

Chapter 2: Socialism In Europe And The Russian Revolution

The Age Of Social Change

The French Revolution laid the groundwork for the social and political changes that occurred throughout Europe. However, not everyone in Europe desired a complete social transformation.

Some were referred to as 'conservatives,' while others were referred to as 'liberals' and 'radicals'. *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity* became inspirational ideas that motivated political movements throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Liberals, Radicals And Conservatives

Liberals: Liberals sought to transform society and desired tolerance for all religions. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Christianity dominated Europe. Liberals were opposed to the absolute powers wielded by the majority of Europe's monarchs.

They advocated for the protection of individual rights and a democratic form of government. They advocated for a well-trained, self-governing judiciary. They cannot be considered democrats because they opposed the universal adult franchise (right to vote). They favoured male voting rights over female voting rights.

- ***Conservatives :*** They stood in opposition to radicals and liberals. Conservatives felt the need for change following the French Revolution. By the 19th century, conservatives recognised the necessity of change but believed that the past must be respected.

- **Radicals:** They fought for women's rights and were instrumental in organising the various suffragette movements. Radicals desired a nation governed by the majority of a country's population. They were not opposed to the private property itself, but to its concentration in the hands of a few people.

Industrial Society And Social Change

The Industrial Revolution resulted in the development of new cities, industrial regions, and railway lines. It employed men, women, and children. However, unemployment remained a widespread problem. People were compelled to accept long hours and low wages. With urbanisation came an increase in housing and sanitation problems.

Outlooks Of Nationalists, Liberals And Radicals : Many liberals and radicals owned property and were also self-employed. They had amassed wealth through industrial efforts or commerce. They valued individual effort, labour, and enterprise.

Nationalists, liberals, and radicals all desired revolutions to end the type of governments that existed in Europe in 1815. Nationalists became revolutionaries in France, Italy, Germany, and Russia, attempting to depose existing monarchs.

Nationalists spoke of revolutions that would establish 'nations' with equal rights for all citizens. After 1815, Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian nationalist, conspired with others to create an Italy with equal rights for all citizens.

The Coming Of Socialism To Europe

By the mid-nineteenth century, socialist ideas had spread to Europe, arguing and campaigning for collective control of property rather than individual control.

- ***Idea Of Communist Society:*** Robert Owen (1771-1858), a prominent English manufacturer, demanded the establishment of a cooperative community called New Harmony in Indiana (USA).

- ***Louis Blanc (1813-1882)***, a French socialist, desired that the government promote cooperatives and eliminate capitalist enterprises. These cooperatives were to be associations of individuals who produced goods cooperatively and divided profits based on the amount of work performed by members.
- ***Karl Marx (1818-1883)*** argued that industrial society was capitalist and that capitalists profited from the labour of workers. The working conditions of workers could not improve until private capitalists amassed a profit.

To overthrow capitalism, he believed that workers needed to build a radically socialist society in which all property was socially controlled, and all production units should be nationalised. This society, on the other hand, will be communist.

Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) collaborated with Marx in arguing that workers must overthrow capitalism and private property rule.

Support For Socialism

The Socialists established the Second International to coordinate their efforts and ideas. Workers in England and Germany formed associations and established funds to assist members in times of need. They pressed for shorter work hours and the right to vote.

In Germany, these associations collaborated with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and aided in the party's election victory. By 1905, socialists and trade unionists had established the 'Labour Party' in the United Kingdom and the 'Socialist Party' in France. However, socialists did not form a government in Europe until 1914.

The Russian Revolution

The October Revolution of 1917 saw the socialists seize control of Russia's government. The fall of the Russian monarchy in February 1917 and the events of the October Revolution are commonly referred to as the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Empire In 1914

1. Tsar Nicholas II ruled Russia and its empire in 1914.
2. Apart from the area surrounding Moscow, the Russian empire encompassed modern-day Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, as well as portions of Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus.
3. The empire extended all the way to the Pacific, encompassing Central Asian states as well as modern-day Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.
4. Russia's primary religion was Russian Orthodox Christianity, which developed from the Greek Orthodox Church.
5. Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Buddhists were also included in the empire.

Economy And Society

At the turn of the 20th century, 85 percent of Russia's population was dependent on the agricultural sector. Russia was a significant grain exporter. Russian cultivators produced goods for both the market and personal consumption.

St. Petersburg and Moscow are prominent industrial areas in Russia. Although the majority of production was carried out by craftsmen, large factories coexisted with craft workshops.

Numerous factories were established in the 1890s as a result of the railway network's expansion and an increase in foreign investment in industries. As a result, coal production doubled, while iron and steel production quadrupled.

The majority of industries were privately held.

The government oversaw large factories to ensure minimum wages and work hours were adhered to. Working hours in craft units and small workshops were occasionally 15 hours, compared to 10 to 12 hours in factories.

Situation Of Workers :

1. Workers were classified according to their social group or skill level.

2. Some were connected to villages, while others established permanent residences in cities.
3. Because metalworkers were skilled craftspeople, they regarded themselves as aristocrats.
4. By 1914, women accounted for 31% of factory labour but were paid less than men.
5. Workers occasionally banded together to participate in strikes.

Peasants In the Countryside :

1. In rural areas, peasants cultivated the majority of the land.
2. The nobility, the crown, and the Orthodox Church all possessed substantial estates.
3. Peasants were divided here along religious lines, and they had little regard for the nobility.
4. Nobles gained power not through local popularity, but through their services to the Tsar.
5. In France, during the French Revolution, peasants respected and fought for nobles in Brittany. However, in Russia, peasants desired to inherit the nobles' land.
6. They withheld rent and even assassinated landlords. This occurred on a large scale in South Russia in 1902, but by 1905, such incidents had spread throughout Russia.
7. Russian peasants were distinct from those in the rest of Europe.
8. They pooled their land on a periodic basis, and their commune (mir) divided it according to the peasant families' needs.

Socialism In Russia

1. Prior to 1914, all political parties were illegal in Russia.
2. In 1898, socialists who admired Marx's ideas founded the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party.
3. It was forced to operate as an illegal organisation as a result of government policies.
4. It founded a newspaper, organised strikes, and mobilised workers.

5. Certain Russian socialists recognised that their peasant ancestors' practise of periodic land division made them natural socialists.
6. As a result, peasants, rather than workers, would be the revolution's primary force.
7. The Socialist Revolutionary Party was founded in 1900 by socialists fighting for the rights of peasants.
8. They demanded the transfer of nobles' land to peasants.

Lenin And Socialist Movement : Lenin believed that peasants were not a unified group due to economic divisions. Due to these 'differences,' they could not all be considered members of the socialist movement. Later on, the Social Democratic Party split into two factions: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

Vladimir Lenin was the leader of the Bolsheviks. He believed that in Tsarist Russia, the party should be disciplined and its membership quality and size regulated.

On the other hand, the Mensheviks believed that the party should be open to all, just as it is in Germany.

A Turbulent Time : The 1905 Revolution

At the turn of the 20th century, Russia remained an autocracy, with the Tsar not subject to Parliament. During the 1905 revolution, social democrats and socialist revolutionaries banded together with peasants and workers to demand the establishment of a Constitution. They were backed by nationalists (for example, in Poland) and by jadidists in Muslim-majority areas, who desired a modernised Islam to lead their societies.

- ***A Bad Time For Russian Workers :*** 1904 was a difficult year for Russian workers due to the increase in the prices of essential goods. Then, real wages fell by 20%. The membership of labour unions increased dramatically.

When four members of the Assembly of Russian Workers (founded in 1904) were dismissed from the Putilov Iron Works, thousands of workers went on strike, demanding an eight-hour workday, wage increases, and improved working conditions.

- ***The Incident Of Bloody Sunday:*** In 1905, a procession of workers led by Father Gapon marched to the Tsar's Winter Palace to present a petition. They were, however, attacked by police and Cossacks. Numerous workers were killed and injured in this incident.

Bloody Sunday is the name given to this incident. It precipitated a series of events dubbed the 1905 Revolution. Strikes have spread throughout the country.

Universities were forced to close following walkouts by student bodies protesting a lack of civil liberties. The Union of Unions was founded by doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other middle-class workers who demanded the establishment of a Constituent Assembly.

The Tsar permitted the establishment of an 'elected consultative Parliament, or Duma,' during the 1905 Revolution. Numerous trade unions and factory committees composed of factory workers also existed briefly. Political activity was severely restricted.

- ***The Reaction Of The Tsar :*** Within 75 days, the Tsar dismissed the first Duma and within three months, the second Duma was re-elected. The Tsar did not want his supreme authority to be questioned. He altered the electoral laws and crammed the third Duma with conservative politicians, excluding liberals and revolutionaries.

The First World War And The Russian Empire

1. The First World War began in 1914 between two European alliances - Germany, Austria, and Turkey (the Central Powers) and France, the United Kingdom, and Russia (along with Italy and Romania). This conflict was fought on a global scale.
2. At first, the war was popular in Russia, with the populace rallying behind Tsar Nicholas II.
3. The Tsar had decided to seize command of the Russian army.
4. As a result, he departed from his court and proceeded to the battlefield.

The Defeat Of The Russian Army:

1. The Russian Army's defeat was shocking and demoralising.
2. Between 1914 and 1916, the Russian army suffered heavy losses in Germany and Austria.
3. By 1917, Russia had suffered over 7 million casualties.
4. The Russian army destroyed crops and buildings as they retreated, preventing the enemy from subsisting off the land. It resulted in the influx of over 3 million refugees into Russia.
5. The situation reflected poorly on the government and Tsar.
6. Soldiers were disinclined to fight such a war.

Impacts Of The War:

1. The industry was severely impacted by the war.
2. The Germans separated the country from other suppliers of industrial goods.
3. By 1916, railway lines had begun to degrade.
4. Men with able bodies fought in the war. This resulted in a severe labour shortage.
5. Grain supplies were sent in large quantities to feed the vast army.
6. Food scarcity became common, resulting in riots in bread shops on occasion.

The February Revolution In Petrograd

Conditions in 1917's winter capital, Petrograd, were atrocious. The city's layout appeared to emphasise the divisions between its inhabitants, as workers quarters and factories were located on the right bank of the Neva, while the winter palace and official buildings were located on the left. In February 1917, Russia experienced an acute food shortage, making life extremely difficult for workers. Parliamentarians fought against the Tsar's desire to dissolve the Duma.

On February 22nd, a factory on the right bank of the river neva was attacked.

The following day, fifty factories declared a sympathy strike. Women also paved the way for strikes on 23 February 1917 in a number of factories. International Women's Day was coined on this date.

Suspension Of (Duma)

Demonstrating workers-crossed the Neva, and the quarters surrounding the capital's central business district and official buildings were surrounded by workers.

The demonstrators dispersed in the evening but returned on the 24th and 25th.

The government attempted to maintain control of the situation by rallying the cavalry and police. On Sunday, 25th February, the Duma was suspended.

Events Subsequent To Suspension Of The Duma : Politicians expressed their opposition to the Duma's suspension. On the 26th of February, demonstrators returned in force to the streets of Neva's left bank.

The Police Headquarters was attacked and damaged on February 27th. Workers took to the streets, chanting slogans demanding better working hours, bread, wages, and democracy.

The government called up cavalry once more but refused to fire on demonstrators.

At a regiment's barracks, an officer was shot. Three additional regiments rose up and voted to join the strikers. Cavalry soldiers and workers joined forces to form a 'Soviet' or 'Council' in the same building as the Duma. This was the soviet of Petrograd.

Soviet Leaders And Duma Leaders: The following day, a delegation visited the Tsar. On 2nd March 1917, the tsar resigned the throne on the advice of military commanders. To run the country, Soviet and Duma leaders formed a provisional government. The future of Russia was then decided by a constituent assembly elected by universal adult suffrage. In February 1917, the Petrograd soviet led the February revolution that overthrew the monarchy.

After February

Army officials, landowners, and industrialists all played a significant role in the Provisional Government. Liberals and socialists collaborated in these groups to advance the cause of an elected government. There are no longer any restrictions on public meetings and associations.

Vladimir Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, returned to Russia from exile in April 1917. Since 1917, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had opposed the war. He believed that the time had come for the Soviets to seize power.

Lenin made three demands in his 'April theses.'

1. The war should be brought to an end.
2. Transfer of land to peasants
3. Banks should be nationalised

Workers' Movement And Its Effect: The workers' movement grew throughout the summer. Factory committees were formed in industrial areas. The number of trade unions increased. In the army, soldiers' committees were formed.

In June, approximately 500 Soviets sent representatives to an All-Russian Soviet Congress. Lenin desired that the Bolshevik Party be renamed the Communist Party to reflect its new radical orientation.

As the Provisional Government's authority waned, the Bolshevik influence grew.

As a result, the provisional government opposed worker attempts to run factories and began arresting leaders.

The Bolsheviks' July 1917 popular demonstrations were brutally suppressed.

Peasants and their socialist revolutionary leaders pressed for land redistribution in the countryside. Committees on land were formed.

Between July and September 1917, peasants seized land.

Status Of Workers : Rapid construction resulted in substandard working conditions for construction employees. Magnitogorsk's steel factory was built in three years. Workers lacked even the most comforts like toilets and health care.

Measures made to increase workers' status include the following:

1. A system of extended education was established, and arrangements for industrial employees and peasants to attend universities were arranged.
2. In industries, creches were developed for the children of female employees.
3. Affordable public healthcare was made available. Workers were provided with model living quarters.
4. All of this had an irregular effect due to the government's low resources.

Stalinism And Collectivisation

The early planned economy was associated with the disasters of agricultural collectivisation. After Lenin's death in January 1924, Joseph Stalin became the head of the Soviet Communist Party. By 1927-1928, Russia's cities were experiencing a serious shortage of grain.

The government set grain prices, but peasants refused to sell their grain at these rates to government purchasers. Stalin thought that wealthy peasants and rural merchants were collecting goods with the expectation of higher prices.

As a result, Stalin began the collectivization of Soviet agriculture. It incorporated a huge percentage of peasants into cooperative and state farms. In 1928, members of the party visited grain-producing regions, overseeing forced grain gathering and attacking the Kulaks.

Following 1917, the land was transferred to peasants. It was essential to remove Kulaks, seize land from peasants, and create huge state-controlled farms in order to develop modern agriculture.

Stalin's Policies : Beginning in 1929, the Communist Party compelled all peasants to work on communal farms (Kolkhoz). Peasants toiled on land and profited from communal farms. Those who rejected collectivisation faced harsh repercussions; many were deported or exiled.

The 1930-1933 crop failures resulted in one of the most terrible famines in Soviet history, killing nearly 4 million people. Those who opposed Stalin's policies were charged with anti-socialist conspiracy. By 1939, more than two million people had been arrested or transferred to labour camps.

The Global Influence Of Russian Revolution And The Ussr

1. Existing socialist parties in Europe disapproved of the Bolsheviks' method of taking and maintaining power. However, the idea of a workers' state captured the imaginations of people the world over.
2. Communist parties have been established in a number of nations, for example, the Communist Party of Great Britain.
3. The Bolsheviks pushed colonial residents to join their experiment. Some non-Russians took part in the Conference of the Peoples of the East (1920), which was established by the Bolsheviks (an international union of pro-Bolshevik socialist parties).
4. Several attended the Soviet Union's Communist University of the Workers of the East.
5. By the beginning of the Second World War, the USSR had provided socialism with a worldwide look and worldwide stature.
6. The USSR developed into a major power. Its industry and agriculture had developed, and the poor were fed.
7. However, it had denied individual freedoms to its people and achieved developmental goals via repressive methods.

8. By the close of the twentieth century, the USSR's worldwide image as a socialist country had collapsed, due to the fact that / socialist principles maintained popular support. Each nation rethought socialism in its own unique manner.

The Revolution Of October 1917

The growing conflict between the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks compelled Lenin to convince the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolshevik Party of the necessity of a socialist seizure of power.

He rallied an army, Soviet, and factory supporters for the socialist seizure on 16 October 1917. To organise the seizure, the Soviets appointed a Military revolutionary committee led by Leon Trotsky.

On 24 October 1917, as the uprising began, Prime Minister Kerenskii fled the city in fear, calling troops. The same evening, government-aligned military men seized the offices of two Bolshevik newspapers.

Pro-government troops were dispatched to seize telephone and telegraph offices and to safeguard the winter palace.

The Military Revolutionary Committee ordered its supporters to seize government offices and arrest ministers in response to these measures.

Other vessels sailed down the Neva, seizing various military outposts. By nightfall, the committee had taken control of the city and the ministers had surrendered.

Between the pro-government troops and the Bolsheviks, there was fierce fighting. By December 1917, the Bolsheviks had centralised their hold on the Moscow-Petrograd region.

The Changes After October

Elections For Constituent Assembly

- In November 1917, the Bolsheviks held elections for the Constituent Assembly but were unable to secure a majority.

- The assembly rejected Bolshevik measures in January 1918, and Lenin dismissed it. Lenin believed that an assembly was more democratic than the All Russian Congress of Soviets.

Creation Of Soviet Union

- In March 1918, the Bolsheviks signed a treaty with Germany in Brest Litovsk, effectively ending the war.
- The Bolsheviks became the only party to run for the All Russian Congress of Soviets, the country's parliament, and they won.
- Russia ascended to the status of a one-party state.
- The secret police (originally known as the Cheka and later as the OGPU and NKVD) punished those who opposed the Bolsheviks.
- Numerous young writers and artists flocked to the party in support of socialism and change.

The Civil War

- The Bolsheviks' decision to redistribute land resulted in the disintegration of the army.
- Conflicts between supporters of authoritarianism, liberals, and bolshevik soldiers began.
- Between 1918 and 1919, pro-Tsarists (the 'whites') and Socialist Revolutionaries (the 'greens') fought a Civil War against bolshevik (the reds') troops.
- French, American, British, and Japanese troops backed pro-Tsarist and socialist forces.
- Non-Bolsheviks took severe measures against peasants. This contributed to their lack of popularity.
- By 1920, the Bolsheviks had gained control of the majority of the former Russian empire with the assistance of non-Russians and Muslim jadidists.

- The majority of non-Russian nationalists were granted political autonomy in the Bolshevik-created USSR in 1922.

Making A Socialist Society

Throughout the Civil War, the Bolsheviks maintained the nationalisation of industries and banks. They allowed peasants to cultivate the seized land in order to show collective labour.

Process Of Centralised Planning:

- A highly centralised process was implemented.
- Officials developed five-year plans for economic growth.
- During the first two plans for the economy (1927-1932 and 1933-1938), the government fixed all prices in order to promote industrial growth.
- Economic growth was facilitated by central planning.
- Industrial production increased (by 100 per cent between 1929 and 1933 in the case of oil, coal, and steel).

