

The World Between Wars 1900-1950 : Part - II

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Q. 1. Russian revolution brought in many changes in their society. What were they? And at challenges did they face? (AS1)

Answer : The Russian Revolution brought about many social changes in the country. These changes are mentioned below :

1. USSR under the leadership of Stalin tried to end small-scale production by forcing all small and large farmers to surrender their lands and join collective farms.
2. In this system, all the land, machinery, and raw material were pooled. The farmers worked together and distributed the produce among members. The main idea was to shift from small-scale farming to large-scale farming to use new techniques extensively on a large scale.
3. Many farmers resisted this, leading to imprisonment and even death. This also led to widescale starvation and famine.
4. All industries were owned by the state which did not allow the free market and sold the industrial products to the consumers directly.
5. A proper schooling system was developed. Arrangements were also made for factory workers to enter universities. Creches were set up for children of working women in factories.
6. USSR achieved full employment and improved the standard of living of its citizens.
7. Universalization of literacy and primary education was also achieved.

The challenges faced by Russia are mentioned below :

1. In 1917, Russia and Germany were at war.
2. The economy had deteriorated.
3. The British, French and US refused to recognize their government
4. The people widely resisted some of this changes.

Q. 2. Compare different points of view about the Great Depression, which one would you agree? Why? (AS1)

Answer : The Great Depression began in 1928 and ended in 1939. It led to a worldwide decline in demand and consequently closure of many factories. This declined the purchasing power of the people which led to a further fall in demand and ultimately prices. It caused massive unemployment all over the world. It began with a stock market collapse in the US but spread all over the world. Different economists had a different point of view about the cause behind the Great Depression and measures to prevent its recurrence. Some of these viewpoints are highlighted below :

1. Marxist economists said that this type of crisis is an essential nature of capitalism and can be removed only with the establishment of socialism.
2. JM Keynes argued that the state has an important role to keep the economy going. If it fails to intervene effectively, it might lead to depression.
3. Keynes argued that when demand falls, the state should invest funds and increase employment opportunities. This will help the people to earn money and increase demand for goods in the market. This will help the economy to revive from depression.
4. Austrian economists argued that the great depression was the result of the monetary policies of the federal reserve during 1920.
5. Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz wrote a book "A Monetary History of the United States". In this book, they have said that the cause for great depression is the fall of the money supply.
6. Other neoclassical macroeconomists have said that the cause behind this depression was the different labor market policies.

Although each viewpoint has some significance, I agree with Keynes. The state had no control over the demand and supply market forces. The governments of capitalist countries were hesitant to intervene in the economy and this is the main cause behind the crisis.

Q. 3. In what ways were Jews persecuted during Nazi Germany? Do you think in every country some people are differentiated because of their identity? (AS4)

Answer : The ideology of Nazis depended on majoritarian principles. They resorted to mass killing of minority communities to build racial superiority of Germans. The main target of Nazi were the Jews in Germany which were approximately 5 lakh in number.

The Jews were persecuted in the following ways :

1. In 1933, New Germany laws forced Jews out of their civil service jobs, universities and law court positions and other areas of public life.
2. The laws proclaimed at Nuremberg in April 1933, made Jews second-class citizens.
3. Jews could not attend public schools go to theatres, cinema, vacation resorts etc.
4. The new anti-Jewish regulations segregated Jews further and made daily life very difficult for them.
5. Anti-Nazi Jews were sent to the death camps and were killed by gassing in gas chambers or shooting with rifles in gas chambers.
6. About 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust.

Q. 4. List the measures taken under the idea of welfare state under Great Depression and explain how similar or different they are from that of the reforms that emerged under the USSR? (AS1)

Answer : The two main measures that were taken under the idea of the welfare state under the Great Depression are :

1. Roosevelt introduced the social security system in US. It established a system for the welfare of the State. Under this system, various measures were introduced such as universal retirement pensions, Unemployment Insurance, special benefits for the handicapped and needy children in families.
2. Britain also introduced unemployment insurance, old age pension schemes, sickness coverage, health schemes, childcare etc. This led to the idea of a welfare state in which the state had the responsibility to ensure a certain basic minimum dignified life for all citizens.

The USSR also followed same measures of welfare.

Q. 5. What challenges were faced by Germany during the Great Depression and how did Nazi rulers and Hitler make use of it? (AS1)

Answer : Germany faced many challenges during the Great Depression. It was deeply hit by this phase and suffered immensely.

1. The level of unemployment increased to a great level. It reached 30% of the total working population in 1932.
2. Many industries, mills, and production units were shut down on a large scale basis.

3. The lack of capital, prevailing in the economy led to a fall in the aggregate demand of produced goods.
4. Since there were no job opportunities, the youth of the country engaged themselves in criminal activities.
5. The currency lost its value which created tension among the middle class. They salaried employees and pensioners, saw their savings decline.
6. The small business of self-employed and retailers was completely destroyed.
7. The agriculture prices fell which affected the peasants.

This helped the Nazi rulers and Hitler to gain from this situation. Hitler was a powerful speaker with great passion and zeal. He promised to restore the dignity of the German people by removing the Versailles treaty and building Germany into a strong nation. He promised to create employment opportunities and help the youth to secure their future. Special focus was given to the middle class which felt threatened with the rise of capitalism. The people believed in him and in 1932, Hitler received 37% votes in Reichstag. Eventually, his Nazi Party became the largest party in the parliament.

Q. 6. What were the political changes brought under the Nazi rule? Often people argue that a single powerful leader can resolve the problems of a country. Based on the experiences narrated in the context of Nazi Germany how do you respond to this vision? (AS4)

Answer : In 1932, Hitler came in power and his Nazi party became the largest party in the Parliament. He immediately decided to remove all democratic institutions and establish autocratic ones. Hitler turned this country into a dictatorship government. On 3 March 1933, he passed the Enabling Act. This gave him all powers to sideline the Parliament and rule by decree. Next, he banned all the political parties and trade unions except his own Nazi party. The state established complete control over the economy, media, army, and Judiciary. Later, he opposed and refused the conditions in the Versailles treaty and withdrew the country from the League of Nations. Finally, he established racial supremacy of Germans, and security forces to control over the society.

The Nazi party had controlled for almost a decade.

In this context, it can be said that although such form of control can prevail for a short run. The best form of governance is a democratic form of government. Only a democracy can solve the issue in politics in a peaceful manner.