# Hitler: From Chancellor to Dictator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 point</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>5 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSDAP</td>
<td>Hindenburg</td>
<td>Chancellor</td>
<td>Dolchstoss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>Reichstag</td>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>Proportional Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictator</td>
<td>Fuhrer</td>
<td>Enabling Act</td>
<td>Abdication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How many terms can you define?

Challenge: Create a question where this word is the answer.
Describe the events that led to Hitler becoming a dictator.

Explain why the Reichstag Fire, Enabling Act and Night of the Long Knives helped Hitler become a dictator.

Assess the most important factor in Hitler becoming a dictator.

Would it be possible for a Prime Minister to become a dictator today?

Lack of: democracy, mutual respect, tolerance.

Rule of law
On January 30th 1933 Hindenburg made Hitler the Chancellor of the Weimar Republic. This made Hitler one of the most important and powerful people in Germany.

However – he was only **ONE OF** the most important people... he did not have total power yet. He had limitations to his power:

- The Nazis only controlled **1/3 of the Reichstag**, this was not a majority
- Hindenburg was **above** Hitler and could fire him anytime.
- Hitler’s cabinet of 12 members only contained **two Nazis**.
- Hitler still **had to follow** the rules of the Weimar Constitution, he couldn’t pass laws on his own.
Within a little over a year, Hitler was the single most powerful person in Germany with **total and unquestioned power** to do whatever he wanted.

How did he achieve this?
Your Task:
Use your memory to fill out your ROAD TO DICTATOR worksheet.

EXTENSION
Think of what different road signs you could add to this journey.
What could they represent?
The Reichstag Fire – 27\textsuperscript{th} February 1933

On the evening of 27\textsuperscript{th} February, 1933, the Reichstag building was destroyed by a massive fire.

A Dutch communist named Marinus van der Lubbe was caught at the scene with matches and firelighters. He confessed and was found guilty, claiming that he acted alone. He was executed shortly afterwards.

Hitler used this as a massive opportunity. He claimed that van der Lubbe must have been part of a communist plot against the government. He used this as an opportunity to attack the communists – the night of the fire 4,000 were arrested.

The next day, Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to declare a state of emergency. This gave Hitler the temporary power to pass laws himself. Next, he asked Hindenburg to call a new Reichstag election, hoping that he could use this opportunity to get more seats in the Reichstag.

Everything he did so far was legal, but he was able to use his power to influence the election.
- He passed the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State. This gave him power to ban communist newspapers and imprison political opponents.
- He controlled the police, so made sure they turned a blind eye to the violence of the SA, 70 were killed in the run up to the election.

When the election happened, the Nazis won 288 seats, when joining with the other Nationalist parties this gave them a \textit{2/3rd} majority in the Reichstag. This meant that Hitler could easily pass new laws.

\textbf{Source A}
\textit{The Reichstag building on fire in 1933}
In March 1933, Hitler suggested passing the **Enabling Act**. This was designed to destroy the power of the Reichstag and massively increase the power of Hitler.

The full name of the law was **The Law for the Removal of the Distress of the People and Reich**. It said that:

- The Reich Cabinet could pass laws without the Reichstag
- These laws could overrule the Weimar Constitution
- These laws would be proposed by the Chancellor (Hitler)

This gave Hitler the right to make laws for four years without the agreement of the Reichstag parliament.

Hitler knew that this would be hard to pass, so he used the SA and the SS to violently intimidate and bully opposing politicians. Some fled, some were beat up, and others decided to follow the Nazi line.

On March 24th, with the Communists refusing to turn up, the vote was taken and the Enabling Act was passed by 444 votes to only 94.

Although the Act was passed under huge intimidation and bullying, it was technically legal – The Reichstag had just voted themselves out of existence.

---

**Source B**

*From a British diplomat living in Berlin in 1933:*

There were nearly 350 Nazi officers. The Communists had not turned up, many of the Social Democrats had not turned up. Some were in hospital, others had fled. Who could blame them?

Along the corridors, SS men, in their sinister black uniforms, had been posted. Their legs apart they stood at every corridor and entrance, their eyes cold and hard.

Outside the SA marched and chanted: “Give us the Bill or else fire and murder”. This could be clearly heard in the Reichstag chamber.
Removing Opposition – 1933-1934

With the new powers given to him by the Enabling Act, Hitler set about removing all sources of opposition to his rule in Germany.

**Trade Unions:**
These were workers organisations that protected employees against their employers. They were hotspots for communism and Hitler was worried that they could organise strikes against his government and targeted them.

- They broke into offices and arrested trade union officials
- He banned all trade unions and made it illegal to go on strike

**Other Political Parties**
Hitler then began to remove all other political parties

- In May 1933 Nazi Stormtroopers entered the offices of the Social Democrat party and the Communist party, destroying their newspapers and confiscating their funds.
- In July 1933 Hitler issued a decree that made all other political parties illegal.

**Local Government**

Hitler strengthened central government and weakened local government.

- There were 18 local parliaments (called Lander parliaments) Hitler banned these and ordered that governors appointed by him would replace them.

Source C

*A British cartoon showing Hindenburg holding up Hitler’s hand in triumph. The defeated opponent is labelled “German liberties”*
At the start of 1934 Germany was a **one party state**. Hitler was the leader of that party.

Hitler worried however about challenges from within his own party. Specifically, he was worried about Ernst Rohm, the leader of the SA.

- Rohm had increased the size of the SA to 3 million. Some of these complained that Hitler didn’t respect them, and they were more loyal to Rohm than Hitler
- Rohm also opposed Hitler’s policies. He hated the Nazi links to rich industrialists. He wanted much stronger socialist policies.

Others thought he was a threat too. The army was scared, because of the Treaty of Versailles they had only 100,000 men – nothing compared to the SA’s 3 million. The SS also disliked the SA, it’s leaders wanted to increase the power of the SS.

The SS and army warn Hitler that they think Rohm is plotting against him. On 30th June 1934 Hitler invited Rohm and 100 other SA leaders to a hotel. When they arrive, Rohm and the other leaders were arrested and shot. This is called **The Night of the Long Knives**.

Von Papen complained to Goering but he was also arrested, his house was surrounded and his phone was cut off. He most certainly did not have “Hitler in his pocket”.

Some Germans objected to the violence but most were just happy that the hated SA had been restrained.
On the 2\textsuperscript{nd} August 1934 Hindenburg, aged 87, died. Hitler took supreme power.

- He declared himself Germany’s “\textit{Fuhrer}” and decreed that he would add all of the President’s powers to those he already had as Chancellor.

- He forced every member of the army to swear him an \textit{oath of loyalty}.

A \textit{plebicide} (a public vote – like brexit) was held on 19\textsuperscript{th} August to confirm Hitler as Fuhrer. Bombarded by pro-Nazi propaganda it was \textit{passed by 90\%}.

The Weimar Republic officially ended.
Interpretation 1

From Life in Germany 1919-1945, by Steve Waugh, published in 2009

The greatest threat came from within the Nazi Party. Rohm, as leader of the SA, was a genuine threat to Hitler’s own position as leader. Rohm was the commander of a very large organisation of men whose members were increasingly out of control. Moreover, Rohm favoured a “second revolution”, which would lead to more socialist policies. The purge was also the result of a power struggle between Rohm and leading Nazis, like Herman Goering, the leader of the SS.

Interpretation 2

From Germany 1918-1945, by K Shephard, published in 1971

The smoothness with which the murders of June 30th were carried out is powerful proof that no Rohm plot was imminent. There was no resistance encountered anywhere. More victims unsuspectingly surrendered voluntarily believing it was a big mistake. The only shots fired were those of the executioners.

Source A

From the book Hitler Speaks, published in 1940, by Herman Rauschning, a Nazi official who fled Germany in 1936.

In the last months of his life, in 1934, Ernst Rohm turned bitterly against Hitler. I remember one evening we were drinking on his balcony. Rohm was drunk and ranting about Hitler. He said “Adolf is a swine. His old friends are not good enough for him. Adolf is turning into a gentleman. He wants to sit on a hilltop and pretend he is God.”

Source B

Extracts from the diary of Alfred Rosenberg from 30th June 1934. Rosenberg was a leading Nazi.

With an SS escort, the Fuhrer knocked gently on Rohm’s door. “A message from Munich”, he said in a disguised voice. “Come in”, Rohm shouted back, “the door is open”. Hitler tore open the door, fell on Rohm as he lay in bed, seized him by the throat and screamed, “You are under arrest, you pig!”. Then he turned him over to the SS.

Question 3b

Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about the threat posed by Rohm to Hitler in 1934. What is the main difference between these views?

Explain your answer using details from both interpretations.

(4 marks)

Question 3c

Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about the threat posed by Rohm to Hitler in 1934.

You may use Sources A and B to help explain your answer.

(4 marks)
Interpretation 1

From Life in Germany 1919-1945, by Steve Waugh, published in 2009

The greatest threat came from within the Nazi Party. Rohm, as leader of the SA, was a genuine threat to Hitler’s own position as leader. Rohm was the commander of a very large organisation of men whose members were increasingly out of control. Moreover, Rohm favoured a “second revolution”, which would lead to more socialist policies. The purge was also the result of a power struggle between Rohm and leading Nazis, like Herman Goering, the leader of the SS.

Interpretation 2

From Germany 1918-1945, by K Shephard, published in 1971

The smoothness with which the murders of June 30th were carried out is powerful proof that no Rohm plot was imminent. There was no resistance encountered anywhere. More victims unsuspectingly surrendered voluntarily believing it was a big mistake. The only shots fired were those of the executioners.

Source A

From the book Hitler Speaks, published in 1940, by Herman Rauschnig, a Nazi official who fled Germany in 1936.

In the last months of his life, in 1934, Ernst Rohm turned bitterly against Hitler. I remember one evening we were drinking on his balcony. Rohm was drunk and ranting about Hitler. He said “Adolf is a swine. His old friends are not good enough for him. Adolf is turning into a gentleman. He wants to sit on a hilltop and pretend he is God.”

Source B

Extracts from the diary of Alfred Rosenberg from 30th June 1934. Rosenberg was a leading Nazi.

With an SS escort, the Fuhrer knocked gently on Rohm’s door. “A message from Munich”, he said in a disguised voice. “Come in”, Rohm shouted back, “the door is open”. Hitler tore open the door, fell on Rohm as he lay in bed, seized him by the throat and screamed, “You are under arrest, you pig!”. Then he turned him over to the SS.

Question 3b

Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about the threat posed by Rohm to Hitler in 1934. What is the main difference between these views?

Explain your answer using details from both interpretations.

(4 marks)

Question 3c

Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about the threat posed by Rohm to Hitler in 1934.

You may use Sources A and B to help explain your answer.

(4 marks)
Interpretation 1

From Life in Germany 1919-1945, by Steve Waugh, published in 2009

The greatest threat came from within the Nazi Party. Rohm, as leader of the SA, was a genuine threat to Hitler's own position as leader. Rohm was the commander of a very large organisation of men whose members were increasingly out of control. Moreover, Rohm favoured a "second revolution", which would lead to more socialist policies. The purge was also the result of a power struggle between Rohm and leading Nazis, like Herman Goering, the leader of the SS.

Interpretation 2

From Germany 1918-1945, by K Shephard, published in 1971

The smoothness with which the murders of June 30th were carried out is powerful proof that no Rohm plot was imminent. There was no resistance encountered anywhere. More victims unsuspectingly surrendered voluntarily believing it was a big mistake. The only shots fired were those of the executioners.

Source A

From the book Hitler Speaks, published in 1940, by Herman Rauschning, a Nazi official who fled Germany in 1936.

In the last months of his life, in 1934, Ernst Rohm turned bitterly against Hitler. I remember one evening we were drinking on his balcony. Rohm was drunk and ranting about Hitler. He said "Adolf is a swine. His old friends are not good enough for him. Adolf is turning into a gentleman. He wants to sit on a hilltop and pretend he is God."

Source B

Extracts from the diary of Alfred Rosenberg from 30th June 1934. Rosenberg was a leading Nazi.

With an SS escort, the Fuhrer knocked gently on Rohm's door. "A message from Munich", he said in a disguised voice. "Come in", Rohm shouted back, "the door is open". Hitler tore open the door, fell on Rohm as he lay in bed, seized him by the throat and screamed. "You are under arrest, you pig!". Then he turned him over to the SS.

Question 3b

Study Interpretations 1 and 2. They give different views about the threat posed by Rohm to Hitler in 1934. What is the main difference between these views?

Explain your answer using details from both interpretations.

(4 marks)

Question 3c

Suggest one reason why Interpretations 1 and 2 give different views about the threat posed by Rohm to Hitler in 1934.

You may use Sources A and B to help explain your answer.

(4 marks)