

PART 2.1

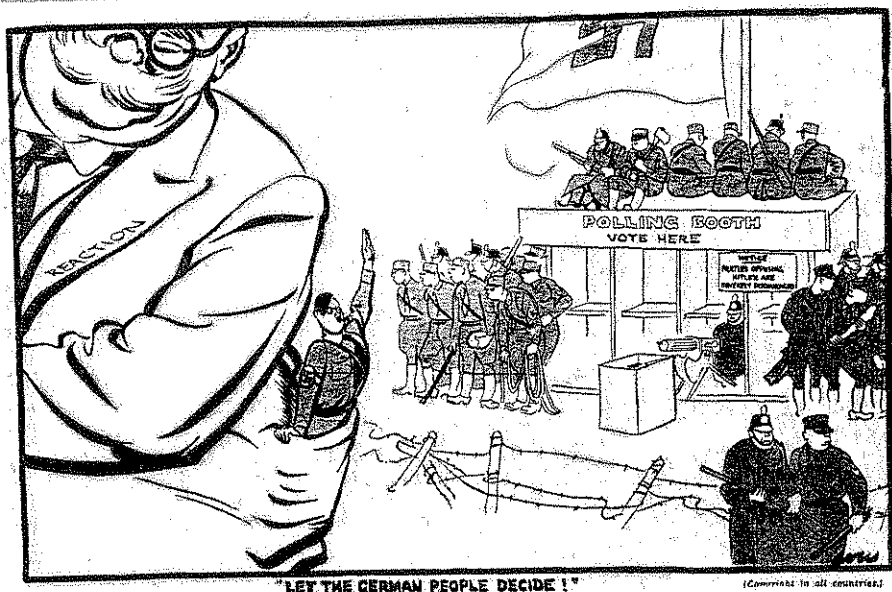
How did Hitler secure his regime?

10

Why was Hitler able to consolidate his position in power?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

SOURCE 10.1
A contemporary cartoon from the London evening newspaper *The Standard*. What insight does this cartoon give into who held power in Germany in 1933?



On 30 January 1933 torchlight parades celebrated the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany. The millions who had voted for the Nazis were looking to him to restore hope to the German people and re-establish Germany's position after the shame of Versailles. The elite groups around Hindenburg who had actually secured Hitler's appointment hoped to use him to secure their position and then discard him. Vice-Chancellor Papen said to a conservative friend in February 1933: 'I have Hindenburg's confidence. Within two months we will have pushed Hitler so far into a corner that he'll squeak.'

This was one of the most famous, and disastrous, misjudgements in history; for Hitler was to turn into a Frankenstein's monster who inflicted mass destruction on most of Europe and finally on Germany itself. All this, however, lay in the future. In 1933 many saw Hitler as Germany's last hope, while others, from both the Left and Right, did not expect Hitler to last for more than a few months. This chapter examines how Hitler outmanoeuvred Papen and the conservatives and established his Nazi dictatorship so that, by late 1934, it was impossible to remove him legally.

- A** How did Hitler set up a dictatorship? (pp. 168–72)
- B** How significant was the Night of the Long Knives? (pp. 173–9)
- C** Review: Why was Hitler able to consolidate his position in power? (pp. 180–2)

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Choose five or six of the most important events from January 1933 to August 1934 that helped Hitler to establish his dictatorship.
- 2 Explain why each of these events was important.

A How did Hitler set up a dictatorship?

Hitler lost no time in using his power as Chancellor to gain access to the radio in order to rally support for his government.

SOURCE 10.2 Millions of Germans listened to Hitler's 'Appeal to the German people', broadcast on the radio on 31 January

Over fourteen years have passed since the unhappy day when, dazzled by promises made by those at home and abroad, the German people forgot its most precious possessions, our past, the Empire, its honour and freedom, and thus lost everything. Since those days of betrayal the Almighty has withdrawn His blessing from our people. Discord and hatred came among us. With the deepest sorrow millions of the best German men and women from all walks of life saw the unity of the nation founder and disappear in a confusion of politically egotistical [selfish] opinions, economic interests and ideological conflicts . . . The breakdown of the unity of mind and will of our nation at home was followed by the collapse of its political position abroad . . . With an unparalleled effort of will and of brute force the Communist method of madness is trying as a last resort to poison and undermine an inwardly shaken and uprooted nation . . . Fourteen years of Marxism have undermined Germany. One year of Bolshevism would destroy Germany . . .

. . . It is an appalling inheritance which we are taking over. The task before us is the most difficult which has faced German statesmen in living memory. But we all have unbounded confidence, for we believe in our nation and in its eternal values. Farmers, workers, and the middle class must unite to contribute the bricks wherewith to build the new Reich.

The National Government will therefore regard it as its first and supreme task to restore to the German people unity of mind and will. It will preserve and defend the foundation on which the strength of our nation rests. It will take under its firm protection Christianity, as the basis of our collective morality, and the family as the nucleus of our people and state. It will rise above position and class to bring our people again to an awareness of its racial and political unity and the duties arising from this . . . It will make national discipline govern our life . . . Within four years the German farmer must be free from impoverishment. Within four years unemployment must be overcome permanently . . .

In foreign policy the National Government will see its highest mission in the preservation of natural rights and thus in regaining the freedom of our people. By its resolution to end the chaotic conditions in Germany it will help to introduce into the community of nations a state of equal worth and thus, of course, with equal rights. In doing this it is inspired by the greatness of the duty to support this free nation in maintaining and strengthening, as an equal, that peace which the world needs as never before . . . Now, German people, give us four years and then judge us and give your verdict!

Following the order of the Generalmarschall [Hindenburg] let us make a start. May Almighty God look graciously on our work, direct our purpose, bless our understanding and enrich us with the trust of our People. For we have no desire to fight for ourselves; only for Germany!

ACTIVITY

- 1 Source 10.2 contains a powerful description of what Hitler was opposed to and what he aimed to do.
 - a) Explain how he portrayed the Weimar Republic.
 - b) Explain what he claimed the new Germany would be like.
- 2 With reference to the language and tone of the speech, explain how Hitler tried to win support for his government.

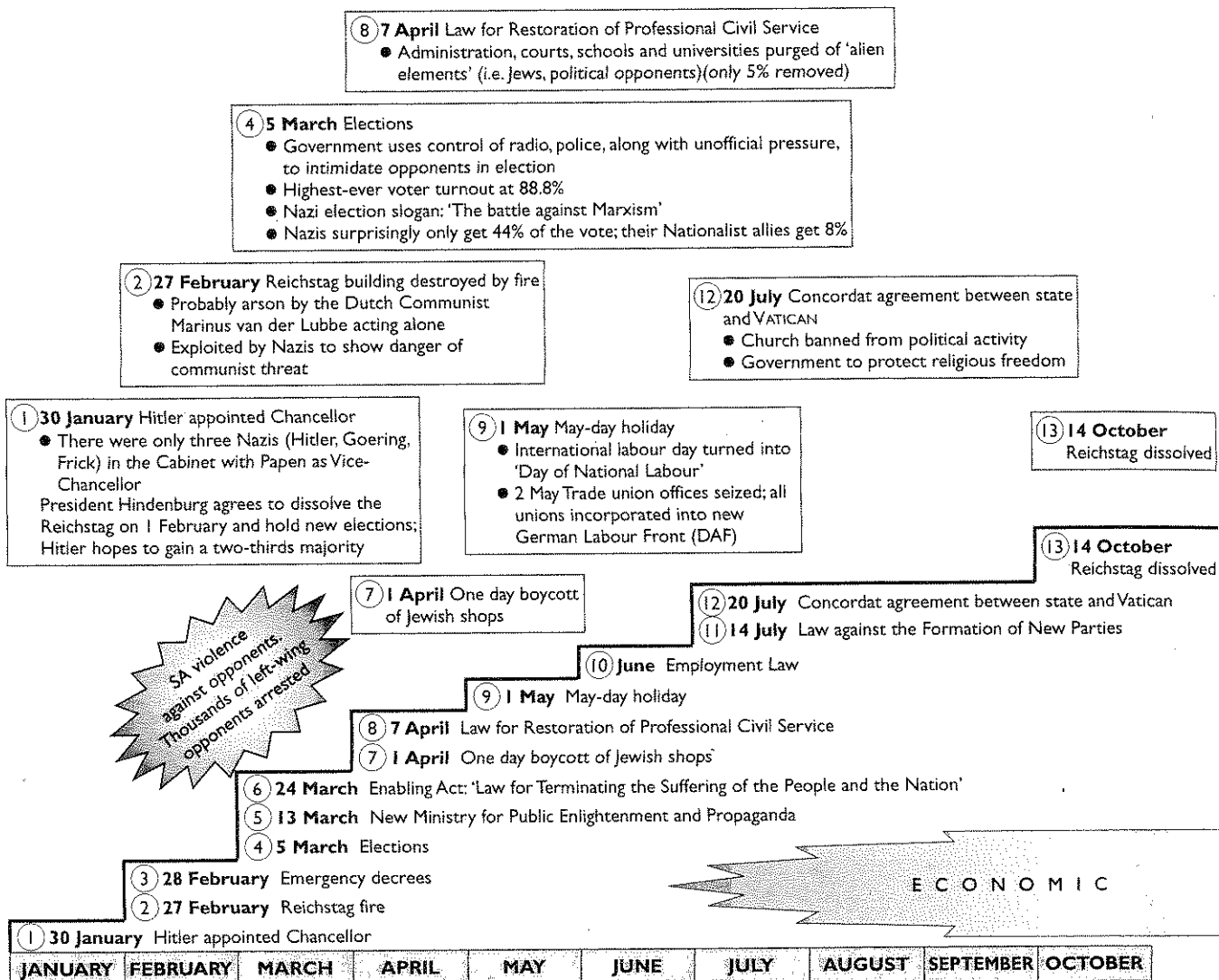
ACTIVITY

How do you think Hitler would try to consolidate his position after his appointment as Chancellor in January 1933? Remember that Hitler's survival in power would be determined by his position in 1933 and by the actions both he and his opponents would take.

- 1 Make a list of
 - a) the problems he faced
 - b) his advantages.
 Refer to the Nazi Movement, its supporters and opponents, the overall context, etc.
- 2 a) Decide which one of each of the alternatives a)–n) in the table below you would expect him to take in the first eighteen months, and be prepared to explain your decision.
 - b) Then choose a statement from o) to describe his overall approach.
- 3 Decide on several more measures Hitler could take: for example, what might his initial foreign policy be?
- 4 How do you think his potential opponents would act?

	Radical option	Cautious option	
a) Reichstag	Abolish the Reichstag	Call new elections	
b) Chancellor's position	Declare himself as Chancellor and Führer to be omnipotent (all-powerful)	Use Article 48, and get Reichstag to grant emergency powers	
c) Political parties	Ban other parties; create one-party state	Promise to restore democratic rights	
d) Left-wing opposition	Arrest left-wing leaders and imprison them in new camps	Promise opponents that only traitors will be persecuted	
e) Catholic Church	Take over control of the Catholic Church	Arrange a deal with the Catholic Church	
f) Local government	Ensure Nazi control of local government	Respect local democracy	
g) President Hindenburg	Remove Hindenburg	Appease Hindenburg	
h) Civil service	Replace all top officials with Nazis	Use most of the existing officials	
i) Army and the SA	Replace army with expanded SA	Weaken SA and reassure army	
j) Cabinet	Abolish the Cabinet	Keep most of the original Cabinet	
k) Economic policy	Develop a major programme of public works to create jobs	Reduce government expenditure to balance the budget	
l) Jews	Round up Jews and put them in concentration camps	Allow limited anti-semitism	
m) Trade unions	Ban free trade unions	Respect trade union rights	
n) The press	Create propaganda ministry to control information and repress criticism	Respect press freedom	
o) Overall	Embark on a full-blooded Nazi revolution	Combine both cautious and radical measures in a 'legal revolution'	Abandon revolution to appease the elite

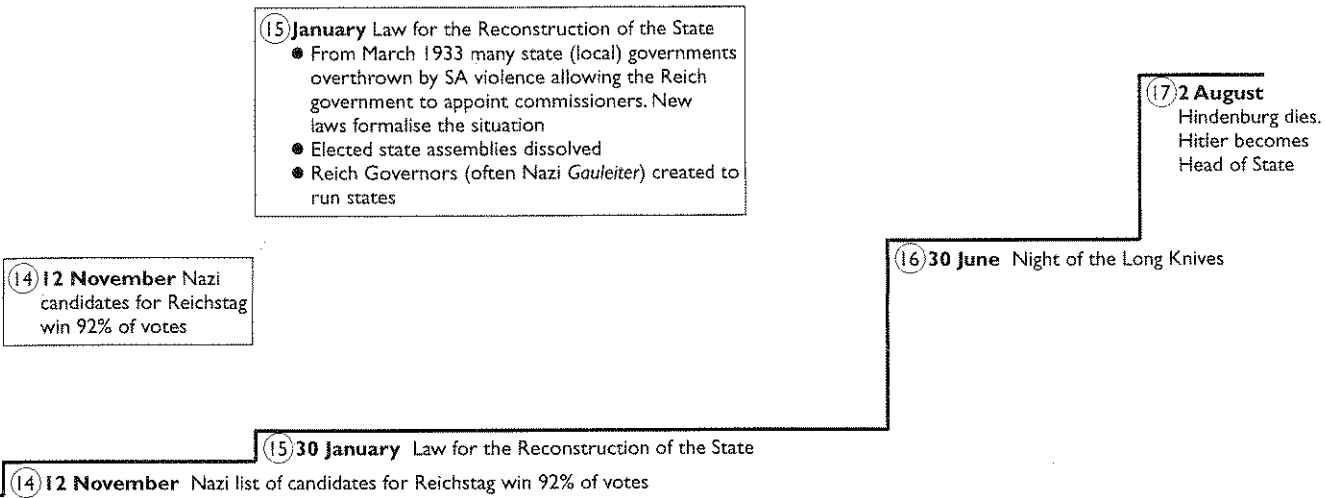
■ 10A Key steps in the Nazis' consolidation of power



1933

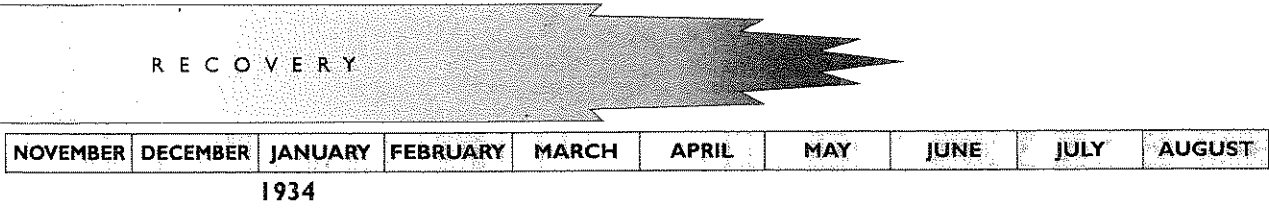
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
---------	----------	-------	-------	-----	------	------	--------	-----------	---------

- 1** 30 January Hitler appointed Chancellor
 - There were only three Nazis (Hitler, Goering, Frick) in the Cabinet with Papen as Vice-Chancellor
 - President Hindenburg agrees to dissolve the Reichstag on 1 February and hold new elections; Hitler hopes to gain a two-thirds majority
- 2** 27 February Reichstag fire
 - Probably arson by the Dutch Communist Marinus van der Lubbe acting alone
 - Exploited by Nazis to show danger of communist threat
- 3** 28 February Emergency decrees
 - Issued by Hindenburg using Article 48
 - Suspended constitutional civil rights
 - Gave secret police power to hold people indefinitely in protective custody
 - Used to repress the KPD
 - Remained in force throughout the Third Reich; in effect the basic law of the Third Reich
- 4** 5 March Elections
 - Government uses control of radio, police, along with unofficial pressure, to intimidate opponents in election
 - Highest-ever voter turnout at 88.8%
 - Nazi election slogan: 'The battle against Marxism'
 - Nazis surprisingly only get 44% of the vote; their Nationalist allies get 8%
- 5** 13 March New Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda
 - Goebbels appointed as its head
 - Exercised control of all media
- 6** 24 March Enabling Act: 'Law for Terminating the Suffering of the People and the Nation'
 - Passed by Reichstag (relocated to the Opera House after the fire) as SA and SS surround building and intimidate deputies
 - Gave emergency powers to government for four years
 - Cabinet (in effect, Hitler) could pass decrees without the President's involvement
 - Needed a two-thirds majority since it was a constitutional amendment
 - Passed by 441 votes to 94 (only SPD voted against; KPD banned); Centre Party supported it after Hitler made promises
 - Renewed in 1938
 - Became the virtual constitution of the Third Reich
- 7** 1 April One day boycott of Jewish shops
- 7** 1 April Law for Restoration of Professional Civil Service
 - Administration, courts, schools and universities purged of 'alien elements' (i.e. Jews, political opponents)(only 5% removed)
- 8** 7 April One day boycott of Jewish shops
- 9** 1 May May-day holiday
 - International labour day turned into 'Day of National Labour'
 - 2 May Trade union offices seized; all unions incorporated into new German Labour Front (DAF)
- 10** June Employment Law
 - Major public works schemes
- 11** 14 July Law against the Formation of New Parties
 - KPD and SPD already banned
 - Other parties had dissolved themselves
 - No new parties allowed, so Germany becomes a one-party state



Other measures

- very few changes to original Cabinet of January 1933
- more assertive foreign policy
- October Germany withdrew from Disarmament Conference, and from League of Nations



(17) August Hitler becomes undisputed head of government

- 1 August Law Concerning the Head of State of the German Reich merges the offices of the President and the Chancellor in the new position of 'Führer and Reich Chancellor'. Confirmed by a plebiscite
- 2 August Hindenburg dies
- Army takes oath of personal loyalty to Hitler: 'I swear by God this sacred oath: I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German nation and people, Supreme Commander of the armed forces, and will be ready as a true soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.'

ACTIVITY

- 1 Study Chart 10A. Compare your predictions (in the Activity on page 169) with what actually happened.
- 2 a) Which groups did Hitler appear to conciliate and which did he suppress?
b) Why did he treat them differently?
- 3 With which of the following statements on the period 1933–4 would you agree:
 - a) 'Once in power, nothing prevented Hitler from imposing his ideas on Germany.'
 - b) 'Hitler took a mixture of radical and more cautious measures.'
 - c) 'Where he took more drastic measures, it tended to be policies which the elite welcomed, and which weakened the Left.'
 - d) 'Within the first year Hitler established complete control of all key institutions.'
 - e) 'Hitler was prepared to compromise on areas not crucial to him.'

The key events 1933–4

Within eighteen months of being appointed Chancellor, Hitler had turned himself into a dictator. He had the power to issue decrees and there was no legal way to replace him. His conservative, liberal and socialist opponents were divided, demoralised and weakened by repression. Potential opponents were intimidated by both violence 'from below' (by the SA, who murdered an estimated 500 people in 1933) and terror 'from above', as the Nazis could now use the power of the state machine. By the end of 1933 over 100,000 potential opponents had been arrested. In addition, the elite politicians who had sought to use Hitler had been outmanoeuvred. The only potential threat came from the army, but it had committed itself to the new government.

Chart 10A on pages 170–1 covers the key steps chronologically, as it is important that you develop a clear understanding of the pattern of events between January 1933 and August 1934, by which time the fundamentals of the dictatorship were in place. The process by which Hitler gained control of Germany was called GLEICHSCHALTUNG (co-ordination). He ensured the government had control of all key aspects of society, so that there would be little opposition. The regime developed organisations that Germans had to join: for example DAF (German Labour Front), the Hitler Youth, the German Lawyers' Front. This ensured the regime's control and that the members would work to fulfil the government's objectives.

SOURCE 10.3 Decree of the Reich President on the Protection of the People and the State, 28 February 1933 (see pages 26–7 for the Weimar Constitution)

On the basis of Article 48, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Reich, the following is decreed as a protection against communist acts of violence endangering the state:

- 1 *Sections 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are suspended until further notice. Thus restrictions on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press, on the right of assembly and association ... are permissible beyond the legal limits otherwise prescribed [laid down].*
- 2 *If in any German state the measures necessary for the restoration of public security and order are not taken, the Reich Government may temporarily take over the powers of the supreme authority in such a state in order to restore security ...*

This decree applies from the day of publication, Berlin 28th February 1933.

SOURCE 10.4 Enabling Act, March 1933

Article 1 In addition to the procedure for the passage of legislation outlined in the Constitution, the Reich cabinet is also authorised to enact Laws ...

Article 2 The national laws enacted by the Reich cabinet may deviate from the Constitution provided they do not affect the position of the Reichstag and Reichsrat. The powers of the President remain unaffected.

Article 3 The national laws enacted by the Reich cabinet shall be prepared by the Chancellor and published in the official gazette. They come into effect, unless otherwise stated, upon the day following their publication ...

ACTIVITY

Read Sources 10.3 and 10.4.

- a) On what grounds are the government's new powers justified?
- b) To what extent did the emergency decrees and Enabling Act undermine the Weimar constitution, in spirit and in fact?



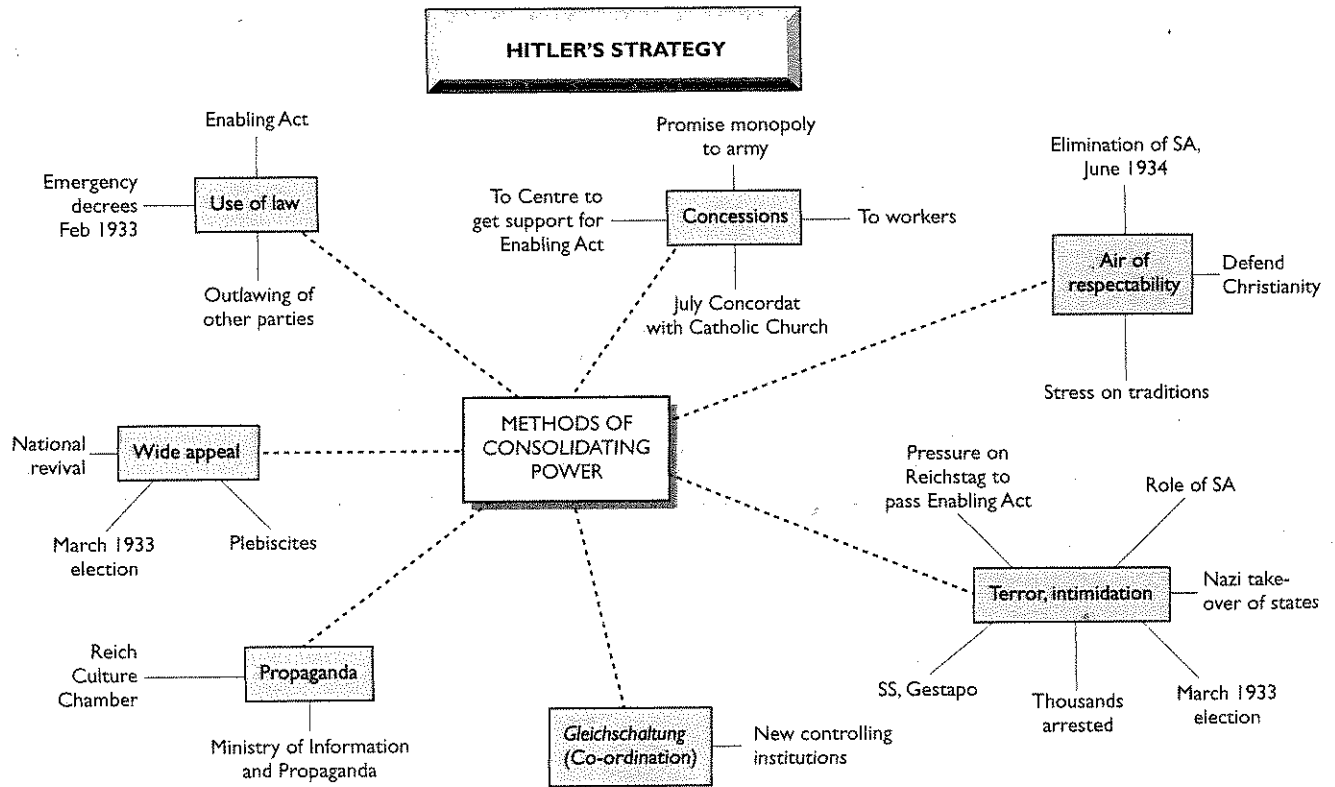
Review: Why was Hitler able to consolidate his position in power?

You have studied how Hitler established himself in power, choosing to reassure the elite and control his more radical supporters. As Chart 10E shows, in some

10E Routes to power

	Before 1933	After January 1933
Radical approach	SEIZE POWER IN PUTSCH Tried 1923, but failed. Some, especially in SA, still urged this method until Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933	CONTINUE REVOLUTION Nazis and SA gain full power
	Danger: The army would suppress any putsch, as it had done in 1923	Danger: The elite would turn against Hitler and remove him from office
More cautious approach	GAIN POWER LEGALLY Win mass support Win over 50 per cent of votes to gain a majority in Reichstag: Hitler could then demand to be made Chancellor	CO-OPERATE WITH ELITE Rely largely on inherited administrative, economic and military machine to fulfil aims
	Win support of the elite Negotiate with key groups to be appointed Chancellor	Control radical elements Use the SS to control the SA
	Danger: Heterogeneous (varied) Nazi Movement could disintegrate if power not achieved and if economic conditions improved	Appease elite Establish personal dictatorship
		Danger: Hitler would be used (as planned by the elite) to smash communism and move the system in a more authoritarian direction; then would be discarded

10F How Hitler consolidated his position



<p>MIXTURE OF METHODS</p> <p>Legality and violence, i.e. authoritarian powers from above and Nazi revolution from below</p>	<p>HOW TO KEEP POWER</p> <p>a) Genuine support through successful policies b) Propaganda – indoctrination c) Repression</p>
--	--

ways this was following the cautious route he had chosen since his failure in 1923. Once he became secure, however, he was more prepared to embark on his own radical vision of the future.

We have looked chronologically at the measures Hitler's government took. Chart 10F identifies the methods Hitler used to gain full power and the reasons why he faced little opposition. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the best time to have removed Hitler would have been right at the beginning, in 1933. There were a few attempts by some on the conservative Right to move against Hitler once they realised how violent he was becoming, but they were intimidated by the Long Knives massacre.

ACTIVITY

- Study Chart 10F. Elaborate (orally or in writing) on the various methods Hitler used to consolidate his position, giving examples of each method.
 - Why was there so little opposition to Hitler in his first crucial eighteen months in power?
- Hitler talked of a 'legal revolution' and a 'national revolution'. Röhm, on the other hand, advocated a 'second revolution'. Explain what each meant by these phrases.
- Bullock describes the way Hitler consolidated his power as a 'symbiosis [mixture] of legality and terror ... a characteristic interplay of "legal" authorisation from the highest level of government with a mixture of threats, blackmail and terrorism at local level.' What evidence is there to support this view?

