Loyalties Under Pressure

How war reshaped socialist and communist politics

TOT.C.3.1 "Examine the response of communist and socialist leaders and parties in Europe and the United States of America to changing conditions created by the First World War (e.g., repudiation of nationalism, pacifist movements…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three pressures created by the war or its aftermath. Circle a leader's or party's response to each pressure, then give each matched pair the same number.

A War That Divided Movements

1. When war began in 1914, European socialists faced a choice: support their countries' armies or oppose a war they saw as serving powerful states. Germany's Social Democratic Party voted for war loans, arguing that the nation needed defense. Other socialists rejected this wartime patriotism. Karl Liebknecht voted against later war loans, and he and Rosa Luxemburg helped organize the antiwar Spartacus League. They urged workers to resist the war across national borders. In 1918, as Germany's defeat shook its government, members of the Spartacus League helped found Germany's Communist Party. Wartime unity had split the socialist movement into rival camps.

2. In Russia, war brought food shortages, heavy losses, and anger at the government. Vladimir Lenin's Bolsheviks promised "peace, land, and bread" and took power in November 1917. They pulled Russia from the war by signing a harsh peace treaty with Germany in 1918. Their call for international workers' revolution challenged the idea that workers owed first loyalty to their nations. Yet not every postwar party using the word socialist shared this goal. In Germany, the National Socialist party took that name in 1920. It promoted extreme German nationalism and antisemitism and opposed communism, despite the word socialist in its name.

3. In the United States, Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs criticized the war and the draft. In a 1918 speech in Ohio, he defended people jailed for resisting the war. The government convicted him under the Espionage Act of 1917, which was used to prosecute some antiwar speech; the Sedition Act of 1918 further restricted criticism of the government and war effort. Debs ran for president from prison in 1920. After the war, some American socialists formed communist parties, inspired by Russia's revolution. The war had sharpened disputes over national loyalty, dissent, and the path to change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Germany's Social Democratic Party and the Spartacus League respond differently to wartime pressure to support the nation?

2. How did Russia's wartime conditions help the Bolsheviks gain support, and what did they do about the war after taking power?

3. How did wartime laws affect Debs's antiwar position, and how did he continue in politics afterward?

4. Why would it be misleading to assume the postwar National Socialist party shared the Bolsheviks' goals?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a fictional socialist party in the United States in 1918. In 80 to 100 words, propose how it should respond to wartime nationalism and limits on antiwar speech, compare your advice with two leaders or parties in the passage, and explain one risk.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.3.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three pressures created by the war or its aftermath. Circle a leader's or party's response to each pressure, then give each matched pair the same number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Germany's Social Democratic Party and the Spartacus League respond differently to wartime pressure to support the nation?	**The Social Democratic Party voted for war loans in the name of national defense. The Spartacus League opposed the war and urged workers to resist it across national borders.**
2	How did Russia's wartime conditions help the Bolsheviks gain support, and what did they do about the war after taking power?	**Food shortages, heavy losses, and anger at the government made the Bolsheviks' promise of peace appealing. After taking power, they signed a peace treaty with Germany.**
3	How did wartime laws affect Debs's antiwar position, and how did he continue in politics afterward?	**Debs was convicted under the Espionage Act for his antiwar speech. He ran for president from prison in 1920.**
4	Why would it be misleading to assume the postwar National Socialist party shared the Bolsheviks' goals?	**The Bolsheviks called for international workers' revolution, while the National Socialist party promoted extreme German nationalism and antisemitism and opposed communism.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would advise our party to oppose the war without treating Americans who support it as enemies. Like Debs, we should defend the right to criticize the draft, even though wartime laws make public protest risky. Unlike Germany's Social Democratic Party, we should not support war funding simply to appear loyal. We should hold meetings about workers' needs across national borders and ask lawmakers to protect peaceful dissent. One serious risk is prosecution or imprisonment, as Debs's conviction shows. Our speakers should understand that risk before taking a public stand.

Accept responses that accurately connect a wartime or postwar condition to a leader's or party's choice. For the open task, accept different proposed positions if the comparisons are accurate and the risk follows from the passage.