

Socialism in Europe and The Russian Revolution



1. The Age of Social Change

- The French Revolution opened up the possibility of creating a dramatic change in the way in which society was structured.
- In India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Derozio talked about the significance of the French Revolution,

2. Liberals

- Liberals wanted a nation which tolerated all religions.
- They were not democrats because they did not believe in universal adult franchise. They were in favour of voting only by men and the propertied class.

3. Radicals

- They wanted a government based on the majority of a country's population.
- Many radicals supported women's suffragette movements to achieve voting rights.
- They disliked the concentration of property in the hands of a few.

4. Conservatives

- The conservatives opposed the views and ideologies of the liberals and the radicals.
- They resisted change. After the French Revolution, they started accepting change provided it was slow had links and respected the past.

5. Industries and Social Change

- The Industrial Revolution led to changes in social and economic life, new cities came up and new industrialised regions developed.
- Men, women and children came to factories in search of work. But, unfortunately, working hours were long and wages were poor.
- Nationalists talked of revolutions to create 'nations' with equal rights.

6. Socialism in Europe

- Socialists were against private property and saw it as the root of all social ills of the time.
- Robert Owen (1771–1858) sought to build a cooperative community called New Harmony in Indiana (USA).
- Louis Blanc (1813–1882) wanted the government to encourage cooperatives and replace capitalist enterprises.
- Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) added other ideas to this body of arguments.
- According to Marx industrial society was 'capitalist' who owned the capital invested in factories, and the profit of capitalists was produced by workers.

7. Support for Socialism

- By the 1870s, they formed an international body – namely, the Second International.
- Associations were formed by workers in Germany and England to fight for better living and working conditions.
- 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 Labour Party in Britain and a Socialist Party in France.

8. The Russian Empire & Revolution

- The fall of the monarchy in February 1917 and the events of October were termed as the Russian Revolution.
- Russia was ruled by Tsar Nicholas II. The Russian Empire included current-day Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus, stretching to the Pacific and comprised today's Central Asian states, as well as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- The majority of the population was Russian Orthodox Christianity. But the empire also included Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists.
- About 85% of the Russian population was engaged in agricultural activities. Industries were located only a few places such as in St Petersburg and Moscow.

9. Socialism in Russia

- The Russian Socialist Democratic Labour Party was formed in 1898 and respected Marx's ideas.
- Some Russian socialists felt that the Russian peasant custom of dividing land periodically made them natural socialists.
- The Socialist Revolutionary Party was formed in 1900 which struggled for the rights of peasants. The Social Democrats differed from the Socialist Revolutionary Party on the issue of farmers.
- Social Democrats disagreed with Socialist Revolutionaries about peasants. Lenin felt that peasants were not one united group.

10. A Turbulent Time: The 1905 Revolution

- During the Revolution of 1905, Russia along with the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, worked with peasants and workers to demand a constitution.
- In 1904, prices of essential goods rose and their real wages declined by 20 per cent.
- Over 110,000 workers in St. Petersburg went on strike demanding a reduction in working hours and an increase in wages.
- The procession was led by Father Gapon, the procession was attacked by the police and the Cossacks when it reached the Winter Palace.
- Over 100 workers were killed and about 300 wounded. The incident, known as Bloody Sunday, started a series of events which resulted in the 1905 Revolution.
- '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.
- The Tsar allowed the creation of an elected consultative Parliament or Duma.
- He did not want any questioning of his Authority or any reduction in his power.

11. The First World War and the Russian Empire

- In 1914, war broke out between two European alliances – Germany, Austria and Turkey (the Central powers) and France, Britain and Russia (later Italy and Romania). This was the First World War.
- Anti-German sentiments ran high, as can be seen in the renaming of St. Petersburg – a German name – as Petrograd.
- The First World War was different on the eastern front and on the western front. Between 1914 and 1916 Russian army lost badly in Germany and Austria. There were 7 million casualties and 3 million refugees in Russia.
- The Russian army destroyed crops and buildings to prevent the enemy from being able to live off the land.
- The destruction of crops and buildings led to over 3 million refugees in Russia.
- The country was cut off from other suppliers of industrial goods by German control of the Baltic Sea.
- Large supplies of grain were sent to feed the army. The people in the cities, bread and flour became scarce. By the winter of 1916, riots at bread shops were common.

12. The February Revolution in Petrograd

- Petrograd city is divided among its people. On the right bank of the river, Neva workers' quarters and factories were located and on the left bank located fashionable areas such as the Winter Palace and official buildings.
- Food shortages deeply affected the workers' quarters. On the right bank, a factory was shut down on February 22. Women also led the way to strikes and it is called International Women's Day.
- On the 24th and 25th, the government called out the cavalry and police to keep an eye on them.
- Duma was suspended on 25th February and politicians spoke against this measure. The people were out with force once again on the 26th.
- On the 27th, the Police Headquarters were ransacked. The Streets thronged with people raising slogans about Bread, wages, better hours and democracy.
- Soldiers and striking workers gathered to form a 'Soviet' or 'council' in the same building where the Duma met and it is termed the Petrograd Soviet.
- Military Commanders advised him to abdicate. He followed their advice and abdicated on 2 March.
- A Provincial Government was formed by the Soviet and Duma leaders to run the country.

13. Women in the February Revolution

- At the Lorenz telephone Factory, Marfa Vasileva almost single-handedly called a successful strike.
- In celebration of Women's Day, women workers presented red bows to the Men then Marfa Vasileva, a milling machine operator stopped work and declared an impromptu strike.

14. After February

- Under the Provisional Government, army officials, landowners and industrialists were influential.
- Liberals and socialists worked towards an elected government. Restrictions on public meetings and associations were removed.
- In April 1917, Vladimir Lenin returned to Russia. He had earlier demanded that the war should be brought to an end, land should be distributed among the peasants and Banks should be nationalised. This came to be known as Lenin's 'April Theses'.
- He also emphasised renaming the Bolshevik Party to the Communist Party.
- In June, about 500 Soviets sent representatives to an All-Russian Congress of Soviets. As the Provisional Government saw its power reduce and Bolshevik influence grow, it decided to take stern measures against the spreading discontent.

15. The Revolution of October 1917

- The conflict between the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks grew, Lenin feared the Provisional Government would set up a dictatorship.
- On 16 October 1917, Lenin persuaded the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power.
- To organise the seizure, a Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the Soviets under Leon Trotsky.
- The uprising began on 24 October. Sensing trouble, Prime Minister Kerenski had left the city to summon troops. At dawn, military men loyal to the government seized the buildings of two Bolshevik Newspapers.
- Late in the day, the ship Aurora shelled the Winter Palace. By nightfall, the city was under the committee's control and the ministers had surrendered.
- At a meeting of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in Petrograd, the majority approved the Bolshevik action.
- There was heavy fighting – especially in Moscow – but by December, the Bolsheviks controlled the Moscow-Petrograd area.

16. What Changed after October?

- Industry and banks were nationalised in November.
- Land was declared as social property and peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility.
- The Bolshevik Party was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).
- Elections were conducted in November 1917, to the Constituent Assembly, but they failed in majority.
- In January 1918, the Assembly rejected Bolshevik measures and Lenin dismissed the Assembly.
- Despite opposition, in March 1918, the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany at Brest Litovsk.
- The Bolsheviks became the only party in Russia which could contest the elections. Thus, Russia Became a one-party state.
- Trade unions were kept under Party control. The secret police (called the Cheka first, and later OGPU and NKVD) punished those who criticised the Bolsheviks.

17. The Civil War

- The Russian Army broke up and their leaders moved to south Russia and organised troops to fight the Bolsheviks ('the Reds').
- During 1918 and 1919, the Russian Empire was controlled by the 'greens' (Socialist Revolutionaries) and 'whites' (pro-Tsarists) backed by French, American, British and Japanese troops.
- By January 1920, the Bolsheviks controlled most of the former Russian empire.
- They succeeded due to the cooperation with non-Russian nationalities and Muslim jihadists.
- Most non-Russian nationalities were given political autonomy in the Soviet Union (USSR) – the state the Bolsheviks created from the Russian empire in December 1922.

18. Making a Socialist Society

- During the civil war, industries and banks kept nationalised. Peasants were permitted to cultivate the land.
- The mechanism of centralised planning was introduced, and five-year plans were made. This led to the industrial growth of Russia.
- During the first two 'Plans' the government fixed all prices to promote industrial growth (1927-1932 and 1933-1938).
- Cheap public health care was provided to the workers. Many housing quarters were also set up for workers.
- For women workers, crèches were established in factories for the children.

19. Stalinism and Collectivisation

- The period of the early Planned Economy led to the disaster of the collectivisation of agriculture.
- By 1927-1928, the towns in Soviet Russia faced an acute problem of grain supplies. Stalin introduced strict emergency measures.
- In 1928, party members toured the grain-producing areas, supervising enforced grain collections, and raiding 'kulaks' – the name for well-to-do peasants.
- From 1929, the Party forced all peasants to cultivate in collective farms (kolkhoz). Peasants worked on the land, and the kolkhoz profit was shared.
- Many peasants resisted the policy of collectivisation.
- The government of Stalin allowed some independent cultivation but treated such cultivators unsympathetically.
- In spite of collectivisation, production did not increase immediately and due to bad harvests of 1930-1933 over 4 million people died.

20. The Global Influence of the Russian Revolution and the USSR

- In many countries, communist parties were formed, like the Communist Party of Great Britain.
- Many people across the globe criticised the capture of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks.
- 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.

