**The Chief Features of the Industrial Revolution**

Starting from the title, Revolution is a key word, together with Industrial and it means something that changes what came before. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution, as the historian Arnold Toynbee stated, changed England - an agrarian country - into an industrialized economic city, during the nineteenth century. The economy stopped to be autarchic in favour of the law of competition. England became industrialized, thanks both to the new machines and the scientific researches/improvements, capitalists realized that labourers were unnecessary; therefore they made their capital growth with the enclosures. Thus the labourers were forced to leave their - once - common fields in order to look for a vacancy in the city - urbanization -. The cities of the north were rich in factories, they were built up near coal’s mine and infrastructures and there the economy was based on a high production with the aim of beat the competition with the lowest prices.

The Victorian age symbolized the period of the best industrialization even though there were some contradictory elements, one of them was children and woman ‘ s work in the factories.

The Industrial Revolution led to the growth of two system of thought:

1. ECONOMIC SCIENCE which implies the supremacy of the market, without any interference of the State;
2. SOCIALISM which follows labourers’ class awareness.

The development of Economic Science in England had four chief landmarks, each connected with the name of one of the four great English economists:

* Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, 1776
* Malthus’ *Essay on Population*, 1798
* Ricardo’s *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, 1817
* John Stuart Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy*, 1848.

Facts of the Industrial Revolution:

* Growth of population;
* Decline in the agricultural population.

The period was one of a great agricultural advance as well: the breed of cattle was improved, rotation of crops was generally introduced, the steam-plough was invented, agricultural societies - such as cooperative – were instituted.

Besides, passing to manufactures, the growth of the industry led to mechanical discoveries: the spinning-jenny, Hargreaves – 1770, the water-frame, Arkwright – 1669, Crompton’s mule, 1779, the self-acting mule, Kelly – 1792. Nevertheless the two most relevant discoveries were the steam-engine and the power-loom.

Meanwhile, the iron industry had been equally revolutionised by the invention of smelting by pit-coal (1740-1750) and by the application, in 1788, of the steam-engine to blast furnaces.

A further growth of the factory system deals with the expansion of trade, an expansion which was itself due to the great advance made at this time in the means of communication (canal system, roads improved, railroad); these improves means of communication caused an extraordinary increase in commerce.

The conditions in the production of wealth necessarily involved an equal revolution in its distribution. In agriculture the prominent fact was an enormous rise in rents, due to money invested in improvements, but especially for the effect of the enclosure system, of the consolidation of farms and of the high price of corn. However, it represented a great social revolution, a change in the balance of political power and in the relative position of classes.

The farmers shared in the prosperity of the landlords; for many of them held their farms under beneficial leases, and made large profits by them. In consequence, their character completely changed; they ceased to work and live with their labourers, and became a distinct class.

Social changes in manufacturing world:

The new class of great capitalist employers made enormous fortunes, they took little or no part personally in the work of their factories, their hundreds of workmen were individually unknown to them.

Consequences:  
1) alienation  
2)old relations between masters and men disappeared  
3)class conflict  
Misery of working people often caused by:  
1) fall in wages  
2) conditions of labour  
3) rise of prices

Conclusion:  
The effects of the Industrial Revolution prove that free competition may produce wealth without producing well-being.