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France Surrenders to Germany –
1940

Lead: It ended almost before it began. Using lightning tactics perfected in Poland the previous autumn, in May 1940 Germany forced France to surrender.

Intro: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts.

Content: For eight months after the collapse of Poland in September 1939, Allied and Axis forces engaged in what in the West was called the Phony War or Twilight War. The Germans named it sitskreig or sitting war. Hitler was trying to goad his reluctant generals

into attacking the French and British before the Allies could ramp up their preparations.

The French had constructed the seemingly impregnable Maginot Line from the Swiss border to the Belgium frontier, but the Line did not go all the way to the Channel. France counted on Belgium slowing any German attack. This would signal the direction in which the Germans were coming and would give France breathing space to deflect the blow. France also depended on the inhospitable terrain of the Belgium's Ardennes region to prevent large German mechanized operations.

In early May, Hitler finally

whipped his military into action and using the now-proven blitzkrieg tactics of surprise, speed, and the concentrated armor attacks, German divisions simply overwhelmed the unprepared French and British. It was over in less than six weeks

On June 18th Germans peacefully entered Paris and on June 22, 1940 France surrendered in the same rail car in the Compiegne forest where Germany had been forced to sign the Armistice in 1918.

Research by Kristin Bushby, in Richmond, Virginia this is Dan Roberts.

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