

needs of the people. Eventually, in 1906, after the Tsar's government had been weakened by disastrous defeat in the war with Japan (see Chapter 2, page 11), Russia did get a parliament, or 'Duma'. It was a sham, it had no real power and the Tsar sent its members away every time they tried to discuss political questions seriously. But the Duma was never finally disbanded.

Meanwhile, as industrialisation got under way in western Russia, workers in the cities formed trade unions; and a Social Democratic Party, influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx, was started - but it met in secret and had next to no effect on Russian politics. In 1903 a small group, calling themselves the Bolsheviks, and led by Vladimir Ilich Lenin, set off on their own to plan a Marxist revolution in Tsarist Russia. However, even Lenin thought they hadn't a hope of succeeding during his lifetime.

Across the Atlantic, or across the Bering Sea, was the USA, whose form of government was as unlike that of Russia as people could imagine. Many Russians did imagine it and promptly left Russia on a one-way ticket to 'the land of the free'. America was democratic: the people (provided they were neither female nor black) elected their President as well as Congress (Parliament). Indeed, Americans seemed addicted to voting, as they also elected their state governors and parliaments, their town mayors, sheriffs, police chiefs, judges and school boards.

There was, however, a darker side to American politics. The southern states, which had lost the Civil War against the more industrialised North only forty years before, were still plagued with a vicious racialism: negroes were systematically denied their civil rights. In the northern cities immigrant workers and children were ruthlessly exploited in factories and sweatshops. But there was little chance of Marx's ideas making much headway there. Trade unions found it difficult to recruit new members among a highly mobile working population, many of whom were recently arrived immigrants. And although hours of work in America were long, rates of pay were generally much higher than in Europe. Both main political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, supported a more or less unrestrained capitalist system. They believed that it offered unique incentives to hard work and opportunities for all - even though there was plenty of evidence that it left many people very poor and a few grotesquely rich.

As you saw in Chapter 2, much of the rest of the world had been gathered into the colonial empires of Western European states, such as France, Britain and Germany. Colonies were ruled directly by the mother countries, or indirectly through local princes and chiefs. Within the British Empire the exceptions were India and the white Dominions.

India was provided with a complete system of government and an army. Her people were controlled by British civil servants and British officers; and at the head of that system of rule was the 'Viceroy', appointed by the British government in London. The former white colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada had become self-governing countries (South Africa achieved the same status in 1910) and, reasonably enough, they adopted the British way of governing themselves, through elected parliaments. As in any other country whose government was not controlled from outside, the political struggles inside the Dominions were about their own peculiar circumstances and people. For example, in Australia the battle was about the powers of the federal government and the rights of the individual states which made up the 'Commonwealth of Australia'. In South Africa the struggle for power was restricted to a contest between the Boers and the English settlers, with the black population looking on to see who would be their eventual masters.

You have now seen something of the variety of the world's politics as it entered the twentieth century. You have seen how communism and non-revolutionary socialism were beginning to emerge as alternatives to capitalism; and how some Western European countries enforced their rule over much of the rest of the world. We ended the last chapter with a look at nationalist opposition to the European imperialists. Among the leaders of that opposition were men who admired much of what they saw or read of Western Europe. Some of the Asians who wanted the French out of Indo-China admired the French ideals of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. And many of the Indians who wanted to expel the British were deeply impressed by British parliamentary government. In a sense they wished to destroy the power of the West in order to spread what many of them believed to be good Western values - such as liberalism and democracy - in their own lands. We must now turn to see how the West tried to help them, unintentionally, by an attempt to destroy itself.

The British monarch had been stripped of power well before the beginning of the twentieth century and no longer played an active part in politics. In contrast, the German Kaiser (Emperor) wielded great power and appointed the ministers of his government without consulting the *Reichstag* (Parliament). Those ministers came from the old ruling class of Germany and most of them were from landowning families in Prussia, the powerful state which had forced the smaller German states to unite with her into one empire. The weak and divided opposition to the government came from the members elected to the Reichstag from the smaller states and from liberals who believed that Germany should be more democratic. There was also a fast-growing Social Democratic Party. The government had tried to prevent the spread of socialism in the industrial cities by introducing the first unemployment benefits and old-age pensions of any country in Europe, but it could not stop the industrial workers voting for the Social Democrats.

In contrast to both Britain and Germany, Russia had been slow to industrialise and most wealth was still in the hands of the imperial family, the landed nobility and the Church. The main business of the government of the Tsar (Emperor) was to keep law and order, to control the subject peoples of the Russian Empire, and to protect landowners against the frequent outbreaks of peasant violence. The Fundamental Law of the Russian Empire said: "The Emperor of all the Russias is an autocratic [all powerful] and unlimited monarch. God himself commands that his supreme power be obeyed..." God might command obedience to the Tsar, but in that immense empire obedience had to be enforced by a large civil service, the Russian Orthodox Church, the secret police and the Cossacks - peasant warriors from south Russia who were allowed to rule themselves in return for helping out the Tsar in time of trouble.

The most spectacular opponents of the Tsar's government were the terrorists who wanted to smash the system, not tinker with it. In 1881 they blew up Tsar Alexander II, an act which merely made the next Tsar set his face against reform of any kind. The non-violent opposition to the power of the Tsar came from the Liberals, who believed that Russia should be modernised on the lines of France and Britain. That would have meant industrialising, improving public services such as schools and roads, and setting up a more modern form of government, responsive to the

which are easy to remember, the new parties of the Left began to challenge the established parties of the Right.

Patterns of Power

We can now look at politics in particular countries to see how, if at all, industrialisation had affected them; and see what other factors had given them their character by the beginning of the twentieth century.

In Britain, industrialisation had already had profound effects, for the great landowners no longer controlled Parliament. Some of them still sat in the House of Lords - by hereditary right, not by election - but that body was about to have its powers severely trimmed in 1911. The government was formed by the party which won most seats in a general election to the other House of Parliament, the Commons. At the start of the century that chamber was dominated by two parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, both of which had learnt how to appeal to a population in which most adult males had the vote. A third party was formed, which claimed to represent the demands of the working class for a share in law-making. Yet for a time that new organisation, known as the Labour Party from 1906, had little effect. Its representation in Parliament was small compared with over eighty Irish Nationalist MPs, most of whom had only one concern - to win Home Rule (self-government) for Ireland.

The politics of other industrialised countries in Western Europe looked similar to those of Britain. For example, both France and Germany had parliaments elected by the adult males in their populations. But there were important differences too, as we should expect, since each country had developed in its own way, politically as well as economically.

In France, organised religion still played an important part in political life. The Catholic Church's involvement in politics raised questions such as whether the state or the Church should control education; and France's political parties were either 'clerical' or 'anti-clerical', for or against the influence of the Church. There was nothing quite like that on the main island of Britain. Then again, there were more people who made their living from the land in France than in Britain. The interests of large numbers of conservative peasants were not the same as those of industrial workers; and French politics reflected that deep conflict of interests.