

# Sailor With a Swastika

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learned, at war's end, of the atrocities committed by Hitler and his sadistic henchmen. This we may find a little hard to believe when the approximately 120 conferences at headquarters are mentioned. No doubt the secret was very well kept. But when Doenitz says, "I cannot say what I would have done, as a responsible member of the Armed Forces, had I known"—he but speaks the dilemma of all honest people the world over. Let the reader ponder what he himself would have done.

**A**S for the U-boat angle, the author's exposition of this campaign loses nothing by being interpolated between political and governmental problems. The London Submarine Agreement of 1936, to which Germany was a signatory, forbade submarines from sinking merchant ships without surfacing and giving warning. It also forbade merchantmen from carrying guns except "solely for self-defense." But it did not specify when "self-defense" began; and in 1938 a British

Admiralty order directed merchant ships to take immediate military action against submarines whenever possible. In view of the extreme vulnerability of a surfaced U-boat, these restrictions were unfair in Doenitz's eyes, but nevertheless he ordered the rules obeyed.

With Britain making all-out war on U-boats whenever and wherever discovered, however, all sorts of special cases arose. Among these was the famous Laconia incident in which the British liner Laconia was sunk by a German U-boat in the South Atlantic in 1942, while carrying British service personnel and Italian prisoners of war. When informed of the incident Doenitz first ordered that the survivors be rescued. When these operations were interrupted by an attack from an American Liberator bomber, however, Doenitz ordered that all rescue work be abandoned.

The American "Neutrality Period" gets its share of attention. It is difficult today to refute the contention that, here Germany was far more sinned against than sinning. Recognizing the importance of not having to fight the United States,

Hitler had already withstood extreme provocation. Considering the temper of the times, it is interesting to imagine what might have been the consequences had Germany not declared war on the United States after the Japanese attack but, instead, had announced her intention to fight only her European enemies. With a war already on in the Pacific, Congress might have refused to start another in the Atlantic; at the insistence of the Western states, Lend Lease might have been curtailed in favor of pressing the fight against Japan.

Tremendous diplomatic and propaganda potential would appear to have been within Hitler's grasp when he foreclosed it by the war declaration of Dec. 11, 1941. Doenitz, however, was delighted with the opening of new hunting grounds and seized the opportunity to send every U-boat he could to our East Coast—a total of five submarines. Until well into 1942, only six U-boats at a time could be committed to this theatre.

**D**URING the first six months of 1942, Germany's U-boat strength had built up to 101 submarines, of which an average of only nineteen were on station. In this period they sank 585 ships totaling over three million tons. Well did Doenitz realize, however, that this period of successful operation was drawing to a close. Bitterly he complains against the naval policy which had prevented him from starting hostilities with 300 subs instead of the 57 he actually had. Inexorably the prodigious anti-sub effort of the Allies increased; his own forces never achieved even his calculated minimum. Belatedly, Germany went all-out for submarine warfare too, but the chance was gone. The "collapse of the U-boat war," as he terms it, took place in May, 1943.

To permit release of the tremendous Allied anti-submarine forces for employment elsewhere against Germany was, however, unthinkable to Doenitz. He grimly ordered that his U-boats continue operations regardless of the fantastic cost in casualties. Proudly he recounts how his crews unflinchingly met their self-immolation. Among the losses were his own two sons and his son-in-law.

New developments, even the snorkel, came too late. "How different the course of the submarine war and, indeed of the war as a whole, might have been," he writes, "if after the abrogation of the Naval Agreement in the spring of 1939, or even on the declaration of war, the Government had given us the material and labor we required to concentrate on the rapid building of a large number of submarines and we had been able to throw them into the fight before it was too late!"

It was at the beginning, repeatedly laments the author, that the war was lost.





From "Memoirs"  
Admiral Karl Doenitz leaving headquarters of the surrendered German High Command, Flensburg, Germany, May, 1945.

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MEMOIRS Ten Years and Twenty Days. By Admiral Karl Doenitz. Translated by R. H. Stevens in collaboration with David Woodward, from the German "Zehn Jahre und Zwanzig Tage." Illustrated. 500 pp. Cleveland and New York. The World Publishing Company. \$6.

By EDWARD L. BEACH

WITHOUT doubt Karl Doenitz's memoirs form the most important volume yet to come out of the German side of World War II. Written by a man who was for a short time Chief of the German State, the book is primary source material. For eight years Admiral Doenitz controlled Germany's submarines, for two more he was concurrently Commander in Chief of the German Navy, and for the last twenty days of Nazi Germany he held, by his own announcement, all the perquisites and powers of the Fuehrer.

The book is also Doenitz's personal refutation of the Nuremberg verdict in his case. In these less hate-filled years we may be willing to grant him the last word, but his personal bitterness at his ten years in prison gains scant sympathy when measured against the horror charged to Germany's account by millions of even less guilty people than he. Just as no law is really capable of jurisdiction over the criminal acts of a state, so does the ideal of justice for the individual sometimes prove inadequate when a state is forced finally to expiate its sins. Doenitz was fortunate he did not share the fate of some of his contemporaries.

From these pages we see that

*Captain Beach, who served as commander of the Triton, wrote "Submarine" and "Run Silent, Run Deep."*

the higher Doenitz rose into Hitler's inner circle, the more he defended the regime and the more insensitive to human values he became. Even fourteen years later, he can still write: "To make peace was not possible, since the enemy would have none of it until Germany had been destroyed"—thus completely missing the point that, by consistent example, Germany had demonstrated that she would not keep the peace. Moreover, Germany did not sue for peace.

With equal lack of perception, Doenitz inveighs against the victors for not helping save more of German territory and German people from Russian occupation. We, too, now recognize this as a grave error; but Nazi Germany had, through her own perfidy, taught the world to hate everything she stood for; and we, at least, were attempting to deal honorably with our Russian ally. Doenitz's criticisms of our policy, none the less, make many fair points. For example, the Allied demand for unconditional surrender was a serious obstacle, for the Germans well knew what would happen to the civilian population suddenly thrown to the mercy of a rampaging Russian army. The corollary insistence that Germany immediately surrender all her ships doomed hundreds of thousands of civilians in the cut-off eastern provinces to capture, enslavement and death. Though armies could in some instances capitulate to the West instead of to Russia, civilians had no such opportunity.

Admiral Doenitz states that he was "shocked" when he

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