



## Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France

*Ernest R. May*

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*Strange Victory* is a riveting book about France and Germany in the years leading up to World War II. Why did Hitler turn against France in the Spring of 1940 and not before? And why were his poor judgement and inadequate intelligence about the Allies nonetheless correct? Why didn't France take the offensive earlier, when it might have led to victory? What explains France's failure to detect and respond to Germany's attack plan?

Skillfully weaving together decisions of the high commands with the confused responses from exhausted and ill-informed, or ill-advised, officers in the field, the distinguished diplomatic historian Ernest R. May offers many new insights into the tragic paradoxes of the battle for France.

## Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France Details

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## From Reader Review Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France for online ebook

### John says

Extremely detailed and with convincing analysis. Its is overwhelmingly about the pre-invasion plans involving Hitler's thinking, intelligence, strategy, pre-war content than actual war waging (which is understandable seeing as Nazi Germany effectively won in 10 days.)

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### Andrew Tollemache says

After watching "Dunkirk" I wanted to read more on the Fall of France in 1940. May's "Strange Victory" looked to be the best and most recent.

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### Dave says

4 stars for important insights, but 2 stars for being about 150 pages too long.

The book essentially overthrows most of my previous conceptions about why France lost so quickly. All of the old ideas of a defeatist France, an irresistible Germany, etc. are swept away. This is really too bad, as it will alter my lesson plans, and I guess I will have to scrap showing my students Vol. 3 of the video series, 'The World at War.' This is also a sad casualty of this book, as it was always fun to have L. Olivier talk in a droll and snobbish way about the French.

Another problem I have with the book is that its best insights are not highlighted enough by the author - and they are very good ones about the relationship between political cultures and the military, and the political influence of intelligence. Too often they are buried in the midst of names, numbers, and chronologies that I can't follow.

Still, an important book for those interested in the subject.

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### Alex says

Good little revisionist WWII history. May argues that from a military standpoint, Germany should have been defeated by the Allies in 1940, and then lays out the reasons that it did not come to pass. Focuses surprisingly little on the Battle for France, and more on the political and military preparations by Germany that led up to the war and the invasion itself.

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## **Tim says**

I'm just at the very beginning but it is so awesome. Until now, in my mind, the fall of France at the beginning of WWII deserved one sentence. "France surrendered". But, as with most subjects, drilling down into the details yields big complexities.

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## **Steve says**

As a warning, this book probably is of the most interest to a serious student of WWII or European politics. It is a book written in response to the prevailing accounts of the fall of France in 1940.

May presents a revisionist account that challenges the idea that France was rotten and bound to be defeated in 1940. By contrast, France felt much stronger than Germany and was in fact more powerful at that time. While Germany was a larger nation, France could mass her entire army on the border with Germany and Belgium.

May further asserts that the Germans were in many ways lucky to defeat France. Importantly, he argues that the German General Staff were aware of France's superiority. It was this that led them to lead the attack through the Ardennes. While brilliant, the move was quite probably the ONLY way that Germany could have overcome the French armies in the field.

France was not rotten internally, but the army suffered from two flaws which in this case proved fatal. One, the French command system was incredibly ponderous, sufficient for a conventional war but inadequate for a rapid war of maneuver. Second, French military intelligence was deficient. The signs of a major move into the Ardennes were too numerous to conceal completely, but just like with 9/11, these signs were misread.

Once the Germans got across the Meuse in strength at Sedan - which was not easy or preordained - the French army proved incapable of repelling the invaders. France's leaders capitulated when half of their nation was overrun and no organized armies were left to resist the attacker.

Charles DeGaulle once famously asserted that had France had the same land mass as Russia, that France could have defeated the Germans in a similar way holds many truths. The Russians were likewise ponderous, something that is credited to their command economy, but there are many militaries that operate by ponderous plans. The Russians took years and the sacrifice of \*millions\* of lives to figure out how to counter the new warfare of armored maneuver.

I am convinced by May's argument. I think this is an important book for any one who studies World War Two.

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## **Michael Romo says**

I found this to be an excellent book about the surprising and earth-shattering defeat of France and Britain in May of 1940. Allied misjudgements, excellent German planning, and a lot of luck were the culprits of France's defeat. Even so it was a very close thing and this book reveals just how close a victory for the

Germans it was.

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### **Crunknor says**

Very good. Interesting thesis, well argued. Could have used more and better maps.

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### **Nicholas Grace says**

This book really is an epic. It was sold to me as the bible for the Fall of France.

I can only agree. The research of this work is amazing. The style is very detailed but very reader-friendly and the layout is perfectly logical.

For all those who want to know the Army/Hitler relationship pre-war or the political reasons behind the era. This really is the book for you. I just can't praise this work enough.

The tables at the back are also useful for comparative data if you are more into technology and comparing tank numbers.

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### **Dave says**

"Strange Victory" offers a fresh look at the fall of France in World War II. Ernest May delivers a detailed exploration of both the Allied and German sides, underscoring the many missteps both sides made as they approached the final confrontation in the spring of 1940. He does an excellent job of recasting the position of the French, revealing a nation that was not by any means defeatist or unprepared, but of a militarily strong country that was doomed by poor intelligence services and an inability to adjust to quickly-changing situations. This is not a military history (although the opening stages of the battle are covered in detail), but instead a deep diplomatic and espionage tale, so for actual battle sequences you will have to look elsewhere. But if you want to see the story behind the battle of France, and why it happened the way it did, "Strange Victory" is an absolute must-read.

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