

# Reactions to the Industrial Economy

*For a second's sunlight, men must fight like tigers. For the privilege of seeing the color of their children's eyes by the light of the sun, fathers must fight like beasts in the jungle.*

—Mary Harris “Mother” Jones, (1837-1930)

**Essential Question:** What conditions led to calls for change in industrial societies, and what were the effects of those efforts?

The harsh conditions of industrial life provoked resistance and calls for reform. “Mother” Jones, a labor organizer, described the severe deprivations of the coal miners working underground all day, and other activists told of the horrors of factory work. Philosophers such as John Stuart Mill sought to address this growing inhumanity of the industrial era through social reforms. Others, such as the utopian socialists, argued for completely changing a system they considered to be basically flawed. Workers formed trade unions to advocate for higher pay and safer working conditions. Various ideologies and political movements emerged, some promoting alternative visions of society.

The Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean Basin, China, and Japan also instituted reforms to promote industrialization. In response, in each, faced reactions against the results of economic change.

## Labor Unions

Dangerous and unsanitary working conditions, low wages, and long hours were common in factory work in the 19th century. A committee of Britain's Parliament released a study called the Sadler Report in 1833. The report described these conditions. It made many people in Britain, particularly in Parliament, aware of the need for reforms.

Workers also responded to low pay and harsh conditions. They began to form **labor unions**—organizations of workers that advocated for the right to bargain with employers and put the resulting agreements in a contract. For most of the 19th century, unions in Great Britain had to organize in secret because the government treated them as enemies of trade. However, by the 20th century, unions became more acceptable and membership increased.

Unions improved workers' lives by winning minimum wage laws, limits on the number of hours worked, overtime pay, and the establishment of a five-day work week.

**Voting Rights** Unions sparked a larger movement for empowerment among the working class. In 1832, 1867, and 1884, the British parliament passed reform bills to expand the pool of men who could vote, thereby giving more representation to British cities. The acts reduced property ownership qualifications as a requirement for voting. These reforms laid the foundation for expansion of the franchise (right to vote) to all men in 1918. British women would not gain equal suffrage (voting rights) until 1928.

**Child Labor** Along with unions, social activists and reformers hoped to improve the living conditions of the least powerful in society. Reformers' achievements especially benefited children. A law in 1843 declared that children under the age of 10 were banned from working in the coal mines. In 1881, education became mandatory for British children between the ages of 5 and 10. This focus on education, as opposed to work for monetary gain, permanently redefined the role of children in urban society.

## The Intellectual Reaction

As trade and production became increasingly global, the ideas of early economists such as Adam Smith (see Topic 5.1) were taken in new directions. While Smith wrote in an age of individual entrepreneurs and small businesses, people of the 19th century witnessed the rise of large-scale transnational businesses. This shift caused people to think about society in new ways. For example, utopian socialists tried to create new communities to demonstrate alternatives to capitalism.

**John Stuart Mill** Some economists, clergy, and intellectuals criticized laissez-faire capitalism as inhumane to workers. One of these was a British philosopher, **John Stuart Mill** (1806–1873). He championed legal reforms to allow labor unions, limit child labor, and ensure safe working conditions in factories. While his ideas were controversial in his time, many of them eventually become widely adopted in industrial societies.

Mill's philosophy was called **utilitarianism**. Rather than state a set of timeless moral rules, as many religions or ethicists did, utilitarianism sought "the greatest good for the greatest number of people." Unlike utopian socialists, who wanted to replace capitalism, utilitarians wanted to address the growing problems they saw with it. They viewed themselves as moderate, rational advocates of gradual reform.

## Karl Marx

While most reformers wanted to fix what they considered problems with capitalism, some people wanted more extensive changes. **Karl Marx** (1818–1883) was a German scholar and writer who argued for socialism. Unlike utopian socialists, whom he scorned because he thought they wanted to escape problems rather than confront them, he wanted to look at how the world actually operated. He called his approach to economics “scientific socialism.”

In 1848, Karl Marx and his wealthy supporter **Friedrich Engels** published a pamphlet (now called the **Communist Manifesto**) that summarized their critique of capitalism. According to Marx, capitalism was an advance on feudalism because it produced tremendous wealth, but that it also produced needless poverty and misery. This contradiction between wealth and poverty occurred because capitalism divided society into two basic classes.

- The **proletariat** was essentially the working class, working in factories and mines, often for little compensation.
- The **bourgeoisie** included the middle class and investors who owned machinery and factories where workers produced goods.

Marx said that market competition drove the bourgeoisie to exploit the proletariat for the sake of higher profits. Because the bourgeoisie owned the **means of production**, such as machines, factories, mines, and land, they received most of the wealth produced. The proletariat, who did the physical and dangerous work, received very little, just enough to survive. Marx exhorted the proletariat to recognize their shared interest as a class and take control of the means of production and share the wealth they created fairly.

For Marx, socialism would replace capitalism. It, then, would later be replaced by a final stage of economic development, **communism**, in which all class distinctions would end. (Connect: Create a chart comparing utopian and Marxist thought. See Topic 5.1.)

## Ottoman Response to Industrialization

In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was no longer at the peak of its political power. However, it maintained some economic power. Sultan **Mahmud II** (ruled 1808–1839) reformed the Ottoman system. In 1826, he abolished the corps of Janissaries, which had opposed him, and developed a new artillery unit trained by Europeans. When the Istanbul Janissaries revolted, he had them massacred. The abolition of the feudal system in 1831 marked the final defeat of the Janissaries’ power. Military officers were no longer able to collect taxes directly from the populace for their salaries. Instead, tax collections went directly to the central government, which paid military personnel, thus ensuring their loyalty.

Mahmud's reforms also included building roads and setting up a postal service. To fight the power of popular religious charities, he set up a government directory of charities. To operate the central administration of government, Mahmud II created European-style ministries.

**Reorganization** Reforms after Mahmud (during the years 1839–1876) are called **Tanzimat** (reorganization) and include the following changes:

- The sultans in this period worked to root out long-standing and widespread corruption in the central government.
- Education had long been under the control of the ulama, the educated class of Muslim scholars. Now the sultans created a secular system of primary and secondary schools. Secular colleges were also gradually set up, one for each special purpose: military, engineering, translation, civil service, and so on.
- The sultans codified Ottoman laws and created new ones, including a commercial code (1850) and a penal code (1858). These codes made it easier for foreigners to do business in the empire.
- In 1856, the sultan issued an edict known as the **Hatt-i Humayun** (Ottoman Reform Edict) that updated the legal system, declaring equality for all men in education, government appointments, and justice regardless of religion or ethnicity. The new legal system also regulated the **millet**s, which were separate legal courts established by different religious communities, each using its own set of religious laws. Christians in the Balkans protested the new regulations because they felt that their autonomy was being threatened. Muslims, on the other hand, protested the reforms because they conflicted with traditional values and practice.

Although not achieving religious equality, the Tanzimat reforms continued to have wide effects in areas such as the military and education. These effects continued even when succeeding sultans blocked other reforms.

**Ottoman Economy and Society** The reforms under Mahmud II and the Tanzimat occurred during a period of economic change in Turkey. After the Napoleonic wars ended in 1815, prices for food and other crops declined in the Ottoman Empire. However, a global economy was in place, built partially on the flow of wealth into the Mediterranean from European colonial expansion in the Americas. Ottoman workers were increasingly paid in cash rather than in goods. Financial enterprises such as banking increased. These economic changes occurred along with the slow spread of industrialization. The growth of industry affected men and women differently. For example, most new industrial jobs went to men.

Legal reforms also benefited men more than women. Traditionally, under shariah, women had been allowed to hold money, to gain from inheritance, and to receive some education. The reforms of Mahmud II made the law more secular, and ended the right of women to distribute their property or cash through trusts to family members.

Although women had indirect control of their property, the new nonreligious courts ended even these limited rights. Many reforms had no effect on women. Since women were excluded from the army, the professions, higher education, and commerce, reforms in these areas did not affect them directly. The Tanzimat reforms of 1839 did not even mention women.

**Opposition to Reform** When Sultan Abdulhamid took power in 1876, he supported the efforts at internal reforms. He accepted a new constitution for the Ottoman Empire and he continued to emphasize primary education and secularization of the law. A few girls were allowed to attend girls' secondary schools by the beginning of the 20th century.

However, fearful of any "seditious" reform, the sultan and the central government maintained tight control over the empire. Abdulhamid eventually drove the advocates for reform, known as "Young Turks" into exile. Further, his government whipped up anger against minority groups, particularly Armenians and Assyrian Christians. Between 1894 and 1896, between 100,000 and 250,000 Armenians were killed throughout several provinces in what has become known as the Hamidian massacres. For this bloodshed, he received the nickname the Red Sultan.

## Reform Efforts in China

Like other powers, China under the Qing Dynasty felt pressure to modernize. Its major reform effort of the late 19th century was known as the **Self-Strengthening Movement**. It developed as a way for the government to face the internal and external problems confronting China. Government officials hoped to strengthen China in its competition with foreign powers by advancing its military technology and readiness and by training Chinese artisans in the manufacture of items for shipyards and arsenals. French and British advisors helped Chinese reform efforts. A stable government capable of collecting revenue allowed China to repay debts and participate in trade. For the Chinese, their existence as an independent state depended upon economic solvency. Reform in the name of modernization seemed inevitable.

As another step toward reform, the Chinese government set up its own diplomatic corps and a customs service to help collect taxes on imports and exports. The government's strategy was to graft some modern ideas and technology onto Chinese tradition rather than to create major change.

Demand for reform increased after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). People formed clubs to call for change. One club, led by a civil servant named Kang Youwei, was able to meet with **Emperor Guangxu**. Kang convinced the ruler to support a set of sweeping reforms known as the **Hundred Days of Reform**. The reforms included the abolition of the outdated civil service exam, the elimination of corruption, and the establishment of Western-style industrial, commercial, and medical systems.

**Cixi's Initial Conservatism** However, the emperor's aunt and adopted mother and the most powerful political figure in the country, **Empress**

**Dowager Cixi**, was a conservative. At first, she opposed the reforms and wanted to protect traditional social and governmental systems. In a coup d'état, Cixi imprisoned the emperor and immediately repealed his reform edicts. She feared the influence of foreigners, so she resisted any new technology that would extend their reach into her country. For example, she stopped the extension of railroad lines and telegraph networks into the Chinese interior.

**Reform of the Civil Service** However, toward the end of Cixi's rule, she came to recognize the problems with the civil service system. It was designed according to Confucian ideals of respect for rank and hierarchy as well as values of civic participation and action. By the 19th century, though, the wealthy were using the civil servants to get favors. Revenue dropped off for the government as a result of bribes going into the pockets of corrupt civil servants. Moreover, non-qualified persons were purchasing civil service posts. China abandoned nearly 2,500 years of tradition, one that had yielded an educated bureaucracy of scholar-gentry. In spite of this concession, the empress's overall conservatism caused her to fail to cope with demands of modernity in China.

**China and Foreign Powers** Unlike Turkey, where Europeans had little to gain from either passage or opposition to progressive reforms, in China, Europeans encouraged change. When reforms were met with the conservatism of Empress Cixi and the 1900 Boxer Rebellion against foreign influence (see Topic 6.2), the Chinese government, including its provincial governors, continued to modernize, with some help from American and European advisors. Weakened by internal rebellion and fearing encroachment from Japan, China had to accept territorial "protection" from Western powers, who in return demanded trade concessions.

In 1911, the Chinese chose to become a republic. (See Topic 7.1.) In addition, they resisted being swallowed up by their external enemies. China's attempts to preserve its territorial integrity benefited from the efforts of the United States to maintain stability in Asia by preventing Japan from encroaching farther on its territory after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. U.S. efforts were exemplified by the Treaty of Portsmouth, which settled the war and was negotiated with the help of President Theodore Roosevelt.

## Resistance to Reform in Japan

Just as China ended its long-standing civil service system, the Japanese also ended a traditional system of exercising authority. In 1871, Japan gave samurai a final lump-sum payment and legally dissolved their position. They were no longer fighting men and were not allowed to carry their swords. The **bushido**, their code of conduct, was now a personal matter, no longer officially condoned by the government.

Some samurai adjusted to the change by serving the government as **genros**, or elder statesmen. Others, particularly those from the provinces of Satsuma and Choshu, resisted the change. They defended their right to dress and wear their hair in traditional ways and to enjoy relative autonomy from



the centralized government. The last battle between the samurai shogunate forces and those loyal to the emperor occurred in the 1870s. Dismayed by defeat, the samurai became the main victims of Japan's rapid modernization. Ironically, some of their leaders were the same people who had supported the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s.

**Rise and Decline of Liberalization** Some reforms in Japan worked better than others. The new schools quickly improved literacy rates, the economy rapidly industrialized, and the country began to develop traits of democracy such as a free press, strong labor unions, and respect for individual liberties. However, by the 1920s, army officers again began to dominate the government.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Samurai from southern Japan led the reaction against the rapid changes in Japanese society in the 1860s and 1870s.

## Limits to Reform

Turkey, China, and Japan each followed its own path in responding to industrialization in the 19th century. Of the three, Turkey began to make changes earliest. However, Sultan Abdulhamid, though he supported reforms at first, became more conservative during his time as ruler. China began to make changes only later in the century. In contrast to Abdulhamid, China's Cixi started as skeptical of reform but became more liberal during her reign. Japan responded to industrialization with dramatic, rapid changes beginning with the Meiji Restoration in 1868. However, the speed and depth of its reforms prompted a backlash from conservative members of society.

**KEY TERMS BY THEME****ECONOMICS: Communists**

socialism

Karl Marx

Friedrich Engels

*Communist Manifesto*

means of production

communism

**ECONOMICS: Theory**

John Stuart Mill

utilitarianism

**SOCIETY: Workers**

labor unions

proletariat

bourgeoisie

**CULTURE: Japan**

bushido

genros

**GOVERNMENT: Ottomans**

Mahmud II

Tanzimat

Hatt-i Humayan

millets

**GOVERNMENT: China**

Self-Strengthening

Movement

Emperor Guanxu

Hundred Days of Reform

Empress Cixi