

Interrogation of von Neurath

By Major Monigan

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This interrogation was conducted in cooperation with the French delegation and consisted of asking questions previously prepared by the French. The matters which were covered included events from the time of Neurath's appointment by von Hindenberg in the cabinet of Hitler until the time of his retirement from the foreign office in February 1938. He reiterated his former statements concerning Germany's departure from the disarmament conference, her resignation from the League of Nations, her attitude toward Locarno, her purpose in adopting compulsory military conscription, and the occupation of the Rhineland. The reasons for all these events, according to von Neurath, was that throughout the early period of Hitler's regime it was his purpose to follow a program of disarmament but that when it became obvious that it was impossible to obtain an agreement with France under which France would disarm, Hitler felt that further conferences were of no value and that his bargaining powers would be greater if, instead of having no Army and no armaments, he would have a sufficient amount so that at the council table in exchange for other reductions of armaments, Germany, too, would reduce hers.

The occupation of the Rhineland was basically a political rather than a military event but he admitted that it had military significance in that it made more difficult any military reaction by the Western powers to the actions of Germany. He emphasized that had the Western powers reacted militarily to any of these events, Germany would have been powerless to resist them. He stated that it was his intention by negotiation to avoid the provisions of Versailles but that as a result of the Soviet-French Pact, Locarno was destroyed and then Versailles was no longer of any importance.

He denied that Hitler or he had any wish for an Anschluss with Austria but that a cessation of persecution of German minorities in the Sudeten land and a customs union with Austria was all that was initially desired. He agreed that an economic alliance of this kind, together with the growth of the Nazi Party in Austria, would make a political alliance more likely, but said that that was not Hitler's intention until 1938.

There was considerable discussion of German-Italian relationships which initially were not cordial. Nothing of substantial interest was disclosed.

German intervention in the Spanish Civil War was based more on an ideology plan than on politics. It was, of course, recognized that in the event of a Franco success France might be obliged to divert some of its forces from Germany to the Spanish border.