One Movement, Many Paths

How the Second International sought a common socialist program

TOT.C.2.2 "Describe the Second International and its efforts to impose Marxist theory on the socialist parties of Europe, the United States of America, and Japan."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a Marxist goal, circle two ways the Second International promoted its ideas, and number one barrier to a common strategy in each of these places: Europe, the United States, and Japan.

Could Socialists Follow One Plan?

1. In 1889, socialist delegates gathered in Paris to launch the Second International, a network linking parties and workers' organizations across national borders. Karl Marx had argued that workers formed a class with interests opposed to those of employers, and that capitalism should give way to shared ownership of production. The International tried to make these ideas a common guide for socialist parties, not merely a topic for speeches. Its congresses debated tactics and passed resolutions favoring workers' political action and international solidarity. Yet it had no power to order parties to obey, so agreement on paper did not always mean agreement in practice.

2. In Europe, delegates disagreed about how strictly to follow Marxist theory. Some wanted workers' parties to stay independent of parties representing business owners; others favored reforms won through elections and alliances. At the 1904 Amsterdam congress, delegates backed a resolution rejecting efforts to replace class struggle with cooperation across classes. This was an attempt to set a Marxist line for socialist parties, especially those debating whether to work with non-socialist governments. But a congress vote could not erase local pressures. European parties continued to argue over whether immediate reforms helped workers or weakened the movement's larger aim of transforming capitalism.

3. The debate reached beyond Europe. The Socialist Party of America took part in the International, but American socialists faced a political system dominated by two major parties and disagreed about how closely to work with labor unions. Japan's socialists faced even harsher limits: the government banned the Japanese Socialist Party in 1907. At a 1904 congress, Japanese socialist Sen Katayama publicly greeted a Russian socialist while their countries were at war, making international solidarity visible. Across these settings, the International promoted common Marxist principles, but it could not force parties to use one strategy or overcome repression.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What Marxist goal did the Second International try to make a common guide for socialist parties, and how did its congresses promote that goal?

2. How did the 1904 Amsterdam resolution try to shape European socialist parties, and why did disagreement continue?

3. What conditions in the United States made a common socialist strategy difficult for the Socialist Party of America?

4. How did Sen Katayama show the International's goal in action, and what limited socialist organizing in Japan?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are proposing a resolution at a Second International congress. In four sentences, state a shared Marxist goal, propose one action that parties could take toward it, explain how parties in the United States and Japan might need different approaches, and acknowledge one limit on what the International could require.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.2.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a Marxist goal, circle two ways the Second International promoted its ideas, and number one barrier to a common strategy in each of these places: Europe, the United States, and Japan. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What Marxist goal did the Second International try to make a common guide for socialist parties, and how did its congresses promote that goal?	**It promoted replacing capitalism with shared ownership of production. Congresses debated tactics and passed resolutions supporting workers' political action and international solidarity.**
2	How did the 1904 Amsterdam resolution try to shape European socialist parties, and why did disagreement continue?	**It rejected replacing class struggle with cooperation across classes. Disagreement continued because some parties favored electoral reforms and alliances, and congress votes could not remove local pressures.**
3	What conditions in the United States made a common socialist strategy difficult for the Socialist Party of America?	**Two major parties dominated politics, and American socialists disagreed about how closely to work with labor unions.**
4	How did Sen Katayama show the International's goal in action, and what limited socialist organizing in Japan?	**Greeting a Russian socialist during a war between their countries demonstrated international solidarity. Japan's government limited organizing by banning the Japanese Socialist Party in 1907.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our parties should work toward shared ownership of production so workers have greater control over their work. Each party could organize workers and choose candidates who support that goal. In the United States, socialists might focus on building support outside the two major parties, while in Japan, where the government has banned a socialist party, organizers would need to account for the danger of repression. This congress can recommend a common goal, but it cannot force every party to follow the same plan.

Accept other historically plausible actions and regional approaches that distinguish the shared Marxist goal from local tactics. Responses should recognize that the International could pass resolutions but could not compel parties to obey.