

Bormann Leads a Colony in

Brazil, Ex-SS Man Says

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By Antony Terry
London Sunday Times

BRONN, Dec. 30—For 22 years the world has looked for Martin Bormann, Hitler's deputy and the chief of the Nazi Party.

Now a German, Erich Karl Wiedwald, an SS corporal in Berlin in the last days of the war, is prepared to say publicly that he knows the truth about him.

Is Wiedwald telling the truth? The obvious motives for lying can be ruled out: He has not mentioned payment, and if he is a mad exhibitionist he has dissimulated to the point of declaring that he did not care whether or not his name was used.

He might be working for the West German government, trying to embarrass the Brazilians into handing Bormann over. But the way

the deadly river. To the south the Paraguayan jungle is so treacherous that it is all but impassable.

The roads to the west— from Asuncion in Paraguay, or down the Brazilian border from Bella Vista—pass through territory combed by hostile militia (again, mostly bribed) and even more hostile German settlers.

To the north lies the only international airport, at Campo Grande. But the colony's trucks take three days to reach base with supplies from there.

Wiedwald emphasized several times that his geography was ten years out of date. He left Colonia Waldner 555 in December, 1958. He last saw Bormann briefly in Montevideo in March, 1965, and Bormann's lieutenant, Rolf Schwent, in Holland this summer.

Yet Bormann is not a man to move unless forced by some crisis. When Wiedwald joined him at the end of 1947, Bormann was living in the Switzerland of Argentina, on a 5600-acre cattle-and-sheep ranch 60 miles south of San Carlos de Bariloche, almost in the Andes. The area is one of the busiest tourist spots of Argentina. But Bormann did not move on until his political protector, the dictator Juan Peron, was overthrown at the end of 1955.

Bormann stayed for two years with an old colleague, Gen. Richard Gluecks, who had been responsible for the concentration camps and the property taken from the Jews gassed in them. Gluecks was then—and, Wiedwald thinks is now— on a ranch on Lake Ranco in Chile, not far from the town of Ranco itself.

Kolonia Waldner 555 is altogether more secure than Lake Ranco. Its layout is basically the barrack square, eight huts facing a central courtyard about 50 yards across. Bormann's house, the only solidly constructed bungalow, is at the far left of the square from the entrance. It is, not surprisingly, the nearest house to the colony's escape route—Two Pier Cubes.

Bormann's vast wealth ensures both the colony's protection and its freedom from toil.



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MARTIN BORMANN
... dying in stronghold?

Hitler's private wealth (all of which Bormann expropriated), plus another \$31.2 million in SS funds. Wiedwald claims to know of three other wanted war criminals in South America. There is Gluecks in Chile. Auschwitz physician Josef Mengele, he maintains is an army doctor with the rank of major operating in the garrison of "Antonio Lopez" in the military zone in northeast Paraguay. Gestapo chief Heinrich Muller and an Italian girl run a hardware and provisions store in the suburb of Natal, in northeast Brazil.

Here is Wiedwald's version of Bormann's escape:

On May 2-3, 1945, as the Allied armies ground down the last pockets of Nazi resistance in Berlin, 19-year-old Erich Karl Wiedwald—a corporal in the Frundsberg Division of the SS—found himself in a Russian emergency field hospital at Koenigs-

igs-wusterhausen, on the southern edge of Berlin.

He knew he could find sanctuary in the home of an uncle at Dahlem, a suburb to the west of Berlin. But in planning his trip with another of the "walking wounded," he was overheard by five men on the hospital verandah.

They wore assorted uniforms. One, disguised in the uniform of the Berlin anti-aircraft troops, was Bormann. Another, in an SS camouflage smock, was Schwent.

Schwent did the talking, and he persuaded Wiedwald that the journey round Berlin to Dahlem would be less hazardous for a group. On May 4, the group arrived at the ivy-covered semidetached house at 9 Fontanestrasse, Dahlem.

After the Russians stopped them on the way to an estate in South Mecklenburg, Bormann and Schwent decided to head north, to the last bastion of resistance being organized by Admiral Doenitz. They took the daring course of simply walking down the Autobahn to the west—right through the British lines.

Wiedwald learned later from Schwent that Doenitz's resistance had died before the party ever reached him. Bormann joined the SS escape route, the Odessa Line.

Other investigators, notably the Israelis, have pieced together his travels through Austria, over the Brenner pass into Italy, to a monastery in Rome, on a fishing boat from Genoa to Spain, and finally, in the middle of 1947, to South America. Wiedwald says he knows nothing of this journey.

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Schwent apparently once estimated to Wiedwald that Bormann's income was at most \$36,000 a month. From the gossip in the camp, Wiedwald thinks Bormann's capital came from \$35 million of Nazi Party funds and



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Wiedwald also says he did not recognize Bormann. He learned who he was in 1946, after accidentally meeting Schwent again and deciding to accompany him to South America, "more out of a sense of adventure than anything."

According to Wiedwald, Bormann is unrecognizable from his photographs, and he is dying.

He is unrecognizable because of a botched job of plastic surgery in Buenos Aires soon after he landed. According to Wiedwald, it left Bormann's face puffy, blotchy and partly deformed.

To hide these scars, Bormann is never seen without a wide-brimmed hat and heavy dark glasses. These, plus his habitual dress of white shirt, wide breeches and high riding boots, give him the air of a typical prosperous landowner.

The only peculiarity, according to Wiedwald, is that Bormann's riding boots are brown. The SS traditionally spurned brown boots as symbols of "the decadent upper classes."

The apparent explanation may also indicate one factor in Bormann's immunity from arrest. Paraguayan President Alfredo Stroessner favors brown boots, and Bormann admires Stroessner extravagantly.

Stroessner seems to return the compliment. According to Wiedwald, a framed photograph of Stroessner, inscribed "To my friend," has pride of place in Bormann's bedroom, along with portraits of Hitler and Goebbels.

Ironically Bormann believes it was his first hero,

Hitler, who caused the stomach cancer that is now killing him. Bormann has always been a heavy smoker. But Hitler, the ascetic vegetarian, hated tobacco. Bormann, in desperation, was driven to furtive drags in the lavatory of Hitler's bunker. The nicotine of his strong, filterless cigarettes, combined with an "anxiety neurosis," he thinks, gave him cancer.

But Bormann is apparently resigned to death. He smokes and drinks excessively (he prefers Vat 69 Scotch, also Stroessner's favorite). He does not seem worried by the slim possibility that he may be captured, although the rest of the colony is trigger-happy.

Bormann still dreams of recognition. In his pep talks to the colony—like Hitler's wartime speeches, but now "always sounding the same," according to Wiedwald—he used to talk of getting a square deal for the Nazis from the International Court

at The Hague, or perhaps the United Nations.

The colony's feast days are almost theatrically crazy. Bormann's men celebrate Hitler's birthday (April 20), his seizure of power (Jan. 30), the abortive 1923 coup (Nov. 9), and Bormann's birthday (June 17), and sing the Horst Wessel song and other Nazi ballads.

Apart from a bowling alley, their only "entertainment" is talk, and their only topic the dear dead days.

It is a dying community. In the last two years, women seem to have been allowed in for the first time. Previously Bormann had refused them as a "security risk" and angrily dismissed as "irreverent to Hitler's memory" a proposal for a Nordic stud farm.

But the outpost exists for only one man. Even if children are born, it is hard to believe that Kolonie Walüner SSS will long outlive its founder.

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