Power by Purge

Trace the causes, actions, and consequences of a Nazi power struggle.

TOT.C.4.4.F "Night of the Long Knives (Rohm Purge)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons Hitler targeted rivals, circle two actions taken during the purge, and write 1 and 2 beside two consequences that strengthened his power.

The Night of the Long Knives

1 By June 1934, Adolf Hitler was Germany's chancellor, but his control was not secure. The Storm Troopers, or SA, had helped the Nazis intimidate political opponents. Their leader, Ernst Röhm, wanted the SA to take a larger role in a new military order. Germany's professional army saw this ambition as a threat. Conservative officials also feared the SA's street violence and calls for further revolution. Hitler needed the army's support, especially as the aging president, Paul von Hindenburg, neared death. Rather than settle the conflict through debate, Hitler chose to eliminate rivals within his own movement.

2 On June 30, 1934, Hitler traveled to Bad Wiessee, where Röhm and other SA leaders were staying. Röhm was arrested, and Nazi police and SS units carried out arrests and killings across Germany over the next several days. The victims included SA leaders, but the violence reached beyond the SA. Former chancellor Kurt von Schleicher and conservative critic Edgar Jung were also killed. The Nazis claimed they had stopped an imminent SA uprising, yet historians have found no convincing evidence of a coordinated revolt about to begin. Röhm was shot on July 1. No public trial tested the charges against those killed.

3 After the killings, Hitler told Germany's parliament that he had acted to protect the nation. On July 3, his government passed a law declaring the killings legal as acts of state self-defense. This law came after the murders, not before them. The army's leaders welcomed the removal of the SA leadership, and their support strengthened Hitler's position. When Hindenburg died in August, army members swore a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler. The purge, later called the Night of the Long Knives, showed that Nazi leaders could use state violence against perceived enemies and then claim it was lawful.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Röhm's plans for the SA make Hitler's relationship with the professional army more difficult?

2. How do the deaths of Schleicher and Jung show that the purge went beyond a conflict with the SA?

3. How does the passage challenge the Nazis' claim that they had stopped an uprising?

4. How did the July 3 law and the army leaders' response each strengthen Hitler's position?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label explaining how the purge helped Hitler gain power. Include one cause, one action, one consequence, and a distinction between the Nazis' claim and what the passage says about evidence.

ANSWER KEY

Power by Purge

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.4.4.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons Hitler targeted rivals, circle two actions taken during the purge, and write 1 and 2 beside two consequences that strengthened his power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Röhm's plans for the SA make Hitler's relationship with the professional army more difficult?	**Röhm wanted a larger military role for the SA, which the professional army saw as a threat. Hitler needed the army's support.**
2	How do the deaths of Schleicher and Jung show that the purge went beyond a conflict with the SA?	**Schleicher and Jung were not identified as SA leaders. Their deaths show that Nazi forces also killed other perceived opponents.**
3	How does the passage challenge the Nazis' claim that they had stopped an uprising?	**The Nazis claimed an SA uprising was imminent, but historians have found no convincing evidence of a coordinated revolt about to begin.**
4	How did the July 3 law and the army leaders' response each strengthen Hitler's position?	**The law declared the killings legal after they occurred. Army leaders welcomed the removal of the SA leadership and supported Hitler.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hitler wanted the professional army's support while its leaders feared Röhm's plans for the SA. During the purge, Nazi forces arrested and killed SA leaders and other perceived opponents without public trials. Nazi leaders claimed an uprising was imminent, but the passage reports no convincing evidence of a coordinated revolt about to begin. A later law declared the killings legal, and the army's support helped Hitler strengthen his hold on power.

Accept other passage-supported causes, actions, and consequences. Responses should distinguish the Nazis' stated justification from the lack of convincing evidence for an imminent coordinated revolt.