

France Falls - The Armistice Train and Its Aftermath

The railway carriage in which Germany surrendered to France, at the end of World War I, had been housed in a French museum. Hitler ordered his engineers to retrieve the train car—and deliver it to the exact spot where Germany had surrendered $21\frac{1}{2}$ years before.

Hitler, waiting for the French delegation at a place about fifty miles northeast of Paris, had a special plan in place for this special railway car.

The arriving Frenchmen, set to surrender their country to Nazi control on the 22nd of June, in 1940, recognized the railway carriage and instantly realized Hitler's objectives.

Hitler would make France surrender in the very train car, at the very place, where Germany had surrendered to France at the end of World War One.

Hitler, in short, would have his revenge for Germany's WWI surrender humiliation.

Four hundred thousand French troops were forced to stop fighting when the Second Armistice of Compiegne was signed. The fall of France—on June 25, 1940—was complete.

In ten short months, Hitler had devastated Western Europe. Britain, however remained independent—separated from Hitler's reach by the English Channel.

Because the British Expeditionary Force (with its hundreds of thousands of men) had escaped from Dunkirk, and returned to their own country, Britain was down—but not out.

Hitler, turning his sights on the Soviet Union, would thereafter wage war on two fronts. Some historians believe that was the beginning of his downfall.

Credits:

Historic footage, online courtesy BBC.

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