

Neurath, Konstantin Freiherr Von

(1873--1956), Foreign Minister of Germany from 1932--1938 and Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia from 1939--1941.

Neurath joined the foreign diplomatic service in 1901. In June 1932 he was made Foreign Minister, and held that position under Adolf Hitler until 1938. He led the negotiations that resulted in the alliance of Germany and Italy. Hitler used Neurath to keep up the appearance of respectability in his foreign policy, but replaced him in February 1938 with Joachim von Ribbentrop when he was ready to shed appearances and show his true aggressive nature.

After Czechoslovakia was dissolved in March 1939, Hitler appointed Neurath the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. In this case, Hitler once again hid behind Neurath's respectability in order to carry out dastardly activities. As Reich Protector, Neurath nominally supervised the execution of the same anti-Jewish measures already in effect in Germany and destroyed the region's political and cultural institutions. However, when Hitler was once again ready to implement even harsher measures, Neurath was dropped in favor of Reinhard Heydrich.

After the war, Neurath was found guilty of war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment; he was freed after eight years due to illness. (see also Bohemia and Moravia, Protectorate of.)