

Never Saw Bormann, Argentinian Declares

By JOSEPH NOVITSKI

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BUENOS AIRES, Dec. 7—The man who gained worldwide fame recently as the dogged "Argentine intelligence officer" who had tracked down Martin Bormann, the world's most wanted Nazi war criminal, says that he has never seen Bormann, never, in fact, even looked for him and has no knowledge of whether he is dead or alive.

Juan José Velasco, who was identified as the star informant in the newspaper version of Martin Bormann's fate researched by Ladislav Farrago early this month, said this week in a series of interviews in Buenos Aires that the documents used by Mr. Farrago were forgeries.

A week-long investigation also disclosed that the man whose pictures had been published around the world for the last two weeks, identified as Bormann, is alive and well in Argentina. His name is Rodolfo Nicolas Siri and he is a 54-year-old high school teacher, not a 72-year-old Nazi on the run.

These two men—Mr. Velasco and Mr. Siri—are the key to the latest and most sensational of many journalistic versions of what happened to Hitler's deputy at the end of World War II.

In the articles, Mr. Farrago calls his informant José Juan Velasco, but there is no doubt that the man whose picture was published with the Bormann articles in The Daily Express of London and The New York Daily News are of Juan José Velasco.

Mr. Velasco, who wears tinted glasses, described himself as a former intelligence agent. He is 36 years old and carries a valid Argentine identity card in that name.

"I think he's dead," said Mr.

Velasco in a discussion of Bormann early one recent morning. "Sure, he's dead. He died in Berlin back in 1945, so far as I'm concerned. But who can

Mr. Farrago's articles on Bormann began appearing appearing in the Daily Express and The Daily News Nov. 27. An announcement above the story in The Daily News that day read:

"This is the first of a documented five-part series, with pictures, proving that Nazi war criminal Martin Bormann is not dead—but is, in fact, leading the life of a prosperous businessman in Latin America. The series, by best-selling author Ladislav Farrago, in collaboration with Stewart Steven of The London Daily Express, is based

on a nine-month investigation."

The photographs published with Mr. Farago's account are actually of two friends, Mr. Velasco and Mr. Siri, talking outside the Cafe Tortoni on the Avenida de Mayo in downtown Buenos Aires late in the afternoon of last Oct. 5. They are not of an intelligence officer and his quarry, Martin Bormann, facing one another in the bordertown of Mendoza, as they had been described.

'Burned Me for good'

Mr. Velasco also says that the documents written to order, wit official stamps cut from other papers and pasted onto them. He does not say who ordered the documents changed.

"That man Farago has burned me for good," Mr. Velasco told this correspondent. "The Argentine documents he has are false—at least the ones I've seen in the papers. I can prove they are false because I have the originals—in a safe place. You have only to see the originals to know they are false."

The New York Times did not have access to Mr. Velasco's documents. However, the Argentine Federal Police, from whose files Mr. Farago said the documents printed with his articles had come, stated categorically last Wednesday that none of the published documents had come from their files.

'No Sign' of Documents

Commissioner Osvaldo A. Messori, chief spokesman for the Federal Police, was supplied last Monday with a written list of the documents cited by number in Mr. Farago's article and with copies of The Daily Express in which the facsimilies of some documents were reproduced.

On Wednesday, he said that the files had been searched and that he had been authorized by Brig. Gen. Alberto S. Cáceres, commander of the Federal Po-

lice, to say: "There is no sign of these documents in our archives."

Commissioner Messori was much less affirmative about Mr. Velasco and his possible connection with the Federal Police.

"Mr. Juan José Velasco is not a commissioner, a sub-commissioner nor a non-commissioned officer of this police force. That is all I have been authorized to say," he declared. He had been asked about José Juan Velasco.

As Mr. Farago's series unfolded, much of its content seemed familiar to those who have kept up with newspaper and magazine publications on the flight of Nazis to South America after the war.

There were also gross errors in key details, such as the name and description of the Argentine ranch where Borman had allegedly been traced by Argentine intelligence officials.

There were also strange coincidences; the detailed list of the treasure hoard Borman was

supposed to have smuggled out of Germany and delivered to Juan Domingo Perón, Argentina's President at the time, in return for safety in Argentina corresponded exactly to that published by an Argentine newsletter called Ultima Clave last Sept. 14—a time when Mr. Farago said he had been researching his story in Argentina.

The Hungarian-born author also said that he had had access to high Argentine intelligence officials and to their files. He identified his two principal informants as José Juan Velasco, whom he describes as a high-ranking intelligence official in the Argentine Federal Police, and Z. I. Sztemberg, the chief of the intelligence division of the police force in the province of Buenos Aires.

After a search by the Buenos Aires Province Police of their personnel files, a police spokesman said no one named Sztemberg or Steimberg had ever been on the provincial police

force. Mr. Sztemberg or Steimberg is believed to be in Uruguay, across the River Plate.

Mr. Siri was located through Mr. Velasco and interviewed in his six-room apartment at 265 Calle Medrano in Buenos Aires. Mr. Siri had not left the apartment for seven days.

"Since those photographs came out I have received several telephone calls, from different places, some anonymous, some not so anonymous, threatening me with some kind of attack, that possibly, even, they were going to blow up my house, to dynamite it," Mr. Siri said during a one-hour, tape-recorded interview on Thursday.

According to the West German Government description of Bormann, he was 5 feet 6 inches tall and tugged incessantly at his left earlobe. Mr. Siri is about four inches shorter and does not tug his left earlobe.

Mr. Siri says he has never met Mr. Farago. He says he did not authorize Mr. Farago or any other person to use his

photographs. He has already taken legal steps to sue. The published his picture and identified it as that of Martin Bormann.

The scar on Mr. Siri's forehead, which Mr. Farago found important in identifying the man in his pictures as Bormann, is according to Mr. Siri the result of a childhood fall.

To all appearances, including documentary proof, the short, broad teacher with the gravelly voice is not Bormann. Mr. Siri was born in Buenos Aires on Oct. 19, 1918. He is 54 years old and proved it with a thumbprinted Argentine identification card issued by the Federal Police under No. 1,546,417.

In his articles, Mr. Farago emphasized that Bormann constantly wore rubber gloves to avoid being fingerprinted.

If Martin Bormann were alive, and did not die trying to escape from Berlin in 1945, as a West German court declared 18 years ago, he would be 72 years old.

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