

# Getting inside the stories of resistance during WWII

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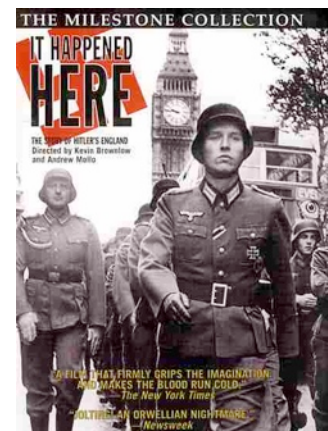
Sunday is Remembrance Day, a chance for Canadians to wear a plastic poppy, salute the ancestors who fought for their liberty and pay homage to the victims of war.

It's also a time to remember those who resisted tyranny under armed occupation. And one way to reawaken the memories is to see how resistance has been depicted in feature films.

Here are six movies on DVD that get to the heart of some of the best-known (and in one case, fictitious) underground movements who opposed fascism in Europe in the Second World War.

**Rome, Open City** (*Italy, 1945*) Roberto Rossellini's masterpiece about a partisan, a priest and the widow who brings them together in Nazi-occupied Rome is memorable not least because of the difficult conditions under which it was shot, right after the war, when the city was still scarred by fighting and film stock was extremely scarce. The DVD is from Image Entertainment.

**It Happened Here** (*Britain, 1965*) What if the Nazis had invaded and conquered England? Intrepid teenage filmmakers Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo (who'd go on to do production design for the Oscar-nominated *Downfall*) gave their answer with this story of a British nurse who turns collaborator. A frighteningly realistic fantasy that took eight years to complete; a full account is in the re-released book, *How It Happened Here*.



**Closely Watched Trains** (*Czechoslovakia, 1966*) A sexy, subversive comedy about a lonely dispatcher's apprentice at a Czech whistlestop who looks for love among the rails as the German munitions trains roll through. An Oscar-winner for best foreign film, it's directed by Jiri Menzel; his new movie, *I Served the King of England*, is set in the same period and is as good (no DVD yet, alas). A budget Criterion release.

**Swing Kids** (*U.S., 1993*) A Disney flick about a little-known resistance movement inside Nazi Germany in the 1930s: teenagers in the Hitler Youth who secretly

jived to outlawed swing music on jazz records smuggled in from the U.S. Filmed in Prague, it stars Christian Bale (Batman Begins) and Robert Sean Leonard (House); unbilled, the great Kenneth Branagh plays a suave Gestapo officer. The DVD is very reasonably priced.

**Sophie Scholl: The Final Days** (*Germany, 2005*) Sophie Scholl was one of the few women in the White Rose, a non-violent movement of Bavarian university students who tried to undermine support for Hitler by distributing anonymous leaflets opposing his regime. The film recreates her arrest, interrogation and execution by guillotine. The double-sided Mongrel Media DVD has more than two hours of extras.

*And available by mail order at amazon.uk: **Le silence de la mer** (France, 1949)* Based on a famous wartime resistance novel by Vercors, Jean-Pierre Melville's debut film about a father and daughter who are forced to billet a Nazi officer in their rural home in occupied France is a must-see. New on DVD from Eureka!, Masters of Cinema, a fine British art-house distributor; the disc is coded Region-2 (viewable here only on all-region players or modified Region-1 players).