

MAY 2, 1945

Adm. Doenitz a Logical Successor to Hitler

Fronted for Fuehrer Before; Closely Identified With Nazis

By JACK SHAFER

If it is true, as the Hamburg radio reports, that Hitler is dead, the announcement that Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz is his successor should not come as a surprise to people who follow the news carefully.

As far back as August, 1943, reports that Hitler was on his way out were coupled with announcements—from unreliable sources, of course—that the Fuehrer would be succeeded by a triumvirate consisting of Luftwaffe boss and No. 2 Nazi, Goering; Doenitz, and Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, Keitel.

On the day that Germany launched its unprovoked attack on Poland, Sept. 1, 1939, Hitler designated as his possible successors Goering and Rudolph Hess—in that order. Hess parachuted into England in May, 1941, on his purported negotiated peace mission and has been there ever since. Goering remained, but on one very significant occasion his designation as No. 2 Nazi appeared to be just a formality. The job of fronting for Hitler that day fell to the alleged new "feuhrer," Doenitz.

No Bright Day

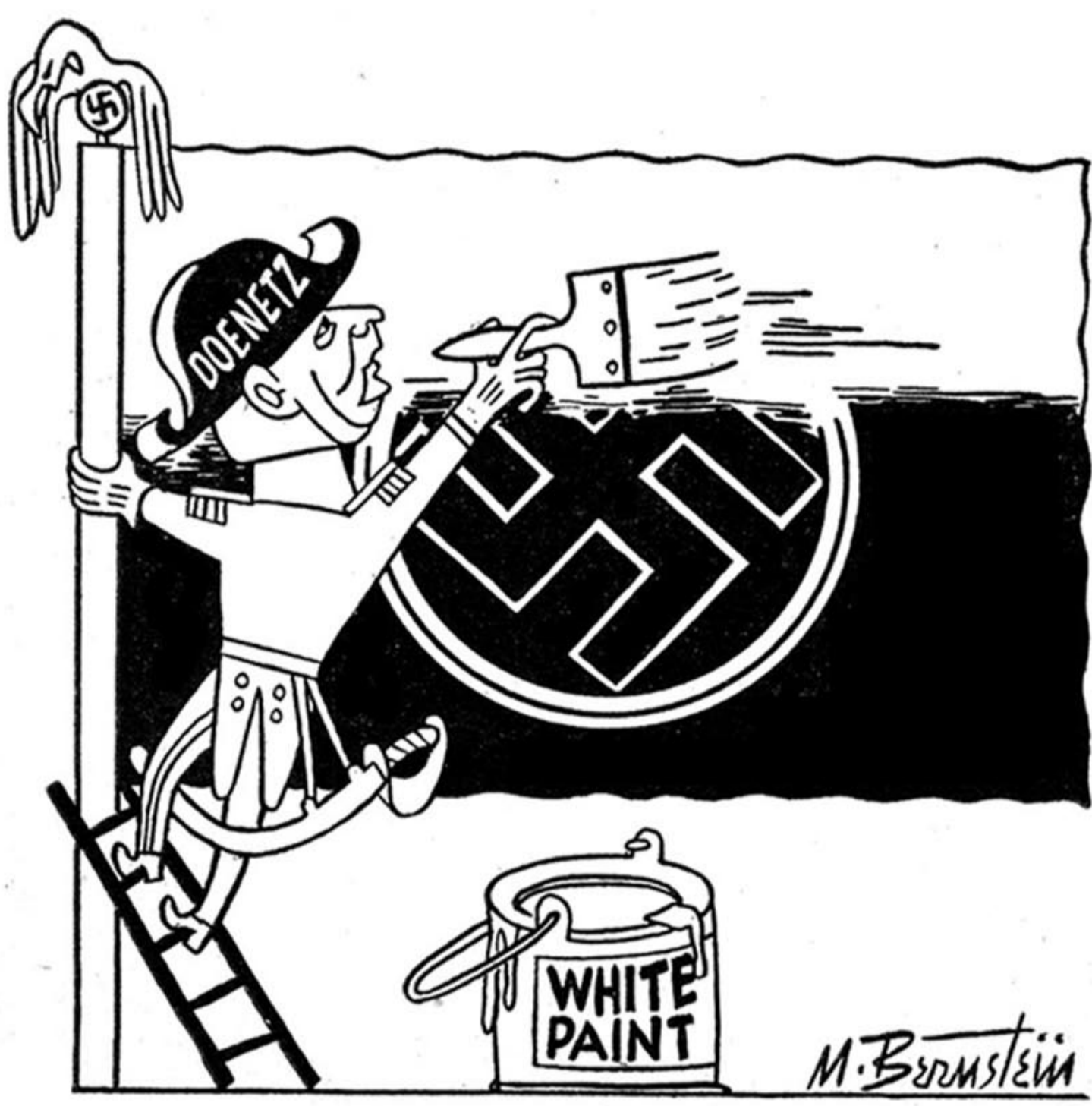
The occasion was the "Heroes' Day" ceremony in Berlin's Zeughaus, military museum on Unter den Linden, on Mar. 12, 1944. Every year, since the start of the war, it had been Hitler's wont to ascend the rostrum and tell his faithful followers of the exploits of Germany's armed forces. That day, however, was not a very bright one for Germany. It was the Spring of the Wehrmacht's great retreat from the Soviet Union.

Hitler, apparently, didn't feel much like talking, so Adm. Doenitz pinch hit for him and warned the German people that "a pitiless struggle is being waged for the existence or annihilation of our nation." Everyone knows, he said then, "we are in a merciless struggle of great harshness and seriousness," but, he added, Herr Hitler "will steer the Reich safely through. . . ."

Doenitz

Goering managed to stick around with his No. 2 title until last week, when, pleading illness, he "resigned." That left Doenitz in the clear.

Doenitz always has been identified closely with the Nazis. Back in August, 1943, when the rumors had it that Goering, Doenitz and Keitel had succeeded Hitler, OWI Chief Elmer Davis remarked that, if the dispatches were true, the real situation seemed not to have changed much—implying that the Nazis were still on top.



Finishing the Housepainter's Job

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 1945