

FRANCE YIELDS TO NAZIS' DRIVE WITHIN 39 DAYS

Ninth Country to Fall
to Hitler in Two Years
Shows Feeble Defense

ABANDON MAGINOT

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New York, June 23.—France, the ninth nation to succumb to Germany in little more than two years, was brought to her knees within thirty-nine days, beginning with the invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The Netherlands capitulated in four days and Belgium gave up the struggle fourteen days later, on May 28, paving the way for the final defeat of the Allied armies in Flanders and the smashing, relentless German drive on Paris and beyond. Luxembourg had not offered resistance.

The Nazi offensive that culminated in France's surrender was started on June 5, the day after the Germans completed their mop-up of Flanders with the capture of Dunkirk. Nine days later Chancellor Hitler's legions marched into Paris and unfurled the swastika over the Eiffel Tower and the palace at Versailles.

Within another two days the Germans had outflanked the famed Maginot Line and the French were compelled to abandon the \$500,000,000 system of fortifications upon which they had relied so much for the defense of the country. The withdrawal from the Maginot Line was the beginning of the end of French resistance.

Defensive War Fails.

What had been referred to humorously during the winter of inactivity as Germany's "Sitzkrieg" developed with the coming of operations in the West into a blitzkrieg of totally unexpected speed and proportions. The long-expected defensive warfare, with the Maginot Line as the bulwark of the defense on the part of France and Britain, was shown to have been an illusion, as the Germans, sweeping on with terrific power and rapidity, made it a war of lightning-like movement.

It was this type of warfare for which the French had not prepared. The overwhelming superiority of the Germans in mechanized and armored divisions, as well as in the air, caught the French in a desperate position almost from the beginning, after the break-through of

the Germans in the Ardennes and the dislocation of the defensive positions prepared by the French along their Belgian frontier.

The French had mobilized 6,000,000 men, including their air force, much inferior numerically to the German air force, which played a leading role in the operations. So great and rapid was the German advance that at no time after the retreat from Flanders and the beginning of the march on Paris were the French able to reorganize upon a new strong line.

The fighting that sealed the fate of France began on May 15 with the Battle of the Meuse, after the invasion of Belgium, with Namur and Sedan among the important German objectives. By May 21, after the break-through at Sedan, which opened the road for the Germans into France, the Germans reached Arras and the strategic railway centre of Amiens, a development that facilitated their drive toward the French Channel ports.

"Incredible Mistakes."

Speaking before the Chamber of Deputies, Premier Paul Reynaud declared that "incredible mistakes, which would be punished," had been committed. He referred to French military movements in the Ardennes, which made possible the capture of Sedan. By May 23 the Germans had encircled the Allied army in Flanders, while their advance mechanized divisions were rushing forward to Boulogne and Calais. Abbeville was captured and there was severe fighting for Boulogne.

The position of the Allied armies in Flanders became untenable when, on May 28, the Belgian Army surrendered to the Germans on the order of King Leopold and made the encirclement of the Allied forces appear inevitable. The next five days supplied one of the tensest periods of the fighting, for during this brief time the Allied forces managed to execute their remarkable retreat from Flanders by sea, with the aid of British and French naval contingents and air forces.

On June 4, to the amazement of the world, which had expected the surrender of the entire Allied army, Prime Minister Winston Churchill was able to announce in the House of Commons that 335,000 troops had been extricated from Flanders by way of Dunkirk.

To Paris and Beyond.

With the entire English Channel region of France in their hands, the Germans soon resumed their drive southward toward Paris and along the French coast. On June 9 German reconnaissance units reached Rouen and two days later

their forces were on the Seine. The next day, June 12, they claimed Reims, and on June 14 they entered Paris after it had been proclaimed an open city by the French to save it from destruction.

On June 17, with the German drive advancing ninety miles beyond Paris and the French Government installed at Bordeaux, Marshal Henri Phillipe Petain, who had in the meanwhile succeeded Paul Reynaud as Premier, announced that "France must give up the fight."

The train of events that led up to the outbreak of the war last September began on March 11, 1938 with the occupation of Austria by German troops without opposition. The following March Hitler, oblivious to French and British threat of resistance, seized Czecho-Slovakia without firing a shot. On Sept. 1, 1940, German armies moved into Poland and two days later France and England declared war on Germany. In less than a month Poland was crushed, with Warsaw surrendering on Sept. 28, after a terrific siege in which the city was reduced to ruins.

The immediate prelude to the fighting in France was the occupa-

tion of Norway and Denmark on April 9. Allied operations in Norway were abandoned when it became apparent that Hitler was making ready for the great thrust against France.

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