

Richard Walther Darré, Reich Farm Leader and Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture (1933/34)

Abstract

In 1933, the “blood and soil” ideologist Richard Walther Darré took control of Nazi agricultural policy. As Reich Farm Leader and Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture, Darré coordinated and directed all of German agriculture through the so-called Reich Nutrition Estate, which regulated the production, wholesale and retail trade, and consumption of agricultural products. Central protection and promotional measures such as production norms, fixed prices, import duties, and support purchases were supposed to insulate German agriculture from the world market and make it as productive as possible. In fact, by 1939 Germany had achieved the goal of self-sufficiency in the production of bread, potatoes, sugar, meat, and other foodstuffs, but only through strict rationing. At least 15 percent of the food supply was still being imported. Price increases and supply shortages were already common in Germany before 1939. Additionally, the demands of war preparation also prevented Darré from realizing his goal of raising farmers to a central position in the new German national community and achieving a general return to pre-industrial farming. Great areas of farmland were transformed into roads, airports, and military bases. The building of the “Westwall” alone swallowed up 5,600 farms, and others were confiscated and forcibly combined in order to increase production. The flight from the land was further accelerated by the development of the armaments industry. Between 1933 and 1939, the number of farm workers fell from 1.8 to 1.4 million. By the beginning of the war, Darré’s vision of a German “agricultural nobility” on its own soil had completely disappeared in the Reich. His influence steadily diminished, and in 1942 he was relieved of his duties. In 1949, he was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment in the so-called Wilhelmstraße Trial; among other charges, he was accused of expropriating Jewish and Polish farmers and refusing food to German Jews. He was pardoned the following year and died in Munich in 1953. The photo shows (from left to right) Richard Walther Darré, Walther Funk (Secretary of State in the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda), Kurt Schmitt (Reich Minister of Economics) and Gottfried Feder (Secretary of State in the Reich Ministry of Economics).

Source



Source: Members of Hitler's Cabinet. From left to right: Walther Darré (Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture), Walther Funk (State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda), Kurt Schmitt (Reich Minister of Economics), Gottfried Feder (State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Economics). Photo: Heinrich Hoffmann.

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Recommended Citation: Richard Walther Darré, Reich Farm Leader and Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture (1933/34), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-2018>> [July 08, 2025].