

Admiral Erich Raeder Is Dead; Led German Navy Under Hitler

**Played an Important Role in
Developing of Nazi Fleet—
Convicted for War Crimes**

KIEL, Germany, Nov. 6 (AP)—Erich Raeder, the Grand Admiral who built Adolf Hitler's navy into the terror of the North Atlantic, died today in this old port city where he had been hospitalized as a mental patient. He was 84 years old.

Admiral Raeder was released from Spandau Prison in 1955 because of poor health. He became ill last year after the death of his wife, Erika.

Commanded for 14 Years

Admiral Raeder commanded his country's navy for fourteen years until Hitler, shouting and gesticulating with rage, removed him from command on Jan. 30, 1943.

The small but power-packed German Navy that faced the vastly superior sea power of Britain at the beginning of World War II had been developed while Admiral Raeder was in command and it owed much to his conception of the role that Germany should play at sea in wartime.

The compact, fast and heavily gunned pocket battleships, Deutschland, Admiral Scheer and Admiral Graf Spee were developed under him. It was at his insistence that the German submarine fleet was trained to act with the Air Force in a combination that all but cut Britain's life lines overseas.

Trained in the authoritarian leadership traditions of the pre-World War I imperial navy, Admiral Raeder was loyal to Hitler to the end. He had been less loyal to the Weimar Republic, having been removed from sea duty for two years on suspicion of having been involved in the right-wing coup d'etat attempt of Wolfgang Kapp in 1920.

With Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering and other surviving leaders of the Nazi regime, Admiral Raeder was placed on trial at Nuremberg on Nov. 20, 1945. He was charged with having conducted naval warfare contrary to the rules of civilized warfare and of having conducted aggressive war by naval operations against Norway. He was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. He served ten years.

Admiral Raeder was never a member of the Nazi party although Hitler gave him a gold badge of honorary membership. The admiral denied that he had known anything of the concentration-camp atrocities until a few weeks before the end of the war, when a friend, Dr. Hans Gessler, former Weimar Republic Defense Minister, came out of a camp and told him what went on there.

Wrote Autobiography

In his autobiography, "My Life," published in English in 1960, Admiral Raeder wrote: "That such a thing could happen in Germany * * * made me so bitter that I took off the gold party emblem * * * and ground it to bits."

Erich Raeder was born in the town of Wandsbek, near Hamburg, on April 24, 1876. His father was a teacher and his mother was the daughter of a royal court musician.

In his last year in secondary school young Raeder won as a prize a book describing the life of a naval cadet. Since he did not have enough Latin or Greek to enter a university he entered the naval school at Kiel and went on duty as a sub-lieutenant in 1897.

He went up the promotion



Associated Press

Erich Raeder

ladder with relative speed, serving on many types of surface craft. However, he never commanded a war vessel either in peace or war, a fact that was held against him by his critics.

Imperial Germany acquired a considerable colonial empire and young Raeder saw most of it on long cruises. In World War I he saw action at Dogger Bank and at Jutland.

Admiral Raeder took part in the elaborate deceptions that permitted the German Army and Navy to rearm in violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

On Oct. 1, 1928, Admiral Raeder became commander in chief of the German Navy and was soon involved in complicated intrigues. In 1932 Gen. Wilhelm Groener, Minister of Defense, resigned and Gen. Kurt von Schleicher, a political general who was to become Chancellor and who was to be assassinated by Hitler's gunmen, caused it to be announced that Admiral Raeder would succeed General Groener.

He had not consulted the admiral, who had no desire to take the job. It appeared that General von Schleicher wanted him to try it, fail and go out.

Remained as Chief

But Admiral Raeder's technical skill as a planner and authority on naval strategy and tactics kept him at the head of the Navy. He based his plans of attaining Germany's maximum naval strength about 1944 and was greatly disappointed when Hitler took Germany into World War II before the Navy was ready.

As World War II loomed Admiral Raeder counseled Hitler strongly not to provoke Britain into war. When the war began he urged Hitler to exploit the Mediterranean theatre of operation when the British were weak and the rewards of German success would be great. Hitler promised to consider this but was never able to bring maximum strength in this area because he could not knock the Soviet Union out of the war.

Ship by ship the British put the German fleet out of action and gained control of the surface of the sea. It was then that Hitler hauled Admiral Raeder over the coals and replaced him with Germany's submarine warfare director, Admiral Karl Doenitz.

Admiral Raeder was appointed to the more or less honorary post of Inspector General of the Navy. After his release from Spandau Prison he lived in retirement with his wife. A son, Hans, lived with them for a time.