

# Was hitler really master in the third reich

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



When it comes to choosing sources to answer an essay question such as “ To what extent was Hitler ‘ master in the Third Reich?’” it can be difficult to find reliable and valuable ones, especially from the wide range of sources that are available to us for such a subject. I believe that if you can find sources that link with one another, either with the same viewpoint or arguing viewpoints it will be far easier to answer an essay question.

My choice of sources fit in well with one another, at times the sources don't meet eye to eye when it comes to the opinion of Hitler's role in the Nazi party and whether or not he really is the master of the Third Reich but they both provide greater insight to the political and social ideas of different people, ranging from Hitler himself, to his close party members and even more to the likes of Carl Schmitt, a leading constitutional lawyer. The sources provide us with a balanced argument on the true opinions of Adolf Hitler. They all share the same topic of interest and that's Hitler's role as Fuhrer and Reich Chancellor.

After looking through various possibilities, my first source to analyse was Ian Kershaw's journal on contemporary history written in 1993, “Working towards the Führer.” Reflections on the nature of the Nazi dictatorship, *Contemporary European History*, 2, pp. 103-118”. Kershaw's journal draws up a series of points, which tell us about Hitler's style of government, and the way, in which he conducted his daily and long-term actions, it gives us a good comparison between Stalin and Hitler and how they differ in terms of leadership.

When analysing a source we have to look at its significance or value when using it to answer our question and throughout Ian Kershaw's "Working towards the Führer", he gives us various examples and evidence on Hitler's role in the Nazi party and how that differed from Stalin's leadership. The finest example is on page 105, where we have a statement from Fritz Wiedemann, commenting in 1964 on Hitler's style of government:

' Hitler normally appeared shortly before lunch, quickly read through Reich Press Chief Dietrich's press cuttings, and then went into lunch. So it became more and more difficult for Lammers and Meissner to get him to make decisions which he alone could make as head of state...When Hitler stayed at Obersalzberg it was even worse. There, he never left his room before 2pm. Then, he went to lunch. He spent most afternoons taking a walk, in the evening straight after dinner, there were films...He disliked the study of documents. I have sometimes secured decisions from him, even ones about important matters, without his ever asking to see the relevant files. He took the view that many things sorted themselves out on their own if one did not interfere.'

Wiedemann, most known for his role as Hitler's personal adjutant was born August 1891, and as young man served in World War One as a German Soldier alongside Hitler. In 1934 he joined the Nazi Party and became Hitler's personal assistant until 1938. His background in terms of his role in the Nazi party and his connections with Hitler help us move towards accepting his statement as reliable as Wiedemann has an immediate relationship with Hitler, he has worked for him and with him. He will personally know Hitler

and there are few better people to interpret Hitler's leadership qualities or lack of qualities. We also notice that Wiedemann's role at Hitler's side ended in 1938, which has significance in terms of his judgement on Hitler's role in the party. Wiedemann only experienced Hitler in charge during the inter-war periods, from 1934 to 1938, so whatever his opinion is of Hitler style of government can only be applied to this time period before the Second World War and not to Hitler during the Second World War.

None the less the source is contemporary to the time of period we are studying and does apply to Hitler's role as 'master of the Third Reich', making it a primary source, and although the statement in the source is released shortly after the war I believe this in fact helps us verify it as a reliable source, as at this time the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler and the war did not exist anymore, leading us to believe that there was no longer the fear of reparations, therefore no reason not to speak the truth about Hitler.

Wiedemann's statement does appear to be very truthful, still an opinion of course but Wiedemann did not appear to have a negative relationship with Hitler, which makes the statement appear non-emotional or even judgemental but simply opinionated and an observation. This does not make the source 100% reliable but it does allow us to have an insight on Hitler's role in the Nazi party from the viewpoint of one of his party members. We cannot forget to mention that Wiedemann was a strong supporter of the Nazi party, a Partisan and upheld his political views long after he left his role as Hitler's assistant, which could make his statement on Hitler very biased and not tell us the whole truth.

This particular part of Kershaw's journal has many others like it; Wiedemann is not the first Nazi party member to make a statement on Hitler's role in government. When using this source as a piece of evidence in formulating an opinion on Hitler's role in the Reich it is very useful to the historian or student but 'opinions' on Hitler can be found almost everywhere and it doesn't really offer much that other sources can't.

My second source I decided to analysis was J. Noakes and G. Pridham's edited of "Nazism 1919-1945, vol. 2, State, Economy and Society: 1933-1939" which is a documentary reader that focuses on the domestic aspects of the regime between 1933 and 1939. The book gives more than enough examples of peoples different opinions how Hitler ruled the Nazi regime and to what extent he had with the dealings of the parties policy.

In particular, on page 205, we have a statement from Otto Dietrich, born August 1897, who also fought in the First World War, who was later awarded an Iron Cross. He later studied at university, graduating with a doctorate in political science then eventually he joined the Nazi Party in 1929 and in 1931 he was appointed as press chief to the NSDAP, where he worked closely with Joseph Goebbels in the Propaganda Ministry. Dietrich was given a position in the SS in 1932 and when Hitler became Chancellor in 1933 Dietrich was given the task of coordinating all the newspapers in Nazi Germany. Dietrich was actually fired by Hitler towards the end of the war, and some say he was never truly in Hitler's 'inner circle' and often never knew of his whereabouts. This can automatically lead us to assume that Dietrich was very bitter about

his dismissal and had a negative opinion of Hitler, which of course would influence his opinion of Hitler.

Other evidence shows us that Dietrich was actually with Hitler during the Night of the Long Knives, and he aided in the newspapers reports on how Hitler was shocked at what had happened. In addition, Dietrich was with Hitler at Rastenburg where the July Bomb Plot took place, and it was Dietrich who phoned Goebbels with the news that Hitler has survived the explosion. So the idea that Dietrich was never in Hitler's 'circle' can be debatable as he seemed to be with him often and quite close.

The reason this is so important is that it raises the question, did Dietrich really experience Hitler's style of government? Or is it just an opinion that is swayed by his negative views on Hitler for dismissal or is it a true statement that he experienced when working so closely to Hitler.

On page 205 Dietrich comments on the structure of the Nazi state, where he highlights his opinion on the intention and 'cleverness' of Hitler in running the Nazi party, for example:

"It was not all laziness or an excessive degree of tolerance which led the otherwise so energetic and forceful Hitler to tolerate this real witch's cauldron of struggles for position and conflicts over competence. It was intentional."

"With this technique he systematically disorganised the upper echelons of the Reich leadership in order to develop and further his own authority until it became a despotic tyranny."

The source has the same effects as Wiedemann's statement and both Wiedemann and Dietrich differ in their views, yet both are great sources to use. Both party members, worked with or close to Hitler, and are good people to use for their opinions on Hitler's role in government. Dietrich statement was also released after the war, leading us to believe that there is no reason for him to lie, as there will not be any repercussions. None the less they are both still opinions, maybe not accurate version of events but do offer an insight into the members mind set and give us a better argument when writing an essay, and can help us see both sides of the story.

We have to consider the question on how much are we presented. Are we given the whole picture or story, or are we not given enough? We can't just accept the source as reliable and whole truth without giving a balanced argument, which I believe using both the sources together can provide.

Both examples from Hitler's Nazi members have great importance, as they have both had significance for historians when writing their books, journals or articles. Kershaw, Noakes and Pridham have all used these 'statements' made by Wiedemann and Dietrich, using them to support their argument they are trying to raise in their work, just as we could as historians and students when writing our essays.

We can acknowledge that the two sources are primary sources, and we can also see they were intended for publication, and nothing was hidden or meant to be private. It was clearly aimed for a mass audience and the world to see, which can be taken two ways. Firstly that the statements were created purposely in order for the world to see Hitler as the West saw fit,

through propaganda, as both Dietrich and Wiedemann were later arrested after the war or secondly that it simply is the true opinion of both party members. We have to be careful when using the sources as evidence as it could not be the opinion of the members, more so the opinion of Western governments propaganda.