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Just how *did* Hitler consolidate his power and become Führer?

In January 1933 Hitler was given the Chancellorship. However, this did not mean that he was able to rule as he wished from the outset. Several barriers to unparalleled and unchecked power remained in place, such as opposition parties, the President, the Constitution, the Law and, not least, the German Army. However, by mid-1934, Adolf Hitler had become the unrivalled 'Führer' of Germany. What was the main causal factor that facilitated Hitler's journey from Chancellor to Führer by 1934? In this episode, Elliott (@thelibrarian) argues in favour of the Enabling Law of 1933, while Patrick (@historychappy) argues that it was the death of President Hindenburg in 1934 that allowed Hitler unchecked power. Special guest Conal (@prohistoricman) argues that it was the mechanisms of the Nazi 'Police State' which mainly enabled Hitler to become Führer. Please note, this episode was recorded live in a Cafe. As such, there may be some ambient noise - hopefully this adds a degree of organic flavour to proceedings! For terms of use, please visit www.versushistory.com.

Patrick's arguments that the <i>death of Hindenburg</i> was the key causal factor.	Elliott's arguments that the <i>Enabling Law</i> was the key causal factor.	Conal's arguments that the ' <i>police state</i> ' was the key causal factor.
Until the death of President Hindenburg in August 1934, Hitler's power was limited in both theoretical and practical terms. As per the constitution, Hindenburg was more powerful than Hitler. In practical terms, Hitler ruled at Hindenburg's discretion, not vice versa.	The Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich (Enabling Law) laid the foundation for the dictatorship because it removed any requirement for Hitler to consult the Reichstag in any matter of law-making.	Laws on their own do not ensure obedience and conformity. It is only in combination with a means of enforcement, such as the organisations of the SS, Gestapo, SD etc., that they play a role.
Hindenburg was the one man in Germany that Hitler could not directly challenge. During the 1932 Presidential Election, Hitler avoided criticising Hindenburg - and lost to him. As such, Hitler had good reason to appease Hindenburg until his death.	When Hitler becomes Chancellor, there are only three Nazis in the cabinet and they still no majority in the Reichstag. This weakness becomes irrelevant after the passing of the Law.	The Police State was very active from the start of Hitler's time as Chancellor, with 26,000 political prisoners by July 1933. This played a key role in preemptively stopping dissent.
Hindenburg was the one man in Germany with a power source completely independent of Hitler: the German Army. The Army only swore loyalty to Hitler after Hindenburg died - not before.	In de facto terms, the Law also removed the constitutional requirement to gain the approval of Hindenburg in passing laws. At this point, Hitler is surely a dictator.	Organisations within the Police State were able to go beyond the law and often operated outside of it, thereby allowing them to secure Hitler's power further.
The Night of the Long Knives in 1934 is evidence of Hitler's willingness to annihilate leading Nazis, such as Rohm, and curb the power of the SA, largely in order to assuage Hindenburg and the German Army. This showcases Hindenburg's de facto power.	No matter how terrible the laws passed thereafter, there is no legal way to challenge them as the Reichstag has voted itself out of existence. Hitler is legally able to carry out almost every whim of the Nazis.	The Nazis recognised the key importance of the Police State. Goering claimed it was " <i>chiefly responsible for the fact that in Germany today there is no question of a Marxist or Communist danger.</i> " (1934)

Don't forget to check out Dr Elliott L. Watson's free website: www.thecourseworkclub.com and follow him at @thelibrarian6 on Twitter.

Don't forget to check out Patrick O'Shaughnessy's free website: www.historychappy.com and follow him at @historychappy on Twitter.

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