

Class: IX

Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution

Q1. What were the social, economic and political conditions in Russia before 1905?

Ans. Social Conditions:

The majority religion was Russian Orthodox Christianity – which had grown out of the Greek Orthodox Church. But the empire also included Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists. The non-Russian nationalities were not treated equal to that of Russian nationalities. They were not given freedom to follow their culture and language. Workers were a divided group on the basis of skill and training. Peasants formed their groups called commune or mir.

Economic Conditions:

Majority of the Russians were agriculturists. Grain was the main item of export from Russia. Industries were few. Prominent industrial areas were St. Petersburg and Moscow. Much of the production was done by the craftsmen. There were large factories alongside the craft workshops. With the expansion of the Russian rail network, foreign investment in factories grew. There was huge coal, Iron and Steel production. There were equal numbers of factory workers and craftsmen. The workers were exploited by the capitalists who made their life miserable.

Political Conditions: Russia was a monarchy. Tsar Nicholas II ruled Russia and its empire that extended to current day Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus. It stretched to the Pacific and comprised today's Central Asian states, as well as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Tsars believed in the divine rights of kings. They were not responsible to the parliament. All political parties were illegal in Russia.

Q2. In what ways was the working population in Russia different from other countries in Europe, before 1917?

Ans. The working population in Russia was different from other countries in Europe, before 1917, in the following ways –

- a) Vast majority of Russians were agriculturalists. This proportion was higher than in most European countries. In France and Germany this proportion was between 40% and 50%.
- b) The cultivators in Russia produced for the markets as well as for their own needs.
- c) Workers were a divided social group on the basis of skill. Metal workers considered themselves aristocrats among other workers as their occupation demanded more training and skills.
- d) Peasants in Russian had no respect for the nobility. Nobles got their power and position through the Tsar and not through the local popularity, whereas in countries like France, peasants respected nobles.

e) In Russia, peasants had pooled their land together and divided the profits according to the family needs. In other parts of the world, agriculture was done individually by the peasants.

Q3. Why did the Tsarist autocracy in Russia collapse in 1917? Ans. The following were the reasons for the collapse of Tsarist autocracy:

- a) Anti-German sentiments in Russia were high owing to the First World War. Further, Tsar Nicholas II's German origin and poor advisors made the autocracy unpopular.
- b) Russia suffered shocking defeats on the warfront with millions of casualties. Crops and buildings were destroyed by the Russian army to prevent enemy having any advantage. It led to millions of refugees. Tsar was being cursed for this situation.
- c) Food shortage led to people rioting for food. The Russian army too shifted its loyalty and began supporting the revolutionaries.
- d) A lockout took place at a factory on the right bank of Neva river in sympathy with the workers on the left bank on 22nd February. Women led the strikes.
- e) Later, the government suspended the Duma which resulted in sharp protests. The demonstrators ransacked the Police head Quarters. The government called the cavalry but they refused to fire on the demonstrators.

f) Soldiers and the striking workers gathered to form a 'soviet' or 'Council'. This was the Petrograd Soviet.

g) The very next day, when a delegation went to the Tsar, the military commanders advised the Tsar to abdicate. Soviet leaders and Duma leaders formed a provisional government to run the country. The Tsarist autocracy thus collapsed in 1917.

Q4. Make two lists: one with the main events and effects of the February Revolution and the other with the main events and effects of the October Revolution. Write a paragraph on who was involved in each, who were the leaders and what the impact of each was on Soviet history.

Ans. **February Revolution:**

Events:

In the winter of 1917, the situation in Petrograd was grim. There was food shortage in the worker's quarters.

a) 22 February: Lock out took place at a factory. Workers of factories joined in sympathy. Women also led and participated in the strikes. This came to be called the International Women's Day.

The government imposed a curfew.

b) 24, 25 February: The government called out the cavalry and police to keep an eye on them.

c) 25 February: The government suspended the Duma and politicians spoke against this measure. The people were out with force once again.

d) 27 February: The police headquarters were ransacked. Cavalry was called out again. An officer was shot at the barracks of a regiment and other regiments mutinied, voting to join the striking workers gathered to form a Soviet or Council. This was the Petrograd Soviet. A delegation went to meet the Tsar. The military commanders advised him to abdicate.

e) 2 March: The Tsar was abdicated.

A provisional government was formed by the Soviet and Duma leaders to run the country.

EFFECTS:

a) Restrictions on public meetings and associations were removed.

b) Soviets were set up. In industrial areas, factory committees were formed which began questioning the way the industrialists ran their factories.

c) Soldier's committees were formed in the army.

d) The Provisional Government saw its power declining and Bolshevik influence grew. It decided to take stern measures against the spreading discontent. It resisted attempts by workers to run factories and arrested leaders. Peasants and socialists revolutionary leaders pressed for a redistribution

of land. Land committees were formed and peasants seized land between July and September 1917.

No political party was involved in the February Revolution. It was a combined effort of the workers of fifty factories along with the women who took up the leadership.

OCTOBER REVOLUTION:

EVENTS:

a) 16th October 1917: Lenin persuaded the Petrograd Soviet and Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power. A Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the Soviet to organise seizure.

b) 24th October: Uprising began. Prime Minister Kerenskii left the city to summon the troops. Military men loyal to the government seized the buildings of two Bolshevik newspapers. Pro-government troops were sent to take over telephone and telegraph offices and protect the winter Palace.

In response Military Revolutionary Committee ordered to seize government offices and arrest ministers.

c) The 'Aurora' ship shelled the Winter Palace. Other ships took over strategic points. By night, the city had been taken over and ministers surrendered.

d) All Russian Congress of Soviets in Petrograd approved the Bolshevik action.

e) By December: Heavy fighting in Moscow. The Bolshevik controlled the Moscow-Petrograd area. The people involved were Lenin, the Bolsheviks and pro-government troops.

EFFECTS:

- a) Most industries and banks were nationalised in November 1917.
- b) Land was declared social property and peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility.
- c) Use of old titles was banned.
- d) New uniforms were designed for the army and officials.
- e) Russia became a one-party state.
- f) Trade unions were kept under party control.
- g) A process of centralised planning was introduced. This led to economic growth. Industrial production increased.
- h) An extended schooling system was developed.
- i) Collectivisation of farms started.

Lenin led the October Revolution. Bolshevik supporters in army, Soviets and factories were mobilised for mass struggle. Lenin rose to power and set up a Bolshevik government in Soviet Russia.

Q5. What were the main changes brought about by the Bolsheviks immediately after the October Revolution?

Ans. The main changes were:-

- a) Industries and banks were nationalised. This meant that the government now had their ownership and management. Land was declared social property and peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility. In cities, Bolsheviks enforced the partition of large houses according to family requirements.
- b) Use of old titles of autocracy was banned. New uniforms for the army and officials were designed.
- c) The Bolshevik party was renamed as the Russian Communist Party(Bolshevik).
- d) Despite opposition by their political allies the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany and withdrew from the First World War.
- e) In the later years, the Bolsheviks became the only one party to participate in the elections to the All Russian Congress of Soviets. It became the parliament of Russia.

Q6. Write few lines to show what you know about:

- a) Kulaks: They were well-to-do peasants who were supposed to be holding stocks in the hope of higher prices. They were raided so that they may be eliminated in order to develop modern farms and establish state-controlled large farms.
- b) The Duma: The Duma was a consultative parliament that was created on the permission of the Tsar during the 1905 Revolution.

c) Women workers between 1900 and 1930: Women made up 31% of the factory labour force, but were paid between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a man's wage. They actively led the strikes in many factories. They even worked in the collective farms.

d) The Liberals: They were a group which looked to change society. They wanted a nation which tolerated all religions and opposed the uncontrolled power of dynastic rulers. They argued for a representative, elected parliament government subject to laws interpreted by a well-trained judiciary independent of rulers and officials.

e) Stalin's collectivisation programme: Stalin hoped to solve the problem of food shortage through combining small with large and modern farms. This was collectivisation programme that began in 1929. Peasants were forced to work in these state controlled collective farms called Kolkhoz.