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French, Russian, and Industrial Revolution

French Revolution Of 1789

The French Revolution was a time of social and political upheaval in France and its colonies that began in 1789 and ended in 1799. Inspired by liberal and radical ideas, Its overthrow of the Monarchy influenced the decline of absolute Monarchies in other parts of Europe.

Background

- The French involvement in the American revolution of 1776 was a costly affair that left the country in a state of near bankruptcy. King Louis's extravagant spending also did not help matters.
- Empty royal coffers, poor harvests and rise in food prices had created feelings of unrest among the poor rural and urban populace. The matter was further worsened by the imposition of taxes that provided no relief. As a result rioting, looting and general strikes became the norm
- Towards the end of 1786, a universal land tax was proposed by the controller general, Charles Alexandre de Calonne. This tax reform would no longer exempt the privileged classes like the clergy and the nobility as had been the case for centuries
- The King summoned the Estates-General to pass these measures. The Estates-General was an assembly that represented the French nobility clergy and the middle class. The last time the Estates-General was called was in 1614.
- The date of the meeting was fixed on May 5 1789, where grievances of the three estates would be presented to the king.

Causes Of French Revolution of 1789

- **Social** – The social conditions in France in the late 18th century were extremely unequal and exploitative. The clergy and the nobility formed the first two Estates and were the most privileged classes in French society. They were exempt from payment of taxes to the State. On the other hand, the Third Estate that consisted of peasants and workers formed the majority of the population. They were burdened with excessive taxes with no political and social rights. As a result, they were extremely discontent.
- **Economic** – As a result of numerous wars waged by Louis XVI the State coffers were empty. The situation was made even more complex by France's involvement in the American War of Independence and the faulty system of taxation. While the privileged classes were excused from paying taxes the Third Estate was more and more burdened with them.

- **Political** – The Bourbon king of France, Louis XVI was an extremely autocratic and weak-willed king who led a life of obscene luxury. This led to a lot of disenchantment among the masses who then were leading life of extreme poverty and widespread hunger.
- **Intellectual** – The 18th century was marked by a conscious refusal by French thinkers of the 'Divine Rights Theory'. Philosophers like Rousseau rejected the paradigm of absolute monarchy and promulgated the doctrine of equality of man and sovereignty of people. They played a pivotal role in exposing the fault lines of the old political system, i.e. the ancien regime, and articulating the popular discontent.

Stages of French – Revolution

Stage I – The meeting of the Estates-General

- Despite the non-aristocratic members outnumbering the aristocrats in terms of population. Yet, they could be outvoted by the other two bodies.
- Before the meeting of the Estates-General on May 5, members of the Third Estate (as the non-aristocratic class was known) began to mobilise the support of equal voting rights which would be on the basis of head and not by status
- While the middle-class was of the opinion that fiscal and judicial reform was the need of the hour, the nobles were against the idea of giving up the privileges they had enjoyed under the traditional system.
- When the meeting was convened, the question over the voting process turned to open hostility between the three orders, thus the original purpose of the meeting and the authority of the king who called for it being neglected.
- With further talks having failed the Third estate met alone and formally adopted the title of National assembly on June 17, 1789. They gathered in a nearby indoor tennis court and took the oath of office. This oath was known as the Tennis Court Oath. The members of this new assembly vowed not to disperse until reforms have been initiated.
- Seeing no other option Louis XVI had to absorb the three assemblies into the new order.

Stage II – The French Revolution Begins

- The National Assembly continued to meet at Versailles. In the meantime, fear and violence had consumed Paris.
- Speculations went around regarding an imminent military coup. This led to an insurgency which resulted in the taking of Bastille fortress on July 14, 1789. This event marked the beginning of the French Revolution

- A wave of revolutionary fervour spread throughout the countryside, which led to a peasants revolt that saw many homes of tax collectors and burnt as well as those of the aristocrats themselves.
- The rebellions caused the nobles of the country to flee en masse. This period is known as the Great Fear when the National Assembly finally dealt a fatal blow to feudalism on August 4, 1789. The old order had finally ended.

Stage III – Declaration of Rights of Man

- The National Assembly adopted the Rights of Man and of the Citizen on August 4, 1789. The charter was grounded on democratic principles, drawing from philosophical as well as political ideas of Enlightenment thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The declaration was published on August 26, 1789
- The constitution was adopted on September 3, 1791. It symbolised a new French society where the king would have limited powers with a moderate assembly wielding the most power. This, however, was not enough for the radical elements of the assembly like Goerges Danton and Maximilien de Robespierre, who demanded a trial of the king and a more republican form of government.
- The French constitution was adopted on September 3, 1791. Although it was moderate in its stance by limiting the powers of the king, it was not enough for the more radical members of the assembly like Maximilien de Robespierre who wanted Louis XVI to stand trial.

Stage IV – Reign of Terror

- The revolution took a more radical turn when a group of insurgents attacked the royal residence in Paris and arrested Louis XVI on August 10, 1792
- The following month many who were accused of being the ‘enemies of the revolution’ were massacred in Paris. Some of these included the moderate voices of the revolution. The Legislative Assembly was replaced by the National Convention which proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of France and the abolition of the Monarchy.
- King Louis XVI was condemned to death on January 21, 1793, and executed for treason. His wife, Marie Antoinette would follow him nine months later.
- The execution of the king marked the beginning of the most violent and turbulent phase of the French Revolution – the Reign of Terror.
- The National Convention was under the control of an extremist faction led by Robespierre. Under his auspices, thousands were executed for suspected treason and counter-revolutionary activities. The Reign of Terror ended until Robespierre’s own execution on July 28, 1794.

- Robespierre's death began a moderate phase during which the people of France revolted against the excesses committed during the Reign of Terror. This was known as the Thermidorian Reaction.

Stage V – End of the French Revolution

- On August 22, 1795, the National Convention, now composed of moderates who had survived the excesses of the Reign of Terror, approved the creation of a new constitution that created France's bicameral legislature.
- The power would be in the hands of the Directory, a five-member group appointed by the parliament. Any opposition to this group was removed through the efforts of the army, now led by an upcoming and successful general, Napoleon Bonaparte.
- The Directory's rule was marked by financial crises and corruption. In addition, they had ceded much of their authority to the army that had helped them stay in power.
- Finally, resentment against the Directory reached fever pitch and a coup d'état was staged by Napoleon himself, toppling them from power. Napoleon appointed himself "first consul". The French Revolution was over and the Napoleonic era was about to begin during which time French domination continental Europe would become the norm.

Significance of the French Revolution

- For all its faults, the French Revolution is highly regarded as the turning point in modern history as the rise of new ideas steeped in liberalism, enlightenment and democracy. These ideals were carried throughout Europe by French armies that fought many wars in order to preserve the Republic's existence.
- It inspired the common folk in Europe to rise up against their own Monarchs in a wave of revolutionary fervour. Although most were harshly put down, the revolutions would continue into the early years of the 19th century which saw the fall of many absolute Monarchy all over Europe.
- Above all, the French Revolution brought an end to feudalism and made a path for future advances in broadly defined individual freedoms

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution, otherwise known as the First Industrial Revolution, was a series of innovations in manufacturing processes that transformed rural, agrarian European and American societies into industrialised and urban ones.

Where did the Industrial Revolution Begin?

- The Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain, and many of the technological innovations were of British origin. Due to its cold damp climate, Britain was ideal for raising sheep which gave it a long history of producing textiles such as wool, linen, cotton etc. Before the industrial revolution, the textile industry was in every sense a 'cottage industry' as the work was performed in smaller workshops and homes by individual spinners, weavers and dyers.
- With the introduction of machines like the flying shuttle, spinning jenny and power loom, weaving cloth and spinning yarn was made much easier and faster, while at the same time requiring less human labour.
- The efficient and mechanized means of production could now meet the growing demand for cloth both at home and abroad. Britain's overseas colonies were also a captive market for the goods it produced now. Along with the textile industry, the iron industry adopted some innovations of its own as well.
- One of these innovations was the method of smelting iron with coke, a material created by heating coal. This method was cheaper when compared to using charcoal that was traditionally used and produced high-quality material at the same time. The rapidly expanding steel and iron production fulfilled demands created by many wars that Britain fought overseas, such as the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) and it helped in the growth of the railway industry.

What was the impact of Steam Power during the Industrial Revolution?

- Nothing so vividly describes the impact of the industrial revolution as the invention of machines that harnessed the power of steam.
- The first prototype of a modern steam engine was designed by Thomas Newcomen in the early 1700s. He named it as the "atmospheric steam engine" and was originally created for pumping out water from mines.
- James Watt, an engineer from Scotland, worked on the steam engine created by Newcomen in the 1760s. By adding a water condenser to make it more efficient, James Watt invented a steam engine that would be far more efficient than any other models invented so far. Also, his innovation would be used by many industries such as paper and cotton mills, waterworks, canals, ironworks etc.
- The demand for coal rose to astronomical heights during this period as most of the machines were powered by these cheap sources of energy. But these demands for coal were themselves met by the machines that helped workers to extract coal from the mines.

Innovations in Transportations During the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution led to an improvement in Britain's road network, which was substandard before the advent of industrialisation. The arrival of new innovations such as steam-powered locomotives heralded a new era in transportation that saw an efficient movement of freight and people across Britain by 1815. These innovations also allowed the transport of goods to overseas markets across the Atlantic Ocean and beyond.

Communications and Banking During the Industrial Revolution.

- The later period of the Industrial Revolution saw many advances in long-distance communication. The first telegraph system was patented by inventors William Cooke and Charles Wheatstone, while Samuel Morse worked on their version of the telegraph in the United States. The telegraph system created by Wheatstone and Cooke would be used for signalling in the railways as it required efficient means of communication due to the speed of the trains in question.
- A new factory system that relied on owners and managers came to be during this time period.
- Along with the first stock exchanges in the 1770s and 1790s in Britain and the United States respectively. Adam Smith, regarded as the 'father of modern economics', published *The Wealth of Nations* where he advocated a system of free-market characterised by individual ownership of methods of production and little to no government interference.

Standard of Living during the Industrial Revolution

- For all its technological marvels and breakthroughs, the Industrial Revolution came with a few faults of its own. The rapid industrialisation had led to rapid urbanisation, prompting many to leave the countryside to find work in the cities. This brought significant challenges as the cities now suffered from overcrowding, pollution, appalling levels of sanitation compounded by frequent shortages of clean drinking water.
- Although the standard of living improved dramatically for the middle and upper classes, the poor and the working classes had no change in their lot in life. Although mechanization of factories had improved output and production overall, the working conditions had become tedious and at times fraught with danger. The wages paid to these workers were also low, fuelling violent opposition to changes in Britain's industrial landscape.

Impact of the Industrial Revolution

- The Industrial Revolution was a watershed moment in human history as every aspect of daily life felt its impact in one way or another. The average income and the growth of the population, in general, saw unprecedented changes. Modern economists are of the

opinion that the standard of living of the general population began to change considerably for the first time in history even though it did not see an overall improvement until the beginning of the 20th century.

- The Industrial Revolution saw the emergence of modern capitalist economies around the world at this time as the GDP per capita saw an exponential rate of growth around this time. Economic historians regard the Industrial Revolutions as the most important moment in human history since the domestication of animals and plants.

The Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was one of the most significant events of the twentieth century that ended centuries of monarchy in Russia and brought forth the first constitutionally communist state in the world.

Background of the Russian Revolution

- The Russia of the 1900s was one of the most economically backwards and least industrialised nations in Europe with a large population of peasants and a growing number of industrial workers.
- It was where the last vestiges of feudalism - serfdom - was still in practice. Serfdom was a system where landless peasants were forced to serve the land-owning nobility. Although the practice in most of Europe was ended by the time of the Renaissance in the late 16th century, it was still being carried out in Russia well into the 19th century.
- It would not be until 1861 when serfdom would be abolished. The emancipation of serfs would set off a chain of events that would lead to the Russian Revolution in the coming years.

1905 Russian Revolution

- The Industrial Revolution came to Russia much later compared to the rest of Europe. When it did, it brought with it a multitude of political and social changes.
- The Industrial Revolution in Russia doubled the population in urban areas such as St Petersburg and Moscow, putting a strain on the infrastructure of the cities and leading to overcrowding and pollution. The result was a new level of destitution of the urban working class.
- The population boom did not have the food supply to sustain it in the long run, as decades of economic mismanagement and costly wars lead to chronic shortages in the vast country from time to time.

- In response to their present conditions the Russian people, composed mainly of workers marched to the winter palace of Tsar Nicholas II on January 22 1905. Although he was not there at the time, he had given orders not to shoot at the unarmed crowd.
- However his orders, either due to miscommunication or downright inefficiency on part of the officers, were largely ignored
- When the huge crowd of people finally showed up the troops were intimidated by the sheer size of the people present. Upon their refusal of the protestors to disperse when told to, the Russian troops opened fire killing and wounding hundreds of the protesters. This event was known as the Bloody Sunday massacre and would have grave consequences for the Russian monarchy in the years to come.
- The massacre sparked the Russian revolution of 1905, during which angry workers responded with a series of crippling strikes throughout the country. The strikes further threatened to cripple Russia's already fragile economy. Left with no choice, Nicholas II agreed to implement reforms, which would be known as the October manifesto. But kept delaying them in order to not lose his grip on power. To this effect, he dissolved the Russian parliament through which he had promised to implement reforms.
- Although nothing significant came out of the 1905 revolution, the events of Bloody Sunday had alienated the Tsar from his people.

Events of World War I

- Russia joined its Serbian, French and British allies in declaring war against the Central Powers of Austria, Germany and Ottoman Turkey on August 1914
- Russia had not modernised its army at the pace that Germany had and as a result, the war proved disastrous for Russia. Its casualties were far more than any other nation in the war.
- Germany had seized key Russian territories which further caused food shortages and disrupting the economy as a result.
- Hopin to rally the Russian troops and the people in the wake of the deteriorating condition of the war front, Tsar Nicholas II personally made his way to take command of the army, leaving his wife, Tsarina Alexandra in charge of the government.
- Due to her German heritage, the Tsarina was hated by the Russian populace. It did not help matters when she began dismissing elected officials on the alleged advice of the controversial preacher and mystic, Rasputin. His influence and hold over the Russian imperial family were well known at the time.
- Rasputin was murdered by nobles resenting his hold over the imperial court on December 30, 1916, but the damage was already done. Most ordinary Russian had lost faith in the Tsarist government. Soon this resentment would turn into a full-blown revolution in the coming years.

The February Revolution

- The February revolution began on March 8, 1917. Because Russia used the Julian Calendar at the time it is known as the February Revolution. The Julian calendar date of the revolution is given as February 23.
- Protestors took to the streets of the capital of St. Petersburg angry over chronic food shortages. They were joined by industrial workers and clashed with the police on the streets.
- On March 11, the troops garrisoning St. Petersburg were called to quell the protests but despite firing upon them, the uprising was continued unchecked.
- The Russian parliament - the Duma - formed a provisional government on March 12. Nicholas II abdicated the throne ending centuries of his family rule in Russia
- The new government under Alexander Kerensky established a statuette of rights such as freedom of speech and the rights of unions to organize and strike. Despite this, he continued the war with Germany contrary to the popular opposition against it.
- This move worsened Russia's food supply problems. Unrest continued to grow as peasants looted farms and food riots erupted in the cities.

The October Revolution

- On November 6 and 7, 1917 (or October 24 and 25 on the Julian calendar, hence referred to as the October Revolution), communist revolutionaries led by Vladimir Lenin launched a coup against Kerensky's government.
- The new government under Lenin was composed of a council of soldiers, peasants and workers. The Bolsheviks and their allies occupied key locations across St. Petersburg and Russia as a whole soon formed a new government with Lenin as its head. Lenin became the dictator of the world's first communist state.
- But this was not the end of troubles for the new government
- Civil War broke out in Russia in late 1917 where the Red faction, composed mainly of communists and socialists, fought against the White factions, which were composed of monarchists, capitalists and democrats.
- Nicholas and his entire family were executed on July 16, 1918, by the Bolsheviks.
- The war would end in 1923 with Lenin's red army claiming victory. It would pave the way for the formation of a communist super-state: The Soviet Union. The Soviet Union would become a formidable player during the events of the Cold war in the coming decades



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