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HISTORY

SOCIALISM IN EUROPE AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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1. THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

In the October Revolution of 1917, socialists took over the government in Russia. The fall of monarchy in February 1917 and the events of October were termed as the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Empire in 1914

In 1914, Russia was ruled by Tsar Nicholas II and its empire. The Russian Empire included current-day Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus, stretching to the Pacific and comprised today's Central Asian states, as well as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Majority of the population was Russian Orthodox Christianity.

2. ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian population was dominated by agriculturalists, who used to cultivate for the market as well as for their own needs. St Petersburg and Moscow were prominent industrial areas. Craftsmen undertook much of the production, but large factories existed alongside craft workshops. In the 1890s more factories were set up after and foreign investment in industry increased. Large factories were supervised by the government to

ensure minimum wages and limited hours of work. Workers were a divided social group. They were also divided by their skill. Despite divisions, workers united to stop work when they disagreed with employers about dismissals or work conditions.

Peasants cultivated most of the land but the nobility, the crown and the Orthodox Church owned large properties. Nobles got power and position through their services to the Tsar. In Russia, peasants wanted the land of the nobles.

3. SOCIALISM IN RUSSIA

Political parties in Russia were legal before 1914. In 1898, socialists founded the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party who respected Marx's ideas. Some Russian socialists felt that the Russian peasant custom of dividing land periodically made them natural socialists. Throughout the nineteenth century, socialists were active in the countryside and formed the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1900. The party struggled for peasants' rights and demanded land belonging to nobles be transferred to peasants. The party was divided over the strategy of organisation. According to Vladimir Lenin in a repressive society like Tsarist Russia, the party should be disciplined and should control the number and quality of its members. Mensheviks thought that the party should be open to all.

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