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Second Armistice at Compiègne

The **Second Armistice at Compiègne** was signed at 18:50 on 22 June 1940 near [Compiègne](#), in the department of [Oise](#), between [Nazi Germany](#) and France. Following the decisive German victory in the [Battle of France](#) (10 May–21 June 1940), it established a German occupation zone in Northern France that encompassed all [English Channel](#) and [Atlantic Ocean](#) ports and left the remainder "free" to be governed by the French. [Adolf Hitler](#) deliberately chose [Compiègne Forest](#) as the site to sign the armistice due to its symbolic role as the site of the 1918 [Armistice with Germany \(Compiègne\)](#) that signaled the end of [World War I](#) with a German defeat.

Battle of France

Main article: [Battle of France](#)

The best and most modern armies had been sent north and lost in the resulting encirclement; the French had lost their best heavy weaponry and their best armored formations. Between May and June, French forces were in general retreat and Germany threatened to occupy [Paris](#). The French government was forced to relocate to [Bordeaux](#) on 10 June to avoid capture and declared Paris to be an [open city](#). By 22 June, the German Armed Forces (*Wehrmacht*) had lost 27,000 dead, more than 111,000 wounded and 18,000 missing, against French losses of 92,000 dead and more than 200,000 wounded. The [British Expeditionary Force](#) had lost more than 68,000 men.

Choice of Compiègne

When [Adolf Hitler](#) received word from the French Government that they wished to negotiate an [armistice](#), Hitler selected Compiègne Forest near Compiègne as the site for the negotiations. As Compiègne was the site of the [1918 Armistice](#) ending the [Great War](#) with a humiliating defeat for Germany, Hitler saw using this location as a supreme moment of [revenge](#) for Germany over France. Hitler decided to sign the armistice in the same rail carriage where the Germans had signed the first armistice in 1918. However, in the last sentence of the preamble, the drafters inserted "However, Germany does not have the intention to use the armistice conditions and armistice negotiations as a form of humiliation against such a valiant opponent" referring to the French Forces. Furthermore, in Article 3, Clause 2, the drafters stated that their intention was not to heavily occupy North-West France after cessation of hostilities with Britain.

In the very same railway carriage in which the 1918 Armistice was signed (removed from a museum building and placed on the precise spot where it was located in 1918), Hitler sat in the same chair in which Marshal [Ferdinand Foch](#) had sat when he faced the defeated German representatives. After listening to the reading of the preamble, Hitler – in a calculated gesture of disdain to the French delegates – left the carriage, leaving the negotiations to his High Command of the Armed Forces (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, or OKW Chief, General [Wilhelm Keitel](#)).

Terms

According to William Shirer's book *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, French General Charles Huntziger complained that the armistice terms imposed on France were far harsher than those imposed on Germany in 1918. They provided for German occupation of three-fifths of France north and west of a line through Geneva, Tours and the Spanish border so as to give the German Navy (*Kriegsmarine*) access to all French [Channel](#) and Atlantic ports. All persons who had been granted political asylum had to be surrendered and all occupation costs had to be borne by France, to the tune of 400 million French francs a day. A minimal [French Army](#) would be permitted. As one of Hitler's few concessions, the [French Navy](#) was to be disarmed but not surrendered, for Hitler realized that pushing France too far could result in France fighting on from French North Africa. An unoccupied region, the [Zone libre](#)

was left relatively free to be governed by a rump French administration based in [Vichy](#), which also administered the occupied zones albeit under severe restrictions. This was envisaged to last until a final peace treaty would be negotiated.

However a final peace treaty was never negotiated, and the unoccupied zone was occupied by Germany and its Italian ally in [Operation Anton \(Case Anton\)](#) following the invasion of French North Africa by the United States in November 1942.

The French delegation – led by General [Charles Huntziger](#) – tried to soften the harsher terms of the armistice, but Keitel replied that they would have to accept or reject the armistice as it was. Given the military situation that France was in, Huntziger had "no choice" but to accede to the armistice terms. None of the French delegation, believing the war would last just a few more weeks now that the United Kingdom and its Commonwealth were fighting alone, objected to a clause that said all French prisoners of war (POW) were to remain prisoners until the end of all hostilities with the British. Nearly one million Frenchmen were thus forced to spend the next five years in prisoner of war camps (about a third of the initial million and a half prisoners taken were released or [paroled](#) by the Germans before the war ended) ^[1]. The cease-fire went into effect on 25 June 1940, 0:35.

Article 19 of the Franco-German armistice required the French State to turn over to German authorities any non-French person, who would then frequently face deportation to a concentration camp (the "[Surrender on Demand][1]" clause).

Full text

ARMISTICE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES AND FRENCH
PLENIPOTENTIARIES, COMPIEGNE, JUNE 22, 1940 ^[2]

Between the chief of the High Command of the armed forces, Colonel General [Wilhelm Keitel](#), commissioned by the [Fuehrer](#) of the [German Reich](#) and Supreme Commander in Chief of the [German Armed Forces](#), and the fully authorized plenipotentiaries of the French Government, General [Charles L. C. Huntziger](#), chairman of the delegation; Ambassador Léon Noel, Rear Admiral Maurice R. LeLuc, Army Corps General Georges Hubert Parisot, and Air Force General Jean-Marie Joseph Bergeret, the following armistice treaty was agreed upon:

ARTICLE I.

The French Government directs a cessation of fighting against the German Reich in France as well as in French possessions, colonies, protectorate territories, mandates as well as on the seas.

Clause 1

It [the French Government] directs the immediate laying down of arms of French units already encircled by German troops.

ARTICLE II.

To safeguard the interests of the German Reich, French State territory north and west of the line drawn on the attached map will be occupied by German troops.

Clause 1

As far as the parts to be occupied still are not in control of German troops, this occupation will be carried out immediately after the conclusion of this treaty.

ARTICLE III.

In the occupied parts of France the German Reich exercises all rights of an occupying power The French Government obligates itself to support with every means the regulations resulting from the exercise of these rights and to carry them out with the aid of French administration.

Clause 1

All French authorities and officials of the occupied territory, therefore, are to be promptly informed by the French Government to comply with the regulations of the German military commanders and to cooperate with them in a correct manner.

Clause 2

It is the intention of the German Government to limit the occupation of the west coast after ending hostilities with [England](#) to the extent absolutely necessary.

Clause 3

The French Government is permitted to select the seat of its government in unoccupied territory, or, if it wishes, to move to Paris. In this case, the German Government guarantees the French Government and its central authorities every necessary alleviation so that they will be in a position to conduct the administration of unoccupied territory from Paris.

ARTICLE IV.

French armed forces on land, on the sea, and in the air are to be demobilized and disarmed in a period still to be set. Excepted are only those units which are necessary for maintenance of domestic order. Germany and Italy will fix their strength. The French armed forces in the territory to be occupied by Germany are to be hastily withdrawn into territory not to be occupied and be discharged. These troops, before marching out, shall lay down their weapons and equipment at the places where they are stationed at the time this treaty becomes effective. They are responsible for orderly delivery to German troops.

ARTICLE V.

As a guarantee for the observance of the armistice, the surrender, undamaged, of all those guns, tanks, tank defense weapons, war planes, anti-aircraft artillery, infantry weapons, means of conveyance, and munitions can be demanded from the units of the French armed forces which are standing in battle against Germany and which at the time this agreement goes into force are in territory not to be occupied by Germany.

Clause 1

The German armistice commission will decide the extent of delivery.

ARTICLE VI.

Weapons, munitions, and war apparatus of every kind remaining in the unoccupied portion of France are to be stored and/or secured under German and/or Italian control — so far as not released for the arming allowed to French units.

Clause 1

The German High Command reserves the right to direct all those measures which are necessary to exclude unauthorized use of this material. Building of new war apparatus in unoccupied territory is to be stopped immediately.

ARTICLE VII.

In occupied territory, all the land and coastal fortifications, with weapons, munitions, and apparatus and plants of every kind are to be surrendered undamaged. Plans of these fortifications, as well as plans of those already conquered by German troops, are to be handed over.

Clause 1

Exact plans regarding prepared blastings, land mines, obstructions, time fuses, barriers for fighting, etc., shall be given to the German High Command. These hindrances are to be removed by French forces upon German demand.

ARTICLE VIII.

The French war fleet is to collect in ports to be designated more particularly, and under German and/or Italian control to demobilize and lay up — with the exception of those units released to the French Government for protection of French interests in its colonial empire.

Clause 1

The peacetime stations of ships should control the designation of ports.

Clause 2

The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use the French War Fleet which is in harbors under German control for its purposes in war, with the exception of units necessary for the purposes of guarding the coast and sweeping mines.

Clause 3

It further solemnly and expressly declares that it does not intend to bring up any demands respecting the French War Fleet at the conclusion of a peace.

Clause 4

All warships outside France are to be recalled to France with the exception of that portion of the French War Fleet which shall be designated to represent French interests in the colonial empire.

ARTICLE IX.

The French High Command must give the German High Command the exact location of all mines which France has set out, as well as information on the other harbor and coastal obstructions and defense facilities. Insofar as the German High Command may require, French forces must clear away the mines.

ARTICLE X.

The French Government is obligated to forbid any portion of its remaining armed forces to undertake hostilities against Germany in any manner.

Clause 1

French Government also will prevent members of its armed forces from leaving the country and prevent armaments of any sort, including ships, planes, etc., being taken to England or any other place abroad.

Clause 2

The French Government will forbid French citizens to fight against Germany in the service of States with which the German Reich is still at war. French citizens who violate this provision are to be treated by German troops as insurgents.

ARTICLE XI.

French commercial vessels of all sorts, including coastal and harbor vessels which are now in French hands, may not leave port until further notice. Resumption of commercial voyages will require approval of the German and Italian Governments.

Clause 1

French commercial vessels will be recalled by the French Government or, if return is impossible, the French Government will instruct them to enter neutral harbors.

Clause 2

All confiscated German commercial vessels are, on demand, to be returned [to Germany] undamaged.

ARTICLE XII.

Flight by any airplane over French territory shall be prohibited. Every plane making a flight without German approval will be regarded as an enemy by the German Air Force and treated accordingly.

Clause 1

In unoccupied territory, air fields and ground facilities of the air force shall be under German and Italian control.

Clause 2

Demand may be made that such air fields be rendered unusable. The French Government is required to take charge of all foreign airplanes in the unoccupied region to prevent flights. They are to be turned over to the German armed forces.

ARTICLE XIII.

The French Government obligates itself to turn over to German troops in the occupied region all facilities and properties of the French armed forces in undamaged condition.

Clause 1

It [the French Government] also will see to it that harbors, industrial facilities, and docks are preserved in their present condition and damaged in no way.

Clause 2

The same stipulations apply to transportation routes and equipment, especially railways, roads, and canals, and to the whole communications network and equipment, waterways and coastal transportation services.

Clause 3

Additionally, the French Government is required on demand of the German High Command to perform all necessary restoration labor on these facilities.

Clause 4

The French Government will see to it that in the occupied region necessary technical personnel and rolling stock of the railways and other transportation equipment, to a degree normal in peacetime, be retained in service.

ARTICLE XIV.

There is an immediate prohibition of transmission for all wireless stations on French soil. Resumption of wireless connections from the unoccupied portion of France requires a special regulation.

ARTICLE XV.

The French Government obligates itself to convey transit freight between the German Reich and Italy through unoccupied territory to the extent demanded by the German Government.

ARTICLE XVI.

The French Government, in agreement with the responsible German officials, will carry out the return of population into occupied territory.

ARTICLE XVII.

The French Government obligates itself to prevent every transference of economic valuables and provisions from the territory to be occupied by German troops into unoccupied territory or abroad.

Clause 1

These valuables and provisions in occupied territory are to be disposed of only in agreement with the German Government. In that connection, the German Government will consider the necessities of life of the population in unoccupied territory.

ARTICLE XVIII.

The French-Government will bear the costs of maintenance of German occupation troops on French soil.

ARTICLE XIX.

All German war and civil prisoners in French custody, including those under arrest and convicted who were seized and sentenced because of acts in favor of the German Reich, shall be surrendered immediately to German troops.

Clause 1

The French Government is obliged to surrender upon demand all Germans named by the German Government in France as well as in French possessions, colonies, protectorate territories, and mandates.

Clause 2

The French Government binds itself to prevent removal of German war and civil prisoners from France into French possessions or into foreign countries. Regarding prisoners already taken outside of France, as well as sick and wounded German prisoners who cannot be transported, exact lists with the places of residence are to be produced. The German High Command assumes care of sick and wounded German war prisoners.

ARTICLE XX.

French troops in German prison camps will remain prisoners of war until conclusion of a peace.

ARTICLE XXI.

The French Government assumes responsibility for the security of all objects and valuables whose undamaged surrender or holding in readiness for German disposal is demanded in this agreement or whose removal outside the country is forbidden. The French Government is bound to compensate for all destruction, damage or removal contrary to agreement.

ARTICLE XXII.

The [Armistice Commission](#), acting in accordance with the direction of the German High Command, will regulate and supervise the carrying out of the armistice agreement. It is the task of the Armistice Commission further to insure the necessary conformity of this agreement with the Italian-French armistice.

Clause 1

The French Government will send a delegation to the seat of the German Armistice Commission to represent the French wishes and to receive regulations from the German Armistice Commission for executing [the agreement].

ARTICLE XXIII.

This armistice agreement becomes effective as soon as the French Government also has reached an agreement with the Italian Government regarding cessation of hostilities.

Clause 1

Hostilities will be stopped six hours after the moment at which the Italian Government has notified the German Government of conclusion of its agreement. The German Government will notify the French Government of this time by wireless.

ARTICLE XXIV.

This agreement is valid until conclusion of a peace treaty. The German Government may terminate this agreement at any time with immediate effect if the French Government fails to fulfill the obligations it assumes under the agreement.

This armistice agreement, signed in the Forest of Compiègne, June 22, 1940, at 6:50 p.m., German summer time.

[HUNTZIGER](#)

[KEITEL](#)

APPENDIX

The line mentioned in Article II of the armistice agreement begins in the east on the French-[Swiss](#) border at [Geneva](#) and runs thence nearly over the villages of [DA'le](#), [Paray-le-Monial](#), and [Bourges](#) to approximately twenty kilometers east of [Tours](#). From there it goes at a distance of twenty kilometers east of the [Tours-Angoulême-Liborune](#) railway line and extends through [Mont-de-Marsan](#) and [Orthez](#) to the [Spanish](#) border.

Destruction of the Armistice site in Compiègne

The Armistice site was demolished by the Germans on Hitler's orders three days later [2]. The carriage itself was taken to Berlin as a trophy of war, along with pieces of a large stone tablet which bore the inscription (in French):

HERE ON THE ELEVENTH OF NOVEMBER 1918 SUCCUMBED THE CRIMINAL PRIDE OF THE GERMAN REICH. VANQUISHED BY THE FREE PEOPLES WHICH IT TRIED TO ENSLAVE.

The [Alsace-Lorraine](#) Monument (depicting a German eagle impaled by a sword) was destroyed and all evidence of the site was obliterated, with the notable exception of the statue of Marshal Foch: Hitler intentionally ordered it to be left intact so that it would be honoring only a wasteland. The railway carriage itself was taken to [Crawinkel](#) in [Thuringia](#) in 1945, where it was destroyed by SS troops and the remains buried.

Restoration of the Armistice Site

After the war, German POW labor was used to restore the armistice site to its former state. The stone tablet's pieces were recovered and reassembled, and a replica of the railway carriage placed at the restored site. The Alsace-Lorraine monument was rebuilt from scratch. After the reunification of Germany in 1989, those who witnessed the event dug up relics and came forth with earlier relics. This was written up in the *Südthüringer Zeitung* (*South Thuringia Newspaper*) on 11 May 1991 in an article entitled "Hitler's Salon Wagon Found in the village of Crawinkel". Various components were returned to the French General Gamache in Compiègne in 1992. On 5 May 1994 a small oak commemorating the "hope for peace" was dug up from the destruction site in Crawinkel and transplanted to Compiègne. On 7 May 2005 the historic site in Crawinkel was dedicated. [from Dankmar Leffler and Klaus-Peter Schambach book]

See also

Italian Armistice Commission

[Paris Protocols](#)

Notes

- [^] Durand, *La Captivité*, p. 21
- [^] United States Department of State, Publication No. 6312

References

United States Department of State, Publication No. 6312, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, IX, 671-676. Washington, DC : Government Printing Office, 1956.

Further reading

William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, 1960, 1990, 2004.

William Shirer, *The Collapse of the Third Republic* (1969)

External links

Steven Lehrer's Compiègne site

Armistice Agreement Between Germany and France, 22 June 1940