

Films of the Anti-Nazi Resistance



OLLI Winter 2024
*Week 1: **Overview***

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Europe



HOW?

- Spontaneous resistance to occupation began in most countries shortly after the government capitulated or fled.
- Where the government had not surrendered (*notably the Soviet Union*), armed resistance began almost at once by bypassed remnants of military units taking to forests, swamps, or other inaccessible regions. In most areas, resistance was at first mostly non-violent.
- Where governments had fled to allied countries, the armed forces of those countries soon began organizing and supplying armed resistance groups within occupied territory. In the Soviet Union, arms, supplies, and specialists in guerrilla warfare were soon sent to partisan units by airdrop, usually at night.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Europe



HOW?

- In the west, Great Britain soon formed the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to send radios, explosives, weapons, and trained instructors to the Resistance, primarily in France.
- One example of weaponry was the single-shot “Liberator” pistol. Easily concealed, it’s one bullet was meant to kill one German soldier and then be discarded, replaced by the weapon and ammunition taken from the dead soldier.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Europe



WHAT?

- Intelligence gathering.
- Smuggling personnel out. (Downed airmen, political leaders, Jews)
- Propaganda (printed books and posters)
- Nonviolent sabotage by workers
- Assassination of Nazi officials and collaborators
- Violent sabotage by trained resistance fighters
- Armed combat operations against occupying military units

WHERE?

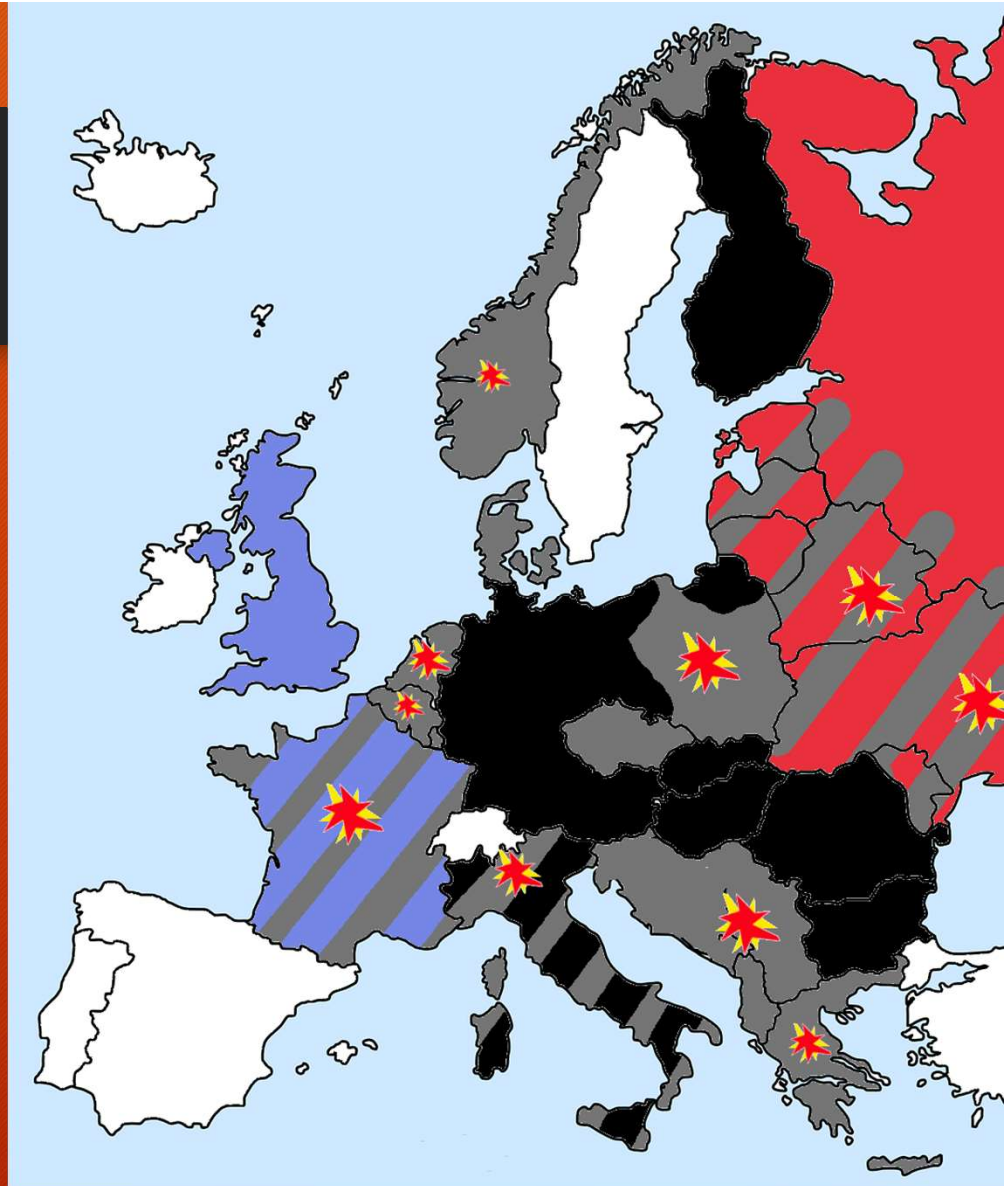
Blue: Western Allies

Red: Soviet Union

Black: Axis Powers

Gray: Axis-Occupied

White: Neutral



The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Europe



How Many?

- **Largest Groups:** Netherlands, France, Poland, Yugoslavia, Soviet Union
 - Each of these had between 100,000 and 200,000 members at their peak
 - The Soviet total probably reached 500,000 by its peak in 1943.
 - Netherlands had a much smaller proportion of armed fighters, and concentrated on non-violent resistance. The others had very large numbers of armed fighters.
- From 1944 on, Italy had a large and active anti-Nazi resistance, with about 100,000 armed fighters.
 - The fighting between anti-Nazi Italian resistance fighters and (fairly often) Italian fascist units fighting with the Germans, became extremely bitter.
- Records are fragmentary, but throughout Europe there probably between two and four million members of anti-Nazi resistance groups.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Europe



Complications

- Differing Ideologies
 - Most initial resistance movements were organized by the political left, as they had already been organizing against fascism since the 1930s.
 - As more conservative groups joined the fight against Naziism, mistrust and rivalry damaged cooperation.
- Differing Sponsors
 - Particularly in eastern European countries, there were often rival factions with one sponsored by the Soviets and another sponsored by the British (and later US).
 - This remained a problem in Poland throughout the war.
- German Counterespionage
 - Nature of non-professional volunteer organizations made them particularly easy to penetrate and compromise.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Europe



The Cost?

- **France:** 33,000 killed in action or executed, 60-80,000 deported to concentration camps.
- **Italy:** 36,000 killed in action or executed in Italy, 32,000 killed abroad (mostly in Yugoslavia).
- **Yugoslavia:** 237,000 partisans killed during the war.
- **Poland:** about 75,000 killed in action
- **Soviet Union:** No good figures on partisans, but Soviet civilian deaths by “intentional acts of violence” were over 7 million.

Today's Film: The Moon is Down



The Moon is Down (USA, 1943)

- Director: Irving Pichel
- Principle Cast
 - Sir Cedric Hardwick
 - Henry Travers
 - Lee J. Cobb
 - Doris Bowden
 - Margaret Wycherly
 - Peter van Eyck (Götz von Eick)

Today's Film: The Moon is Down



Based on the 1942 Novel of the same name by John Steinbeck

- Illegal (underground) translated editions appeared in France, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, and others.
- Authorized editions published many other countries., Became the best known American novel in the Soviet Union during the war.
- Has appeared in over ninety editions since then.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Norway



- **Actions:** Mostly concentrated on intelligence gathering and smuggling personnel out of the country.
- **Assassination:** A few small groups conducted assassinations early in the occupation, but they were penetrated by German counterintelligence and mostly eliminated,
- **Passive Sabotage:** Workers slowed production at canneries and other light industrial facilities.

The Anti-Nazi Resistance in Norway



- **Active Sabotage:** Small groups of trained commandoes operated from Sweden and destroyed the German heavy water manufacturing facility. German reprisals against civilians reduced the number of sabotage operations.
- **Reoccupation:** Sweden secretly trained 7-8,000 men along the Swedish border. Many of these formed small guerrilla groups which operated against the Germans. When the Axis collapse came, these troops occupied all the key points in Norway and accepted the German surrender.
- **Casualties:** 1,443 members of the Norwegian Resistance were killed during the war, of which 255 were women.