

# 02. The Russian Revolution

## Session 1→

### 01. What do you mean by Socialism?

Socialism is a political and economic theory of social organisation which advocates that the means of production distribution and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.

### 02. Differentiate between the ideas of liberals, radicals and conservatives.

#### (a) Liberals –

- i. They believed in changing the society.
- ii. They wanted secular nation.
- iii. They were against monarchy and wanted to protect the rights of the people
- iv. They wanted parliamentary government and an independent judiciary
- v. They thought that only propertied men should have the right to vote.

#### (b) Radicals –

- i. Radicals wanted a government based on the approval of country's majority.
- ii. They supported women's right to vote.
- iii. They opposed the privileges of the land owners.
- iv. They were against the concentration of wealth in the hands of few

#### (c) Conservatives –

- i. They opposed both the radicals and the liberals.
- ii. Earlier they opposed any kind of changes but by the 19th century, they accepted the change but believed that the past had to be respected.

### 03. Describe the vision of the following socialists.

- i. Robert Owen – Robert Owen (1771-1858), a leading English manufacturer, sought to build a cooperative community called New Harmony in Indiana (USA).
- ii. Louis Blanc – In France, Louis Blanc (1813-1882) wanted the government to encourage cooperatives and replace capitalist enterprises. These cooperatives were to be associations of people who produced goods together and divided the profits according to the work done by member.
- iii. Karl Marx – (i) Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) added other ideas to this body of arguments. Marx argued that industrial society was 'Capitalist'. Capitalist owned the capital invested in factories, and the profit of capitalists was produced by workers.  
(ii) The conditions of workers could not improve as long as this profit was accumulated by private capitalists. Workers had to overthrow capitalism and the rule of private property.

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- (iii) Marx believed that to free themselves from capitalist exploitation, workers had to construct a radically socialist society where all property was socially controlled. This would be a communist society. He was convinced that workers would triumph in their conflict with capitalists.

### Session 2 →

#### 01. What were the main causes of Russian Revolution?

The main causes of Russian Revolution were as follows:

- i. Autocratic rule of Tsar – In 1914, the Russian emperor was Tsar Nicholas II. He fought a number of wars to expand his empire in the North and West in Europe. He bore the expenditure of war by taxing the common people of Russia.
- ii. Condition of Peasants – Majority of the Russian were agriculturists. Major part of the land was owned by the Nobles and Clergy, and these farmers worked on their land as a daily wage worker.
- iii. Condition of workers in the industries – Most industries were owned by private industrialists. Though the government supervised factories working hours and wages of the workers but still rules were broken. Women workers were paid less than men. Some workers formed associations to help members in times of unemployment and financial crisis.
- iv. Status of Industries – Industry Petersburg was found in pockets. Prominent industrial areas were St. Petersburg and Moscow. Foreign investment in industries increased with the extension of Russia's Railway network.
- v. Formation of socialist parties – All political parties were illegal in Russia before 1914. The Russian Social Democratic Workers Party founded in 1898 by socialists who respected Marx's ideas. But because of government policies it had to operate secretly. It set up a newspaper, mobilised workers and organised strike.

#### 02. Describe the condition of Russia during First World War.

- In Russia, the war was initially popular and people rallied around Tsar Nicholas II. The First World War on the 'eastern front' differed from that on the 'western front'.
- In the west, armies fought from trenches stretched along eastern France, In the east, armies moved a good deal and fought battles leaving large casualties. Defeats were shocking and demoralising. Russia's armies lost badly in Germany and Austria between 1914 and 1916. There were over 7 million casualties by 1917.

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- As they retreated, 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 situation discredited the government and the Tsar. Soldiers did not wish to fight such a war.

### 03. What was the impact of the First World War on Russian economy and industry?

- The war had had a severe impact on industry. 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.
- Industrial equipment disintegrated more rapidly in Russia than elsewhere in Europe.
- By 1916, railway lines began to break down. Able-bodied men were called up to the war. As a result, there were labour shortages and small workshops producing essentials were shut down. Large supplies of grain were sent to feed the army. For the people in the cities, bread and flour became scarce. By the winter of 1916, riots at bread shops were common.

### 04. Who was Father Gapon? Narrate the events leading to the 'Bloody Sunday' incident and the 1905 revolution.

Father Gapon was leading the procession of striking workers towards the Winter Palace.

The events leading to the 'Bloody Sunday' were as follows:

- i. when this procession of workers reached the Winter Palace, it was attacked by the police.
- ii. Over a hundred of workers were killed and about 300 were wounded.
- iii. This incident, known as the 'Bloody Sunday', started a series of events leading to the 1905 revolution.
- iv. Strikes took place, universities closed down when students' bodies staged walkout. Lawyers, doctors and other middle-class workers formed Unions and demanded a constituent assembly.

## Session 3 →

### 01. What was the parliament of Russia called?

Duma

### 02. Explain how the February Revolution of 1917 ended monarchy in Russia.

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OR

**Explain the Petrograd Revolution of 1917.**

- i. All the worker quarters and factories were located on the right bank of the river Neva. On the left were the fashionable areas, the Winter Palace, official buildings, and the Duma.
- ii. In February 1917, there was severe shortage of food in the workers' quarters. On February 22, a lockout took place at a factory leading to a strike by workers. In other factories also workers went on strike.
- iii. The workers ultimately crossed the river and surrounded the official buildings in protest. The government imposed a curfew and called out a cavalry and police to keep an eye on them.
- iv. On Sunday 25 February, the government suspended the Duma. Demonstrators returned in force to the streets of the left bank. On 26 February and on 27 February, the police headquarters were ransacked. People raised slogans about bread, wages, better working hours and democracy. The government tried control the situation by calling the army, but the cavalry refused to fire at the demonstrators.
- v. By that evening soldiers and striking workers had gathered to form a "Soviet" or "Council" in the same building as the Duma met. This was a Petrograd Soviet.
- vi. The very next day, a delegation went to see the Tsar and the Military Commanders advised him to abdicate. He decided to abdicate on 2 March.
- vii. Soviet leaders and the Duma leaders formed a Provisional Government to run the country. Russia's future would be decided by a constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Petrograd had led the February Revolution that brought down the monarchy in February 1917.

**03. What were the three major demands of Bolshevik?**

OR

**What were the Lenin's demands?**

OR

**What were the April Theses?**

In April 1917, the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin returned to Russia from his exile. He and Bolsheviks had opposed the war since 1914. Now he felt it was time for soviets to take over power.

So, he put forward three demands called as 'Lenin's April Theses' –

- i. The First World War to be brought to an end and Russia should withdraw itself from the war.

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- ii. Land to be transferred to the peasants.
- iii. Banks to be nationalised.

### **04. Explain the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia.**

- i. As the conflict between the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks grew, Lenin feared the Provisional Government would set up a dictatorship.
- ii. On 16 October 1917, Lenin persuaded the Petrograd soviet and the Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power. A Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the Soviet under Leon Trotskii to organise the seizure.
- iii. The uprising began on 24 October. Sensing trouble, Prime Minister Kerenskii had left the city to summon troops. Pro-government troops were sent to take over telephone and telegraph offices and protect the Winter Palace.
- iv. In a swift response, the Military Revolutionary Committee ordered its supporters to seize government offices and arrest ministers.
- v. Late in the day, the ship Aurora shelled the Winter Palace. Other vessels sailed down the Neva and took over various military points. By nightfall, the city was under the committee's control and the ministers had surrendered.
- vi. Uprising took place in other cities. There was heavy fighting – especially in Moscow – but by December, the Bolsheviks controlled the Moscow-Petrograd area.

### **Session 4 →**

#### **01. The Soviet hat was called as – Budeonovka.**

#### **02. Explain Stalin's Collectivisation program.**

- i. The period of the early Planned Economy was linked to the disasters of the collectivisation of agriculture. By 1927-1928, the towns in Soviet Russia were facing an acute problem of grain supplies. The government fixed prices at which grain must be sold, but the peasants refused to sell their grain to government buyers at these prices.
- ii. Stalin, who headed the party after the death of Lenin, introduced firm emergency measures. He believed that rich peasants and traders in the countryside were holding stocks in the hope of higher prices. Speculation had to be stopped and supplies confiscated.
- iii. In 1928, Party members toured the grain-producing areas, supervising enforced grain collections, and raiding 'kulaks' – the name for well-to-do peasants.
- iv. It was argued that grain shortages were partly due to the small size of holdings. After 1917, land had been given over to peasants. These small-sized peasant farms could not be modernised. To develop modern farms, and run them along industrial lines with machinery, it was necessary to 'eliminate kulaks', take away land from peasants, and establish state-controlled large farms.

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- v. From 1929, the Party forced all peasants to cultivate in collective farms (Kolkhoz).
- vi. Peasants worked on the land, and the kolkhoz profit was shared. Enraged peasants resisted the authorities and destroyed their livestock.
- vii. Those who resisted collectivisation were severely punished. Many were deported and exiled. As they resisted collectivisation, peasants argued that they were not rich and they were not against socialism. Stalin's government allowed some independent cultivation, but treated such cultivators unsympathetically.

### 03. Who were kulaks?

The well-to-do peasants in Russia were called kulaks.

### 04. What was kolkhoz?

Collective farms in Russia were called kolkhoz.

**- THE END -**

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Note: Some changes are made in **Session 4 – Ques. 1**, **Session 3 – Ques. 3 & 4** and **Session 2 – Ques. 3. Thank You** for your patience and cooperation

Sources: Mrs. Binita Jain Ma'am – History teacher, BMSSS

Some contents are also from NCERT Textbook