

MODERN HISTORY

How Did the Nazi Party consolidate their power throughout 1933-1934?

There were many ways in which Hitler consolidated his power during 1933-1934. The first action was when he was promoted to Chancellor after the death of Hindenburg, which allowed him to implement radical actions, such as terror which was widely used. Propaganda was also used by Goebbels, along with several legislation which deprived Hitler's enemies of their freedom. Hitler further consolidated the Nazi position through the gaining of military support. Furthermore, he gained reputation with big businesses and hence the economy. Ultimately, the Nazi consolidation saw their party become justified and supported.

Hitler being promoted to Chancellor was an integral part of the Nazi consolidation, especially in 1934 when the Chancellor and President was combined. However, despite him being Chancellor, he had no domination of the Reichstag, and Papen and Hindenburg believed that he could be controlled. Papen stated that **'Within two months, we will have pushed Hitler so far into the corner that he will squeak'**. This was due to the fact that he did not have a majority necessary to implement his political program. Instead, Hitler required that opposition be silenced. This was achieved through the Reichstag fire, just before the 1933 March elections. The fire was ultimately blamed on the communists, which saw an emergency decree enforced and civil liberties swept away. **Newton believes that if there was a seizure of power, it occurred under the Reichstag burning decree.** This was due to the fact that 10,000 communists and anti-Nazis were locked up, thus allowing the Nazi's to gain a majority in the Reichstag. The Enabling Law of March 1933 was also a vital part in the Nazi consolidation as it allowed Hitler's cabinet to govern by decree. Hitler gained support from the Centre party as he ensured them that it would not be used without consultation. Despite the SPD voting against the Law, it inevitably passed by a large margin, gaining 441 of the votes compared to 94. Due to the enabling act, there was banning of all opposition parties, censorship of broadcasts and publications. Along with rapid replacement of government officials who were deemed to be unsympathetic towards a Nazi policy, the enabling act ensured an Aryan society and also made the process of Gleichshaltung easier. The success and consolidation of the Nazi's is shown in the March 1933 elections where the Nazi's gained 43.9% of the vote.

Terror was a vital part of the Nazi regime which consolidated their position. Immediately after the Nazi's had gained power, they set up camps at Dachau and Oranienburg. These camps were used extensively after the Reichstag fire, which saw 4000 communists sent to camps. Thus terror allowed Hitler to annihilate any threat to his leadership. **Layton believes that the opening of concentration camps was not made secret, which instilled fear among the masses.** Opponents of the regime, such as left wing parties and Unions were rounded up. Minor threats such as the DVP were also dissolved. Their position was consolidated in June 1933 where there was a formal ban on the creation of future parties. through the Law against the Formation of New Parties in July 1933. Hitler even nominated Reich governors to remove state governments and dismiss state officials. Terror was integral in setting up Gleichschaltung. The Nazi's crushed all signs of opposition and imposed structures to create a society in harmony with Nazism. This was achieved through the Secret Police, which through emergency decrees, could hold people in protective custody. As the Nazi's had only 3 judges, all of whom were Nazi's, it was thus clear that any opposition against the regime would be silenced. However, Detlev **believes that terror met with popular approval, suggesting how it only assisted the Nazi regime.** Through terror, the Nazi's consolidated their position as it limited the threats that Hitler faced.

Goebbels played an important propaganda role which assisted in consolidating the Nazi regime, along with terror and numerous legislation which restricted resistance. As Minister of People's Enlightenment and Propaganda, he began a campaign against the Reich's enemies as soon as the Nazi's gained power. Much of the acts were aimed at the Jews. Through propaganda, the people were attracted **'not only passively but actively'** states Goebbels. In April 1933, the Law on the Admission to Practice of Law was introduced which restricted Jews from entering the legal

profession. The Law for Restoration of the Civil Service also saw Jews and left wing people removed from civil service. Thus the laws consolidated Hitler's position as it removed his enemies. Ideals were also removed in the book burning of May 1933. Goebbels also introduced the Fuhrer Myth, which portrayed Hitler as an all powerful leader that was capable of leading the Regime. In February 1933, the Law for the Curtailment of Freedom of Speech was passed. The law banned newspapers and political meetings that abused the states or to spread false information. The phrasing of the decree was vague so that Hitler could take action against a wide range of political opponents, thus bring them under his grip and consolidating this position. This was emphasised in the Decree for the Protection of People and State, also in February 1933 which allowed the government to do whatever was necessary to protect the state. The use of the decree saw the Nazi's gain 17 million votes in the Reichstag, which was furthered by an electoral agreement with Hugenburg's Nationalists thus allowing the Nazi's to secure a majority in the Reichstag. **This is shown through Hitler's statement that it must be applied on a large scale.** As Goebbels also constantly emphasised the regime was justified through radio and posters, his propaganda played an important role in the consolidation of the Nazi's.

Through the army, Hitler consolidated his military position. Radicals of the Nazi Party had socialist vision for the party. Thus in June 1934, Hitler initiated the Night of the Long Knives which saw leaders of the SA and prominent members being purged, along with several hundred of Hitler's enemies. Due to this, Hitler emerged stronger and the power of the SS was vastly increased. Hitler consolidated his position by making himself commander-in-chief in August 1934. Hitler maintained army support by promising them that they would not be asked to intervene in civil war or lose their power and position. Thus in July 1933, a law was passed ending civil control of the courts over military. Army loyalty to Hitler was reinforced through the oath of allegiance in which all soldiers had to give to Hitler personally. **It is for this reason that Layton believes the army linked with the state helping it consolidate its position.** By taking control of the Army, Hitler had made a vital step forward in consolidating the Nazi reign

The economy of the state was a vital reason for the Nazi's consolidation. The Nazi's shared power with big businesses as they realised their power. He gained their support by removing small businesses. This was also consolidated in May 1933 where the SA and the SS occupied trade union offices throughout Germany. Key union officials were arrested, beaten and taken to camps. The only union was the German Labour Front under the leadership of Robert Ley. Ley promised to protect the rights of workers and consolidated the Nazi's position as they were in league with big businesses. To compliment this the Reich Food Estate was established in 1933 to regulate the conditions and production of the farmers. Its vast bureaucracy enforced regulations that touched all areas of the farmer's life and his food production. Despite increasing whole sale prices by 20%, the Reich Food Estate gave Germany '**self-sufficiency in food**' according to Young. Furthermore, by 1934, Businesses and Trade associates were under state control and compulsory cartels were introduced in July 1933, allowing the maze of businesses and trade associations to be nationalised.

Overall, the Nazi's consolidated their position in numerous ways. It began when Hitler was promoted to Chancellor, which allowed him to take his strength to a new level. Terror and propaganda was widely initiated to drive the population into Nazi grasp. Furthermore, the Nazi's emphasised their position in a military and economic scene which thus helped them consolidate their position.