

The Establishment of Nazi Dictatorship, 1933-34

1. How did Hitler create a one-party authoritarian state?

Key Chronology – Rise and Rule of Hitler

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1928	<ul style="list-style-type: none">May – Reichstag elections: Nazis win 2.6% of the vote
1929	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wall Street Crash and Great Depression
1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sep – Reichstag elections: Nazis the 2nd largest party (18.3%)
1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hitler challenges Hindenburg for Presidency but fails to win
1932	<ul style="list-style-type: none">May – Brüning dismissed as chancellor, replaced by von PapenJul – Reichstag elections: Nazis emerge as largest party (37.3%)Nov – Reichstag elections: Nazis' vote drop (33.1%)Dec – Papen dismissed as chancellor, replaced by Schleicher
1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Jan – Schleicher dismissed, Hitler appointed chancellor in a coalition government, with Papen as vice-chancellorFeb – Reichstag fireMar – Reichstag elections: Nazis secure 43.9% of the vote<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enabling Act passed ('legal revolution' complete)
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Jun – Night of the Long KnivesJul – Death of Hindenburg; Hitler merges post of chancellor and president to become Führer

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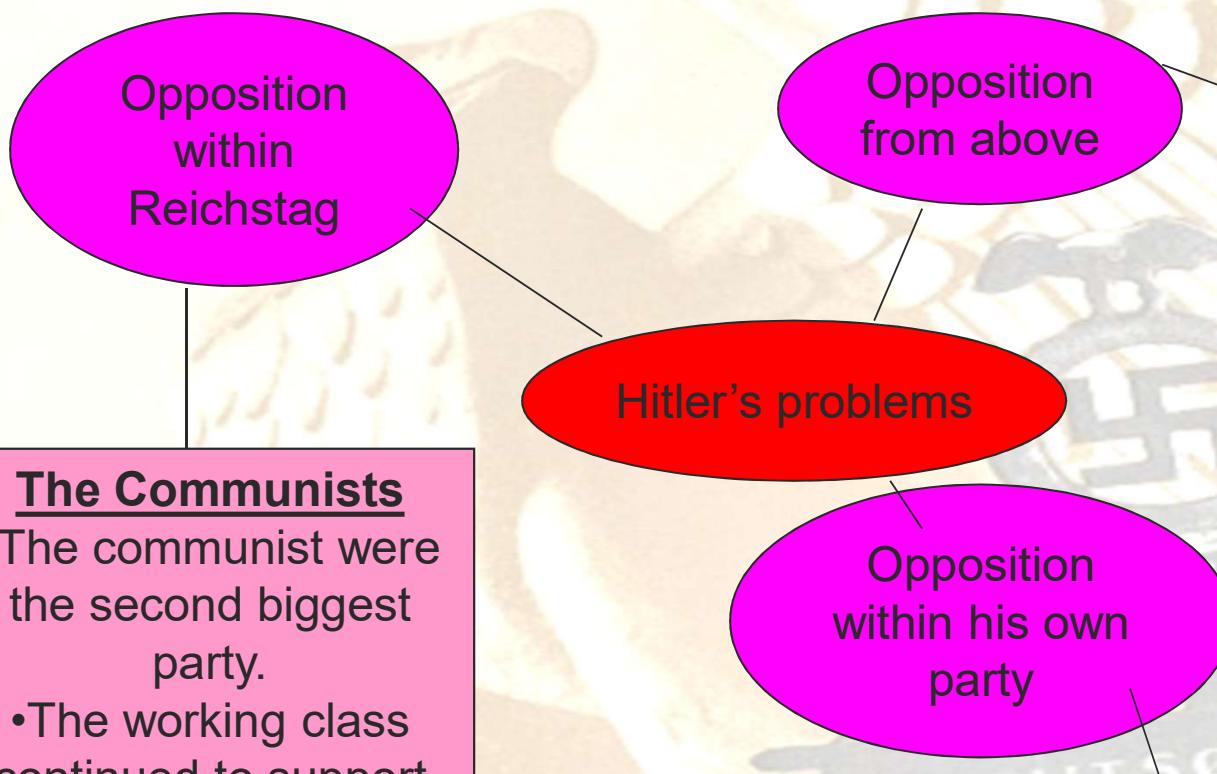
'Stage 1': Nazi Party's performance in elections and Hitler's appointment as Chancellor

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'Stage 2': Hitler's creation of Nazi dictatorship (1933-34)

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Hitler's main problems in 1933



The Communists

- The communist were the second biggest party.
- The working class continued to support this group
- Hitler needed to divert the working class support to himself

Hindenburg

- Hated Hitler
- Didn't want him as Chancellor
- Hitler needed to take over Hindenburg's position to be dictator

Ernst Röhm and the SA

- Röhm wanted Hitler to make the SA the official army of Germany
 - The regular army will rebel.
- Hitler needed to control this situation so that he did not lose the support of the army



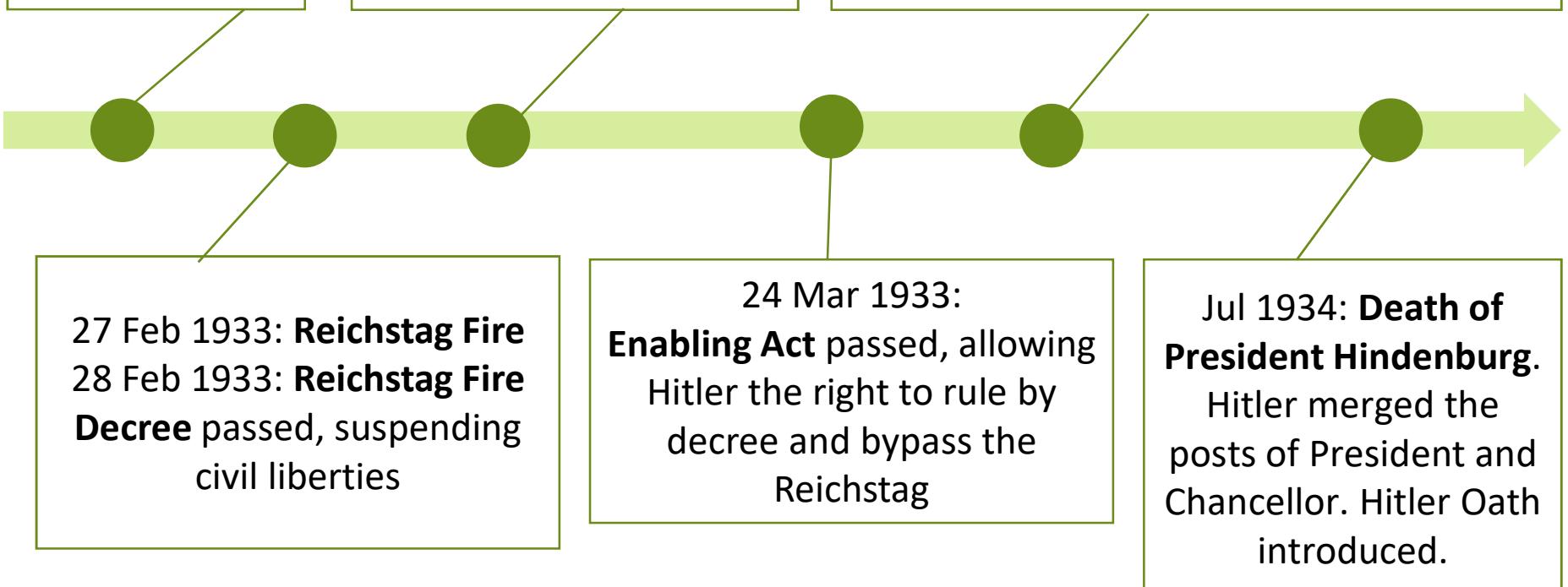
The Nazi Consolidation of Power, 1933-34

Jan 1933: Hitler appointed Chancellor in a coalition conservative government

5 Mar 1933:
Elections to the Reichstag
Nazis won 43.9% of the vote, not enough to amend the constitution

Jun 1934: **Night of the Long Knives**
Rohm and other SA leaders were purged.

- Eliminated internal opposition to Hitler from within the Nazi party
- Won the support of the Army



Establishment of Nazi Dictatorship

The Reichstag Fire (Feb 1933)

- Reichstag building set on fire, probably by a Dutch communist acting alone
- But **exploited by the Nazis** to their advantage
 - Hitler seized on this as proof that it was the start of a Communist revolution
 - Persuaded a reluctant Hindenburg to grant him emergency powers
- Passed “**Decree for the Protection of People and State**”
(Reichstag Fire Decree)
 - Most civil and political liberties were suspended
 - Gave the government greater powers of arrest, allowing it to hold ‘political opponents’ in prison indefinitely
 - Used by the Nazis to ban the KPD and arrest thousands of Communists and other anti-Nazis

On 27 Feb 1933, a fire broke out in the Reichstag building, probably started by a Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, acting alone, though conspiracy theories have attributed the fire to the Nazis fabricating a reason to take action against their greatest political opponents, the KPD. The **Reichstag Fire Decree** was passed the very next day.



Mar 1933 Elections

The last elections before all other parties were banned. It took place in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation by the SA, and corruption by officials. The Nazis increased their votes share to 43.9% and formed coalition government. But this was a political blow to them because any change to existing Weimar constitution required a two-thirds majority.



Establishment of Nazi Dictatorship

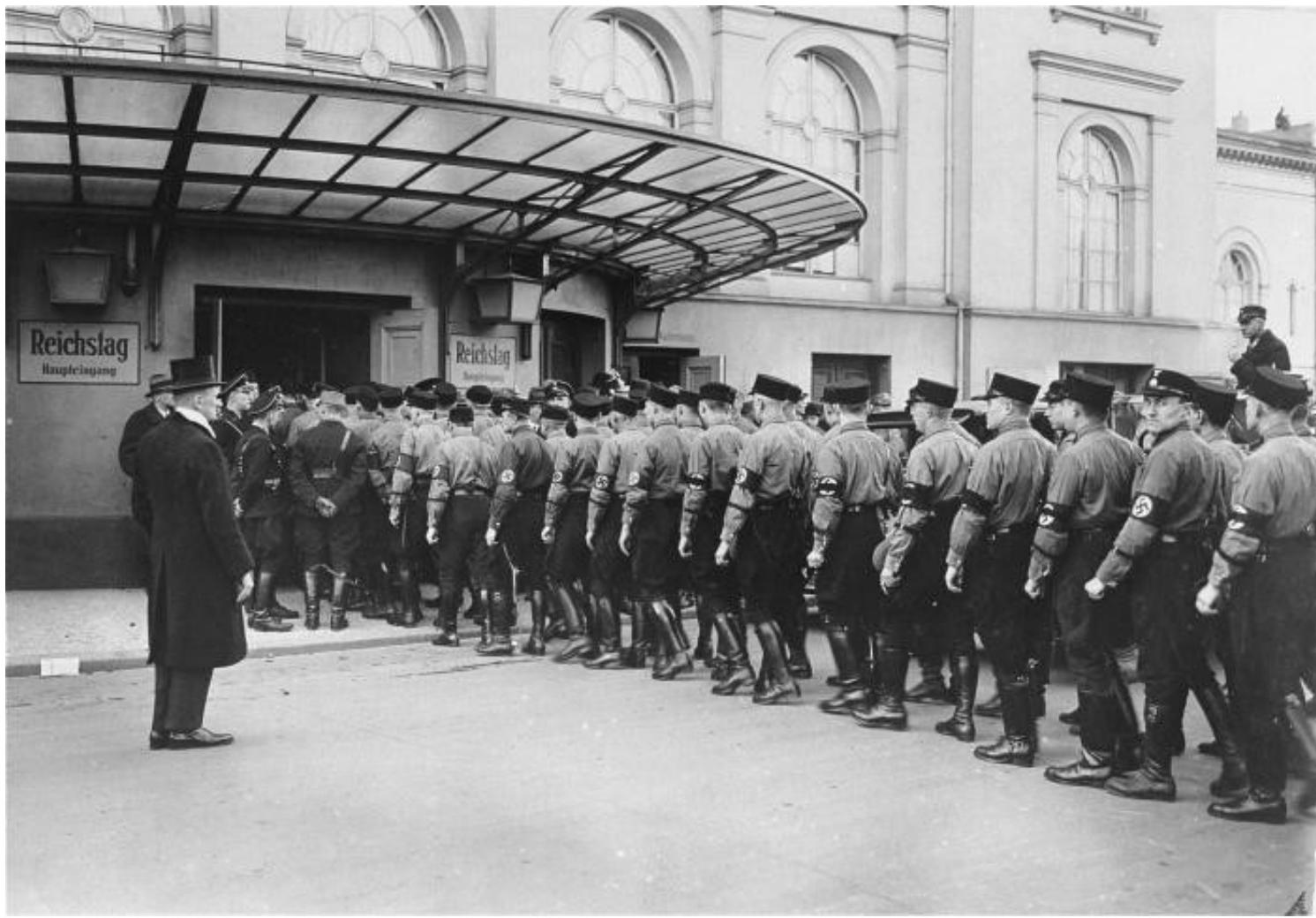
Consolidation of power, one party rule

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Establishment of Nazi Dictatorship

The Enabling Act (Mar 1933)

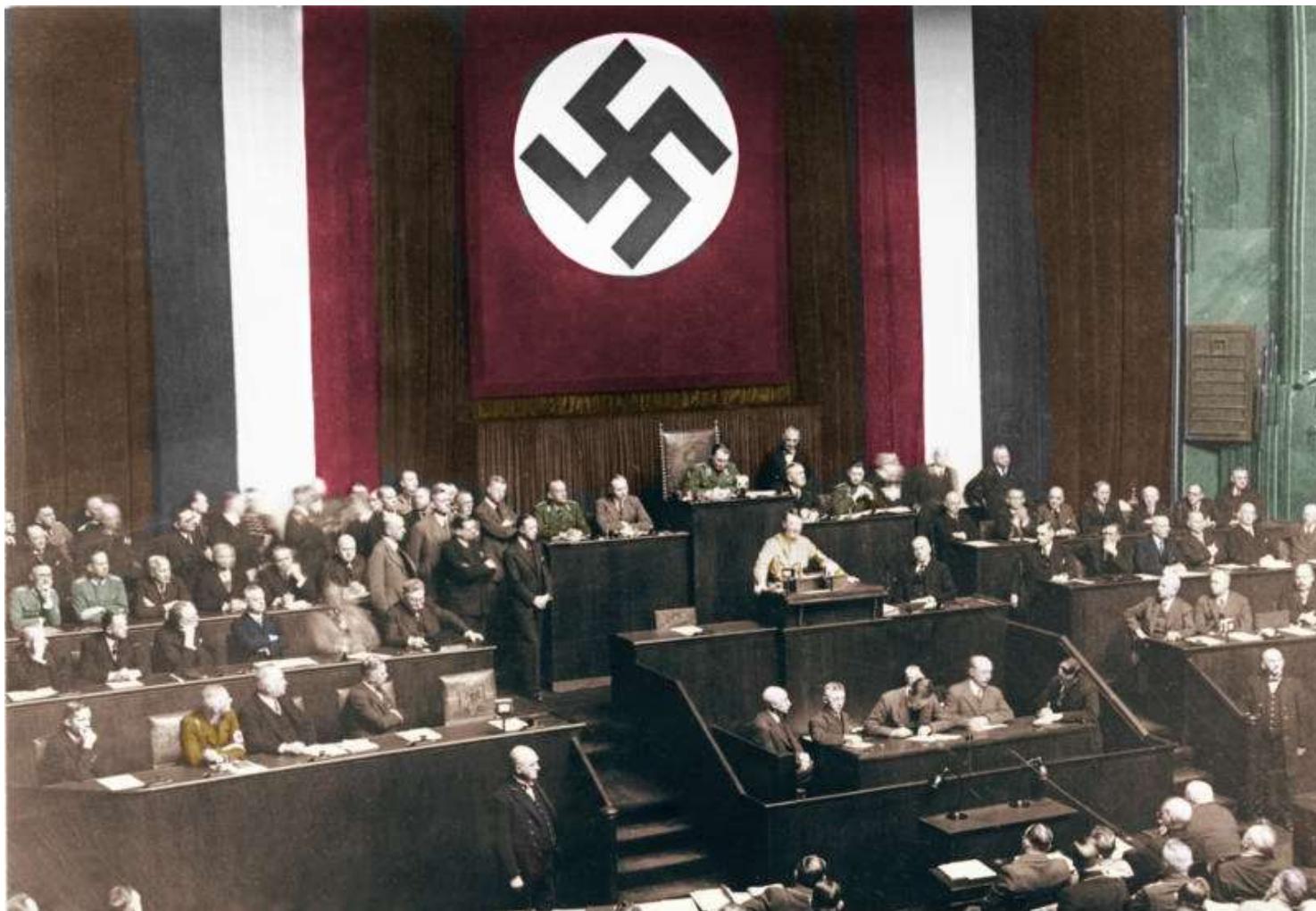
- “Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich”
- Gave Hitler the power to **issue decrees without the approval of the Reichstag** for four years
- Successful passing of this law still required two-thirds majority
 - Communist and many socialist deputies imprisoned or refused admittance
 - SA and SS surrounded the Kroll Opera House and **intimidated deputies** in attendance
 - Hitler won the support of the Centre Party by **falsely promising to respect the rights of the Catholic Church**
- Became the virtual constitution of the Third Reich



SS Troops enter the makeshift Reichstag building, formerly the Kroll Opera House, on the day of the vote on the Enabling Act ("Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich"). The presence of SA and SS men created an atmosphere of intimidating terror.

The Nazi 'Legal Revolution'

Hitler's dictatorship had to have the appearance of legitimacy. The legal basis for the Nazi consolidation of power was established by two pieces of legislation: the **Reichstag Fire Decree**, which abolished civil liberties, and the **Enabling Act**, which removed all democratic accountability and was the foundation stone of one-party rule.





In Jul 1933, the **Concordat** was struck between the Roman Catholic Church and the Nazi government. This treaty guaranteed the rights of the Catholic Church in Germany, but Nazi breaches of the agreement began almost immediately after.

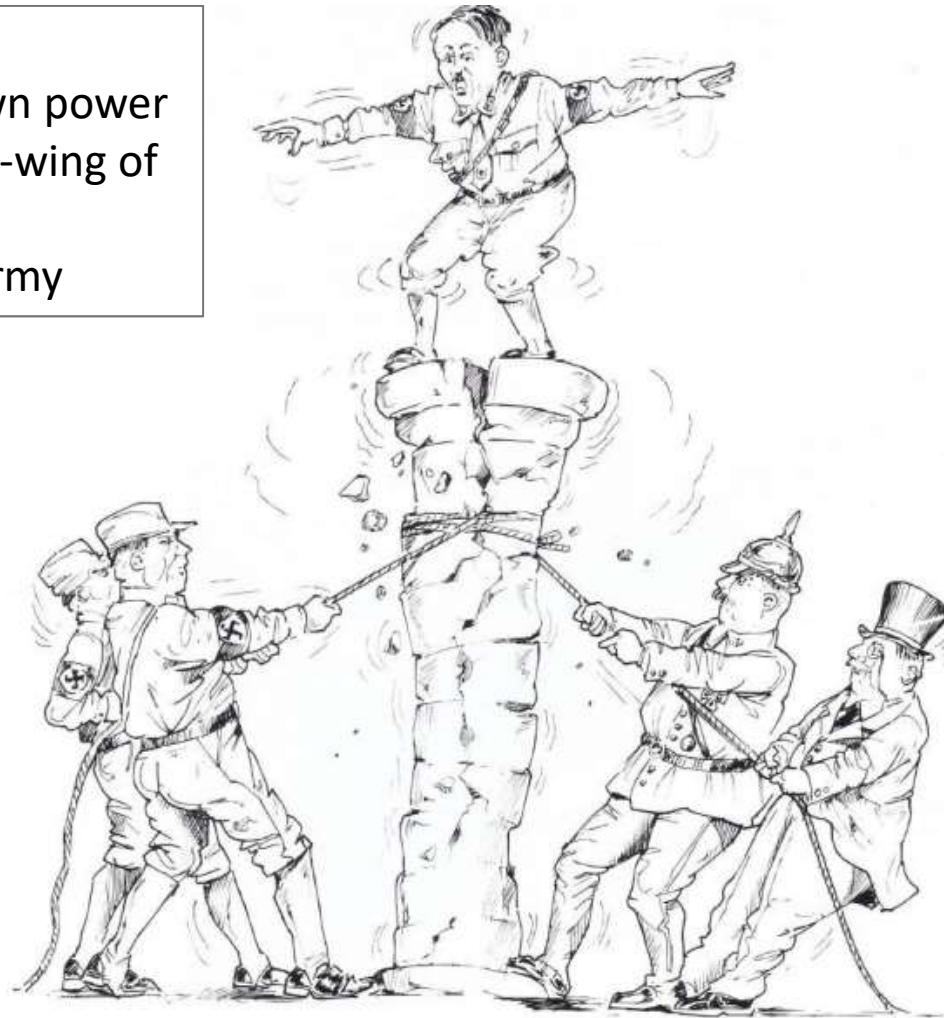
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The Night of the Long Knives (Jun 1934)

- The SA was becoming a political embarrassment for Hitler
 - Demanded a more radical 'second revolution' against Germany's privileged elites; Refused to rein in its intimidation and violent actions
 - SA leader Ernst Rohm also called for the SA to replace the Army
 - These positions threatened Hitler's relationship with the conservative elite, and especially the army
 - Hitler also considered Rohm a personal threat to his leadership
- Rohm, leaders of the SA, and other opponents murdered
- As a result, Hitler not only removed an internal threat to his authority, but also ensured the loyalty of the army
- Also resulted in the emergence of the SS

Hitler's Aims

- To increase his own power
- To control the left-wing of the Nazi Party
- To win over the army



Threat from the Nazi Left

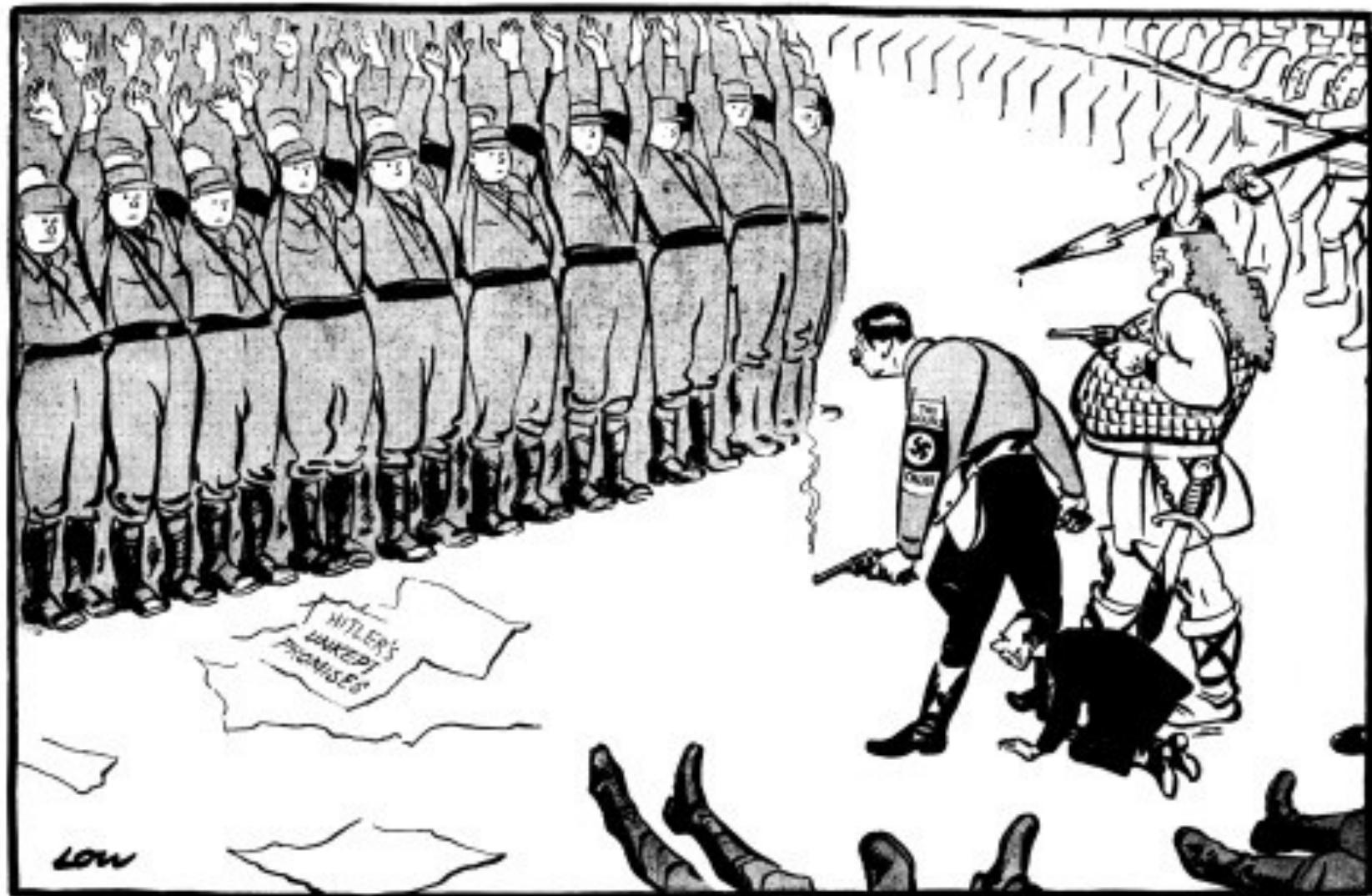
- 3-million strong SA; many of them expecting a 'second revolution'
- Concerned about Hitler selling out to the Right

Threat from the Nazi Right

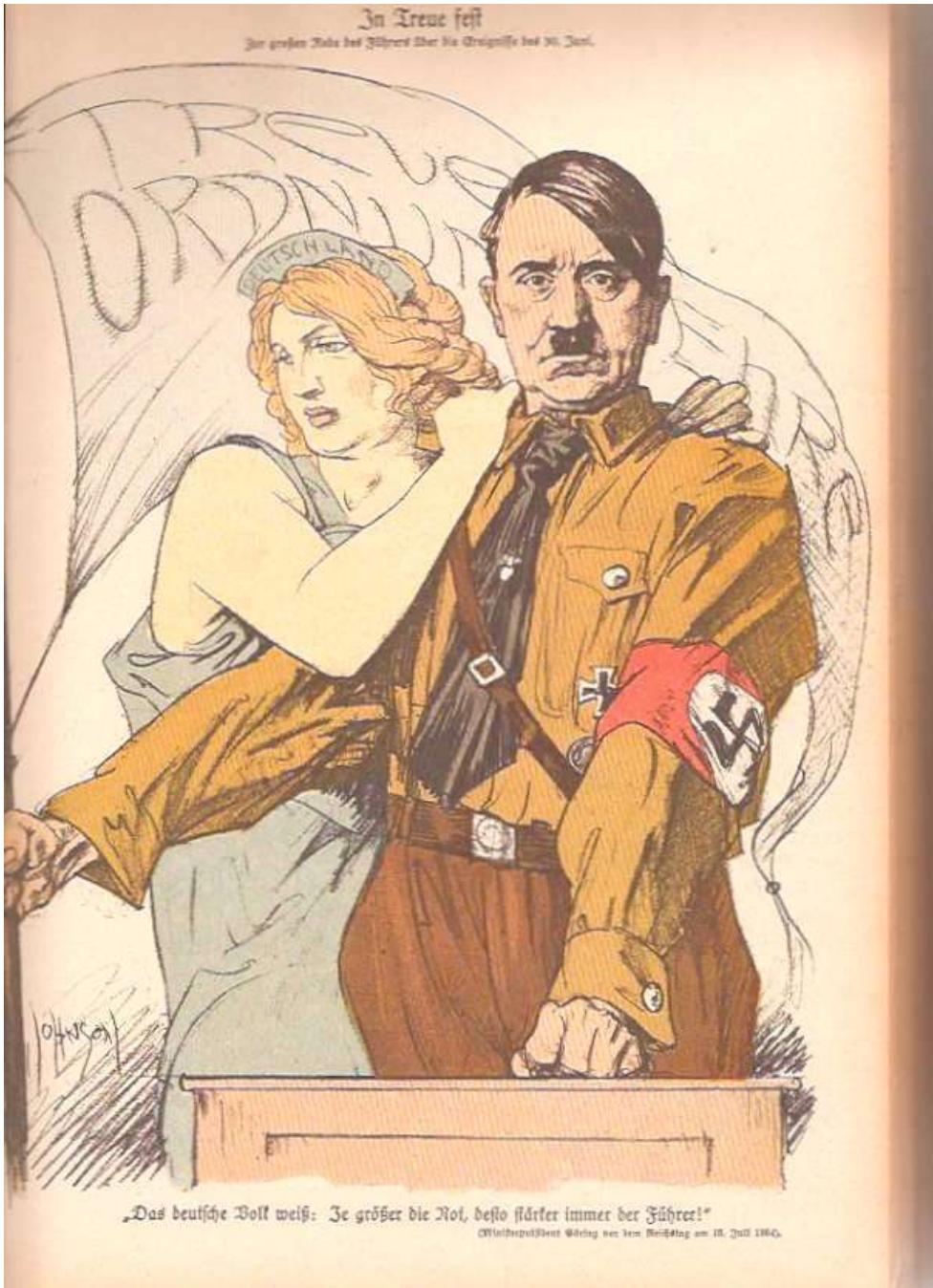
- Elite, especially the army, worried about Nazi radicals, especially the SA
- Growing criticism of Nazi excesses

On the night of 30 June 1934, Hitler ordered the SS, with tacit army support, to arrest and murder Ernst Rohm and other prominent SA leaders. This purge continued until 2 July, and Hitler also took the opportunity to settle some old scores. These actions helped Hitler **overcome the radical left** in the Nazi party and **neutralise the conservative right** in traditional Germany.





THEY SALUTE WITH BOTH HANDS NOW.



This cartoon appeared immediately after the Night of the Long Knives. The title: "Loyalty. The Führer's major speech on the events of 30 June." At bottom, a quotation from Hermann Göring: "The German people knows: The greater the need, the greater always is the Führer!"