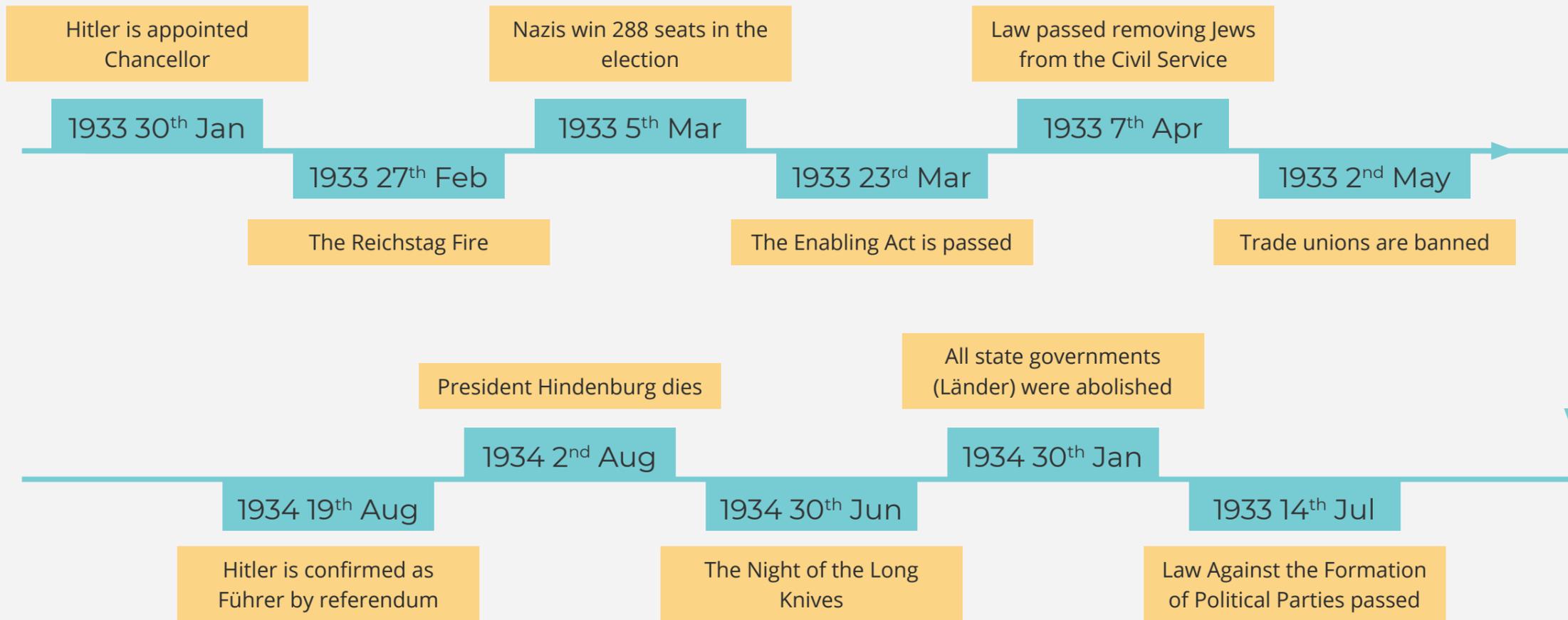


Key Question 4: How did the Nazis consolidate their power between 1933 and 1934?

Timeline of events



Why was the Reichstag Fire important?

To increase Nazi support in the Reichstag Hitler asked Hindenburg to call a general election for 5 March 1933.

Because Goering was now in charge of the police the SA began a brutal election campaign against the KPD (the Communists).

On 27 February, the Reichstag building was set on fire. A Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested and charged with starting the fire. He was found guilty and executed.

Hitler:

- argued the Communists were planning a revolution so Communist leaders were arrested and the party was banned
- passed the 'Decree for the Protection of the People and State'
- restricted free speech
- imprisoned enemies of the state without trial
- took control of the press, and banned left-wing newspapers.

It is possible that the Nazis themselves secretly started the fire so they could blame it on the Communists.

Key words

Enabling Act	Gave Hitler the power to rule Germany without consulting the Reichstag for 4 years
Censorship	Controlling information that is printed or broadcast if a government does approve of it
Trade unions	Organisations that protected and improved the rights and pay of workers
Länder	Governments of the states within Germany
Dictatorship	Putting one political party or person in complete control of a country
Gleichschaltung	Complete control over all aspects of life, getting rid of what is different
Führer	German word for leader; this is what Hitler became instead of being Chancellor and President
Reichswehr	The German armed forces (became the Wehrmacht in 1935)

Important concept

The **Legal Revolution** was achieving power in Germany by legal means, through elections, so that the Nazis could destroy the Republic from within.

"We'll take any legal means to revolutionise the existing situation. We come as enemies! Like the wolf tearing into the flock of sheep, that is how we come!" Goebbels speaking in 1928

Key Question 4: How did the Nazis consolidate their power between 1933 and 1934?

How did the Enabling Act help Hitler?

In the March 1933 election the Nazis won 288 seats - still not a majority. A coalition was formed with the National Party.

To get the Enabling bill passed into law, Hitler:

- banned the Communists from attending
- ordered the SA men to prevent known opponents from entering
- counted absentees as present and in favour of the proposed bill.

The Enabling Act was passed, allowing Hitler to pass laws without consulting the Reichstag so he could establish his dictatorship. As a result:

- all trade unions were banned and strikes were made illegal
- all other political parties were banned by the Law Against the Formation of Parties
- all local states (länder) were to be run by Reich governors and local parliaments were abolished.

This enabled Hitler to have more complete control over the government. Germany was now a dictatorship. He could implement his policy of gleichschaltung – controlling every aspect of people's lives.

What was the Night of the Long Knives?

Ernst Röhm, leader of the SA, wanted to increase his power by adding the SA into the German Army (the Reichswehr). He also wanted a social revolution which would do away with Germany's class structure.

Hitler saw the SA as a threat to his power. He had to make a choice between the SA and the army.

The SA were given a holiday for the whole of June 1934. Leaders were told to meet in a hotel near Munich at the end of the month.

On the night of 30 June 1934 'Operation Hummingbird' was carried out; it is now called the Night of the Long Knives.

Over 400 'enemies of the state' were arrested and shot by the SS, including -

- most of the SA leaders including Röhm
- former Chancellor von Schleicher
- Bavarian Chief Minister von Kahr who had betrayed the Nazis in Munich in 1923.

The Night of the Long Knives:

- got rid of opponents to Hitler's rule
- secured the support of the army
- relegated the SA to a minor role
- made the SS, and their leader Himmler, more important.

Fact

"Night of the Long Knives" was a phrase from a popular German song from this time

How did Hitler become Führer?

- On 2 August 1934 President Hindenburg died.
- Hitler combined President and Chancellor into one new job – Führer.
- As Führer he was Head of State and Commander-in-Chief.
- The German army swore an oath of loyalty to him as their Führer.
- In a referendum 90 % of Germans agreed that Hitler should become Führer.
- Hitler was now absolute dictator of Germany.