

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS BRANCH
BIOGRAPHICAL REPORT

General Jones 30.02
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Index of Statements
in Report

Name: DOENITZ, Karl

On Region: 3 1 a

Nationality: German

On Occupations: 2: 15 B

Region: Berlin

On Political
Affiliations: 13

Position: Grand Admiral of the German Fleet, Commander in Chief of the
German Navy. Successor to Hitler as leader of Germany

Birth Date and Place: 16 September 1891, Berlin-Grimm, 1/62/

Religion: Presumably Protestant, since Doenitz is reported to have attend-
ed services of Pastor Martin Niemöller. 2/64/

Family History: According to source 14/ he is the son of an engineer. He had
two sons, Elms and Peter. Both of them were killed in action
in this war. 5/622/. According to source 16/, both were lost
aboard submarines.

Education and Work History: According to source 1/, Doenitz attended schools in
Berlin, Jena, and Weimar. He joined the German Navy as a naval cadet in 1910
and received his commission as a naval lieutenant in 1913. In the same year
he was assigned to the light cruiser Breslau with the Mediterranean fleet.
At the outbreak of World War I he took part in the break-through of the
Breslau and the battleship Göeben to Constantinople where they were turned over
to the Turks. Doenitz saw action in the Black Sea. In 1916 he was transferred
to the submarine service. According to source 6/ he first saw service in that
branch on the U 39, whose commander, Kapitän-Lieutenant Horthmann (?), was
one of the most successful submarine officers of World War I. On 5 March 1918
he took over the command of the UC-25 and later of the UB-68. With these subma-
rines he harassed enemy merchant shipping in the Mediterranean and in the
Atlantic. Emperor Wilhelm II presented him with the high decoration of the
House of Hohenzollern, 1/.

According to source 14/ Doenitz was taken a prisoner by Great Britain in Oc-
tober 1918 when the UB88 (?) was sunk by a British patrol in the Mediterranean.
According to the same source, after the November 1918 armistice, Doenitz was
confined to the Manchester lunatic asylum, having feigned insanity. He was
later repatriated to Germany as insane.

After the First World War Doenitz was requested by Grand Admiral, then Captain,
Erich Raeder to remain in the navy, 1/. Source 7/ states: "Doenitz shunned
formal association with the Weimar regime in any respect whatsoever, and he had
no official status until his 1936 assignment" when he was appointed commander
of the first U-boat flotilla. According to source 8/ Doenitz re-enlisted in the
Navy in 1919, hoping that someday the Reich would again have a fleet. He oc-
cupied several posts in the General Staff. Then, for several years, he was
commander of a torpedo boat, later becoming the chief of the first flotilla of

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Education and Work History: (cont.) of new torpedo boats which were built by the Reich Navy. During a long vacation, he made a trip through India, Malaya and all Eastern Asia. Soon afterwards, he again visited these regions as the commander of the German cruiser Emden. In January (?) of 1935 when, by the terms of the German-British naval treaty, the Reich again obtained the right to have a fleet, the then frigate captain Doenitz was named chief of the first fleet of new submarines. 8/

According to sources 3/4/, in spite of the Versailles Treaty Doenitz worked to reconstruct and improve the Navy; he perfected the communication system between submarines and planes; he improved hydrophones to protect Germany against Britain's effective ASDIC (Anti-Submarine Defense Investigation Committee); he trained his crews in friendly relations between officers and men in order to prevent the mutinies of officer-bullied crews that had contributed to the breakdown of the submarine service in the First World War. According to the same sources, Doenitz himself supervised every detail of construction and later saw to it that factories were so dispersed that they were out of the RAF's reach. He originated a spare-parts system which provided Germany with a U-boat fleet all packed away in crates and waiting for assembly long before the Versailles Treaty was overtly broken.

In 1937, according to source 12/ Doenitz was on the German submarine U-37 which was on a mission to investigate currents near the English coasts. The submarine was spotted and forced to the surface. Doenitz was compelled to send his captain to apologize to the commander of the British destroyer.

Some time after 1936, Commodore Doenitz was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral and decorated with the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, according to source 8/, and during the fall of 1940 he rose to the rank of Vice-Admiral; as a reward for his work in behalf of the submarine arm and the successes this weapon was achieving, he was promoted to Admiral in 1942. On 30 January 1943 Doenitz was promoted to Grand Admiral in charge of the Supreme Command of the German Navy, 9/ and later he was awarded the Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross, personally presented to him by Hitler, 8/. According to source 10/, Doenitz was generally credited with the sensational success of the German submarine campaign, as he was reported to have devised the new tactics of mass attacks on convoys. He also was believed to have designed tanker submarines used as supply ships operating long distances from home bases. 10/ According to this source, Doenitz declared at that time that he would personally command the U-boat weapon henceforth.

According to source 11/ Doenitz reportedly resigned as supreme commander of the German navy as an aftermath of the loss of the Scharnhorst on her Barents Sea Mission where he had sent it in order to boost his reputation. According to source 12/ however, only pressure was brought to bear on Doenitz as a result of the sinking of the Scharnhorst. He is reported to have ordered the ship to sea in an effort to bolster his reputation as a naval strategist. Hitler allegedly refused to see Doenitz when the latter called and tried to apologize for the loss of the ship.

According to source 15/, in 1943 Doenitz was named one of a new triumvirate to rule Germany. This group was reported to be headed by Goring, with Keitel and Dönitz representing the armed forces. But he presented himself only as

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Education and Work History: (cont.) head of the German state and Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces, 24/. In his addresses to the German people he neither addressed nor mentioned the Party, 24/. Early in May 1945 he announced himself as the new German leader designated by Hitler before the latter's death.

Doenitz was a member of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces and a member of the Hitler Cabinet all along, 24/.

The so-called Doenitz Government included the following men, 25/: Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance; Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart, Minister of Interior and Science, Education and Public Instruction, former secretary of the Ministry of the Interior under Himmler; Albert Speer, Minister of Economics and Production; Herbert Backe, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forests; Franz Seldte, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs; Dr. Julius Dorpmüller, Minister of Communications and Posts; Herbert Klemm, Acting Minister of Justice; Paul Wegener, Head of the Civil Cabinet of Admiral Doenitz; Rear Admiral Hermann Wagner, Head of the Military Cabinet of Admiral Doenitz. On the 23 May 1945 this government was dissolved by the Allies and Grand Admiral Doenitz and his cabinet members were arrested, 25/.

Political History and Attitude: According to source 16/, Doenitz was first publicly linked with the Nazis when he became commander of the first submarine flotilla in 1936. Source 17/ asserts that Doenitz owed his place to Nazi Party affiliations and to the friendship of Himmler, and source 18/ flatly calls him "a convinced and fervent Nazi." Sources 13/ & 24/ report that Doenitz has had no evident party position. There is no record of his Party membership although he unquestionably was a Nazi sympathizer and protégé of the Nazi regime. He never occupied a high party office nor did he hold any rank within any of the Party formations, e.g. in the SS, 24/. Doenitz is furthermore known to have backed his U-boat commanders in successful demands to have the Gestapo weeded out of the crews, 13/. Sources 1/ & 24/ say that Doenitz blamed Raeder for allowing the Gestapo unjustly to arrest submarine crews "whose nervous condition at the end of a tour of duty sometimes led them into utterances that the Nazis distorted into sedition." Doenitz also was reported to have served a note on Admiral Raeder in which he flatly demanded that the above-mentioned police forces "be run out of submarine bases and ports and off the necks of naval men."

But whatever Doenitz' Nazi Party token position may have been, he proved himself a devoted follower of Hitler.

In the statements issued by Doenitz after the July 1944 plot against Hitler had failed, the following excerpt is particularly significant:

"A small mad clique of generals that has nothing in common with our brave Army has in cowardly disloyalty instigated this murder to commit a most base betrayal of the Führer and the German people. If these rascals and henchmen of our enemies whom they service with unprincipled, dastardly and false cleverness - in reality their stupidity is unlimited - believe that by removal of the Führer they can free us from our hard but inextinguishable and fateful struggle, they

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Political History and Attitude: (cont.) do not see in their fearful and blind limitation that their criminal act would have thrown us into terrible chaos and would deliver us unarmed into the hands of our enemies. Extermination and enslavement of our men and hunger and unbelievable misery would be the consequences. Unspeakable unhappiness would be the lot of our people - infinitely more cruel and more difficult than even the hardest days that the present war may entail."

After Doenitz succeeded Hitler as head of the German state and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, his officials continued propaganda over several radio stations, 26/. While the Reichssender Flensburg played up disagreements between the Allies in San Francisco and elsewhere, other broadcasts continued to accuse the Western Allies of "stabbing Germany in the back", 26/. On the other hand, a broadcast of 17 May 1945 fervently asserted that the German Navy had nothing to do with the notorious Nazi concentration camps, 26/. According to same source this broadcast may have been the attempt to whitewash the military forces from charges of participation in German atrocities committed in Nazi concentration camps and furthermore may have had the function of seeking to clear Doenitz specifically from any charges linking him with the record of the Party.

Personal Data: Source 14/ calls Doenitz a severe, seamy-faced, beak-nosed little man who exhorted his seamen to "Kill, kill, kill!" and to avoid any act of humanity. Other sources, 3/44/, describe him as a hard working man with "close-cropped hair, overhanging eyebrows, cruel and deep set eyes, beaklike nose, lined cheeks, ugly mouth and even uglier chin." A man of middle-class origin like the late Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, 14/, gaunt, sternfaced, ruthless and able, 13/. But according to source 18/, a man who saw to it that the best care and accommodations were given to U-boat crews and that the U-boat base personnel was given special privileges. In that connection he continually flew from base to base in the special airplane at his disposal. According to the same source 18/, the building of the U-boat "bunkers" was the direct result of a discussion between him and Minister Speer, at which time he presented his ideas on that subject. Same source reports that Doenitz is a man of great energy and authority who possesses no scruples whatsoever. His officers are loyal to him for he sees to it personally that their efforts are rewarded, and he does not mind spending the better part of an evening drinking with them. He is personally acquainted with all his U-boat captains and with a great many of the younger officers as well 18/. When he was commander of the underseas fleet he personally interrogated the captains and officers of the returning submarines.

According to source 18/ Doenitz has no revolutionary ideas about the waging of war but can be expected to apply recklessly those he has.

Source 20/ describes him as a fanatic who resembles Rommel in his over-confidence, boastfulness, belief in pep talks, and indifference to casualties.

A fervent adherent of unrestricted U-boat warfare, a follower of the late Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz whose portrait with the inscription, "Die Tat ist alles" (the deed is everything), hangs over his desk, 3/44/. He fully expected to win the war with his U-boat fleets and their "wolf-pack" tactics which he originated 14/. Doenitz is also described as a navy officer

Personal Data: (cont.) who hates the sea and who advocates the destruction of all sea-power by submarines rather than the maintenance of large surface forces. 11/

According to source 21/, British-hating Admiral Doenitz is still convinced that unrestricted U-boat warfare would have produced a German victory in the last war by 1940, and he believed that its staunch assistance would win this war.

Evaluation (according to source 23/): Doenitz' career and conduct show that he belonged to the German militarists who ever since the German defeat in 1918 waited for the day of retribution. These circles favored any regime in Germany that would put an end to the republic and support German re-armament. When the Nazis had established themselves as the rulers of Germany, men like Doenitz supported them because they fulfilled old desires. Doenitz became a fervent follower of Hitler and his new order.

Report covers time up to May 1945

- Sources:
- 1/ Berlin Radio, 8 February 1943
 - 2/ Berliner Morgen Zeitung, 16 September 1943
 - 3/ People (London), 30 August 1942, p. 4
 - 4/ Time, 2 February 1942 and 3 August 1942
 - 5/ Les Nouveaux Temps, 14 March 1944
 - 6/ Berlin Radio, 1 February 1943
 - 7/ Berlin Radio, 4 February 1943
 - 8/ Berlin Radio, 21 April 1943
 - 9/ OSS Source S, 2 February 1943
 - 10/ New York Times, 31 January 1943
 - 11/ Washington Post, 30 December 1943
 - 12/ New York Times, 30 December 1943
 - 13/ Washington Post, 31 January 1943
 - 14/ New York Times, 2 May 1945
 - 15/ New York Times, 9 August 1943
 - 16/ Who's Who Monthly Supplement, June 1942
 - 17/ OSS Source S, 10 July 1943
 - 18/ OSS Source S, 8 February 1945
 - 19/ OSS Source S, 11 October 1943
 - 20/ Berlin Radio, 4 February 1943
 - 21/ Berlin Radio FCC report, 19 May 1944
 - 22/ OSS Source T, 25 May 1945
 - 23/ OSS Source S, 5 May 1945
 - 24/ New York Times, 24 May 1945
 - 25/ OSS Source S, 19 May 1945

BR-6

25 May 1945

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