

# Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution

## Notes

Read below to learn the topic-wise notes of Chapter 2 of History, class 9.

### French Revolution Rooting For Social Change

Before the 18th century, Europe was dominated by Monarchical power where the aristocrats and the church enforced economic and social decisions on people. However, with the onset of the French Revolution between 1789 to 1790, people raised their voices to change the country's political landscape and uproot the monarchy system.

### Liberals, Radicals, and Conservatives

It was noted that not all Europeans did not want a complete transformation of society. There were few in favour of a gradual shift while others wanted the society to be restructured rather radically. Let's have a look at these divided groups in further detail

#### Liberals

One of the groups which favoured a change in society was the liberals. This group wished to live in a nation that tolerated all religions. The Liberal Group was strongly against the unrestrained power of the authoritative rulers.

Their agenda was also to promote the rights of individuals against the government. This group were not '*democrats*'. They did not agree with the concept of an independent adult franchise, which gives rights to every citizen to vote. They wanted men owning property to cast their vote and were against women participating in the vote.

#### Radicals

Radicals too wanted to change society like the liberals. However, they wished to stay in a nation in which the government was elected based on the votes of the mass population. They wanted to safeguard the rights of women through the women's suffrage movement. They were in opposition to the privileges enjoyed by great landowners and wealthy factory owners.

#### Conservatives

Conservatives are another important group which played a pivotal role in the upsurge of socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution, Conservatives were initially against the change

that was being favoured by liberals and radicals. However, after the French Revolution, conservatives also became open to change through a slower process.

## Industrial and Social Change

Industrialization brought together men, children, and women in factories. The factory working hours were gruesome and long. During the lack of demand for industrial goods, unemployment was high. There was no proper facility for housing and sanitation. Liberals and radicals who were property owners wanted to address these issues. They felt that wealthy and educated citizens should benefit the economy by being more productive.

## Socialism in Europe

Socialists were against people holding private property. They felt that though the property owners gave employment, they were only concerned with their private gains and not about the welfare of the society at large. **Karl Marx (1818-1883)** argued that industrial society was 'capitalist' and the workers should build a socialist society where all property was socially controlled to become free of capitalist status. Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) contributed immensely to the theories and study of the concept of socialism.

## The Russian Revolution



Socialists took charge of the government in Russia during the October Revolution of 1917. The fall of the monarchy in February 1917 and the events that followed in October of the same year are referred to as the Russian Revolution. Before this Czar Nicholas II ruled Russia and its empire in 1914.

## Economy and Society of the Russian Empire

Now that you are familiar with the upsurge of Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution took place, here are some pointers describing the economic conditions during this time in Europe

- At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of Russians (85%) earned their livelihood by practising agriculture.
- Industries were concentrated only in Moscow and St. Petersburg.
- In the 1890s more factories were set up with the extension of Russia's railway network and the production of coal and iron increased.
- The Government rule was often broken and the workers were made to work for 10- 15 hours a day.
- Women accounted for 31% of factory labour in 1914 but were paid less than men.

## Russian Socialism

In this chapter, the next important topic is Russian Socialism. Enlisted below are some major pointers related to it.

- The socialists founded and formed the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party in 1898 but had to be operated illegally due to the Government's policing.
- The Socialists group founded the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1900 which stood for peasant's rights, demanding that the land which belonged to the nobles should be handed over to the peasants.

## The Bloody Sunday



Bloody Sunday is a vital sub-topic covered under the chapter on socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution. It took place on **22nd January 1905 in St. Petersburg**. A procession of 1,10,000 workers gathered to make an appeal to **Czar Nicholas II** demanding a reduction in working hours to eight hours a day, an increase in wages, and better working conditions. Many workers felt that the prices of essential goods were increasing too fast and the wages were declining by 20%. The local police along with the Cossacks attacked the mob and killed over 100 workers and injured over 300. The Bloody Sunday is an unfortunate event known worldwide covered under the Russian Revolution

## Beginning of the World War and its effect on the Russian Empire

The emergence of World War I indirectly impacted the Russian Revolution in great terms, let us have a look at some key pointers related to it:

- In 1914, two European alliances, i.e. Germany, Austria & Turkey as well as France, Britain & Russia took to war.
- The war was initially popular in support of Czar Nicholas II, but then the public stopped supporting the Czar.
- From 1914 to 1916, Russian armies lost war against Germany and Austria. As many as 7 million people were recorded as casualties,
- Industries were affected, railway lines were disintegrated, small workshops were shut and bread & flour became scarce.

## The February Revolution in Petrograd

As mentioned in Socialism and the Russian Revolution, the February Revolution was one of the most influential events of that period. Here are the key pointers you must know about the February Revolution:

- The conditions in 1917 in Petrograd were grim as there was an acute shortage of food in the worker's quarters,
- On February 22nd, a major lockout was declared in the Factory and workers walked from the factory dwelling quarters to the centre of the capital.
- The government called for a curfew and the Duma was removed. Streets were filled with people shouting slogans of bread, wages, lesser working hours and democracy.
- The government asked the cavalry to fire, however, they did not follow the orders and joined the workers on strike.
- Soldiers and workers formed a 'soviet' or 'council' which came to be known as the **Petrograd Soviet**.
- This led to the rise of the February Revolution and the end of monarchy rule in 1917 February.

## Post-February

Liberals and socialists favoured a government elected by the masses. Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks came back to Russia from his exile and declared the war to end. He also demanded that land must be passed on to peasants and that the banks should be nationalized. Different unions were formed in factories. Land committees came into existence and peasants seized land.

## October Revolution (1917)

On 16 October 1917, Lenin convinced the Soviets of Petrograd and the Bolsheviks to accept the socialist power. The Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the Soviets under Leon Trotsky for the seizure. At a meeting in Petrograd of the All Russian Congress of Soviets party, the majority approved the Bolshevik action. A major fight in Moscow broke out but by December, Bolsheviks established control of the Moscow-Petrograd area. Hence, the October Revolution is marked as an essential topic under the chapter on Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution.

## After-Effects of the October Revolution

Here are some of the major repercussions of the October Revolution:

- The nationalization of Industries and banks had taken place by 1917. The land was declared as public property. Most peasants were able to seize the lands of the nobility class.
- The Assembly in 1918 rejected Bolsheviks' appeal and the assembly was dismissed by Lenin.
- Bolsheviks was the sole party to take part in the election to the Russian Soviet Congress.
- Russia became a one-party state and trade unions had to take orders from the ruling party.

## Civilian War

The civilian war witnessed disapproval from various leading groups in Europe. While studying Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution, you must also go through the following pointers on the emergence of the Civilian War:

- The group of Socialists, liberals, and autocrats did not support the Bolsheviks uprising.
- During the period of 1918 to 1919, the greens termed as socialists (revolutionaries and whites who were in favour of the Czar) controlled the Russian empire supported by the French, the Americans, the British and the Japanese troops.
- Civil War was initiated between newly formed troops and the Bolshevik supporters.
- Non-Bolsheviks lost support in the War and by 1920 the Bolsheviks headed and controlled the Russian Empire.
- Bolsheviks sought the support of non-Russian nationalists and Muslim jadidists.
- The non-Russians were now allowed to participate in politics in the Soviet Union (USSR).

## Forming a Progressive Social Society

While making the study notes for the class 9 chapter Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution, you must also know about how the formation of a progressive social society was carried out in the post-war European society:

- Planning became a centralized process and a five-year plan was drafted.
- The government set prices for all commodities to increase industrial and economic growth.
- Industrialization increased and new factories were set up.
- The school system was formed and provisions were made for factory workers and peasants. Crèche facility was opened in factories, public healthcare at cheap was provided, and living quarters were made for workers.

## Stalinism and Collectivisation

Stalinism and Collectivisation are described in detail in the chapter on Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution. Here is a section summary of Stalinism and Collectivisation:

- The period of the early Planned Economy led to the disasters of the collectivization of agriculture.
- By 1927-28, Soviet Russia faced an acute shortage of grains.
- The Government fixed a price for grains but peasants denied the new rates.
- Stalin led the party after the death of Lenin and called for emergency measures.
- Peasants were stocking grains for a higher price and got arrested.
- Lands were seized from peasants and large state-controlled farms were established.
- Peasants were forced to work on collectivized farms.
- Due to a bad harvest in 1930-33, a devastating famine struck Russia and 4 million died.
- Around 2 million people were imprisoned for criticizing the Planned Economic measures.

## Global Impact of the Russian Revolution and USSR

As the Russian Revolution was one of the major historical events, it had multiple repercussions all across the world. Take a look at the key consequences of how the Russian Revolution affected the world economy at large:

- Globally, many Communist groups were formed like the Communist Party of Great Britain.
- Many non-Russians outside of the USSR were a part of the Conference of Peoples of East during 1920 and the Bolshevik group initiated the Comintern (a worldwide union of Bolshevik socialist party supporters).
- The idea of Socialism had been given a front face globally by the outbreak of the Second World War.
- It was noticed that the structure of the USSR governance was not tuned correctly with the ideals of the Russian Revolution.
- Even though industries were flourishing especially the agriculture sector and there was an abundant food supply, the ultimate freedom to citizens was denied

## NCERT Solutions - Extra Questions and Answers

**Q 1. What were the main changes brought about by the Bolsheviks immediately after the October Revolution?**

**Ans.** The following are the main changes brought about by the Bolsheviks immediately after the October Revolution:

1. Industries and banks were nationalised by November 1917; the Government took over ownership and management.

2. The land was declared as a social property and peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility.
3. In the cities, the Bolsheviks enforced the partition of large houses according to family requirements.
4. Old titles of the aristocracy were banned.
5. New uniforms were designed for the army and officials.
6. The Bolshevik Party was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).
7. Bolsheviks conducted elections for the constituent assembly; however, they failed to attain the majority. The assembly rejected the Bolshevik measures, and Lenin dismissed the assembly.
8. All Russian Congress of Soviets became the Parliament of the country. Russia became a one-party state.
9. Trade unions were kept under party control, the Secret Police punished anyone who criticised the Bolsheviks. Many young artists and writers continued to support the Party as it stood for Socialism.
10. Many experiments were done in Arts and Architecture. However many artists were unhappy because of the censorship.

**Q 2. In what ways was the working population in Russia different from other countries in Europe, before 1917?**

**Ans.** A major portion of Russia's population were agriculturists. About 85 per cent of Russians depended on agriculture as the main source of their income. Unlike France and Germany where only 40 per cent and 50 per cent depended on agriculture and the rest were involved in manufacturing or service industries. Russia was a major exporter of grain as a larger number of the population was dependent upon the sector. Russia had two major industrial areas- St Petersburg and Moscow. With only a few industries, craftsmen took care of maximum production. Changes were introduced in the 1890s when Russia's railway extended, industries were set up, foreign investment in industry increased, coal production doubled and iron and steel output quadrupled.

**Q 3. What were the social, economic and political conditions in Russia before 1905?**

**Ans.** The social, economic and political conditions in Russia before 1905 are described below:

1. At the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of Russians (85%) earned their livelihood by practising agriculture.
2. Industries were concentrated only in Moscow and St. Petersburg.
3. In the 1890s more factories were set up with the extension of Russia's railway network and the production of coal and iron increased.
4. Government rule was often broken and the workers were made to work for 10- 15 hours a day.
5. Women accounted for 31% of factory labour in 1914 but were paid less than men. The socialists founded and formed the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party in 1898 but had to be operated illegally due to the Government's policing.



The Socialists group founded the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1900 which stood for peasant's rights, demanding that the land which belonged to the nobles should be handed over to the peasants.

**Q 4. Why did the Tsarist autocracy collapse in 1917?**

**Ans:** Tsarist autocracy collapsed due to a number of reasons. The Tsar's rule was authoritarian and not answerable to the general public. There was no parliament to keep its powers in check and the poor economic and social conditions of the workers did not help. Workers in the early 20 century were overworked and trade unions and factory committees were declared illegal. There were heavy restrictions on political activity. Tsar had dismissed the first 2 Dumas very quickly because he did not want his authority and powers to be questioned. The third Duma was filled with Conservative politicians. Tsar refused to consult the Duma during the first world war. The dissatisfaction increased when the Russian soldiers returned from war to find their agricultural lands were burnt and buildings destroyed on the orders of the Tsar.

