Name: Dönitz, Karl
Nationality: German
Region: Berlin
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: 15 September 1891, Frankfurt (Oder, Prussia, 1902/
Religion: Presumably Protestant, since Dönitz is reported to have attended services of Pastor Ermisch, Berlin/ 1902/
Family History: According to source 1, he is the son of an engineer. Both he and his father were killed in action in this war, 1916. According to source 2, both were lost aboard submarines.

Education and Work History: According to source 3, Dönitz attended schools in Berlin, Jena, and Heidelberg. He joined the German Navy as a naval cadet in 1909 and received his commission as a naval officer in 1913. In the same year he was assigned to the light cruiser Bayern with the Mediterranean Fleet. At the outbreak of World War I he took part in the break-through of the Dardenelles and the battle with Italian vessels where they were turned over to the Turks. Dönitz was hit by a shell in the Black Sea. In 1916 he was transferred to the submarine service. According to source 4, he first saw service in that branch on the U-29, whose commander, Kapitän-Leutnant Kronheim (2), was one of the most successful submarine officers of World War I. On 5 March 1918, he took over the command of the U-62 and later of the U-68. With these submarines he harried enemy merchant shipping in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic. Emperor Wilhelm II presented him with the high decoration of the House of Hohenzollern, 1918.

According to source 5, Dönitz was taken a prisoner by Great Britain in October 1918 when the SMS 2 was sunk by a British patrol in the Mediterranean. According to the same source, after the November 1918 revolution, Dönitz was confined to the Manchester munitions factory, having7 held minor leadership. He was later repatriated to Germany in January.

After the First World War Dönitz was requested by Grand Admiral, then Captain, Erich Bethge to remain in the Navy, 1918. Source 6 states: Dönitz shared formal association with the Weimar regime in any respect whatsoever, and he had no official status until his 1936 appointment as commander of the first U-boat flotilla. According to source 7, Dönitz re-enlisted in the Navy in 1932, hoping that someday the Kitch would again have a fleet. He occupied 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
According to sources 3/4, in spite of the Versailles Treaty Dönitz 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, Dönitz 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 19, Dönitz 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. Dönitz was compelled to send his captain to apologize to the commander of the British destroyer.

Some time after 1936, Commodore Dönitz 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 1933 Dönitz 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, 9/. According to source 10/, Dönitz 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, Dönitz declared at that time that he would personally command the U-boat weapon henceforth.

According to source 11/, Dönitz 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 Dönitz 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 Dönitz when the latter called and tried to apologize for the loss of the ship.

According to source 15/, in 1943 Dönitz was named one of a new triumvirate to rule Germany. This group was reported to be headed by Göring, 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, 2h/. In his addresses to the German people he neither addressed nor mentioned the Party, 2b/. Early in May 1945 he announced himself as the new German leader designated by Hitler before the latter's death.

 Dönitz was a member of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces and a member of the Hitler Cabinet all along, 2b/.

The so-called Dönitz Government included the following men, 25/; Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, Prinz 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 Boake, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry; Franz Salzle, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs; Dr. Julius Borrmüller, Minister of Communications and Posts; Herbert Klemm, Acting Minister of Justice; Paul Wagoner, Head of the Civil Cabinet of Admiral Dönitz; Rear Admiral Hermann Wagner, Head of the Military Cabinet of Admiral Dönitz. On the 23 May 1945 this government was dissolved by the Allies and Grand Admiral Dönitz and his cabinet members were arrested, 2b/.

Political History and Attitude: According to source 16/, Dönitz was first publicly linked with the Nazis when he became commander of the first submarine Flotilla in 1936. Source 17/ asserts that Dönitz 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 13/21/ report that Dönitz has had no evident party position. There is no record of his Party membership although he unquestionably was a Nazi sympathizer and protegé 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, 2h/. Dönitz is furthermore known to have backed his U-boat commanders in successful demands to have the Gestapo weed out of the crews, 17/. Sources 3/3/ say that Dönitz blamed Hitler 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." Dönitz also was reported to have served a note on Admiral Rainer 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 Dönitz's Nazi Party token position may have been, he proved himself a devoted follower of Hitler. In the statements issued by Dönitz 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 rebels and henchmen of our enemies when they serve 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 inexorable and fateful struggle, they

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Political History and Attitude (cont.) do not see in their fearful and blind illusion 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 Dönitz 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 Eastern 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 Dönitz specifically from any charges linking him with the record of the Party.

Personal Data: Source 14/ calls Dönitz a severe, heavy-faced, beak-nosed little man who extorted his men to "kill, kill, kill!" and to avoid any act of humanity. Other sources, 3/ch/, describes him as a hard working man with "close-cropped hair, overhanging eyebrows, cruel and deep set eyes, beaconstyle nose, lined cheeks, ugly mouth and even uglier chin." A man of middle-class origin like the late Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, 13/, gaunt, stern faced, ruthless and awful, 13/. But according to source 10/, 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 19/, 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 Dönitz 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 28/. When he was commander of the undersea fleet he personally interrogated the captains and officers of the returning submarines.

According to source 18/ Dönitz has no revolutionary ideas about the waging of war but can be exposted 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), hags over his desk, 3/ch/. He fully expected to win the war with his U-boat fleets and their "wolf-pack" tactics which he originated 20/. Dönitz is also described as a navy officer
Personnel 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. 

According to source 22, British-hating Admiral Doenitz is still convinced that unrestricted U-boat warfare would have produced a German victory in the last war by 1942, 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 re-arms 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 Morgenpost, 10 September 1943
3. People (London), 30 August 1942, p. 4
4. Times, 2 February 1942 and 3 August 1942
5. Leman News, 14 March 1943
6. Berlin Radio, 1 February 1943
7. Berliner Morgenpost, 21 April 1943
8. OSS Source 5, 2 February 1943
10. Washington Post, 28 December 1943
15. The Monthly Supplement, June 1942
16. OSS Source 5, 10 July 1943
17. OSS Source 5, 8 February 1943
18. OSS Source 5, 11 October 1943
20. OSS Source 5, 25 May 1943
21. OSS Source 5, 19 May 1945
22. New York Times, 24 May 1945
23. OSS Source 5, 19 May 1945

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