Fear and Power

How opposition to reform socialists helped Italian fascists rise

TOT.C.8.3.B "opposition to reform socialists that catalyzed the rise of fascist governments"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the reform socialists' methods, circle actions taken against them, and number three steps that helped Mussolini reach office.

Opposing Reform in Italy

1. In Italy after World War I, prices rose, and many veterans struggled to find work. The Socialist Party won seats in parliament and local councils. Some socialists sought change through elections, unions, and labor laws rather than a sudden revolution. Yet strikes and factory occupations led many landowners and business leaders to fear that all socialists threatened their property. That fear made promises to stop socialism attractive, even when the targets were socialists working within the political system.

2. Benito Mussolini's fascists presented themselves as defenders of order. Their armed squads attacked socialist newspapers, union offices, and town councils, especially in northern and central Italy. The violence did not merely answer strikes: it also broke up meetings and intimidated elected socialist officials. Police and local authorities often failed to stop the squads. Some landowners and industrialists gave fascists money or other help because the attacks weakened organized labor and socialist electoral power.

3. As socialist organizations lost offices and supporters faced threats, fascists gained room to organize and claim they could restore stability. In October 1922, fascists mobilized for the March on Rome; King Victor Emmanuel III then appointed Mussolini prime minister. He did not win power simply by defeating socialists in a free election. Violence against political opponents, support from fearful elites, and the king's decision all helped bring a fascist leader into government. Mussolini later built a dictatorship.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did some landowners and business leaders support opposition to socialists who sought change through elections?

2. How could attacks on socialist offices and meetings weaken reform socialists without defeating them in an election?

3. How did help from landowners and industrialists make fascist opposition to socialists more powerful?

4. Why is it inaccurate to say Mussolini reached office simply by winning an election against socialists?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine an Italian town in 1921 where elected reform socialists propose a tax-funded clinic. In three sentences, explain how a business owner and a fascist squad might respond and how their actions could help fascists gain power.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the reform socialists' methods, circle actions taken against them, and number three steps that helped Mussolini reach office. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did some landowners and business leaders support opposition to socialists who sought change through elections?	**They feared that socialist activity threatened their property, even when some socialists pursued change through elections and laws.**
2	How could attacks on socialist offices and meetings weaken reform socialists without defeating them in an election?	**The attacks disrupted their organizing and intimidated elected officials and supporters.**
3	How did help from landowners and industrialists make fascist opposition to socialists more powerful?	**Their money and other help supported squads whose attacks weakened unions and socialist electoral power.**
4	Why is it inaccurate to say Mussolini reached office simply by winning an election against socialists?	**Fascist violence weakened opponents, and the king appointed Mussolini prime minister after the March on Rome.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A business owner might oppose the clinic because its taxes would raise costs and might give money to fascists who promise to stop the plan. A fascist squad might threaten council members and disrupt their meetings. If the threats weaken the elected socialists, fascists could gain support by claiming they can restore order.

Accept other plausible predictions that connect opposition to a legal socialist reform with intimidation or elite support and increased fascist power. Students should present the town as hypothetical, not as a documented event.