Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What were the main effects of October 1917 Revolution on Russia? Explain any four. What measures did the Bolsheviks take to establish a communist state?

Or

Describe the immediate consequences of the Russian Revolution in Russia.

Ans. (a) All feudal titles were abolished and the lands of the clergy and nobility were confiscated.

(b) All the means of production were nationalized, i.e., mines, transport, banks and insurance companies, etc.

(c) Control of industries were transferred to a commune of workers. Lands were given to the peasants to be cultivated for the benefit of the state.

(d) All policies were directed to achieve the socialist ideal, "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his work."

(e) Private property was abolished thus creating a classless society. Work was now an essential requirement for everyone as there was no unearned income to live on.

2. Who was Lenin? Describe his role in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Ans. (a) Lenin was the leader of the Bolshevik Party. A communed revolutionary, he led the Russian Revolution which was synonymous with his nature and was always prepared to take desperate measures to defend it.

(b) When the Kerensky government lost the support of the people, Lenin returned from exile to Organise the Bolshevik Party to take over the reins of power.

(c) He put forward clear policies to end the war, transfer land to the peasants and popularized the Slogan' All power to the Soviets'.

(d) He proclaimed the right of all peoples, including those under the Russian empire to self· determination. On 7th November, with the fall of Kerensky's government, Lenin became head of the world's first communist government.

3. Describe the autocratic nature of the rule of Tsar Nicholas II which brought Russia on the verge of revolution.

Ans. (a) The Tsar believed in the Divine right of kingship at a time when such ideas were outdated. By this time England had become a parliamentary democracy and France had become a republic. The people were clamoring for their rights while the Tsar was not prepared to make any concessions to popular demands. His inability to perceive the strength of the new forces emerging I in Russia was one of the most important causes for the outbreak of the Russian Revolution.

(b) The Russian polity was basically still feudal in nature. Vast tracts of land were held tax free by the clergy and the nobility who also monopolized the high posts in the army and administration The new middle class which was slowly emerging in Russia began to make strident demands for some sort of representative government to be formed where access to high posts would be give! On the basis of birth. Administration was also riddled with corruption and was inefficient.

4. Describe the condition of the Russian workers and farmers on the eve of the Russian Revolution in Russia.

Ans. (a) The end of serfdom in Russia did not improve the condition of the peasants. The land, the received. was not enough to fulfill needs and the money they had to pay was exorbitant Their position was worsened by a series of famines and bad harvests which occurred in the year before 1917. Land hunger and poverty made them ready to support any movement which would give them relief.

(b) The industrial workers worked under appalling conditions, toiling for long hours and were paid very low wages. Living in unhygienic conditions where crime was rampant, the workers were denied any political rights and did not have even the right to form trade unions which could improve their conditions.

5. Write short notes on : (a) Kulaks (b) the Duma (c) women workers between 1900-and 1930 (d) the Liberals

Ans. **(a)** Kulaks. It is the Russian name for well to do peasants. Stalin took the decision to develop modern farms and run them along industrial lines. For this purpose it was necessary to eliminate kulaks, take away their lands and establish state controlled large farms.

Stalin's collectivization plan was bitterly resisted by the kulaks, many of whom destroyed their livestock. Thousands of kulaks were executed when they attempted to withhold their lands from collectivization. Many others were imprisoned or exiled.

(b) Duma. The Russian parliament or legislature. Its members were elected and charged with the responsibility of making laws. An elected Duma came into being after the 1905 Revolution. But friction between its members allowed power to slowly slip back into the Tsar's hand. The Tsar dismissed the First Duma within 75 days and re-elected second Duma within three months. He changed the voting laws and packed the third Duma with conservative politicians. Liberals and revolutionaries were kept out.

(c) Due to industrialization, women began to work in factories. On 22nd February 1917, many women became the leaders in organizing strikes in factories. This day came to be called as the International Women's Day.

(d) Liberals: They wanted to change society and wanted a nation which was secular in nature.

They also wanted to safeguard the rights of individuals against governments. They believed in an elected parliamentary government but did not believe in Universal Adult Franchise. They believed only men of property should be given the right to vote. Women, according to them, should not be given the right to vote.

6. Describe the four major demands of the Russian revolutionaries before the Russian Revolution Of 1917

Ans. The main objectives were:

To secure peace - withdrawal of Russia from the First World War.

To transfer land to the tiller.

To give control of industry to the workers.

To give equal status to non-Russian nationalities.

7. Describe the international consequences of the Russian Revolution.

Ans. (a) The Russian Revolution helped to promote similar revolutions in other parts of the world and the end of the Second World War was to see the establishment of many socialist states in eastern Europe.

(b) Democracy was redefined to include economic and social equality.

(c) The idea of economic planning was adopted by many countries including India as was the belief in the dingily of labor.

(d) The Revolution helped to hasten the end of imperialism and to promote internationalism. It helped in promoting freedom movements in countries under colonial rule.

8. Describe the events that were responsible for the Russian Revolution of 1905. Mention two important effects of the Revolution.

Ans. (a) Russia's defeat in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war brought all the simmering discontentment of the Russian people to the forefront. Affected adversely by the impact of the war on the economy, the people had to face the brunt of high prices and scarcity of essential commodities. They were also bitterly humiliated by the reverses which Russia had suffered.

(b) On 22nd January, a mass of peaceful workers with their wives and children led by Father Gapon decided to present a petition to the Tsar. They carried icons and pictures of their 'little father' and sang religious and patriotic songs.

(c) The Tsar was not present and the palace guards panicked by the vast numbers, opened fire on the unarmed and relatively unexpressive crowd. This day in Russian history is known as Blood Sunday.

(d) This incident provoked unprecedented disturbances throughout Russia. Disturbances spread to practically every region of the country and affected nearly all social classes. Sections of the arm) and navy revolted. The crew of the battleship Potemkin demonstrated sympathy with the striking workers by bombarding Odessa.

(e) In this revolution, a new form of organization developed which was to playa leading role in the, Russian Revolution. This was the 'Soviet' or the council of worker's representatives who began. As committees to conduct strikes and later became the instruments of political power.

(f) Yielding to popular pressure, the Tsar introduced the October manifesto which granted freedom of speech, Press and association and conferred the power to make laws upon an elected body called the 'Duma'.

9. Describe the social and economic conditions in Russia before the Revolution of1917. How did Russia's participation in the First World War help create conditions for the fall of the Russian autocracy?

Ans. (a) The industrial workers worked under appalling conditions, toiling for long hours and were paid very low wages. Living in unhygienic conditions where crime was rampant, the workers were denied any political rights and did not have even the right to form trade unions which could improve their conditions.

(b) **(i)** The Tsar took Russia into the war to further his imperialist ambitions of annexing Constantinople and the Straits of Dardanelles. But it was to prove disastrous for Russia she was ill-equipped to fight a modern war. The First World War cruelly exposed Russia) weakness.

(ii) Russia lacked adequate railroads to provide transportation to the army and the Russia! Industry could not adequately equip and supply the army. By February 1917,6,00,000 soldiers had been killed in the war. Russians were now weary of hardships and disheanenee by the appalling casualties they had suffered.

(iii) On 8th March, a crowd lining up for bread turned violent on being told none was available Rioting spread rapidly. The Tsar ordered the army to suppress the riots but the army fail to respond. On March 15th unable to control his subjects or his army, Nicholas II abdicated the fall of the Tsar is known as the February Revolution.

10. Describe the immediate consequences of the October Revolution on Russia's participation in the First World War, the ownership of land, and position of the non-Russian nationalities of the Russian empire.

Ans. (a) Lenin's first act was to withdraw Russia from the First World War. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed with Germany allowed Russia to withdraw from the war, but in turn Russia had to pay I high indemnity and had to cede the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to Germany.

(b) A decree on land was passed whereby the land of the clergy and nobility were confiscated and given to peasant societies.

(c) The non-Russian nationalities had been greatly discontented by the policy of 'Russification pursued by the Tsars, whereby their language and culture was sought to be exterminated and the Russian language was forcibly imposed on them. They were treated as inferior. But after the October Revolution, the non-Russian nationalities became a part of USSR in the form of legislature they were given equal status in the constitutions of 1923 and 1925. Equal representation WI assured to the nationalities in one of the two chambers of the USSR legislature.

The non-Russian nationalities were given autonomy to develop their languages and cultures.

11. Describe the policy of the Russian government towards the First World War when it broke out. Explain the changes, if any, which took place in this policy after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

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12. Write short notes on the following:

(a) The New Economic Policy of Lenin

(b) Stalin's attempt to improve the Soviet Economy.

Ans. (a) The New Economic Policy allowed individuals to buy, sell and trade in farm products. While major industries, remained under government control, small businesses and home industries could be privately owned and operated for profit. Foreign capital was welcomed for the development of state industries and investors promised a high rate of return. This policy help. the Russian economy to improve and the economic conditions of the ordinary people improved

(b) When Stalin came to power, the Soviet economy was plagued by many problems. He took steps to revitalize all sectors of the economy. Industrialization was carried out through a planned process. In 1929, Russia adopted the first of a series of its Five Year Plans aimed at making Russia a modern industrialized country. Heavy industries were given greater importance at the cost of consumer goods. As a result, by 1940, the USSR overtook Britain in iron and steel production and almost equaled Germany's coal output.

But life was hard for workers. While medals were given for high production, workers were also condemned to death if they failed to meet the targets set. Workers lived in primitive conditions while party functionaries and their families lived in spacious flats and maintained dachas in holiday resorts.

In the agricultural field, collective farms were introduced, worked by the peasants with government owned machinery and animals. The income was divided according to their work and capacity. Thousands of wealthy peasants were executed when they attempted to withhold their lands from collectivization. Many others were imprisoned or exiled. Under forced collectivization the production of food grains dropped. Famine broke out in many parts of the country and nearly 5 million peasants died of starvation.

13. Describe the role of Lenin in Post 1917 Russian reconstruction.

Ans. (a) When the civil war ended in Lenin's favour, he sought to fulfill his two major priorities to eliminate capitalism and to industrialize Russia rapidly.

(b) He organised the economy like an army. State appointed managers operated the various functions of the economy under orders from a high command.

(c) The New Economic Policy was started whereby the peasants were allowed to keep surplus production after payment of tax. Private trade was allowed in a limited measure.

(d) Lenin, on the political front banned 'factionalism' within the communist party. Anybody who held a different view from the official party line was either expelled or shot dead.

(e) Lenin died in 1924. He succeeded in destroying the feudal structure in Russia and in establishing the world's first communist state. Lenin had expected communist uprisings to occur in many other countries of the world which could not happen. This left the USSR isolated in world affairs. His untimely demise led to a power struggle within the party which culminated in the victory of Joseph Stalin.

14. Describe the major changes introduced in agriculture in the Soviet Union after 1918.

Ans. (a) After the Russian revolution the estates of the landlords, church and nobility were confiscated and distributed among the peasants. Most of the land-holdings created were small and productively viable.

(b) Consequently the government started its own farms and also introduced collective farms, worked by the peasants with government owned machinery and animals. The income was divided according to their work and capacity.

(c) By 1937, almost all the cultivable land was brought under collective farms. Initially the peasants were free to decide whether they wanted to join the collective farms or not. Later it become compulsory for them.

(d) Thousands of wealthy peasants were executed when they attempted to withhold their land from collectivization. Many others were imprisoned or exiled.

15. In what ways was the working population in Russia different /Tom other countries in Europe, before?

Or

How Russian Peasants were different from other European Peasants in the beginning of the twentieth. Century? What were the main changes brought about by the Bolsheviks after the October revolution?

Ans. (a) At the beginning of the 20th century, the vast majority of Russia's working class were agriculturists, i.e., 85% of the population.

(b) This proportion was higher than in most European countries. For instance, France and Germany, the proportion was between 40 to 50%.

(c) In the Russian empire, cultivators produced for the market as well as for their own needs and Russia was a major exporter of grain.