, 1924. Stalin believed that rich peasants and traders in the countryside were holding stocks in the hope of higher prices. He introduced the collectivisation of Soviet agriculture, which brought the great majority of peasants into collective and state farms.
- From 1929, the Communist Party forced all peasants to cultivate in collective farms(Kolkhoz). The profit of the farms was shared among the peasants. Those who opposed the collectivisation were severely punished, many were deported and exiled.
- Stalin’s government allowed some independently cultivation, but treated unsympathetically. But the production did not increase and the bad harvest 1930 - 1933 led to one of the most devastating famines in Soviet history.

THE GLOBAL INFLUENCE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE USSR

- Existing socialist parties in Europe did not wholly approve of the way the Bolsheviks took power and kept it. In many countries , communist parties were – like Communist Party of Great Britain.
- The Bolshevik encouraged colonial peoples to follow their experiment . Many non- Russians from outside the USSR participated in the conference of the peoples of the East (1920) and the Bolshevik-founded Comintern (an international union of pro- Bolshevik socialist parties).
