

Volume 17

Number 072

**Barbarossa – Hitler’s Greatest
Blunder - II**

Lead: By December 1940 Adolf Hitler had decided to attack Soviet Russia late the following spring. In March he compounded that blunder with a catastrophic error born of pure rage.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Before Hitler could attack Russia he had to clean up the deteriorating situation in the Balkans. He rescued the Italian Army which was being beaten up by Greeks, he dragooned the Bulgarians into the

Tripartite Alliance with Germany and Italy, and he thought he had browbeaten the Yugoslav government into same fate, but the Yugoslavs were made of sterner stuff. A popular uprising in March overthrew the Yugoslav regime and let it be known that that little country would not be a puppet of Berlin. Hitler absolutely hit the ceiling, launching into a wild rage, and ordered his generals to level Belgrade with bombing and crush the Yugoslavs.

Yet this fit of spite produced one of the dictator's most fateful miscalculations. The destruction of Yugoslavia forced him to postpone Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia for four weeks. That precious month

wasted while his armies thrashed away in the Balkans delayed the kick-off of the long march to the gates of Moscow. Though the invasion was initially and wildly successful, once Stalin aroused himself from the initial shock of the invasion and stiffened the Russians who then gathered themselves to resist, the German armies were gradually slowed down. The vicious Russian winter then dealt the fatal blow to Hitler's ambitious desire to take out the Soviets in a single campaign and, though he did not know it, sealed his fate and that of the Third Reich.

From Richmond, Virginia this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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