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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES  
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS BRANCH  
BIOGRAPHICAL REPORT

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This report supersedes previous report on Seyss-Inquart.

Name: SEYSS -INQUART, Arthur

Nationality: Austrian

Major Positions: Bundesminister für Inneres und Sicherheit (Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior and Security) 12 February 1938-11 March 1938.  
Bundeskanzler (Austrian Federal Chancellor,) 11 March 1938-15 March 1938.  
Reichsstatthalter (Reich Governor) of Austria, 15 March 1938-1 May 1939.  
Reichsminister ohne Geschäftsbereich (German Reich Minister without Portfolio), 1 May - 1939 - September 1939  
Stellvertreter des General-Gouverneurs im General Gouvernement (Deputy of the Governor of the General Government (Poland), September 1939 - 18 May 1940.  
Reichskommissar für die Besetzten Niederländischen Gebiete (Reich Commissioner for the Occupied Netherlands Territories) 18 May 1940 - 1945  
SS Obergruppenführer  
Birth Date and Place: 22 July 1892, Stannern near Jihlava, Moravia 1/  
Religion: Roman Catholic 1/

Family History: Seyss-Inquart's father came from Eger (northern Bohemia, close to the German border) His mother was born in Germany. 10/ He is married and has two children. 4/ His elder brother, Richard, who is prominent in youth welfare, directs the State School for Delinquent Children in Kaiser-Ebersdorf near Vienna. According to source 4/, Richard was never a Nazi and was always considered as having leftist tendencies.

Education and Military History: Seyss Inquart attended Gymnasium in Jihlava. At the age of sixteen (in 1908) he moved to Vienna with his parents and was graduated from the Gymnasium in Baden near Vienna in 1910. 3/, 10/. He studied law at the University of Vienna, but had to interrupt his studies in 1914 to enter the Austro-Hungarian Army. He passed his final examinations and received his law degree in 1917. 10/. During his university years he was a member of a Catholic fraternity. The alumni of Catholic fraternities played an influential role in Austria by way of the Christian Social Party, the leading government party between 1920 and 1938. 4/

It is also reported that the later relationship between Schuschnigg and Seyss-Inquart was based largely on their common membership in Catholic fraternities. 4/

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From 1914-1918 Seyss-Inquart served as a commissioned officer in a Tyrolean Imperial Chasseur (Kaiserjäger) regiment. Reportedly among his comrades were also the future Austrian Chancellors, Dollfuss and Schuschnigg. 3/ Seyss-Inquart was wounded during one of the Isonzo battles and has limped slightly since that time. 3/ Upon termination of hostilities in 1918, he took a position with a law firm in Vienna and passed his final bar examination in 1921. 10/

Work and Political History:

Seyss-Inquart began the practice of law in Vienna in 1921 and continued in this capacity until he became a member of the Austrian Federal Government in 1938. 10/

Until the end of the 1920's, he was interested in politics, without being prominent in any political group. 10/ However, according to his own statement, he was always in favor of the incorporation of Austria into Germany. 10/ From 1929 to 1930 he was a member of the governing board of the Austro-German Volksbund, a non-partisan organization advocating the Anschluss (union of Austria with Germany). The president of this organization was Dr. Hermann Neubacher, who was to become Mayor of Vienna after the German occupation of Austria, and, later, German special representative in the Balkans. 10/ Seyss-Inquart's pro-German leanings at that time are also indicated by his membership in the German Club in Vienna, a place where Anschluss sympathizers gathered and met with Reich Germans. 4/, 10/

From 1931 to 1933 Seyss-Inquart was a member of the Styrian Home Guard (Steirischer Heimatschutz), led by Konstantin Kammerhofer who later became a member of the Nazi Reichstag of Greater Germany. This Styrian Home Guard was German nationalist in spirit and had split off from Starhemberg's Heimwehr (Home Guard) because Starhemberg was opposed to the Anschluss. After 1934, the members of the Styrian Home Guard joined the illegal Nazi Party in Austria. 4/, 10/

In 1932, Seyss-Inquart became a member of an organization called Förderer der NSDAP (Promoters of the NSDAP), the members of which supported the Nazis materially without joining the Nazi Party. 10/ Dollfuss nevertheless made him a member of the Staatsrat (State Council) in May 1934, apparently in the belief that Seyss-Inquart would use his good connections with both government and Nazi circles to bring about a reconciliation of the two camps. 3/ Seyss-Inquart has maintained that Dollfuss called him in the middle of July 1934 in order to discuss with him the establishment of a modus vivendi with the Nazis. 10/

Between 1934 and 1938 Seyss-Inquart was in constant contact with the illegal leadership and organization of the Austrian Nazi Party. 4/ But he refrained from joining the party and served, instead, as an intermediary between Catholic and Nazi circles. Source says he considered himself an adherent of a particular Catholic group, the so-called Brückenbauer (bridge builders), of whom Bishop Alois Hudal, Rector of the Unima in Rome, was the spiritual leader; this group further voiced its views in the political weekly, Die Schöner Zukunft (The More Beautiful Future),

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published and edited in Vienna by Josef Eberle. 4/ In official Austrian circles he was regarded as a betont-Nationaler, that is, an outspoken German nationalist who was not, however, engaged in subversive activities. 4/ In spite of Seyss-Inquart's attitude, Schuschnigg still considered him a patriotic Austrian and placed him in charge of the so-called national-politische committees within the Vaterländische Front (Austrian Patriotic Front), that is Schuschnigg entrusted him with the task of reconciling the pro-Nazi "national opposition" with the Austrian State and its form of government. 4/

In July 1936 Schuschnigg began negotiations with a committee of seven persons selected by Captain Leopold, the then leader of the Austrian Nazis. In addition, Schuschnigg negotiated with Seyss-Inquart who proposed the legalization of the Nazi Party in exchange for a promise from Germany not to interfere with Austrian internal affairs. However, these negotiations did not result in any lasting agreement. 10/

Eventually, when Schuschnigg was induced to confer with Hitler in Berchtesgaden on 12 February 1938, one point of Hitler's ultimatum to him was the appointment of Seyss-Inquart to the post of Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior and Security. As a result, Seyss-Inquart was placed in this position on the same day. 6/

Seyss-Inquart's first official act was a trip to Berlin. There he presented himself to Hitler and Goring, asking for their special wishes. 3/ After his return to Austria he began to remove the obstacles in the way of Nazi propaganda in Austria. 3/ Schuschnigg soon realized that his confidence in Seyss-Inquart was misplaced. For this reason he did not inform Seyss-Inquart and his pro-Nazi colleague in the government, General Glaise-Horstenau, about his decision to have the Austrian people confirm their desire for independence through a plebiscite. 4/ Both pro-Nazi members of the government learned of Schuschnigg's decision when he made his public announcement at Innsbruck; they immediately contacted Berlin and, two days later, confronted the Chancellor with the text of a German ultimatum demanding Schuschnigg's resignation and the revocation of the plebiscite. 3/, 4/. Schuschnigg yielded and announced his resignation over the radio the evening of March 1938. According to one report, two hours later, Federal President Miklas, who had been hesitant to accept Schuschnigg's resignation, learned that Seyss-Inquart had already spoken over the radio as chief of the new government. Under the pressure of the impending invasion of Austria by German troops, Miklas officially appointed Seyss-Inquart Federal Chancellor and the latter immediately formed an Austrian Nazi government. 3/ As agreed with Berlin, he then made the official request to Hitler that the German Reich send troops into Austria in order to prevent civil war. 3/

Two days later he went to greet the Führer on Austrian soil. At that time, Seyss-Inquart was presented with the text of the Anschluss declaration. 4/ Seyss-Inquart was appointed Reichsstatthalter (Governor) of Ostmark -- Austria having lost its name immediately after the Anschluss, on March 15, 1938, but political power was concentrated in the hands of the Nazi Gauleiter of Ostmark, Bürckel, a Reich German. 3/, 4/. (It has been pointed out that Seyss-Inquart was not eligible for the position of Gauleiter because he was not officially a member of the NSDAP at that time) 4/

In April 1938 Seyss-Inquart became a member of the Grossdeutscher Reichstag (Reichstag of Greater Germany, which included Austria). 1/ He also became a member of the Nazi Party and was appointed an SS-Obergruppenführer. 8/, 20/, 21/. He lost his position as Governor of Austria on 1 May 1939 when that country was divided into seven Reichsgaue (Reich provinces). Thereupon, Seyss-Inquart was transferred to Berlin and appointed Reichsminister ohne Geschäftsbereich (Reich Minister without Portfolio). 3/

After the conquest of Poland in September 1939 he was appointed Stellvertreter des General-Gouverneurs im General-Gouvernement (Deputy to the Governor General of Poland), Hans Frank. 3/ Seyss-Inquart remained in this position until 18 May, 1940 and therefore may be assumed to share the responsibility for the initial wave of Nazi terror over defeated Poland and the organization of the German administration in that country. 3/

On 18 May 1940 Seyss-Inquart was appointed Reichskommissar für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete (Reich Commissioner for the Occupied Netherlands Territories). 3/ In this position he was directly responsible to Hitler. He first approached the Dutch with the purpose of winning them over to the German cause. On the day of his inaudition into office, 29 May 1940, he declared: "Dutch laws hitherto observed shall remain in force as far as possible. Dutch officials are to be instruments of power in the new administration. The independence of legal jurisdiction is to be preserved...The German Army would rather have entered this land with its arms raised in friendly salute than with weapons in hand. We did not come here to oppress the people and to deprive the nation of its freedom." 3/ Shortly after this proclamation had been issued, however, the Nazis began to exploit the Dutch people in complete disregard of Dutch laws and of the internationally recognized laws of occupation. The Nürnberg (anti-Semitic) Laws and other German laws designed to promote racial discrimination were introduced in the Netherlands. Dutch labor was illegally and forcibly recruited to work in Germany, the Dutch churches were restricted in their activities, and the Netherlands were thoroughly looted. Numerous Dutch patriots were killed, and not a few were taken as hostages for deeds with which they had had nothing to do. When the Dutch workers called strikes and rioted against the deportation of slave workers from the Netherlands to Germany, Seyss-Inquart quelled the strikes with the utmost brutality. 2/, 8/

On 9 January 1943, he published a decree in the Verordnungsblatt to the effect that all violations of public order were henceforth to be dealt with by a special court (Politie Standgerecht) composed exclusively of SS men, a court from the decisions of which no appeals were permissible. The accused did not have the right to select a defense counsel but was represented by an SS man. This "court" was under the final and absolute jurisdiction of the Reich Commissioner, Seyss-Inquart. 8/

In a long speech delivered to the Dutch people on 19 May 1943, Seyss-Inquart decreed a state of emergency in the Netherlands. 11/.

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In order to enforce this decree, he required that all radios, except those belonging to National Socialists, be surrendered to the authorities; furthermore, he ordered the internment of about 400,000 Dutch soldiers who had been released from German prison camps in June 1940. 11/

On 28 June 1943 he issued a decree in which he introduced the unusual concept of crime as "an act punishable according to a healthy sense of justice". This decree stipulated that penal provision was applicable under this concept even if the act did not fall under the text but only under the "basic principle underlying an article of law." A Nazi newspaper commented that the decree was an important step on the path leading to the recovery of that unity which once existed between law and justice, and advised the National Socialists to remember that this decree was but the first step toward the realization of this goal. 12/

At the same time, Seyss-Inquart tried to persuade the Dutch to collaborate. Thus, in August 1943, he sponsored the new periodical Westland to stimulate Dutch science and publicity to renewed activity. In such inconspicuous ways he offered the Dutch people "incentives" and opportunities to carry on their own activity "within the framework of the greater unity." 13/

According to a report of 13 October 1944, Seyss-Inquart was ordered by Himmler to take over the civil administration of Denmark. 14/ This report, however, has not been confirmed by any other source.

During his stay in the Netherlands, Seyss-Inquart had his official residence in the Hague, but his favorite residence was the Olingendaal Estate nearby. 2/ He is said to have lived in great luxury and to have derived a large income from his dealings with Dutch funds. 5/

Seyss-Inquart maintained an unwavering Nazi attitude to the very end. In the course of a speech delivered to the German Wodes in the Netherlands on May 1945, he stated:

German soldiers, German men and women, German youth in the Fortress of Holland. Our Führer has died in action. His tangible acts have come to an end. His life has ended in a soldier's death. His mission has been fulfilled. His spirit will never die, it will live on in all Germans for ever.

On March 15 1938, our Führer told the German people that his greatest ambition until that time was to effect the reunion of all Germans. He had made Greater Germany a reality. This fulfilment of a thousand-year-old desire could not be realized without incurring the hatred and fear of those who, in their blindness, whether deliberately or not, considered this peaceful achievement of our Führer to be a threat to their possessions and an obstacle to their plans of world domination. The suffering of 80 million Germans have contributed toward his clear and uncompromising determination to achieve (? the liberty of the German people and a Greater Germany).

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Now, after the heroic death of our Fuhrer, we shall never cease to fight. Every new day will find us ready with the Fuhrer's faith imperishably graven upon our hearts: 'We believe in Germany and we fight on.' 15/

Six days later, on 8 May 1945, he was captured by British troops. 16/ As of 15 June 1945 he was listed among high-ranking Nazis detained at ASHCAN. 17/ According to his own statement, made since his apprehension by the Allies, he has always been and still is an absolute supporter of the Anschluss idea, and is perfectly willing to answer for anything he has done to realize the Greater Germany. 18/

According to a report of 22 December 1943, he was appointed President of the Deutsche Akademie (German Academy) in Munich, replacing the late Ludwig Siebert, Prime Minister of Bavaria. 18/ It was reported at that time that Goebbels considered Seyss-Inquart too ambitious and, for that reason, had "promoted him" to President of the German Academy. The report went on to state that this appointment precluded further political activity on the part of Seyss-Inquart in Germany and that Goebbels had decided on this course after a sharp difference of opinion with Seyss-Inquart. 19/

Summary:

A native of Moravia (now part of Czechoslovakia), Seyss-Inquart later settled in Vienna. He supported the illegal Nazi Party in Austria before 1938 although he did not join the Nazi Party until after that date. As Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior and Security from 12 February until 11 March 1938 he prepared the last stages of the Anschluss, and was most instrumental in bringing about the German occupation. He served as Federal Chancellor for four days after the Anschluss and then became Reich Governor of Austria (15 March 1938 - 1 May 1939). From May to September 1939 he held the post of Reich Minister without Portfolio in Berlin, and from September 1939 to May 1940 he was Deputy of the Governor of the General Government (Poland). In this latter capacity he shared responsibility for the regime of terror instituted by the Nazis in Poland. From 18 May 1940 to May 1945 he was Reich Commissioner for the Netherlands (directly answerable to Hitler) and, as such, directly responsible for the Nazi regime of oppression in that country. Seyss-Inquart was one of the leading Nazi officials in German-occupied territory.

NOTE:

This record is a summary of such intelligence (from one or more sources as indicated) as was available at the time of preparation. It may consequently be subject to amendment by additional or more recent intelligence. Index numbers and letters are solely for indexing statements in the report.

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Sources:

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- 3/ Current Biography, 1941
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- 5/ OSS Source S, 8 June 1943
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- 8/ Netherlands News, VI, 26 April/10 May 1943, pp. 147, 174-176
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- 10/ OSS Source F, 15 June 1945
- 11/ FCC Daily Report, 21 May 1943
- 12/ Knickerbocker Weekly, 16 August 1943
- 13/ De Waag, 6 August 1943
- 14/ Daily Telegraph, London, 13 October 1944
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- 16/ ABSIE, 8 May 1945
- 17/ OSS Source F, 11 July, 1945
- 18/ Berliner Börsen-Zeitung, 22 December 1943
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