Reform Under Pressure

How governments responded to demands for change

TOT.C.2.5 "Describe the social reforms that responded to the intellectual and political challenge of communist and socialist parties (e.g., child labor laws, retirement pensions, accident and health insurance, expanded voting rights…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each reform in the passage and circle the problem or political concern it addressed.

Change Without Revolution?

(1) In nineteenth-century Britain, industrial cities filled with factory workers who had little political power. Socialists argued that private owners benefited while workers faced dangerous jobs and low wages. Some reformers and officials feared that ignoring these complaints would drive more people toward radical movements. Parliament's 1833 Factory Act restricted the hours children could work in textile factories and created inspectors, although it did not end child labor. The Trade Union Act of 1871 gave unions legal recognition, helping workers organize to bargain. Voting reforms in 1867 and 1884 expanded the male electorate, giving many more working men a voice in Parliament.

(2) In the German Empire, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck viewed the growing socialist movement as a threat to the state. His government tried to weaken its appeal by offering workers protection while also restricting socialist organizing. Laws created health insurance in 1883, accident insurance in 1884, and old-age pensions in 1889. Health insurance drew contributions from workers and employers. Employers paid for accident insurance. Workers, employers, and the government helped fund old-age pensions. These programs did not erase inequality, but they offered support when illness, injury, or age interrupted wages. Bismarck hoped workers would look to the state rather than socialist parties for help.

(3) Russia followed a different path. In 1861, Tsar Alexander II freed millions of serfs, people legally bound to estates. The change came before communist and socialist parties became major forces in Russia. Russia's rulers feared unrest and knew that serfdom weakened the country, especially after defeat in the Crimean War. Freedom, however, did not give former serfs land for free: many owed redemption payments for the land they received. This earlier reform shows that governments responded to pressures for change in different ways. Later, socialists criticized reforms that left poverty and unequal power in place, arguing that deeper change was needed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Britain's 1833 Factory Act address a problem that socialists and other critics raised?

2. How did legal recognition of unions and expanded voting rights give British workers two different ways to seek change?

3. How did Germany's insurance laws aim to weaken the appeal of socialism? Include one detail about how a program was funded.

4. Why is the emancipation of Russian serfs different from a reform passed in response to an established socialist party, and what problem did it leave?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise an industrial country where many factory workers cannot vote and injured workers lose their wages. Write a four-sentence memo proposing one reform for each problem, explaining how the reforms might affect support for socialist parties, and naming one problem they might not solve.

ANSWER KEY

Reform Under Pressure

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.2.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each reform in the passage and circle the problem or political concern it addressed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Britain's 1833 Factory Act address a problem that socialists and other critics raised?	**It restricted children's hours in textile factories and created inspectors, addressing concerns about harsh factory work, though it did not end child labor.**
2	How did legal recognition of unions and expanded voting rights give British workers two different ways to seek change?	**Legal recognition helped workers organize to bargain, while expanded voting rights let many more working men influence Parliament.**
3	How did Germany's insurance laws aim to weaken the appeal of socialism? Include one detail about how a program was funded.	**The laws offered support during illness, injury, or old age so workers might turn to the state rather than socialist parties. For example, employers paid for accident insurance.**
4	Why is the emancipation of Russian serfs different from a reform passed in response to an established socialist party, and what problem did it leave?	**Emancipation came before socialist parties became major forces in Russia and responded partly to fears of unrest. Many former serfs still owed payments for land.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend expanding voting rights so factory workers can help choose lawmakers. Having a voice in government might weaken the appeal of socialist parties that say workers are ignored. I also recommend employer-funded accident insurance to support workers whose injuries interrupt their wages. These reforms might ease two grievances, but workers could still demand safer factories.

Accept other accurate links between a reform and the concern it addressed. For Russia, students should recognize that emancipation preceded the rise of major socialist parties there.