

## **Chapter 2 Socialism in Europe and the Russia**

### **Question-1**

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

#### **Solution:**

*The following were the social, economic, and political conditions in Russia before 1905.*

**(a) 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 the freedom to follow their culture and language. Workers were divided into group on the basis of skill and training. Peasants formed their group called commune or mir.*

**(b) Economic conditions:** *The majority of 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 were huge coal, iron and steel production. There were equal numbers of factory workers and craftsmen. The workers were exploited by capitalists who made their life miserable.*

**(c) 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.*

### **Question-2**

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

#### **Solution:**

*The working population in European countries was a more united lot than those in Russia. Workers in England and Germany formed associations and fought for better living and working conditions. Funds were set up by these Associations to help workers in distress. The workers in European countries were united in their demand for a reduction of working hours and the right to vote. Workers association also supported political parties and ultimately formed political parties themselves. The Labour Party in Britain and a Socialist Party in France are examples of political parties formed by socialists and trade unionists.*

*In total contrast to the working population in Europe, the Russian workers were not united. Workers were divided on the basis of their occupation. Workers whose jobs needed skill and training considered themselves on a higher plane than the untrained workers. Workers had strong links to the villages they came from and this also caused a social divide among workers.*

*Workers' associations rose dramatically in Russia also, as in Europe. They demanded reduced working hours and higher wages. The workers were suppressed by the government.*

### **Question-3**

*Why did the Tsarist autocracy collapse in 1917?*

#### **Solution:**

*Anti-German sentiments in Russia were high owing to the First World War. Further, Tsarina Alexandra's German origin and poor advisors made the autocracy unpopular. Russia suffered shocking defeats on the waterfront 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. Food shortage led to people rioting for food. The Russian army too shifted its loyalty and began supporting the revolutionaries.*

*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 way to strikes. The government imposed a curfew. Later the government suspended the Duma which resulted in sharp protests. The demonstrators ransacked the Police Headquarters and raised slogans about bread, wages, better hours and democracy.*

*The government called the cavalry but they refused to fire on the demonstrators. Soldiers and the striking workers gathered to form a 'Soviet' or 'council' in the building where the Duma met. This was the Petrograd Soviet. The very next day, when a delegation went to see 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 February 1917.*

### **Question-4**

*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.*

#### **Solution:**

*February Revolution:*

- 1. 22 February: Factory lockout on the right bank.*
- 2. 23 February: Sympathy strike by workers in 50 factories.*
- 3. 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>: Strikers stage demonstrations. Police called out to suppress the workers.*
- 4. 25<sup>th</sup>: The government suspends the Duma.*
- 5. 27<sup>th</sup>: Police Headquarters ransacked by the workers. Regiments support the workers. Striking workers from the Petrograd soviet.*
- 6. 2<sup>nd</sup> March: The Tsar abdicates. Soviet and Duma leaders form the Provisional Government.*

*Effects:*

- 1. Army officials, landowners, and industrialists became influential.*

2. *Restrictions on public meetings were removed.*
3. *Trade unions grew in number.*

*October Revolution:*

*16<sup>th</sup> October:*

- *Vladimir Lenin, the Bolshevik leader persuades the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power.*
- *A Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the Soviet*

*24<sup>th</sup>:*

- *The uprising against the Provisional government begins.*
- *Military Revolutionary Committee seized government offices and arrested ministers.*
- *The winter palace was shelled.*
- *Ministers of the Provisional government surrendered.*
- *The Bolsheviks gained control.*

*Effects:*

- *Industries and banks were nationalised.*
- *Russia became a one-party state. The single party being the Bolshevik Party.*

*During the February Revolution, the factory workers and the Government Regiments played an important role. The workers and the regiments joined together. The major impact of the February Revolution was the downfall of the Russian Monarchy and the establishment of the Petrograd Soviet.*

*Vladimir Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, played a major role during the October revolution. His Bolshevik Party overthrew the Provisional Government and gained power. The Russian Communist Party came into existence.*

### **Question-5**

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

#### **Solution:**

*Many changes were brought about by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. They were:*

1. *Industries and banks were nationalised. This meant that the government now had their ownership and management. The 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.*
2. *The use of the old titles of the aristocracy was banned. New uniforms for the army and officials were designed.*
3. *The Bolshevik Party was renamed as the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).*

4. *Despite opposition by their political allies, the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany and withdrew from the First World War.*
5. *In the later years, the Bolsheviks became the only party to participate in the elections to the All Russian Congress of Soviets. It became the Parliament of Russia.*

### **Question-6**

*Write a few lines to show what you know about:*

- (i) Kulaks*
- (ii) The Duma*
- (iii) Women workers between 1900 and 1930.*
- (iv) The Liberals.*
- (v) Stalins collectivization programme.*

### **Solution:**

*(i) Kulaks: They were the 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.*

*(ii) The Duma: The Duma was a consultative parliament that was created on the permission of the Tsar during the 1905 Revolution.*

*(iii) Women workers between 1900 and 1930: Women made up 31% of the factory labour force, but were paid between 1/2 and 3/4 of a man's wages. They actively led the strikes in many factories. They even worked on collective farms.*

*(iv) 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 parliamentary government subject to laws interpreted by a well-trained judiciary independent of rulers and officials.*

*(v) Stalin's collectivisation programme: Stalin hoped to solve the problem of food shortage by combining small farms 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.*