Hitlers Consolidation Of Power Essay, Research Paper

When Hitler came to become chancellor in January 1933 his powers were relatively weak. Hitler had been appointed chancellor by the president, Hindenberg. Hindenberg had the power to appoint any chancellor he wishes, and can get rid of Hitler at any time. This means that Hindenberg controlled all of Hitler´s power. The Nazi politicians were in the minority in the cabinet and in the Reichstag – only 3 in the first cabinet. Hitler only won 33% of the vote in 1932. Without this support it was hard to gain much support for Hitler. Also, the Generals had no loyalty to him. The German army, the Wehrmacht, were very powerful and had the power to overthrow Hitler is they wished. They were afraid that Hitler would replace the army with his own SA – which had increased in size dramatically since it was first created.

Hitler managed to achieve complete control by 1934 by establishing a one-party state where he would have full control. He did this in several ways. The Reichstag building was burned down on 27 February 1933. This helped Hitler to gain a majority in the upcoming March election. The Nazis blamed the fire on the communists, specifically Van der Lubbe – and they claimed that he intended to spark a communist uprising in Germany. It is debatable as to who really caused the fire. Although Van der Lubbe confessed to it, some historians claim that the Nazis started the fire themselves deliberately to increase their chances of success. It is undeniable that Hitler did use the fire to help win the election. He launched a propaganda campaign to whip up fears of a communist uprising. This was hoped to frighten the middle-classed landowners into voting for them. The day following the fire, the “Reichstag fire decree” was introduced. This gave the nazis the power to arrest a number of communists and socialists and hold them for unlimited periods of time without having to appear in court.

The Nazis still failed to gain a majority in the Reichstag, receiving only 44% of the vote (although this was their best election performance). With the support of the Nationalist Party they had a slight majority of seats. Their good performance was undeniably helped by the fact that 81 communist leaders were being held under the “Reichstag Fire Decree”.

Hitler used his new power to pass the “Enabling act” on the 23rd March 1933. This gave Hitler dictatorial powers by enabling him to make decisions that had the same authority and power as those made through Reichstag. Under these powers Hitler was able to destroy the trade union movement of Germany. On 2nd may SA men raided trade union offices and officials were arrested. The Nazis replaced this with the “German Labour Front” which was compulsory for all workers.

Similarly, Hitler used these powers to destroy all opposing political parties, creating a one party state. The Final stage of Hitler´s Consolidation was with the destruction of the Parties internal opposition. The Night of the Long Knives was the name given to the purge of the SA, led by Ernst Rohm. Hitler believed that Rohm was conspiring to take over leadership. Rohm also wanted to create a new army, the “peoples army” out of the SA. This threatened the Wehrmacht, and so by the Sa´s destruction Hitler gained the oath of loyalty from the army.