

SOURCE 10.12 Law passed by the Reichstag, 3 July 1934, legalising the action

The measures taken on 30th June, and 1st, 2nd July to strike down the treasonous attacks are justifiable acts of self-defence by the state.

SOURCE 10.13 Extracts from Hitler's address (lasting several hours) to the Reichstag, 13 July 1934, broadcast on the radio

Everyone will know in future that if he lifts his hand against the state certain death is his fate, and every National Socialist will know that no rank and no position allows him to escape punishment ...

If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice for conviction of the offenders, then all I can say to him is this: in this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby became the Supreme Judge of the German people ...

SOURCE 10.16 Defence Minister Werner von Blomberg, 5 July 1934

The Führer with soldierly decision and exemplary courage has himself attacked and crushed the traitors and murderers. The Army, as the bearers of arms of the entire people, far removed from the conflicts of domestic politics, will show its gratitude through devotion and loyalty.

SOURCE 10.18 President Hindenburg on the Night of the Long Knives

Through your decisive intervention and your courageous personal commitment you have nipped all the treasonable intrigues in the bud. You have saved the German nation from serious danger and for this I express to you my deeply felt gratitude and my sincere appreciation.

SOURCE 10.20 A Saxon small businessman

The main thing is that he has freed us from the Marxists [and has] got rid of the harmful influence [of the] dreadful SA ... even if he is a mass murderer.

Why was Hitler able to get away with murder in the Night of the Long Knives?

It is not easy for us to understand how Hitler managed to get away with state-organised murder. Some of the reasons can be deduced from Sources 10.12–20.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What reasons can you infer from each source as to why Hitler got away with the Night of the Long Knives?
- 2 What other reasons can you think of? (In particular, consider whether the Nazis had got away with violence during the Weimar Republic. Who were the main victims then? Who were they now? What did they have in common?)
- 3 How reliable do you think each of Sources 10.15 and 10.17 is as evidence of public opinion?
- 4 Construct a spider diagram to record your conclusions about why Hitler was not opposed over the Night of the Long Knives.

SOURCE 10.14 Intelligence reports from socialist party agents within Germany to SOPADE (Social Democratic Party in exile) on public reactions

Wide sections of the population have gained the impression from Hitler's [13 July] speech that through his brutal energy Hitler has prevented a much greater bloodbath.

[He has] paved the way for a moral renewal [and] elevated [his] standing as the cleanser of the Movement all the more as the muck was raked out into full view.

SOURCE 10.15 Gestapo and other government reports on public reactions

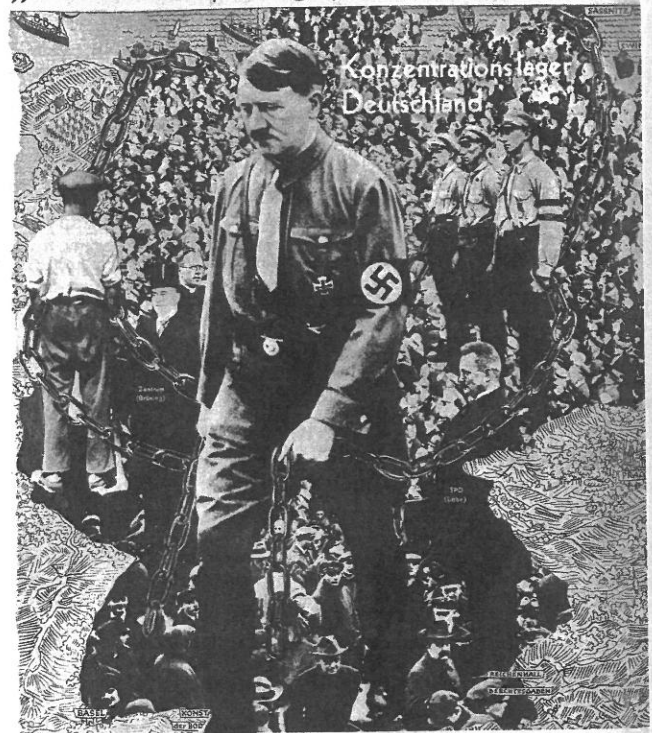
The suppression of the Röhm revolt has been like a purifying thunderstorm. The nightmare which has burdened the people has been followed by a liberating sigh of relief ... Wide sections of the population, however, have been deeply shocked by the shooting of persons unconnected with the Röhm revolt. It is realised these were excesses, which took place without the knowledge and against the will of the Führer.

SOURCE 10.17
A German citizen interviewed in a 1980s TV programme

After June 30th everyone was frightened. Everyone felt that he in turn might share the fate of the SA men. The name of Himmler sent shivers down the spine ... The ordinary German no longer felt free.

SOURCE 10.19
The caption at the top of this cartoon, a photomontage by John Heartfield, reads: 'The whole nation stands behind me.' Underneath it says: 'I don't see parties, I just see prisoners' – a parody of Kaiser Wilhelm II's remark, 'I don't see parties, I just see Germans'

„Die Nation steht geschlossen hinter mir“



Ich kenne keine Parteien mehr,
Ich kenne nur noch Gefangene!