

2.1.1 Terms

Marxism:

- Economic and political philosophy named for Karl Marx.
- It is known as scientific (as opposed to utopian) socialism.
- Marxism has had a profound impact on contemporary culture.
- Modern communism is based on it and most modern socialist theories derive from it.

Bolsheviks:

- A group who split from the original Russian socialist movement in 1903.
- The Bolsheviks (meaning majority) would develop into a small, tightly organized, revolutionary Marxist group led by Vladimir Lenin.
- In November, 1917, they took control of a chaotic Russia and gained full control after a civil war.
- They renamed themselves the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

February Revolution (Our March):

- Arose because of food and fuel shortages, continuing repression by the Tsarist government and military incompetence in WW1.
- Riots broke out in Petrograd (St Petersburg today), which led to the abduction of Tsar Nicholas II and the formation of a provisional government, made up of liberals and a few social democrats.
- They were following Prince Gyorgy Yevgeneich Lvov who was then replaced as the head of government by Alexander Kerensky, a respected orator who was concerned about stabilizing the revolution.

Provisional Government:

- The temporary government established in Russian after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II; led by Prince Lvov and Alexander Kerensky.

Petrograd Soviet:

- A council of workers, soldiers, and intellectuals formed by Russian revolutionaries in the city of Petrograd (led by Trotsky).

October Revolution (Our November):

- Involved a coup on the night of October 25/26 (Nov 6/7).
- Bolshevik workers and sailors seized the government buildings and the Winter Palace in Petrograd, where they were arrested.
- The ministers of the provisional government were arrested in the name of the people. The leaders of this revolution were Lenin and Trotsky.

Collectivization:

- The Soviet plan to create an agricultural cooperative through consolidation of peasant villages into state-controlled collective farms.

Kulaks:

- Russian peasants who became prosperous farmers of mid-size farms as a result of agrarian reforms in 1906 who were “eliminated” in 1929 by Stalin because of the opposition to collectivism.

Stalin Purges:

- The removal of suspected enemies from the Communist Party and the Soviet Union by Stalin.
- Between 1935 and 1938, an estimated 11 million people were sent to labour camps or were executed in the purge known as the Great Terror.

2.1.2 Ideas of Marxism**Marxism:**

- The political, economic and social principals/policies put forth by Karl Marx (German); specifically it involves a theory and practice of socialism including the labour theory of value (labour creates all wealth; labourers are entitled to it, dialectical materialism (study of change in the real world); the class struggle (working class, owning class) and dictatorship of the proletariat (working class run society) until the establishment of a classless society.

A) Relations between social classes:

- Marx viewed the structure of society in relation to its major classes and the struggle between them as the engine of change in this structure.
- A class is defined by the ownership of property.
- Such ownership allows a person with power to exclude others from the property and to use it for personal purposes.
- Class is thus determined by property, not by income or status. Each class has its interests and are in opposition with each other.
- Thus they will be in conflict.
- The division between classes will widen and the condition of the exploited worker will deteriorate so badly that social structure collapses; the class struggle is transformed into a proletarian revolution.
- The workers triumph will eliminate the basis for class division in property through public ownership of the means of production.
- With class wiped away, a classless society will ensue and since political power to protect the bourgeoisie against the worker is unnecessary, political authority and the state will wither away.

B) Work and Economic Value:

- According to Marx's theory, the more labour or labour time goes into an object, the more it is worth.
- Marx defined value as, "consumed labour time" and stated "all goods, considered economically, are only the product of labour and cost nothing except labour."
- Here is an example of how the labour theory of value works; a worker in a factory is given \$30 worth of material and after working 3 hours, producing a good and using \$10 worth of fuel to run a machine, he creates a product which is sold for \$100.
- According to Marx, the labour and only the labour of the worker increased the value of the natural materials to \$100.
- The worker is justly entitled to a \$60 payment, or \$20 per hour.
- If the worker is employed by a factory owner who pays him only \$5 per hour, according to Marx the \$5/hr factory owner receives is simply a rip-off.

- The factory owner has done nothing to earn the money and the \$5/hr he receives is “surplus value”, representing exploitation of the worker.
- Even the tools which the factory owner provided were, according to Marx, necessarily produced by other workers.
- According to this theory, all profits are the rightful earnings of the workers, and when they are kept from the workers by the capitalists, workers are simply being robbed.
- On the basis of this theory, Marx called for the elimination of profits, for workers to seize factories and for the overthrow of the “tyranny” of capitalism.

C) Bourgeoisie:

- The bourgeoisie or those who, “own the means of production”, and employ the proletariat (workers).
- The bourgeoisie may be further subdivided into the very wealthy and the petty bourgeoisie (those who employ labour, but also work themselves).
- They may be small proprietors (store-keepers), land holding peasants, or trade workers.
- The means of production include such things as machinery and factory buildings while their sole source of income is profit.

D) Proletariat:

- The proletariat (working class) are, “those individuals who sell their labour and do not own the means of production”, whom he believed were responsible for creating wealth of a society (they physically build things like bridges, furniture, etc).
- They may be subdivided into the ordinary proletariat (work in stores) and the lumpen proletariat (extremely poor and cannot find legal work on a regular basis) including prostitutes, beggars or homeless people.

2.1.3 Impact of discontent in pre-revolutionary Russian

- There were a number of factors that contributed to discontent in Russia, which in turn led to revolution in 1917.
- They include:

1) Autocratic Government of Tsar Nicholas II:

- **Autocracy** is defined as government in which the ruler has unlimited power and authority.
- In Russia, Nicholas II was an autocrat who stood high above his subjects.
- He stated, “I shall maintain the principle of autocracy just as firmly and unflinchingly as it was preserved by my unforgettable dead father”.
- Nicholas carried out policies like censorship and **Russification** (force people of different ethnic backgrounds to use Russian language and religion).
- The heavy handed rule of Nicholas outraged the peasantry, as they were the ones who suffered the most under his rule.
- Labour unrest and strong opposition from many groups within Russia began demanding reforms and a constitutional government.
- People could no longer deal with the autocratic government/ruler of the country.

2) Plight of Peasants and Factory Workers:

- The peasants were the bulk of Russian citizenry but they were kept, legally and socially segregated from the other social groups in Russian society.
- They felt worthless within their own country.
- They held no land or rights, living conditions were poor, and they were treated like slaves.
- They were a repressed group without a voice but started to identify with their local area and not “Mother Russia”.
- Their plight spawned a revolution that was driven by the desire to improve their lives.
- The factory worker faced oppressive working conditions and had no rights or union representation.
- They wanted civil liberties and representation in government.
- Their desire drove them to become organized into councils of workers (Soviets) to represent and fight for their cause.
- The oppressive conditions also turned this group against the ruling power to a point where they were willing to protest and openly oppose the Tsar.

3) Political reform demands of Liberals and Marxist:

- The liberals, middle class people, were the most moderate of opposition groups.
- Their aim was to introduce parliamentary democracy to Russia.
- Their actions were peaceful, not revolutionary.
- This group did achieve some success but only with the help of the actions of the more revolutionary peasants and workers.
- However, the successes were short lived
- The Marxist’s aim was to remove the Tsar and the autocracy and replace them with small councils to represent the ordinary people and control the means of production.
- This group was divided into the **Bolsheviks** (wanted violent revolution under the guidance of a small elite group lead by one man – Lenin) and the **Mensheviks** (wanted a revolution through democratic means and not under the control of one man).
- Many of these people were persecuted, deported to Siberia or forced into exile (like Lenin) and would not play their part until much later in the revolution.

4) Russo-Japanese War and WWI:

- War with Japan in 1905 was to help Nicholas II. He hoped that victory would grow support for him and ease discontent at home.
- However, a series of defeats dissolved support at home and made his government more unpopular.
- He was being pressured to grant concessions to reformers to try to ease tensions.
- At the same time workers protested for reforms and the 1905 Revolution occurred. (short lived)
- WW1 turned out to be disastrous for the Tsar and a focal point for the Russian people in their cry for revolution.
- By 1916 Russia was suffering great defeats and Tsar took command, he then became identified as the cause of the defeats.
- At home the war effort was resulting in food shortages.

- People were protesting the war and against the lack of action over food shortages.
- People had had enough, they could not stomach the fact of fighting a war while people at home were starving and millions of men were dying on the front lines.
- The Tsar was to blame for it all and they wanted it to end.

5) *Influence of Grigori Rasputin:*

- As the Tsar was on the front lines he left the Tsarina in control at home.
- However, she was under the influence of a peasant holy man named Rasputin.
- He gained the confidence of the Tsarina by helping her son (curing his haemophilia).
- As a result, he assumed significant power in the government.
- However, he became linked to the monarchy in the eyes of the people and was associated with their repressive actions.
- His evil reputation, personal excesses and closeness to the monarchy further destroyed the image of the Tsar in the eyes of the people.
- He was so influential that members of the Tsars government conspired to kill him.

2.1.4 Downfall of Provisional Government

- The Provisional Government came into existence in March 1917 after the Tsar stepped down.
- However, the road for them was rocky because they continued the war effort and did not do much to improve the life of the peasants/factory workers.
- The Provisional Government tried to continue the war and to keep the peasants from taking the land while trying to avoid methods of dictatorship.
- In doing so they were trying to impose a policy that ran counter to the wishes of the mass of peasants, workers and soldiers
- Half-hearted attempts to impose this policy by force just further undermined their position.
- The workers were alienated because the Provisional Government failed to provide an adequate supply of the bread to the cities.
- Further, many workers were facing redundancy as a side effect of the war (losing jobs).
- Perhaps most militant were soldiers who were bitter from seeing many comrades die as a result of their general incompetence.
- They began to see no sense in giving their lives to fight for a government who could not even provide adequate supplies.
- The Provisional Government were facing a widespread popular movement and, as this included the soldiers, by October the government could not even resort to force to keep power.

2.1.5 Role of Political Leaders in the Revolution

- A number of people played significant roles in determining the fate of Russian during 1917, the most influential of these were the following:

1) *Nicholas II:*

- He was poorly prepared for his role as Tsar.
- Nicholas and his government were out of touch with the Russian people and few steps were taken to meet the demands from them.
- He rejected most attempts at reform and distrusted advice from parliament.

- During the war he tried to rally the troops but could not.
- As a result of his leadership, or lack of it, there were riots, strikes, and mutinies among the people.
- They called for peace, land and bread.
- His actions or inactions alienated the people of Russia to a point where they had no other option but to revolt.

2) ***Alexander Kerensky:***

- He was an outspoken opponent of the Tsar's rule prior to the February (March) Revolution.
- He became one of the two leaders of the Provisional Government.
- Kerensky introduced some new reforms but did not agree to redistribute land to peasants and supported the continuation of the war.
- As a result, the people never got behind the government.
- He also took command of the army, leading them to many defeats.
- He alienated generals to the point where they no longer wished to fight/follow his orders.
- These actions left the Provisional Government powerless and Russia ripe for revolution.
- He escaped the October (November) revolt, attempted to reorganize resistance to Lenin but failed and eventually fled Russia.

3) ***Leon Trotsky:***

- He played a fundamental role in the Revolution of 1917, together with Lenin.
- A close associate of Lenin, he was chosen to lead the Petrograd Soviet.
- He was a brilliant organizer and helped Lenin plot the Bolshevik takeover of power.
- He played a particularly important role in building up the Red Army, without which the revolution would have been crushed.
- He continued to lead the Red Army against the forces opposing them in the time following the initial takeover of power.

4) ***Vladimir Lenin:***

- He formed the Bolshevik party in the early 1900's, by April 1917 they had relatively few members. However, Lenin skilfully built support for the party on his return to Russia (he had been exiled).
- He wrote articles calling upon reform and criticising the Provisional Government.
- He demanded an end to the war and demanded that peasants be allowed to "take over the entire land immediately."
- These demands gained him great support from the people in Russia.
- He, along with Trotsky, devised a plan for the takeover of the government.
- By Nov 1917 he led a relatively small group of exiles (with the help of workers, sailors, and soldiers) and engineered the first communist revolution in history.

2.1.6 Events and Outcome of Russian Civil War

- After the Bolshevik takeover, Russia was plunged into a serious civil war (1918-1921).
- The Bolsheviks faced opposition to their rule from a variety of groups (20-30) including socialists and monarchists (these loyal to the king).

- The Bolsheviks were known as the Reds and those who wanted to overthrow them were the whites.

Major Events:

- 1918: Tsar and family put to death
 - 1919: Red Army defeat white forces led by Admiral Kolchak
 - 1919: British, French, American troops went home
 - 1920: The last of the White Army was defeated in the Crimea
 - 1921: Red Army pushes forces back to Poland
- The Reds were ultimately successful in defeating the Whites.
 - The success was mainly due to the Red Army, which was brilliantly organized and led by Trotsky.
 - The Red Army had the support of a large number of peasants and workers.
 - In contrast, the Whites were disunited and disorganized and were not supported by the peasants who regarded the whites as the landlord class.
 - As a result of the vast lands of Russia were now firmly under the control of the new Communist regime.
 - The lasting result of the civil war and allied intervention was a deep distrust on the part of the Communist towards the west, which would last for 70 years.
 - The United States, France, Britain fought against the Reds along with the Whites.
 - Therefore, when the Reds won they distrusted those people who had helped the Whites.

2.1.7 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and War Communism Aid Lenin

- **War Communism** was Lenin's philosophy of control during the civil war.

How did it work?

- Factories with more than 10 workers were taken over by the country which decided what each factory would produce.
- Also, the government allowed money to lose its value over time.

What were the results of war communism?

- The government managed to feed and equip the Red Army.
- Peasants stopped producing surplus food since they could no longer sell it.
- The Red Army seized all grain.
- The peasants then burnt and destroyed all grain and livestock rather than give it to the government, leading to falling production. (1913 - 80 million tonnes; 1921 – 37.6 million tonnes)
- As soon as he gained power in Russia, Lenin decided he had to get Russia out of the war.
- He signed the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**.
- This treaty resulted in Russia giving up major concessions to Germany in exchange for peace.
- Taking the country out of the war Lenin removed some of the threats that were facing him.
- Also, it gave him the opportunity to consolidate Bolshevik control and defeat the opposition.
- Another factor which aided Lenin concerned supplying his forces.
- To gain control and win the war, he had to try and control all aspects of the economy.

He decided to do the following things:

- Factories were nationalized
 - Military discipline in factories
 - Strikes were made illegal
 - Surplus food was handed over to the government
 - Rationing was introduced
- These actions brought things under direct control of the new government.
 - Lenin now had the country in his hands.
 - The measures he had taken did not produce a well-rounded economy but it did succeed in meeting the immediate and minimal needs of the Communist State during the civil war period.
 - War Communism introduced an element of system and order into the general picture or unmanageable chaos.
 - Lenin achieved the control and stability he desperately needed.

2.1.8 NEP (New Economic Policy) and Stalin's 5 Year Plan

- War Communism had helped Lenin win the civil war; however, these policies resulted in declines in agricultural and industrial production.
- The general population had suffered greatly and unrest erupted.
- To combat the poor economy and ease tension, Lenin introduced the NEP.
- He realized that the communist revolution was threatened and he had to create incentives for workers and farmers to work more efficiently.
- Most of the policies under war communism were repeated and new policies, capitalist policies, were introduced.

Under the NEP:

- Some of the ownership of small industry was permitted
- Farmers could sell excess produce for profit
- Rights of private ownership were reinstated
- Some foreign investment was allowed

The policies resulted in:

- Industrial production increased
 - Russian standard of living increased
 - Made the new government more acceptable to the people
- When Joseph Stalin came to power he decided that the NEP was no longer serving his needs.
 - He felt the ideas of NEP ran contrary to the ideas of socialism.
 - The idea of individual profit and lack of central control troubled him greatly.
 - As a result, he developed **5 year plans** which called for rapid industrialization of the economy and a restructuring of the agricultural industry under state control.
 - He feared Russia would fall behind the world powers (USA, Britain, France, etc).
 - So he introduced the policies of **Industrialization** and **Collectivism**.

Industrialization:

- Heavy industry (building steel mills, electric power stations, oil refineries, etc) became the focus of Stalin during this time.
- Stalin knew many regions of the USSR were backward and they needed armaments (war weapons) to defend the country and they were behind other countries in development.
- He believed successes could serve as useful propaganda for communism and that an industrialized nation meant a strong nation.
- Industrialization resulted in huge increases in production, between 1927-1937 in the areas of electricity (up 5 – 36 000 mkw), coal (up 35 – 128 m tonnes), steel (up 4 – 18 tonnes) and oil production tripled. Many achievements were made including; new cities, dam/hydroelectric plants, transportation and communications.
- Also, there were improvements in education and medicine.
- However, the cost of this success was great and the system was poorly organized (inefficient, duplication of effort, waste).
- The quality of goods was often poor, costly projects served no purpose as they became show pieces.
- Finally, there was tremendous sacrifice in human terms; slave labour, no human rights, labour camps, many accidents and deaths and people were punished severely if they failed to meet production goals.

Collectivism:

- Stalin believed that agriculture in his country was operating in a “backward” fashion, (no machinery, too small, inefficient, mainly subsistence in nature) that food was needed for workers in towns, the NEP was not working, cash crops were needed and the Kulaks had to go (not communist, had private wealth).
- He ordered all peasants to give up their land and farm animals and form collective farms (large government enterprises where peasants were supposed to be paid for the work they did).

Goals of collectivism:

- Increase food production by introducing machinery
 - Give government control over farm production
 - Free people from farming to go to work in industry
 - Extend socialism to the countryside
- Most peasants opposed collectivism; the stiffest resistance came from the Kulaks.
 - They protested by destroying livestock and crops.
 - Stalin responded harshly as millions were eliminated (10 - 20 million) by execution or they were sent to forced labour camps in Siberia.
 - There were some successes; more modern methods by 1937, 97 million tonnes of cash crops, 17 million peasants moved to towns and complete communist control.
 - However, in the beginning farm production fell and there was a famine which led to widespread starvation.
 - It was not a perfect system but Stalin achieved his goals. (Stalin did not want the Kulaks to have any power)

2.1.9 Stalin's Methods of Control

- To secure absolute control over his own party and the population in general Stalin began the purges.
- He targeted anyone who did not follow his line of thinking and were opposed to his viewpoints.
- He believed Russia had to be united, with him as a leader, if it was to be strong.
- Also, he became increasingly paranoid and power mad which intensified his attacks.
- He used the secret police, the Checka, which became the OGPU (1922), then NKVD (1934) to carry out his work.

First Purges: 1930-1933 targeted anyone who opposed industrialization and the Kulaks who opposed collectivism.

Great Purges: 1934-1939

- 1) Political Opponents 1934 – Kirov, rival of Stalin, was murdered. Stalin believed to have ordered it. He used it as an opportunity to arrest thousands of his opponents.
- 2) 1934-1939 – Political opponents were put on “show trials” where they pleaded guilty to impossible charges of treason
- 3) In the army (1937) the Commander-In –Chief of the Red Army and 7 leading generals were shot. In 1938-39 all the Admirals and ½ the Army's officers were executed or imprisoned.
- 4) The church religious leaders were imprisoned and churches were closed down.
- 5) Stalin enforced Russification on ethnic groups all over the Soviet Union.
- 6) Ordinary people were denounced, arrested, sent to the Gulag (system of labour camps), 20 million Russians died. People lived in fear. Those who were loyal to Stalin received the best jobs, houses, holidays, etc.

Cult of Stalin:

The use of propaganda created an image of Stalin as a hero and great leader of the people.

The following things were done to achieve this:

- Pictures, statues, etc, were erected showing Stalin in a favourable light
- He was given continuous praise and applause in publications
- Mothers taught their children that Stalin was “the wisest man of the age”
- History books and photographs were changed to make Stalin look good