

Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution

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

Answer:

Social Condition: 85% of Russia's population was agriculturist. The industry existed, but rarely in which was it mostly privately owned. Workers were divided based on their skills. The division among workers is also reflected in their dress and etiquette. The workers were a divided group. Had strong ties with some villages, others were permanently settled in the cities.

Economic Condition: Most industries were the personal property of industrialists. The government supervised large factories. The industry was found in the pocket. Many factories were established in the 1890s when Russia's railway network was expanded, foreign investment in the industry increased, coal production doubled, and iron and steel production quadrupled. Most industries were the personal property of industrialists.

Political condition: Political parties were illegal before 1914. The Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party was founded in 1898 by socialists who respected Marx's ideas. In 1903, this party was divided into two groups - the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks, who were in the majority, were led by Lenin who is considered the greatest thinker on socialism after Marx.

Socialist Revolutionary Party struggled for Peasants rights: 1905 was the year when the 'Bloody Sunday' incident occurred. 100 workers were killed and around 300 were injured. Bloody Sunday began a series of events known as the 1905 revolution.

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

Answer: The majority of the population of Russia were farmers. About 85 percent of the population of the Russian Empire made a living from agriculture. This ratio was higher than most European countries. In France and Germany, the ratio was between 40 percent and 50 percent. Farmers produced for the market as well as for their needs and Russia was a major exporter of grain.

Q3. Why did the Tsarist autocracy collapse in 1917?

Answer: The Tsar first dismissed the two dumas and then packed Parliament with conservatives. During World War I, the Czar made the decision without consulting the Duma. Large-scale casualties of Russian soldiers in the war separated the people from the Tsar. The retreat of Russian forces led to a severe shortage of food in Russia due to the burning of crops and buildings. All these led to the collapse of Czarist autocracy in 1917.

Q4. Make two lists: one with the main events and the 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 was the impact of each on Soviet history.

Answer: Main events of February Revolution:

1. In February 1917, there was a shortage of food in the workers' quarters.
2. On 22 February, a factory lockout occurred on the right bank. Workers in fifty factories went on strike and women played a very important role in these attacks. This day was named International Women's Day.
3. The government suspended the Duma on 25 February.
4. On 27 February, police headquarters were ransacked, people were demonstrating and shouting slogans of bread, wages, better hours and democracy.
5. Petrograd Soviet was formed.
6. The Tsar exhausted his power. Soviet and Duma leaders formed a provisional government for Russia.
7. Soviet leaders and Duma leaders formed a provisional government to run the country.

Effects of the February Revolution:

1. Restrictions on public meetings and associations were lifted.
2. Like the Petrograd Soviet, the Soviets were established everywhere, although no common system of elections was followed.

3. The number of trade unions increased.
4. In industrial areas, industrialists formed factory committees to question how to run their factories.
5. Military committees were formed in the army.
6. The influence of the Bolsheviks continued to increase and the Provisional Government saw its power diminishing.
7. Land committees were formed to handle the redistribution of land, a popular demand of farmers and their socialist revolutionary leaders in the country.

Main events of the October Revolution:

1. 16 October: A Military Revolutionary Committee is appointed by the Soviet.
2. October 24: Revolt against provisional government begins. The Military Revolution Committee controls the city by night and the minister's surrender. The Bolsheviks gained power.

Effects of the October Revolution:

1. By November 1917, industries and banks were nationalized. The government took over ownership and management.
2. The land was declared social property and the peasants were allowed to seize the land of nobility.
3. In the cities, the Bolsheviks implemented the division of large houses according to family requirements.
4. The old titles of the elite were banned.
5. The new uniforms were designed for the military and officers.
6. Bolshevik Party was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)
7. The Bolsheviks held constituent assembly elections; however, they failed to obtain a majority. The assembly rejected the Bolshevik measures, and Lenin rejected the assembly.
8. All Russian Congress of the Soviet Union became the country's parliament. Russia became a one-party state.
9. Trade unions were placed under party control. The Secret Police punished those who criticized 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. But many people were unhappy due to censorship.

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

Answer:

1. By November 1917, industries and banks were nationalized.
2. The land was declared social property, allowing the peasants to seize it from the nobility.
3. In urban areas, the houses were divided according to the needs of the family
4. The old titles of the elite were banned.
5. The new uniforms were designed for the military and officers.
6. The Bolshevik Party was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).
7. The Bolsheviks held constituent assembly elections; however, they failed to obtain a majority, the assembly rejected the Bolshevik measures and Lenin rejected the assembly.
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Q6. Write a few lines to show what you know about:

Kulaks

Answer: It is the Russian word for wealthy farmers who believed that Stalin was hoarding grain to get more profit. By 1927–28 the cities of Soviet Russia were facing acute problem of grain supply. Kulaks were believed to be partially responsible for this. In order to develop modern farms and run them along industrial lines, the party under Stalin thought that it was necessary to eliminate the kulaks.

The Duma

Answer: During the 1905 revolution, the Tsar allowed the creation of an elected advisory parliament in Russia. In Russia this elected advisor parliament was called the Duma.

Women workers between 1900 and 1930

Answer: They made up 31% of the factory labour force by 1914, but were paid about half and three-quarters of the wages paid to men. However, interestingly, it was the women activists who took the path of strikes during the February revolution.

The Liberals

Answer:

1. They considered all religions as equal.
2. They believed only men who have property had the right to vote
3. They wanted an elected form of Parliamentary governance.

Stalin's collectivisation programme.

Answer: Stalin believed that the aggregation of agriculture would help improve the grain supply in Russia. They started collectively in 1929. All the peasants were forced to cultivate in collective farms. The bulk of the land and implements were transferred for the ownership of the collective farm. Many farmers opposed such efforts and destroyed livestock to show their anger. The collectivism did not bring desired results in the state of food supply, becoming worse in later years.