

Newsweek

May 18, 1942: p. 21

U-Boat 'Chivalry'

Baron Edgar Spiegel von und zu Peckelsheim came out of the last war with a reputation as Germany's "most chivalrous U-boat captain." Though he sank millions of dollars in Allied shipping, he boasted that he never took a single life. And after the war the British, who captured and imprisoned him in 1917, made him an honorary member of the British Legion.

But this likable and gaunt-faced aristocrat offended Americans after he came to New Orleans in 1937 as consul general for the Gulf Coast. He was violently pro-Nazi and his crowning offense came on June 14, 1940, when he warned that Germany would "not forget that when she was waging a struggle for her very life, the United States did everything in its power to aid her enemies." He finally left for Germany by request in 1941.

Last week, the Gulf Coast wondered if Spiegel had returned—this time in his old role as commerce raider. For the first time, U-boats became active in the Gulf, evidently under command of men familiar with its shallow waters. Two freighters, one American and one Honduran, were sunk. The United States vessel was chased and shelled by a fast and apparently new submarine painted dark green. After the crew and passengers left the disabled ship, the sub sank her with a torpedo. Then a man on the raider's deck, stripped to the waist and deeply tanned, called out in a voice like Spiegel's: "Sorry we can't help you. Hope you get ashore."

The incident came during a week in which a dozen or more ships went down off the Atlantic Coast. But the Navy supplied one bright note with an account of an old four-stacker destroyer that spotted a submarine charging its batteries on the surface at night and sank her with point-blank gunfire. Some of the Germans were rescued—the first revealed capture of the members of a U-boat crew off the Atlantic Coast since the start of the war.