

Twin Cities Native 'Baron' May Bounce Back Into News Again

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The Twin Cities' imaginative "Baron" Edward von Rothkirch, currently in a federal penitentiary for attempting to extort \$80,000 from the ex-president of Cuba, may be back at his old tricks again soon.

After serving one year and losing an appeal to the circuit court of appeals in Miami, Fla., Von Rothkirch recently had his 2½-year sentence cut six months, and so has served half his time. Federal prisoners are eligible for parole after serving one-third of their terms, said O. B. Cline, assistant United States attorney in Miami.

Von Rothkirch, 37, who was plain Edward Tkach in his Twin Cities days,



EDUARD VON ROTHKIRCH
Baron may be free soon

was sentenced a year ago in Miami for impersonating a special aid to Presi-

dent Eisenhower and attempting to bilk exiled Carlos Prio Socarras of \$80,000 in return for his help in returning Prio Socarras to the Cuban presidency, Cline said.

THE "BARON" began serving his time in Dade county jail, Miami, but caused jailers so much trouble trying to send almost-daily letters to President Eisenhower requesting medical attention that he was moved to a federal institution, Cline said.

Von Rothkirch claims he was born to a Spanish countess and a German baron spying in St. Paul during World War I. Because of his father's occupation, he was registered as the child of friends,

Baron

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BARON Once Posed as Indian

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Fred and Eva Tkach, and reared by them, he said.

RECORDS show von Rothkirch attended Lincoln junior high and West high school in Minneapolis, graduating in 1937, although he often said he was fighting with a German division in the Spanish civil war at that time.

Von Rothkirch's stories of his college years varied. He once said he attended University of Heidelberg, Germany, for two years, and Rockhurst college, Kansas City, Mo., for four. von Rothkirch said he spent half a year there as an air force trainee in 1943 and earned no credits.

OTHER TIMES von Rothkirch said Adolph Hitler presented him with a Ph. D. degree in psychology and military history from University of Berlin in 1940.

In 1941 von Rothkirch turned up at Hennepin county courthouse selling shares in himself for \$1 apiece. Each was good for 1/750th of his "person and earnings," he said.

Von Rothkirch admitted he was pro-German before World War II claimed to hold a commission in the German army, but after Pearl Harbor he joined the fourth army western defense command. He said he was a captain; the army said he was a sergeant.

In 1942 he switched to the air force as a student officer, he said, and was assigned to a coast guard boat as chief boatswain's mate. The air force denied he was in their ranks. He called them a bunch of "sad little jerks," said he had a citation for heroism and a \$13.80 a month disability pension. The veterans administration confirmed the latter.

IN 1944 von Rothkirch married blond Margaret Wilson of St. Paul. They had two children and were expecting a third when von Rothkirch deserted her in 1949, she charged in a divorce suit. Authorities couldn't find von Rothkirch to serve the papers until he brushed with the law in Wisconsin in 1951. The divorce was granted in 1952.

After World War II, von Rothkirch organized the Central European Rehabilitation and Research associations, headquarters 411 Times Annex. He registered as a \$1-a-year lobbyist for them in 1946.

He claimed he made several trips to central Europe to set up an underground railroad by which refugees might flee from behind the Iron Curtain.

The state department stepped in then, however, to say von Rothkirch never was issued a passport and so could not have traveled abroad.

In 1947 Minneapolis police arrested von Rothkirch for disturbing the peace after he brandished a wooden chair leg in an attempt to break up a "Red-infiltrated" picket line at Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. He pleaded guilty.

A YEAR later he bought a 2,900-acre "ranch" at Hillman, Minn., about 100 miles north of the Twin Cities, saying he was a psychiatrist and planned to start a hospital or rest home.

Before long, however, he announced he would start a college for displaced persons instead.

Plans for "Midwestern college" failed to develop, and von Rothkirch filed libel and slander suits totaling \$2,900,000 against six individuals and the Minneapolis Star and Tribune, charging damage to his reputation. The suits were dismissed by a judge for lack of evidence.

He got back in the news in 1951 when he was arrested for passing bad checks in Eau Claire, Wis. Officers found a stick of dynamite, fuse caps and 100 war maps of foreign countries in his car.

He was sentenced to up to a year in a Wisconsin prison, but caused so many disturbances he later was sent to the state hospital for the criminally insane at Waupun, Wis.

He was released in 1952 and turned up that fall in Phoenix, Ariz., posing as an Osage Indian official at an Indian affairs conference.

In 1953 he went to Miami, where he remained until he was sent to the federal prison.