

Notes on Pre-World War I Europe

The traditional society of 19th and early 20th Century Europe was based on:

- a) the Economy of: Capitalism and Industrialism
- b) the Social Classes of: the aristocracy, bourgeoisie and proletariat
- c) the Ideology or beliefs in: Liberalism, Progress, and Rationality
- d) the Art Movements of: Realism and Impressionism
- e) the International relations of: Balance of Power and Imperialism

Each category seemed to support each other and create a coherent world-view.

The Industrial Revolution and Its Consequences

"The Industrial Revolution could easily be considered the most important event in the history of the human race. In all previous societies known to man, periods of population growth were necessarily succeeded by periods of contraction caused by disease and starvation. After 1750, however, the production capacity of the world rapidly increased to the point where population could expand unceasingly and at the same time enjoy an improved standard of living. *What the Industrial Revolution entailed was basically the massive substitution of machines and new techniques of production for human labor.* The result was that, depending on the commodity, the output of the individual worker expanded five, fifty, a hundred, and even a thousand or more times, causing accumulation of goods undreamed of earlier. That human beings in such a world continued to live in dire poverty came to appear either as the fault of a backward regional system of production or as an unjust method of distributing the rewards--or combination of both." -- Witt, The Humanities

Basically, because industrialization creates more products at lower costs, the overall quality of life (standard of living) is raised.

Before the Industrial Revolution, artisans (skilled craftsmen) completed the entire task of manufacturing. Industrialization, on the other hand, is the application of technology and machinery to the problems of production and distribution. It usually involves **mass production** which breaks down a large task into its smallest components and a **division of labor** in which one worker does only one component of the larger task. When these small components are put together (usually through an **assembly line** process), the final product can be produced more quickly and at a lower cost. Industry also uses **interchangeable parts (and people)** so that repairs (and replacement) are easy.

Industrialization needs:

- a) a large amount of **capital** to purchase machinery, factories, pay workers, etc.
- b) **raw materials** (especially iron, steel, and energy)
- c) a large **labor** force
- d) extensive **transportation and communication** network
- e) a large **market** for the goods produced
- f) an organization force (**bureaucracy**) to manage manufacturing and distribution

(*Note:* Industrialization can occur under many political systems, communism and fascism as well as capitalism)

The Social Consequences of Industrialization under Capitalism before World War I

Industrialization created new social classes: the **bourgeoisie** (owners of the means of production) who created the factories and invested in production, **proletariat** (urban workers) and **white collar workers** (usually bureaucrats, managers, lawyers, accountants, engineers, etc). In general, industrialization made capitalists rich and they moved into the Upper Class of European society (often through marriage between wealthy bourgeois families and aristocratic families). The white collar workers' standards of living also increases and some could afford servants. The proletarian workers, however, often lived in poverty. Because the machinery demanded regimentation of work and reduced the need for skill and physical force, workers were easily replaced (if there was a large supply of unemployed workers). Also women and children could often do the industrialized work a man could do (and often for less money). Because workers could be easily replaced, they needed to be paid only enough to keep them alive.

Industrialization affected:

- a) population growth and migration
- b) cities
- c) the nature of work
- d) Imperialism

Capitalism and Liberalism became the ideologies of the bourgeoisie. (Read Notes on Capitalism and Liberalism)

To improve their conditions, the proletariat became attracted to Trade Unionism, Socialism, and Marxism. (to be discussed later.)