

## Industrial Revolution in Japan and Russia Documents

### Document 1

**Source:** Sergey Witte, Russian finance minister, secret letter to Tsar Nicholas II, 1899.

The gradual growth of industry in the country, always accompanied by falling prices for manufactured goods, will make it possible for our export trade to deal not only in raw materials, as at present, but also in industrial goods. Our present losses in the European trade can then be converted into profits in the Asiatic trade.

The influx of foreign capital is, in my considered opinion, the sole means by which our industry can speedily furnish our country with abundant and cheap goods. Each new wave of capital, swept in from abroad, knocks down the high level of profits to which our monopolistic entrepreneurs are accustomed and forces them to seek compensation in technical improvements, which, in turn, will lead to price reductions.

If we carry our commercial and industrial system, begun in the reign of Alexander III, consistently to the end, then Russia will at last come of age economically. Then her prosperity, her trade and finance, will be based on two reliable pillars, agriculture and industry; and the relations between them, profitable to both, will be the chief motive power in our economy.

### Document 2

**Source:** Count Okuma Shigenobu, former prime minister of Japan, "The Industrial Revolution in Japan," article published in a United States magazine, 1900.

One of the principal measures adopted by the Meiji government, with the object of promoting the national prosperity and enlightenment, was the education of the young as well as of grown men, some of whom held high government positions. These latter were made to travel through civilized countries for the purpose of observing and examining their social, industrial, and political institutions, with a view to transplanting to Japanese soil whatever seemed to them likely to bear good fruit there.

Another measure which the government steadily pursued was the establishment of various kinds of factories, under the direct supervision and management of its officials. In the School of Mechanical Engineering, a small iron-foundry was built, and machines were made for the purpose of practical instruction. The Department of the Army started the manufacture of gun-powder and implements of war, while the Department of the Navy built and equipped a dockyard. The Department of Finance . . . also felt the need of an establishment where the paper currency, the national bonds and various kinds of stamps could be printed, and founded one under its direct control. In a similar manner a paper factory was established . . . Thus various manufactures sprang up, one after another.

The government also encouraged the introduction of the machinery for reeling silk thread and spinning cotton yarns, both of which operations had formerly been done almost wholly by manual labor. The government succeeded in concentrating the capital until now scattered by issuing Bank Regulations and establishing national banks. For the purpose of facilitating foreign trade, it used its influence for the establishment of the Bank of Yokohama. Again, the government undertook the construction of the first railway in Japan.

## Document 3

**Source:** Julian Cochrane, photographer employed by a United States company that distributed photos for educational books, silk factory in central Japan, 1904.



## Document 4

**Source:** S. I. Somov, Russian socialist, memoirs published in 1907, recalling his participation in the 1904–1905 strike at the Putilov factory in Saint Petersburg.

I remember the enormous impression which the first workers' meeting [during the strike] produced on me and my comrades. A kind of mystical, religious ecstasy reigned the whole time at the meeting; thousands of people stood side by side for hours in the dreadful heat [of the factory floor] and thirstily devoured the artless, strikingly powerful, simple, and passionate speeches of their exhausted fellow workers. The whole time the content of the speeches was meager, the same phrases being repeated in many ways: "our patience has come to an end," "our suffering has gone beyond all measure," "better death than this life," and so forth. But they were all pronounced with such marvelous, touching sincerity, flowed so much from the very depths of an exhausted human soul, that the same phrase, pronounced for the hundredth time, brought tears to the eyes, and conveyed the certainty that it was really necessary to do something in order to give vent to this worker bitterness and dissatisfaction, which had overflowed its limits.

## Document 5

**Source:** Yamamoto Shigemi, Japanese historian, interviews with elderly Japanese women who had worked in silk factories in eastern Japan in the early 1900s, published in 1968.

## SURVEY OF 580 FORMER JAPANESE SILKWORKERS

Aspect of Life in the Silk Factories	Worker's Impressions		
Food	Poor: 0%	Average: 10%	Good: 90%
Nature of work	Hard: 3%	Average: 75%	Easy: 22%
Pay compared to other work	Lower: 0%	Average: 30%	Good: 70%
Treatment of sick workers	Poor: 40%	Average: 50%	Good: 10%
Asked if they were glad they had gone to work in a silk factory	Not glad: 0%	Neutral: 10%	Glad: 90%

**Document 6**

**Source:** Pavel Buryshkin, Russian merchant, from his published memoirs, written between 1911 and 1914.

The final ten years of the last century and the first years of the present were characterized by the extraordinary growth of industry in Russia . . . Mining and metallurgical industries, ironworks, sugar production, and textiles especially cotton, prospered greatly . . . The growth of Russian industry was furthered by both Russia's immense natural resources and by a series of necessary government measures promulgated during Sergey Witte's administration of Russia's finances, for example, the monetary reform or the protective tariff policy, which had existed in Russia from the early 1800s. The general atmosphere that prevailed among Russian businesses and government circles, also stimulated this growth. The slogan of the day was the development of Russia's protective forces, the building of its own industry, the organization of Russia's own production to utilize the country's enormously rich productive capacities. Qualitative improvement of factory equipment went along with quantitative growth. Many of the textile mills in Russia, especially in the Moscow district, were among the best equipped in the world.

**Document 7**

**Source:** M. I. Pokzovskaya, Russian physician, excerpt from her article published in the magazine of an international woman suffrage organization, London, 1914.

In the majority of the factories where women are employed the working day is from 10 to 11½ hours . . . On Saturday, in many factories . . . the work sometimes lasts 16 and 18 hours per day. The workers are forced to work overtime on pain of instant dismissal or of transference to inferior employment, and in the case of children actual physical force is used to make them continue in their places.

It happens sometime, as on April 25th, 1913, at a cotton spinning factory in St. Petersburg, that the workers strike as a protest against the dismissal of old workers and their replacement by girls between 14 and 16 years of age. The result of the strike was a wholesale dismissal of all the women, whose places were filled by young girls.

In a large tobacco factory in St. Petersburg the women workers who were asking for raised pay were cynically informed that they could augment their income by prostitution.

**Document 8**

**Source:** Tsurumi Shunsuke, Japanese industrialist, circa 1900.

Where do the cheap workers come from? They all come from farming communities. People from families that are working their own land, or are engaged in tenant farming but have surplus workers, come to the cities and the industrial centers to become factory workers. Income from the farms provides for the family needs and subsistence of the parents and siblings. The person who takes employment in the factory is an unattached component of the family. All he or she has to do is earn enough to maintain his or her own living. That is why the workers' wages are low. This shows how important a force agriculture continues to be for the development of our nation's commerce and industry.