How the Nazis Consolidated Power

Nazi Germany
In this presentation you will learn:

1. How Hitler consolidated his position in relation to:
   a) Parliament – through the Reichstag Fire and the Enabling Act,
   b) The Nazi Party – through the Night of the Long Knives,
   c) The presidency – through becoming president and declaring himself ‘Führer’ of Germany.

2. How Hitler established a police state using institutions such as the SS, the SA, the Gestapo and concentration camps.
What problems did Hitler face?

Despite being made chancellor in January 1933, Hitler's position was by no means secure:

Click on Hindenburg, the Nazi flag or the Reichstag to find out more.
How Hitler overcame these problems

When Hitler came to power, his authority was limited by parliament and President Hindenburg. The SA were also getting very powerful. Hitler was determined to eliminate these obstacles.

Over the next few slides you will see how he overcame each problem, and established complete political control over Germany.
Consolidation of Parliament: The Reichstag Fire

The Reichstag Fire

introduction
How did the Reichstag Fire help Hitler?

Hitler used the Reichstag fire to convince everyone that there was a real threat of a communist revolution. Hitler used the confusion and unease that people felt to consolidate his position.

1. **Emergency powers**: Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to pass the ‘Law for the Protection of People and State’. This ended freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the press.

2. **Election success**: Hitler called fresh elections. He used his new powers to make life difficult for non-Nazi candidates. Hitler increased his share of the vote and thereby gave his party more power in parliament.
The March 1933 Reichstag elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Nazi Party</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Democrats</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Centre Party</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who won the 1933 election?

Did this mean that the Nazis now had complete power?

Although the Nazis didn’t have a **majority**, the Nationalist Party joined forces with them. Their 53 seats added to the Nazis’ meant Hitler now controlled over half of the total seats – the Reichstag would do as Hitler wanted.
The Enabling Act

When the Reichstag met again after the election, Hitler proposed a new law:

**The Enabling Act**: This allowed Hitler to rule single-handed without the need for parliament. Although intended to be temporary, Hitler now had the power to pass any law he liked.

The only thing stopping Hitler from becoming a dictator was President Hindenburg.
The Enabling Act

Why was the **Enabling Act** passed so easily?
Click on the carrot or the stick.
Now that Hitler had dictatorial powers, he set about consolidating Nazi authority over the country.

Key groups such as the army and big business had to be brought under Nazi control, and threats from within the party also had to be addressed.

Hitler also sought to extend Nazi control to all areas of society. Opposition was to be crushed through the setting up of a police state.

He called this policy Gleichschaltung (‘coordination’).
Consolidation of the Nazi party

Once Hitler was chancellor, the **SA** – Hitler’s private army – wanted him to take control of big businesses and to put the SA in charge of the regular army.

Hitler however, did not want to lose the support of the industrialists – they had helped fund his election campaign, and he would need them in order to start rearmament.

Hitler was also worried that the SA, led by the ambitious **Ernst Röhm**, was getting too powerful, posing a threat to his leadership.

Most army officers saw the SA as undisciplined thugs who they would not take orders from.

Use this information to complete the table on the next slide.
The Night of the Long Knives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should Hitler side with the army rather than the SA?</th>
<th>Is Röhm a real threat to Hitler?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army view – YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA view – NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SA is formed of committed Nazis and has over 2.5 million members.
The Night of the Long Knives – what happened?

In June 1934, Hitler ordered the SA to go on leave for the entire month.

Hitler then ordered Himmler and Goering to eliminate the threat posed by the leaders of the SA.

On 30 June, Himmler's SS and Goering's special police arrested and executed the leaders of the SA and other people against whom Hitler had a score to settle.

Ernst Röhm was shot after refusing to commit suicide.

Kurt von Schleicher, who had preceded Hitler as chancellor, was also shot.

Altogether, it’s thought that as many as 400 people were killed in the Night of the Long Knives.
Consolidating the state – Hitler becomes president

President Hindenburg died on 2 August 1934.

Hitler seized the opportunity to:

- combine the offices of President and Chancellor and to declare himself ‘Führer’ (leader) of the new Third Reich
- make the whole of the army swear an oath of loyalty to him personally.

A plebiscite was then held, and 90% of the electorate voted in favour of Hitler’s actions.
Discussion point

All of the following helped Hitler to take control of Germany:

- The Reichstag Fire
- The Enabling Law
- The Night of the Long Knives.

Which of these do you think was the most important?
Moving forward: the police state

Very quickly, Hitler placed his party at the heart of the government of the country. Key to this was setting up an effective **police state**. The regular police – the *Ordnungspolizei* (ORPO) – was put under the control of Himmler who already ran the **SS** (Hitler’s personal body guards).

In 1933, the **Gestapo** (Secret State Police) was set up. The Gestapo used agents and informants to find and arrest anyone hostile to the Nazis government. Jews, beggars and gypsies were arrested as well as political opponents. So many people were imprisoned that special **concentration camps** had to be set up to house them.
Can you complete this table on the Nazi police state?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SS</th>
<th>ORPO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Led by:</td>
<td>Led by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>Purpose:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gestapo</th>
<th>Concentration camps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Led by:</td>
<td>Led by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>Purpose:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heydrich, reports to Himmler
Concentration camps

Each prisoner had to wear a badge which indicated why they were in the concentration camp. Click on each badge for more details.
Conclusion

By 1936, Hitler’s power was absolute. The army were pleased that he was building a powerful military and setting up a new air force (the Luftwaffe). Big business liked the Nazi regime because Hitler had destroyed the trade unions, allowing business to improve their profits, and given them lucrative arms contracts.

People felt better off as Hitler had expanded healthcare, social security and state benefits. New motorways were built, unemployment was almost wiped out and traffic-free city centres were established.

“…my mother saw a Storm Trooper parade in the streets of Heidelberg … the impression of energy in an atmosphere of universal hopelessness, seems to have won her over…” Albert Speer, 1931.
You have 60 seconds to answer as many questions as you can in the categories Who, When and What.

Press start to begin.

With timer: start

Without timer: start