

Dr. Rajiv Kumar,
Department of History ,
HDJC, Ara

Topic : Process of Capitalist
Development in Industry and
Agriculture.
Britain, France, Germany and Russia.

The development of capitalism in Europe did not follow a uniform path. Each country experienced capitalist growth in industry and agriculture according to its historical conditions, social structure and state policies.

1. Britain :

Britain was the first country to develop capitalism, both in agriculture and industry.

Agriculture:

Capitalist agriculture emerged through the Enclosure Movement (16th–18th centuries). Common lands were enclosed by landlords, leading to the rise of large capitalist farms. Peasants were displaced and turned into wage labourers.

Agricultural productivity increased due to crop rotation, scientific farming and use of machinery. This surplus labour became the workforce for industries.

Industry:

The Industrial Revolution (late 18th century) transformed Britain into the “workshop of the world.” Private capital, free trade, availability of coal and iron, and technological inventions (steam engine, spinning jenny) accelerated industrial capitalism. The state followed a laissez-faire policy, allowing capitalism to grow freely.

2. France :

Capitalist development in France was slower and uneven compared to Britain.

Agriculture:

The French Revolution (1789) abolished feudal dues and landlord privileges. Land was distributed among peasants, resulting in small peasant proprietorship. While this ensured peasant independence, it limited capitalist farming because small holdings discouraged mechanization and large-scale production.

Industry:

French industrial capitalism developed gradually during the 19th century. Industrial growth was dominated by small and medium enterprises, not large factories. Banking capital and state support played an important role, especially

in railways and infrastructure. Protectionist policies slowed competition but provided stability.

3. Germany :

Germany's capitalist development was late but rapid, particularly after unification in 1871.

Agriculture:

Prussia led agrarian capitalism through reforms like the abolition of serfdom (early 19th century). However, large estates known as Junker estates survived. These landlords adopted capitalist methods while maintaining social dominance. Thus, agriculture

combined feudal remnants with capitalist production.

Industry:

German industrialization was state-supported and scientifically advanced. Heavy industries like steel, coal and chemicals expanded rapidly. Banks played a key role by financing industries, creating finance capitalism. The state actively promoted industrial growth through tariffs and military demand.

4. Russia :

Russia experienced the slowest and most contradictory capitalist development.

Agriculture:

Serfdom was abolished in 1861, but peasants remained burdened with redemption payments and lacked land. Agriculture remained backward, with limited capitalist transformation. Large landlords dominated production, while peasants struggled for subsistence.

Industry:

Industrial capitalism developed mainly through state intervention and foreign capital. Railways, mining and heavy industries expanded in the late 19th century. However, industrialization was concentrated in

a few urban centers, and the working class faced harsh conditions. Capitalism remained weak and dependent, contributing to social unrest.

Conclusions :

Thus, capitalist development followed different paths in Europe. Britain experienced early and smooth capitalist growth; France developed a peasant-based capitalism; Germany followed a state-led industrial path; and Russia witnessed delayed, uneven and crisis-ridden capitalist development. These differences shaped their social and political histories.
