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**Berchtesgaden Now Symbol Of Adolf Hitler's Total Defeat.**

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# Berchtesgaden Now Symbol Of Adolf Hitler's Total Defeat

By Cpl. KLAUS MANN  
Staff Correspondent

BERCHTESGADEN, May 8 (Delayed)—This place—for the past ten years a representative center of Nazi power—is today the most spectacular symbol of Hitler's total defeat. In front of these smoking ruins, which used to be the Fuehrer's much-vaunted fortress, one cannot fail to realize both the impressive dimensions of the Third Reich's former might and the completeness of Germany's present humiliation.

Coming from the Austrian frontier on your way to this Bavarian mountain village, you have a delightful drive on smooth, well-kept roads through peaceful and picturesque countryside. There are some traces of air raids, but in general you don't see much destruction. Some of the sporadic damage done during recent weeks has already been repaired by fast-working American Engineers. Just before reaching Berchtesgaden, you cross a small river on the new "Ernie Pyle Memorial Bridge."

Berchtesgaden itself appears in fairly good shape, with only a few buildings touched by the terrific bombing of April 25. The place is teeming with Allied soldiers, mostly French and American, with a sprinkling of liberated Italians, Poles and Russians. There is a mixed atmosphere of carnival and grim seriousness.

Up to yesterday, May 7, any Allied soldier was free to visit the Obersalzberg, Hitler's legendary estate about two miles from Berchtesgaden's main market square. More recently, however, control has become pretty strict. Our jeep was stopped by MPs, and we had to drive back to regimental headquarters at the other end of town to get our special pass.

## A DISAPPOINTMENT

The first impression is almost anti-climactic. There is so little left of what used to be the world's most discussed, most notorious country seat! But at second glance you still can get a fairly accurate idea of the elaborate and sumptuous setup you'd have found here a couple of weeks before.

What has been destroyed here by Allied bombs was not just one building, but a whole complex of villas, pavilions, terraces and fortifications. The central structure, Hitler's former private residence, was almost completely demolished by a direct hit. You can still discern the general outlines of a once rustic and pompous edifice.

The main hall, where the ex-Fuehrer once received his visitors and victims, appears comparatively well preserved, with all its walls still standing and with the contours of its famous huge window still recognizable. The view through this vast now-blackened opening is the only splendor of the Fuehrer's household that has remained intact. It is indeed gorgeous—a panorama of snow-covered mountain peaks towering over an idyllic foreground of hilly meadows and forests.

The only part of the Berghof where any body was to be found—in fact, the only wing of the whole establishment which has survived as a building, is one of the guest houses, called the "Platterhof," recently transformed into a hospital for wounded SS leaders and other prominent party invalids. It is at the roof of this wing that French soldiers, who were the first to arrive at Obersalzberg, have hoisted the tri-color. Here, too, Allied veterans found staggering supplies of exquisite wines—all stolen by Nazi invaders in Paris and other French towns and cities. Scores of bottles remained.

## TOTAL DESTRUCTION

As for the other wings and adjacent mansions, all have been turned into rubble. French and Italian prisoners, who had to do slave work on these premises, point out to you the ruins of Hermann Goerring's villa—one of the Reichsmarshal's numerous country seats—and inform you that Martin Bormann, Chief of the Chancellery, used to occupy this picturesque spot, while another wing, now shattered beyond recognition, was reserved for the Gestapo, and still another for gentlemen of the German press.

Rubble is all that remains—burned trees, deep craters like open wounds, parched earth littered with fragments of broken furniture and scattered remnants of the Fuehrer's belongings. I noticed some colored prints, all torn to pieces, showing Wagnerian heroes in proud martial poses; disconnected sheets from Hitler's own newspaper *Der Voelkische Beobachter*; film strips, probably from the Fuehrer's private theater; pages of music and yellowed photographs.

These ruins, one somehow feels, ought to be preserved just as they are—with Allied flags, torn Nibelungen heroes, broken bottles and all—as a telling monument to the crushing defeat and fall of the Nazi regime.