

FADE IN:

EXT. STREETS - DAY

SUPER: "BELGRADE, APRIL, 1941"

HENRY RADICK, mid 20s, rugged, worn leather jacket, rides his Triumph motorcycle down the main street.

Henry notices war weary CITIZENS with strained faces lining the sidewalks. A group of soldiers run hurriedly to catch a train to join their regiments.

A NEWSBOY runs along the sidewalk, trying to keep up with Henry's motorcycle.

NEWSBOY

Henry! You're on page three!

The newsboy grins as he opens the paper to show him.

HENRY

Next time I'll make it front page!

Henry waves as he drives on. He rides past a

ROYAL PALACE

A few ROYAL GUARDS are in the middle of performing their rotation beneath a poster of KING PETER II; a teenager decorated in a war uniform.

Henry quickly cuts across the busy street.

EXT. STOREFRONT - LATER

Henry approaches CITIZENS huddled outside of a store window, listening to a large radio for sale inside.

Henry gets closer, curious.

DRAGIŠA CVETKOVIĆ (V.O.)

(loud, through the radio)

I call upon every citizen to defend
his own home at its threshold...

MAN IN CROWD #1

I hope the Nazis continue the cease
fire.

MAN IN CROWD #2
Of course they will, we're a
neutral country.

Some people nod, taking strength from the message.

Henry crosses the street.

EXT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Henry gets near the entrance. He notices two ARMED GUARDS and several GESTAPO AGENTS blocking the doorway.

Henry ducks into the

ALLEY

He finds a nearby garbage bin. He steps onto it. He opens the second-story window and climbs through it.

INT. LIBRARY BUILDING HALLS - CONTINUOUS

Henry walks past a few LIBRARY PATRONS. He arrives at a side
STAIRWELL

Henry hustles down the steps.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The library courtyard is filled with wall-to-wall Nazi insignias and banners. Henry gives a disgusted look.

Uniformed NAZI OFFICERS stand intermingled with BUSINESSMEN and POLITICIANS. They stare towards the lectern, where a GERMAN DIPLOMAT addresses the group.

Henry stands in the back, trying to remain unnoticed.

GERMAN DIPLOMAT
This alliance will preserve your
city and spares you the pains of
war. The German army is ready to
protect you. Heil Hitler.

The Germans in the room give the Nazi salute. The politicians and businessmen follow suit.

The German Diplomat exits the podium and quickly leaves the library.

Some notice Henry's refusal to raise his arm and salute.

GEORGE, 40s, three-piece suit, approaches Henry. George glances at his chain watch.

GEORGE
You're late.

HENRY
Another story got in the way.

GEORGE
I don't abide tardiness.

HENRY
Don't be a hypocrite. You
politicians are late to your own
speeches... what do you have for
me?

GEORGE
We can't talk here.

HENRY
You got to give me something.

GEORGE
Come by my office at 8 a.m.
tomorrow, we can talk then.

HENRY
At least tell me if we're making a
deal with the Russians.

George gets in closer.

GEORGE
These walls have ears. I will tell
you all you want to know; tomorrow.

Henry shakes his head as he slips out.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Henry returns to his motorcycle. He notices the church bell
TOLL at exactly five o'clock.

HENRY
Shit.

Henry punches the throttle and speeds away.

INT. AVALA NEWS OFFICE - NIGHT

Henry enters. It's bustling with activity. WORKERS are on the phones. COPY BOYS run back and forth as READERS helm the wireless services.

The walls hang with maps detailing troop positions and various pictures of politicians.

Henry passes by SHEILA, mid 40s, rigid, sitting behind a small desk.

SHEILA
You're late for the meeting.

HENRY
Hemingway was always late, and look
how he turned out.

She doesn't find this amusing.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I ran into a little trouble
downtown.

SHEILA
You'd better get in there.

Henry gives a wry smile as he walks into the

CONFERENCE ROOM

BILL is in the middle of addressing his staff of REPORTERS.

BILL
(mid-diatribes)
Keep the highest standards in
chasing your stories, check and re-
check your information. That means
getting back on the streets and
tearing up shoe leather. Don't be
passive; get active.

Henry paces, enjoying the looks of consternation on the faces of his staff.

His colleagues seem to be getting inspired.

BILL (CONT'D)
You have to be willing to risk it
all for your story. Never quit,
never give up; and, above all else,
always protect your sources.

Bill notices Henry.

BILL (CONT'D)
Henry, nice of you to join us.

Bill motions for him to 'hand it over'.

Henry hands Bill a few crumpled pieces of paper.

Bill glances at them. He reads the contents intently - clearly intrigued. Bill looks up at his staff.

BILL (CONT'D)
Okay, back to work everybody. I want copy on my desk by end of day.

The staff disperses. Henry approaches Bill.

BILL (CONT'D)
(to the papers)
Is this what I think it is?

HENRY
The Prince is gone, but the Nazis are still holding secret meetings around town. I just got back from one.

BILL
And?

HENRY
My source froze. But I'm suppose to meet with him tomorrow to get the whole scope.

BILL
It could be a set-up.

HENRY
Doubtful. He's a politician; he's got nothing to gain from my death at this point in his career.

BILL
Just watch yourself.

A young PHOTOGRAPHER approaches Bill.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Chief, you want a staff photo?

BILL

Sure.

(to his staff)

Come on everyone, get in here for a quick photo.

The staff quickly huddles together as the photographer gets in place.

The photographer snaps the picture.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Henry walks past Shelia's desk.

SHEILA

Oh, I almost forgot to give you this.

Sheila hands Henry a piece of paper. He opens it. It reads: "Six o'clock at Nikola's. Don't be late. Kristina."

Henry smiles to himself. A faint PLANE ENGINE can be heard O.S. Henry walks over to a nearby

WINDOW

The outline of a plane cuts through the twilight sky. It circles over the large city.

As the plane glides through the air, the day's last remaining beam of sunlight enhances a black and white "SWASTIKA" on its tailfin.

EXT. NIKOLA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Henry enters. LOCAL MUSICIANS in the corner start playing.

He sees KRISTINA, early 20s, attractive brunette, sitting at a table in the corner. Henry approaches.

He leans over and gives her a kiss.

HENRY

How was your day?

KRISTINA

I had to go to civil defense training.

HENRY

Any updates?

KRISTINA

Still preparing for the worst; the
Nazis have everybody spooked.
They're setting up a bomb shelter
under the Mainstreet Bridge.

A WAITER comes by. Henry hands him the menus back.

HENRY

Two of the usual Peter.

Peter nods as he leaves.

KRISTINA

I need those church supplies I
asked you for.

HENRY

I've got to get up early tomorrow
for an important meeting. But after
that I promise I'll bring 'em over.

KRISTINA

I don't like you meeting in back
alleys with shady characters.

HENRY

I'm not meeting in any back alley.
And my sources are highly ranked
officials.

Kristina is clearly not happy.

The band starts a new SONG.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(referring to the song)

One of your favorites, isn't it?

Kristina, still upset from Henry's last comment, softens as
she takes in the music.

Henry gets up, extends his hand. Kristina reluctantly gets up
and takes it. They head to a small

DANCE FLOOR

Henry leads as they begin to sway to the tune.

KRISTINA

I suppose me telling you to be
careful wouldn't change your ways.

HENRY
I'm always careful.

Kristina scoffs.

KRISTINA
You've got a recklessness in you.
Lord knows I've tried to tame it to
no avail.

Henry caresses her face.

HENRY
Don't worry, everything is going to
be just fine.

He kisses her.

She wraps her arms around him as they continue to dance.

EXT. HENRY'S FLAT - NIGHT

Henry arrives at his modest dwelling. He flips on a light switch. We see family photos, a typewriter, a soccer ball and books. The books consist of biographies of world leaders, war strategies, modern warships and planes.

Henry notices a FAMILY OF FIVE, a couple with three kids, in the building across the alley. They glance up from their meal at Henry. They wave.

Henry waves back.

Henry starts to sift through his mail. A letter states "NOTICE. URGENT." He opens it and quickly reads it.

"YOU ARE HEARBY SUMMONED TO REPORT FOR DUTY AT THE NAVAL STATION AT KUMBOR. SINCERELY, THE NAVAL MINISTRY."

Henry an old Bible on his mantle. Henry takes it with him to his bed as he lies down. He opens the Bible. A photo falls out from the back.

The photo is of him and a DOZEN FAMILY MEMBERS.

Henry places the bible on his chest as he takes a closer look at the photo.

MONTAGE - THE PEOPLE STARTING THEIR DAY IN BELGRADE

-- Citizens hustling to work.

-- A BAKER turns his closed sign around to open.

-- The Paperboy sells papers to businesses.

-- A FOOD VENDOR pushes his cart across the sidewalk.

INT. HENRY'S FLAT - DAY

The building begins to shake. SCREAMING PLANES can be heard outside.

Henry wakes, groggy. He climbs out of bed, still in his clothes from the night before.

He staggers to the window to look out at the early morning sky. The floor begins to shake violently.

In the distance - an orange bloom of fire, followed by a distant explosion.

Henry recoils.

HENRY

Oh my God!

A shrieking WHISTLE. Henry looks up to the sky.

It's filled with Nazi Stuka bomber planes diving down on bombing runs. They swarm the sky like locusts, SHRIEKING loudly.

BOOM! A distant explosion flashes fire, followed by black smoke. At once, dozens of bombs begin to hit buildings.

Henry turns away from the window. He dives to the other side of the bed.

BOOM! His window breaks as shrapnel flies into his room. Henry is blown back against the wall as glass shards rain over him.

Henry gets to his feet, still unsteady. A RINGING in his ears. He looks out the broken window.

He sees his NEIGHBORS in the building across the street, looking at him. They seem relieved that everyone is okay.

Their building explodes. They disappear in a wash of flames.

EXT. STREETS OF BELGRAD - CONTINUOUS

All across the city, more buildings disappear into plumes of orange flame.