

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 342

### “Operation Marita”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

With the arrival of spring in 1941, the Germans were ready to bail out the Italians from the messes they had gotten themselves into in Greece and in Egypt. But speaking of messes, politics in the Balkans is seldom neat and tidy.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 342. Operation Marita.

I’ve already told you about the back and forth in North Africa, between the Italians in Libya and the British in Egypt. After some initial reluctance, the Italian side agreed to accept German reinforcement in the form of a panzer corps commanded by Erwin Rommel. Rommel ranked as perhaps Hitler’s favorite military commander, following his dashing escapades in France, where he had turned Hitler’s planned surprise assault through the Ardennes into an astonishing reality.

By March 1941, Rommel was on site in Libya and directing preparations for an Axis offensive to push the British back out of Libya, which would commence later that month.

Then there was the other problem, the disastrous Italian decision to attack Greece. Months of fighting had led to a humiliating Italian withdrawal. The Greek Army was now in control over a piece of southern Albania.

The British government, you’ll recall, had pledged to come to Greece’s aid in the event of an attack by one of the Axis powers, and now Churchill felt honor bound to fulfill that pledge. The Greek dictator, Ioannis Metaxas, declined British aid on the front line against Italy, fearing it would provoke the Germans into entering the fight, but Metaxas did agree to allow some RAF planes to be based in Greece and consented to British Army units occupying Crete, which would help deter an Italian invasion as well as freeing up the Greek Army garrison on that island to be brought to the mainland for the fight against Italy.

Unfortunately for the Greeks, even this limited British involvement convinced Hitler that the need to intervene in the Italian war against Greece had become urgent. RAF bombers in Greece might be able to reach the critical oil fields in Romania, which were always a concern in Hitler's strategic thinking. With planning for Operation Barbarossa underway, Hitler well understood that an invasion of the Soviet Union would cost Germany access to Soviet oil from the Caucasus—at least until those fields were captured by the German Army—but this meant that, at least in the interim, the Wehrmacht would be entirely dependent on Romanian oil, which meant that the RAF could not be allowed to get close enough to bomb those Romanian oil fields, which meant that the British had to be evicted from Greece.

Beyond that, Hitler worried about Mussolini's political position at home in Italy. In the past six months, *Il Duce's* popularity had taken a serious hit. His decision to enter the war had not gained Italy any new territory or other noticeable advantage, while the Italian Army had been humbled in Libya and downright humiliated in Greece. Even in East Africa, where Italy had enjoyed its one military triumph, the occupation of British Somaliland, the tide was beginning to turn. In January 1941, Indian Army units began advancing from Sudan into Eritrea. Since Italian East Africa was cut off from supply or reinforcement, it wasn't hard to see where that was leading.

In the past half-year, Mussolini had led his nation from disappointment to disappointment to disappointment, and the Italian people were getting tired of it. Mussolini needed a victory, and Hitler was willing to oblige. The Wehrmacht was planning Operation Marita, a German attack on Greece, set to begin in spring of 1941.

The difficulty with invading Greece was largely geographical. Between Germany and Greece sat neutral Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The German Army would have to march through one or the other to reach the Greek frontier.

As originally conceived, Operation Marita was to be executed simultaneously with Operation Felix, which was the German plan to deploy Army units into Spain and take control of the British naval base at Gibraltar, but Operation Felix required the consent of the Spanish government, and as you know, Francisco Franco had been nothing but obstinate. Hitler had spent months attempting to persuade Franco to join the Axis. By January 1941, he had all but given up. He asked Mussolini to give it a try, since Italy had also aided Franco's Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War, even more so than Germany had, but Mussolini had no more success in negotiating with Franco than Hitler had, so Hitler reluctantly cancelled Operation Felix. Operation Marita would go ahead on its own.

For those of you keeping score at home, Spain is now definitely out of the Axis. France is iffy, and the nations of Italy, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, as signatories to the Tripartite Pact, are definitely in. With Operation Barbarossa on the calendar for May, Hitler was keen to secure the German position in the Balkans, which would be on the German right flank when Barbarossa began. Also, there would be those Romanian oil fields to think about.

With Hungary and Romania in the Axis and Greece fighting against the Italians, that left only two neutral nations remaining in the Balkans: Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, which happened to be the very same two nations that were blocking the Wehrmacht's path into Greece.

This called for some careful diplomacy. In January 1941, Hitler invited Bulgarian prime minister Bogdan Filov to the Berghof to discuss the possibility of Bulgaria signing on to the Tripartite Pact. Filov noted that Bulgaria couldn't afford to alienate the Soviet Union; Hitler countered that there was no need for Bulgarians to be afraid of the Russians, not if Stalin understood that intervention in Bulgaria would provoke a military response from Germany. Filov was convinced, and on March 1, 1941, Bulgaria signed the Tripartite Pact in a ceremony in Vienna. The 600,000 German soldiers just across the border in Romania may also have helped persuade the Bulgarian government. The next day, many of those German troops advanced into Bulgaria, much to the discomfort of Stalin and the Soviet government, but they chose not to respond. Hitler sent a letter to the president of Turkey to assure him that the German move into Bulgaria was not directed against that nation, and promised that the German Army would maintain a respectful distance from the Turkish border.

Greece was now within German reach, technically, but an invasion through Bulgaria was far from ideal. Along the border that Bulgaria shared with Greece, Greek territory amounted to little more than a strip of coastline along the northern shore of the Aegean Sea. The Greek military, who had been anticipating an attack from Bulgaria basically since the end of the last war, had built a series of fortifications in the mountains along the Bulgarian border, known informally as the Metaxas Line.

Once German troops breached the Metaxas Line, they would be able to occupy the coast, but they would still be more than 100 kilometers away from the Italian Army in Albania. Linking up with the Italians would require the German Army to turn west and fight its way along a very narrow front across some very unforgiving terrain before they could relieve the Italians and then advance south, if necessary, into the heart of Greece.

All of that was feasible, but it no one's first choice. Much better would be Yugoslavia permitting German Army units passage through its territory south to the Greek border, where the Germans and the Italians could link up at once and begin an offensive south from there into the Greek heartland.

That would require Germany to bring Yugoslavia into the Tripartite Pact. Adolf Hitler was aware of this, and as he was talking the Bulgarians into joining the Pact in early 1941, he was also working on Yugoslavia. On February 14, Hitler hosted Yugoslavia's prime minister, Dragiša Cvetković, at the Berghof to discuss Yugoslavia joining the Axis, and when I say "discussed," I mean of course that Hitler subjected Cvetković to one of his characteristic two-and-a-half-hour monologues. Hitler told Cvetković that an historic opportunity lay before Yugoslavia, the opportunity to work together with Germany and Italy to build a new order in Europe.

But Cvetković gave Hitler's proposal a far cooler reception than his Bulgarian counterpart had. Now, to understand why, I need to get you caught up on Yugoslavia, since the last time we talked about that country in any kind of detail was all the way back in episode 177. As I told you back then, Yugoslavia was not formed by the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference; Yugoslavia formed itself in the closing days of the First World War, although the Allies did have a say in drawing its borders.

I also told you back then that this nation originally came into being as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, even though I keep calling it Yugoslavia, because it's easier to say. This new kingdom began as an amalgamation of various ethnic groups, principally Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but also Macedonians, Montenegrins, Albanians, and Bosniak Muslims and probably a half-dozen other groups I'm overlooking.

And yet in spite of that, it was very much a Serb-dominated state. The King of the new kingdom was Peter I, an ethnic Serb and the same man who had been king of Serbia before the war. The man who had been the Serbian prime minister before the war, Nikola Pašić—remember Nikola Pašić?—also an ethnic Serb, became prime minister of the kingdom in 1921. Belgrade, the capital of old Serbia, was the capital of this new kingdom.

When this new kingdom was proclaimed, King Peter I was 74 years old and in poor health. His son and heir, Prince Alexander, served as his regent until the King's death in 1921. Afterward, Alexander ruled in his own name as King Alexander I.

While the other ethnic groups in the kingdom were resentful of Serb domination, the Serbs saw it as only natural, just as Prussia had been the state that led the way to a united Germany or Piedmont-Sardinia had been the state that led the way to a united Italy. Serbia naturally dominated the new state, as Prussia had in Germany and northerners in Italy. What's the problem?

The kingdom's Croat minority took a different view. They consistently voted for the Croatian Peasant Party in parliamentary elections, a party that advocated Croatian secession from the kingdom. In parliament the Croat deputies used parliamentary tactics to obstruct passage of bills and frustrate the will of the government. You may recall that minority groups within Austria-Hungary did exactly the same thing in the years leading up to the First World War.

Tensions between Croats and Serbs in the kingdom escalated over the 1920s, reaching their peak in June 1928 when a Serb deputy drew a Luger pistol in parliament and shot five members of the Croatian Peasants Party, killing three of them, including the Party leader. Rioting followed and the kingdom seemed to be on the brink of civil war when King Alexander stepped in on January 6, 1929 to prorogue parliament, abolish the constitution, and rule the country as a dictator.

This period is known as the January 6 Dictatorship. King Alexander reorganized the state in an effort to reduce corruption in the government and create a more decentralized system that might

be more acceptable to the kingdom's many minority groups and imposed a new constitution that, surprise, surprise, vested far more executive authority with the King. This is also the moment when the King changed the name of the country from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, thank goodness. The Kingdom was already known informally as Yugoslavia; Alexander simply made it official.

These changes only irritated the Croats further, so the new government cracked down on the Croatian Peasants Party, leading to the formation of the Ustaše, a Croat nationalist movement dedicated to the establishment of an independent Croatian state. To get a feel for the organization, here's a quote from the first issue of their newspaper, published in 1932:

*The KNIFE, REVOLVER, MACHINE GUN and TIME BOMB; these are the idols, these are bells that will announce the dawning and THE RESURRECTION OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA.*

Yugoslavia's neighbor Italy was hostile to the Yugoslav state because of Italian claims to the Dalmatian, and so Fascist Italy supported the Ustaše, and they repaid Italy by embracing Fascist ideology.

The Ustaše began a campaign of terrorism within Yugoslavia, and they weren't the only ones. Another organization, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization or IMRO was doing the same thing as part of a fight for autonomy or independence for Macedonia. The IMRO had been around since 1893, initially in opposition to the Ottoman Empire. By the Thirties, the IMRO was supported by Bulgaria and targeted Yugoslavia. The Ustaše and the IMRO often worked together in a sort of loose alliance.

In June 1934, an assassin aligned with the IMRO shot and killed King Alexander while he was in Marseilles. The King had come to France to sign an alliance agreement; the French foreign minister and former prime minister Louis Barthou also died in the attack when he was struck by a stray bullet fired by a policeman.

The assassination came as a shock in Yugoslavia created resentment against France for its failure to protect the King. Relations between the two nations became strained. With the death of King Alexander, his eleven-year-old son inherited the crown as King Peter II; the late King's cousin, Prince Pavle or Paul, would act as regent.

Relations between Yugoslavia and Italy only got worse as well. As you know, in 1940, Mussolini considered making war on Yugoslavia before deciding to target Greece instead.

So when Prime Minister Cvetković, an ethnic Serb, visited the Berghof in February 1941 and listened to Hitler's pitch, you can understand that he would have reservations. Yugoslavia was dealing with a low-grade Croat insurgency in its north and a low-grade Macedonian insurgency in its south, the first supported by Italy and the second by Bulgaria, both of which were aligned

with Germany. That's in addition to the fact that Italy has territorial claims on Yugoslavia and also don't forget that in the last war, Britain and Russia had defended the Serbs against Austria, which was attempting to annex Serbia with Germany's blessing.

When you consider all this, it becomes easy to understand why Cvetković was reluctant to do a deal with Germany and Italy against Britain and against Russia's interests in the Balkans. But Hitler had one more card to play: he invited the prince regent to the Berghof to discuss the Pact. He told Prince Paul that a German invasion of Greece was imminent and proposed that if Yugoslavia sign the Tripartite Pact and allow German units to transit Yugoslavia on their way to attack Greece, in return, Germany would grant the Greek port city of Thessalonica to Yugoslavia after Greece was defeated.

That was tempting, but the prince was able to wrangle an even better deal out of Hitler: Yugoslavia would sign the Tripartite Pact, with three reservations. First, military units of other Axis nations would not be permitted to enter Yugoslav territory. Second, Yugoslavia would not be obligated to render military assistance to the other Axis powers. Third, other Pact members would honor Yugoslavia's current borders, an important provision, considering that Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria all had territorial claims against Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia would still get Thessalonica.

You might reasonably ask: given all these reservations, are Hitler and the Axis nations getting anything out of Yugoslavia at all? Well, Germany would have guaranteed access to Yugoslavia's exports and at least this way, Yugoslavia was declaring its independence from Russian or British influence.

On March 25, Prince Paul traveled to Vienna to meet with Hitler and sign the agreement. It may not have been much, but it was something.

Roughly 36 hours later, tanks were rolling down the streets of Belgrade. Prime Minister Cvetković was taken into custody and forced to resign. The Yugoslav military overthrew the civilian government, replacing it with a government of national unity. They also ordered the regency ended and the 17-year-old King to assume the full powers of his office. The King learned of his new status the same way his subjects did, when he heard it announced on the radio.

Yugoslavia renounced the Tripartite Pact less than 48 hours after signing it. The Pact had not been popular with the public; thousands now took to the streets in Yugoslav cities to demonstrate in favor of the coup. The demonstrators chanted "Better the war than the Pact; better the grave than a slave." Allied governments praised Yugoslavia's diplomatic U-turn; as you can imagine, the Greeks were particularly happy. The Greek government began querying Belgrade about the possibility of Yugoslavia attacking the Italians in Albania.

In Berlin, Adolf Hitler was awakened in the early morning of March 27 and informed of the coup. At first, he thought the news was some kind of joke. When he was assured it was real, he

flew into a rage. He summoned Wehrmacht commander Wilhelm Keitel and chief of staff Alfred Jodl to the Chancellery and told them to begin planning an invasion of Yugoslavia, to be executed in coordination with Operation Marita.

By the middle of the day, Hitler was in a much cheerier mood. He had come around to the view that the coup in Yugoslavia was a blessing in disguise, since it gave the perfect excuse to invade Yugoslavia and put an end to it once and for all. Hitler felt a particular enmity toward the Serbs, recalling their nationalist agitation in the days before the last war, back when Hitler was a struggling artist living in Vienna.

Over the days that followed, Hitler issued two *Führer* directives confirming the plan to attack both Yugoslavia and Greece as soon as possible, even though this would probably require a four-week delay in the execution of Operation Barbarossa. Yugoslavia was to be dismantled; Hungary and Bulgaria would receive their territorial claims, while Croatia would be granted independence. The German foreign ministry began issuing its standard claims of persecution of ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia. Honestly, by now they probably had preprinted press releases on hand for occasions like this; just fill in the blank with the name of the country that is barbarically persecuting Germans this week, and pass them out.

On April 5, the new Yugoslav cabinet met and approved a Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union. The two parties pledged friendly relations; the deal did not include any Soviet commitment to come to Yugoslavia's defense in the event of war. Still, the treaty was all the provocation Hitler needed.

Less than 24 hours later, bombs began to fall on Belgrade as German troops crossed the border.

[music: Agapkin, "Farewell of Slavianska"]

I'm going to defer the story of the German invasion of Yugoslavia until next week, because first we need to look at this invasion in the context of what was going on elsewhere. And by elsewhere, I mean Greece and North Africa.

In Greece, the Italian invasion from Albania had been stymied, and the Greek Army had advanced into southern Albania. That happened last fall and the front had been quiet over the winter. I already mentioned that Winston Churchill offered Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas British Army units to help defend Greece, but Metaxas refused them. Metaxas wanted nine British divisions, calculating that anything less than that would provoke the Germans without providing Greece with sufficient forces to defend itself, and therefore would be worse than doing nothing. Nine divisions were out of the question for the British, so here we are.

Metaxas did agree to host some units of the RAF, and that turned out to be enough to provoke Hitler into attacking Greece anyway.

But Metaxas died suddenly in January 1941. Greek King George II appointed Alexandros Koryzis, the Governor of the Bank of Greece, to succeed him. The British and the Greek governments were by this time both aware of the German military buildup in Romania and later Bulgaria, clearly indicating that a German attack on Greece was in the works. The new Greek government now calculated that in these circumstances any help was better than no help. The Greeks approved a British plan to deploy two infantry divisions and an armored brigade to aid in the defense of Greece.

And where were these British reinforcements seconded to the defense of Greece going to come from? They would be detached from the Middle East Command. This is the command responsible for the North African front. By February 1941, as you'll recall, the British had overrun western Libya, the Italians had retreated all the way to Tripoli, and the Germans had dispatched an armored corps to North Africa to assist their hapless ally.

The British offensive in North Africa advanced about halfway to Tripoli, but now it was the British having to deal with a long supply line through the desert. The British Eighth Army in Libya had to pause its advance to refit and resupply. The British armored division and Australian infantry division garrisoning the British-controlled portion of Libya were withdrawn to Egypt for refitting. These experienced units were replaced by new formations of inexperienced soldiers, the British Second Armored Division, minus one brigade sent to Greece, and the Australian Ninth Infantry Division.

The "British" force sent to Greece was about half Australian or New Zealander. Can you say "Gallipoli"? In fact, these eager New Zealanders and Australians were thinking not of Gallipoli, but of a different analogy from the previous war: the successful 1918 Allied offensive into the Balkans that triggered the collapse of the Central Powers.

British officers in the region had a third historical analogy in mind; to them, this deployment to Greece bore an uncomfortable resemblance to last year's ill-fated Allied intervention in Norway. The Churchill government had insisted on the deployment anyway. Churchill felt honor bound to aid a smaller country in distress, and to demonstrate to the world, and especially the United States, that Britain was serious about winning the war.

Now let's get caught up in the situation in North Africa. I'll just remind you that the Italian Army in Libya all but collapsed when the British began their offensive west from Egypt in December 1940.

The Italian commander, Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, aware that the British forces were running roughshod over his own units, panicked and decided to abandon most of Libya and concentrate on defending Tripoli, Libya's most important port and where most of the Italian Army's supplies were brought ashore.



The British were aware that the Germans were sending an armored corps to assist the Italians in the defense of Libya, but estimated it would be May at the earliest before the German force would be organized and ready to fight, which left some breathing room to complete the resupply and refitting of their own forces.

But the British were unprepared for Erwin Rommel. The German Army command had opposed assigning Rommel to North Africa. They viewed Rommel as an impulsive show-off, more interested in personal glory than in executing his orders. They worried that if he held so distant a command, Rommel would use the opportunity to chase after flashy victories and position himself as the hero of the North African campaign. And they were entirely right about that. Neither did Rommel endear himself to the Army command when he argued forcefully that the Wehrmacht should focus its efforts on his Afrika Korps rather than on an invasion of Greece.

But Rommel had something going for him that allowed him to disregard the opinions of his commanders. He had the personal admiration of the *Führer*. Rommel was Hitler's favorite. In France, Rommel had made Hitler look like a genius. And Rommel, like Hitler, was a commoner, in an Army in which most of the highest-ranking officers were aristocrats, which raised Hitler's estimation of him and lowered that of those officer-aristocrats. As long as he held Hitler's favor, Rommel could flout his orders and get away with it.

Marshal Graziani, had been recalled to Italy following the Italian Army's disastrous performance. The new Governor General, Italo Gariboldi, continued the plan of his predecessor; that is, withdrawing all the way to Tripoli and concentrating on defending that city. Italian Army command had ordered Gariboldi to place all Italian armored and motorized units in Africa at Rommel's disposal; Rommel ordered two Italian divisions immediately be moved up to the town of El Agheila, where the farthest advanced British units were stationed.

Rommel became infuriated when the commander of the Luftwaffe force in Sicily told him that Italian generals had asked the Germans not to bomb the port city of Benghazi, now in British hands, because many of them owned vacation homes there. Rommel ordered bombing of the port and mining of the harbor, complicating British resupply efforts. He also requested that a second armored corps be sent to North Africa. The OKH told him that would not be possible until after the Soviet Union was defeated, and in the meantime, he should defend aggressively, but not attempt an offensive.

On March 24, with one panzer division in Libya and a second on the way, Rommel attempted an offensive. Fortunately for him, he caught the British unprepared. The joint German-Italian force retook El Agheila on March 24 and Mersa Braga on March 31 as the British withdrew. Rommel ordered his panzer division to cut straight across the desert, bypassing Benghazi and the bulge on the Libyan coastline to head for Tobruk, while the Italians moved up the coast toward Benghazi.

British armored units suffered a combination of breakdowns and fuel shortages that left the British essentially without armor, while the German tanks had been specially modified for desert

conditions. The Germans used armored cars for reconnaissance. So did the British, but German armored cars were faster and more heavily armed. All this meant that the British were unable to deploy tanks to guard their inland flank or even reconnaissance units to track German movements. The British hastily withdrew from Benghazi, back toward Tobruk and the Egyptian border.

On April 7, an Italian armored unit captured the town of Mechili, which the British were using as a supply dump. They also captured the commander of the British Second Armored Division and the British military governor. The Germans and Italians seized the British supplies, and from among these stores, General Rommel took a pair of British tank goggles. He would wear these over his German officer's cap as a badge of honor.

It was clear the British forces were collapsing into a disorganized retreat, likely all the way back to Egypt. Buoyed by these successes, Rommel ordered his units to push on to Tobruk.

And if that wasn't enough bad news for the British, on April 1, nationalist military officers in Iraq took advantage of Britain's deteriorating position in the Middle East to launch a coup against the pro-British regent who governed the kingdom. In this they were supported and encouraged by the governments of Germany and Italy.

And then on April 6, the Luftwaffe attacked Belgrade in a massive bombing campaign that marked the beginning of the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Tim for his kind donation, and thank you to Gene for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Tim and Gene help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com) and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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I'm pleased to be able to tell you that a short story of mine appears in the recently released fantasy anthology, *Artifice and Craft*. It's a collection of stories about magical artifacts. It is available as an ebook or a paperback at Amazon, Barnes and Noble and Kobo.

And I hope you'll join me next week, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we pick up the story of the German invasions: first Yugoslavia, then Greece. The Balkan Detour, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. When I described the Yugoslav coup of March 27, 1941, I didn't say anything about who was behind it. The short answer to that question is: senior officers of the Royal Yugoslav Air Force. Beyond that, though, is the question of whether and to what degree foreign powers were involved.

There's a strong possibility that foreign influence helped instigate the coup, though which foreign powers, if indeed any, were involved, remains a question with no definitive answer. Yugoslav military leaders claimed sole responsibility, though it is widely suspected that British intelligence played a role, at least in encouraging the coup and providing information to assist the coup planners. The British interest in keeping Yugoslavia out of the Axis is obvious.

The US government issued a warning to Belgrade against military cooperation with Germany, but instigating a coup in a small country was not anything that the United States ever got involved with...not in 1941, anyway.

For what it's worth, the German government was convinced that both British and Soviet meddling played a role in the coup. And what about the Soviet Union? Moscow was concerned about German encroachment into the Balkans, particularly Romania and Bulgaria, and had a clear interest in keeping Yugoslavia out of the German sphere of influence. Some allege that Soviet military intelligence was involved in the coup. There is no sign that the Communist Party in Yugoslavia participated in the coup itself, although Yugoslav Communists were major participants in the demonstrations that took place afterward in support of the coup.

So there you have it. The answer is unclear. It was equally unclear to the leaders of the Yugoslav resistance following the fall of Yugoslavia. Resistance to the Axis occupation was strongest by far among Yugoslav Serbs; mutual suspicions over Soviet versus British influence led to the resistance becoming divided between the Royalist Četniks, supported by Britain, and the Communist National Liberation Army, supported by the Soviets.

[music: Closing War Theme]