Allies Under Suspicion

Foreign Communists and the Great Terror

TOT.C.8.1.D "Great Terror, including murder of foreign Communists living in the USSR"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline why foreign Communists came to the USSR, circle evidence of how Soviet authorities targeted them, and number two consequences of that targeting.

A Refuge That Became Dangerous

1 In the 1930s, Moscow could look like a refuge for revolutionaries. Communists from other countries came to the Soviet Union to escape persecution, work with the Communist International, or study socialism. After Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, some German Communists fled there to avoid Nazi arrests. Yet living in the USSR did not guarantee safety. During the Great Terror, especially in 1937 and 1938, Joseph Stalin's government treated imagined disloyalty as a deadly threat. The secret police, known as the NKVD, arrested Soviet citizens and foreign residents alike.

2 Officials accused many foreign Communists of spying for their home countries, even when they had spent years supporting the Soviet cause. Under pressure, prisoners could be forced to confess to crimes they had not committed. The NKVD also carried out operations aimed at people with particular foreign ties, including Poles and Germans. These sweeps did not spare Communists. Béla Kun, a Hungarian Communist who had lived in the USSR after his government fell in 1919, was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938. His political commitment did not protect him from the state he supported.

3 The murder of foreign Communists reveals a sharp contradiction. Soviet leaders claimed to lead an international movement of workers, but their police treated ties across borders as signs of danger. Some victims had sought protection from fascism, only to face arrest or death in the country they had trusted. The terror also damaged Communist networks outside the USSR: exile communities lost members, and surviving activists saw that loyalty might not keep them safe. Not every foreign Communist in the USSR was arrested, but the killings show that the purge reached beyond Soviet citizens and beyond people who openly opposed Stalin.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did some German Communists come to the USSR, and how did the Great Terror reverse what they hoped to find there?

2. How could accusations and forced confessions make foreign Communists appear to be enemies of the Soviet state?

3. How does Béla Kun's experience show that supporting the Soviet cause did not guarantee safety?

4. Why did the murder of foreign Communists contradict Soviet leaders' claims, and what effect did it have beyond the victims?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word museum label explaining why the murder of foreign Communists challenges the idea that the Great Terror targeted only Stalin's open opponents. Include two distinct details from the passage and one effect beyond the people killed.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.8.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline why foreign Communists came to the USSR, circle evidence of how Soviet authorities targeted them, and number two consequences of that targeting. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did some German Communists come to the USSR, and how did the Great Terror reverse what they hoped to find there?	**Some fled Nazi arrests and sought safety, but in the USSR foreign Communists could be arrested or killed.**
2	How could accusations and forced confessions make foreign Communists appear to be enemies of the Soviet state?	**Officials accused them of spying for their home countries, and prisoners could be forced to confess to crimes they had not committed.**
3	How does Béla Kun's experience show that supporting the Soviet cause did not guarantee safety?	**Kun was a Hungarian Communist living in the USSR, yet he was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938.**
4	Why did the murder of foreign Communists contradict Soviet leaders' claims, and what effect did it have beyond the victims?	**Leaders claimed to lead an international workers' movement but treated foreign ties as dangerous. The killings damaged Communist networks and made survivors doubt that loyalty would protect them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Foreign Communists were among the people Stalin's government killed during the Great Terror, even though many supported the Soviet cause. German Communists had fled Nazi arrests and sought safety in the USSR. Béla Kun, a Hungarian Communist living there, was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938. Accusations of spying turned international ties into supposed evidence of danger. Beyond the deaths themselves, the killings weakened Communist networks outside the USSR and warned survivors that loyalty offered no certain protection.

Accept other passage-based details, such as forced confessions or NKVD operations aimed at people with foreign ties. Students should distinguish accusations of spying from proven wrongdoing.