

# DOENITZ DEFENDS ATHENIA'S SINKING

## Calls It 'Honest Mistake' by U-Boat That Thought Ship Was Auxiliary Cruiser

NUREMBERG, Germany, May 10—(U.P.)—Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz testified today at the war crimes trial that the sinking of the British liner Athenia was "an honest mistake" and that the murder of ten captured Norwegian commandos was "a purely local error."

Under cross-examination by Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, Doenitz said the Athenia, torpedoed and shelled off the coast of Ireland in the first twelve hours of the war, with the loss of ninety-three lives, was mistaken for an auxiliary cruiser. He said that "Berlin politicians" had changed the log.

Sir David confronted Doenitz with the record of the trial of SS men accused of having murdered ten Norwegian commandos after they had been captured in May, 1943. Navy officers testified at that trial that they had been ordered to turn the commandos over to the Gestapo for execution.

"The matter was never reported to me," Doenitz said. "If indeed events as you describe them occurred at all it must have been a purely local error."

### Camps "None of His Business"

Concentration camp conditions were "none of his business," Doenitz said.

Doenitz admitted having made anti-Semitic statements to Navy personnel "because I thought it impossible to unify the German nation behind the armed forces as long as Jews were a part of the nation."

Sir David read Doenitz' recommendation concerning Adolf Hitler's suggestion late in the war to abandon the Geneva Convention. Doenitz had advised that "the dis-

advantages of abandoning the convention outweigh the advantages."

"It would be better to carry out measures considered necessary without warning so as not to alarm outside opinion," he was quoted as having said.

Doenitz' explanation of this was that so many German troops were deserting to the Americans that he felt abandoning the Convention would react against the deserters.

### Says Doenitz Wanted Spain

NUREMBERG, Germany May 10 (AP)—Doenitz said he believed he had been chosen to succeed Hitler in the last days of the war only because "after Reich Marshal Hermann Goering was removed I was the senior officer in command of an independent branch of the armed forces." Doenitz added that he had been strictly a military man until the time he took over as fuehrer.

When the Russian prosecutor challenged this statement, Doenitz declared that "when a soldier during the war stands solidly behind his nation and his Government, that doesn't make him a politician."

The naval commander angrily reiterated many times that his order forbidding U-boats to attempt the rescue of survivors of torpedoed ships was intended only to insure the submarines' safety from surprise air attacks. This order has been one of the dominant points in the case against him.

Sir David Maxwell Fyfe declared captured minutes showed that Doenitz had proposed in 1943 that Spain be occupied so U-boat activities could be increased from new bases. Hitler, he said, replied that Germany no longer had the resources to carry out such a venture. Sir David introduced Admiralty records to show that the Germans had sunk seventy-nine merchant ships without warning during the first year of the war.