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NCERT Class 9 Social Science Exemplar Chapter-2 Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution Questions and Answers Part 1

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Question 1: What were the social, economic and political conditions in Russia before 1905?

Answer: The social, economic and political conditions in Russia were very deplorable before 1905 which brought about a big revolution there known as '1905 Revolution' .

- At the beginning of the 20th century about 85% of the Russia's population was agriculturists. Russia was a major exporter of grains. Industry was found in pockets only. Most industries were run by the private industrialists. Because of wide spread corruption and exploitations, sometimes workers did not get even the minimum wages and also there was no limit of working hours. Russia was an autocracy and was ruled by the Tsar. The Tsar, especially Tsar Nicholas II was a self-willed, corrupt, oppressive ruler. He ignored public welfare as a result of which the conditions of the peasants and workers had also become very deplorable. The workers and peasants both were divided. Peasants frequently refused to pay rent and even murdered landlords. Being influenced by the democratic experiments by the Western European countries, the Russians also demanded a responsible government but all their demands were turned down. Consequently, even the moderate reformers began to talk of revolutions.
- During the rule of Tsar Nicholas II the privileged had got special rights while the general public including the workers and farmers had no say in the government. The situation had become so explosive that even the liberals campaigned to end this state of affairs. 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 – Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks, who were in majority, were led by Lenin who is regarded as the greatest thinker on socialism after Marx.

Question 2: In what ways the working population in Russia different from other countries in Europe before 1917?

Answer: The condition of Russian people, especially those of the working population like the farmers and the factory workers was very deplorable as compared to other European countries. It was mainly due to the autocratic government of the Tsar Nicholas II who antagonized these people day-by-day by his corrupt and oppressive policies.

- The peasants worked as serf on the land and much of their produce went into the hands of landowners and the privileged classes. The nobility, the crown and the Orthodox Church owned large properties. Although these peasants were generally deeply religious but they had no respect for the nobility. In European countries the peasants respected nobles and fought for them. But in Russia, peasants wanted the land of the nobles to be given to them. Due to the various oppressive policies and out of frustration, often they refused to pay rent and even murdered landlords.

- The condition of the factory workers was equally miserable. They could not form any trade unions and political parties to express their grievance. Most industries were run by the private industrialists. They exploited the workers for their selfish ends. Many times these workers did not get even the minimum fixed wages. There was no limit of working hours as a result of which they had to work from 12 – 15 hours a day. Their conditions were so miserable that they had neither political rights nor any hope of gaining any reforms until the beginning of the Russian Revolution of 1917.