

Werner von Blomberg, Hermann Göring, Werner von Fritsch, and Adolf Hitler at the “Reich Party Rally for Work,” Nuremberg (September 1937)

Abstract

At the end of 1937, Hitler believed that Germany's economic and military-strategic situation would soon permit the launching of a successful war of conquest. But when he shared his plans with the most important representatives of the military leadership at a secret conference on November 5, 1937, Hitler met with skepticism, not enthusiasm. Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath, Commander-in-Chief of the Army Werner von Fritsch, and Minister of War Werner von Blomberg were all of the opinion that Hitler's war plans were dangerously premature. Contrary to Hitler's conviction, they believed that Great Britain and France could not be kept out of the conflict and that in any case Germany lacked the resources and military strength for a war on several fronts. Hitler, who was convinced of the absolute necessity of “conquering living space” [*Lebensraumeroberung*], decided to rid himself of these conservative skeptics in the army and foreign ministry. In early 1938 he used Blomberg's marriage to a former prostitute and Fritsch's alleged homosexuality as pretexts for removing both of them from office. Moreover, Hitler used the “Fritsch-Blomberg Affair” to carry out a profound restructuring and reorganization of the military and foreign policy leadership. He dissolved the Ministry of War and took personal control of the armed forces, which were now led and coordinated by the new High Command of the Wehrmacht [*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* or OKW] under General Wilhelm Keitel. He named Walther von Brauchitsch as Fritsch's successor and dismissed or transferred sixty high-ranking officers. Foreign Minister Neurath was replaced by Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Walther Funk became Minister of Economics. By March 1938, Hitler had thus achieved complete control over the military leadership and the country's foreign and economic policy. From the point of view of domestic politics, his war plans no longer faced any obstacles.

The photograph shows Blomberg, Göring, Fritsch, and Hitler at the “Reich Party Rally for Work” in Nuremberg in September 1937, two months before the secret conference that marked the beginning of the end of the military careers of Blomberg and Fritsch.

Source



Source: Reich Party Congress of Labor, Nuremberg, 1937. In the VIP gallery from left to right: Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg, Colonel General Hermann Göring, Colonel General Werner Freiherr von Fritsch, Adolf Hitler. Unknown photographer.

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