Proximity Effect

William R. Murrow's Radio Storytelling

Written by

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First Draft

Contact information

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An episode of
Re-Imagined Radio

Script by John F. Barber

Synopsis
Re-Imagined Radio explores Edward R. Murrow's shortwave radio reports from London during "The Blitz," fifty-seven nights of bombing of civilian, non-military targets by German air forces. Radio historian Jeff Porter says Murrow's at-the-scene vivid, verbal descriptions and keen attention to sound achieved unmatched immediacy, a realistic experience for listeners, and created a new form of radio storytelling, "the proximity effect." We sample from several of Murrow's radio reports.

Color Coding Key
SFX, sound effect(s), either pre-recorded or created for episode. Pre-recorded audio is used as content in this episode.

~~Magenta highlighted text with strike through~~ = content deleted in post-production for episode timing

~~Example~~ = content deleted, or missing, from actuality before production. It remains in the script to provide the full content of the actuality.

MUSIC, pre-recorded

MUSIC, bespoke, created for this episode

COLD OPEN

SFX: SAMPLES FROM EDWARD R. MURROW'S LIVE REPORT 24 AUG. 1940 FROM TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON. PART OF "LONDON AFTER DARK."

"THIS . . . is Trafalgar Square. The noise that you hear at the moment is the sound of the air raid siren. I'm standing here just on the steps of St. Martin's in the Fields. A search light just burst into action off in the distance, one single beam sweeping the sky above me now. People are walking along quite quietly. We're just at the entrance of an air raid shelter here and I must move this cable over just a bit so people can walk in. ~~I can see just straight away in front of me Lord Nelson on top of that big column. There's another search light, just square behind Nelson's statue. I'll just let you listen to the traffic and the sound of the siren for a moment. Just a few people here, walking rather hurriedly toward the air raid shelters.~~

~~"I'll just ooze down in the darkness here along these steps and see if I can pickup the sound of peoples' feet as they walk along.~~ One of the strangest sounds one can hear in London these days, or rather these dark nights, just the sound of footsteps walking along the street, like ghosts shod with steel shoes.

MUSIC: RIR THEME, FADE UP UNDER PREVIOUS, ESTABLISH, THEN OUT

ANNOUNCER Welcome to Re-Imagined Radio, a program about radio storytelling. I'm Jack Armstrong. With each episode we combine dialogue, sound effects, and music to engage your listening imagination. This episode is no different, and here to tell you about it is John Barber, producer and host.

HOST OPEN

HOST Thank you Jack. Hello everyone. Welcome.

As Jack told you, Re-Imagined Radio is a program about radio storytelling. But more than simply *telling* stories, we explore their backgrounds, histories, connections, and inspirations.

This episode of Re-Imagined Radio explores Edward R. Murrow and his World War II reports from London during "The Blitz," fifty-seven nights of bombing of civilian, non-military targets by German air forces. His at-the-scene, vivid, verbal descriptions and keen attention to sound achieved unmatched immediacy, and provided a realistic experience for listeners. Radio historian Jeff Porter called Murrow's style "the proximity effect" and says he created a new form of radio storytelling. ~~We sample several examples of Murrow's radio storytelling about experiences in London during World War II.~~

Re-Imagined Radio is supported by KXRW-FM and KXRY-FM, community radio stations for Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon. We thank them for their support.

And we thank YOU for joining us as Re-Imagined Radio presents "Proximity Effect: Edward R. Murrow's Radio Storytelling."

MUSIC: NEWS SHOW DRAMATIC TRANSITION

ACT 1--EDWARD R. MURROW

HOST Many consider Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965) the greatest radio news commentator of all time, citing his shortwave radio broadcasts for the Columbia Broadcasting System, CBS, from London during World War II, which he often began with a distinctive opening.

SFX: MURROW-"THIS IS LONDON" OPENING

MURROW "This . . . is London."

HOST ~~Born in North Carolina, south of Greensboro, raised in Blanchard, Washington, north of Mt. Vernon, and a graduate from Washington State University,~~ Murrow went to London in April 1937 as Director of Talks for CBS. His job was to organize lectures, speeches, and performances for broadcast to America.

The following year, 1938, Murrow's career trajectory changed when he broadcast from Vienna, Sunday, March 13, about Germany's annexation of Austria, as part of a special program called *European News Roundup*. The program began with an introduction by Robert Trout, CBS news correspondent.

SFX: CBS WORLD NEWS ROUNDUP, TROUT'S INTRODUCTION.

TROUT "Tonight the world trembles, torn by conflicting forces. Throughout this day, event has crowded upon event in tumultuous Austria. Meanwhile, the outside world, gravely shaken by the Austrian crises, moves cautiously through a maze of diplomatic perils.

~~Since the German troops crossed the Austrian border on the historic invasion last Friday news has flowed across the Atlantic in a steady stream. The German Chancellor now winds his way through the conquered nation in parade of triumph to end in a tremendous spectacle in Vienna. As German troops swarm across frontiers in their first offensive since 1914 momentous decisions are being reached in the capitals outside Germany. And so the world's spotlight, for three days fastened upon Austria, is shared tonight by London's tiny Downing Street, by the Quai d'Orsay whose buildings of state line the Seine River in Paris, by other chancelleries throughout the world.~~

To bring you the picture of Europe tonight, Columbia now presents a special broadcast which will include pickups direct from London, from Paris, and such other European capitals as at this late hour abroad have communication channels available. This is Bob Trout, speaking to you from New York, opening Columbia's shortwave trans-Atlantic program to cover the key cities of Europe . . ."

HOST Trout then reviewed the news surrounding Nazi Germany's invasion of Austria the week before. Then listeners heard from CBS reporter William (SHY-ra) Shirer in London, reporter Frank Gervasi in Rome, former Labour Minster of Parliament Ellen C. Wilkinson, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, a *Chicago Daily News* reporter in Paris, reporter Pierre J. Huss of International News Service in Berlin, Lewis Baxter Schwellenbach, US Senator from the state of Washington, and Murrow in Vienna.

SFX: MURROW-EUROPEAN NEWS ROUNDUP, 13 MARCH 1938.

MURROW "This is Edward Murrow speaking from Vienna. It's now nearly two thirty in the morning and Herr Hitler has not yet arrived. No one seems to know just when he will get here, but most people expect him sometime after ten o'clock tomorrow morning. It's of course, obvious after one glance at Vienna that a tremendous reception is being prepared.

I arrived here by air from Warsaw and Berlin only a few hours ago.

~~[And I'd like to tell you a few things seen and heard in the course of the day.] There was very little excitement apparent in Warsaw. People went quietly about their work. The cafes were full. The drivers of those horse-drawn cabs were muffled up in their fur coats and they seemed pretty remote from the crisis. A Polish friend of mine said to me, 'You see, we Poles have seen so many headlines during the past twenty years that they no longer excite us.' There were rumours in Warsaw that the frontier guard had been strengthened, but these were officially denied. Foreign correspondents there seemed to agree that there was very little probability of Poland making a protest in any form concerning recent developments in Austria. I saw the Minister of War at luncheon yesterday and he certainly seemed calm and unworried, and just as I left Warsaw a distinguished Polish gentleman said to me, 'This is a time for cool heads and calm decisions.' Perhaps that sums up Poland's position. And then a few hours ago, in Berlin, I saw many couples walking along the Unter den Linden. Their primary interest seemed to be enjoying a brisk walk in the clear sunshine of a March afternoon. [The usual number of people were strolling through the tear gardens and Berlin seems about the same as it was last Sunday afternoon.]~~

From the air, Vienna didn't look much different than it has before, but nevertheless, it's changed. The crowds

are courteous as they've always been, but many people are in a holiday mood; they lift the right arm a little higher here than in Berlin and the 'Heil Hitler' is said a little more loudly. There isn't a great deal of real hilarity but at the same time there doesn't seem to be much feeling of tension. Young storm troopers are riding about the streets, riding about in trucks and vehicles of all sorts, singing and tossing oranges out to the crowd. Nearly every principal building has its armed guard, including the one from which I am speaking. There are still huge crowds along the Ringstrasse and people still stand outside the principal hotels, just waiting and watching for some famous man to come in or out.

~~The Anschuluss, or the Customs Union between Austria and Germany has been announced. I overheard . . . I overheard an elderly gentleman say of Dr. Corchess, the German Foreign Minister who first proposed the Anschluss, 'we had the right idea, but no tools with which to work.'~~

As I said, everything is quiet in Vienna tonight. There's a certain air of expectancy about the city, everyone waiting and wondering where and at what time Herr Hitler will arrive tomorrow. [And we're planning to bring you an eye witness account of Herr Hitler's entry into Vienna sometime tomorrow. We return

you now to America"] (Murrow, *In Search of Light* 2-3; Persico 136-137).

HOST The half-hour *European News Roundup* was the first to combine shortwave reports from international cities into a single broadcast. And, it inspired, in the fall of 1938, *CBS World News Roundup*, the longest running network newscast in the United States.

MUSIC: TRANSITION OF TIME

ACT 2--PREPARATION FOR WAR

HOST For the next eighteen months, Great Britain prepared for war. ~~Murrow provided regular radio reports answering the questions: What is happening? How does it relate to America? And, how do ordinary people feel?~~

On September 3, 1939, speaking from London, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced what many listeners expected, but many more did not want to hear.

SFX: CHAMBERLAIN ANNOUNCES WAR BETWEEN ENGLAND AND GERMANY, 3 SEP. 1939.

CHAMBERLAIN "This morning, the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland a state of war would

exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and consequently, that this country is at war with Germany."

HOST In less than a hour, Murrow made this report.

SFX: MORROW REPORTS ON DECLARATION OF WAR BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY, SEP. 2, 1940

MURROW "At nine o'clock this morning London Time, it was announced that a two hour ultimatum had been delivered to Germany; that at the end of that time, hostilities must cease or Germany and Britain would be at war.

At 11:15 the Prime Minister spoke to the nation. He stated that no reply had been received to the ultimatum, and that Britain and Germany were at war.

Shortly after the Prime Minister's speech, the air raid sirens went off... and it wasn't a pleasant sound.

HOST The next day, September 4, 1939, Murrow examined the coming war through one of his favorite lenses: the British class structure.

SFX: MURROW-BRITISH CLASS SYSTEM, SEP 4, 1939.

MURROW "For several days I've reported, or repeated to you, calls for ambulance

~~drivers, stretcher bearers, and other personnel of the civilian defence. It might be useful to request the services of a good sociologist because if this business of repeated air raid alarms goes on, the sociological results will be considerable.~~

"This is a class conscious country. People live in the same small street or apartment building for years and never talk to each other. The man with a fine car, good clothes, and perhaps an unearned income doesn't generally fraternize with the tradesmen, day laborers, and truck drivers. His fences are always up. He doesn't meet them as equals. He's surrounded with certain evidences of worldly wealth calculated to keep others at a distance, but if he's caught in Piccadilly Circus when the sirens sound, he may have a waitress stepping on his heels and see before him the broad back of a day laborer as he goes underground. If the alarm sounds about four in the morning, as it did this morning, his dignity, reserve, and authority may suffer when he arrives half-dressed and sleepy, minus his usual defenses and possessed of no more courage than those others who have arrived in similar state. Someone, I think it was Marcus Aurelius, said something to the effect that 'death put Alexander of Macedon and his stable boy on a par.' Repeated visits to public air raid shelters might have produced the same results.

~~Maybe I'm wrong -- I'm not a very good sociologist -- but I can tell you this from personal experience, that sirens would improve your knowledge of even your most intimate friend.~~

"London, as usual, is black tonight. One gets accustomed to it, but it can hardly be called pleasant.

~~I don't know how you feel about the people who smoke cigarettes, but I like them, particularly at night in London. That small, dull red glow is a very welcome sight. It prevents collisions and makes it unnecessary to heave to until you locate the exact position of those vague voices in the darkness. One night several years ago I walked bang into a cow, and since then I've had a desire for man and beast to carry running lights on dark nights. They can't do that in London these nights, but cigarettes are a good substitute.~~

"For a moment tonight I thought I was back in the London of Mr. Pickwick's time. I heard a voice booming through these stark London streets. It said, '28 Portland Place. All's well!' It was an air raid warden; he had shouted them an order to cover their window. They had done so, and so he was telling them that no more light came through" (Persico 156; Murrow *In Search of Light* 15-16; Murrow *This is London* 18-20).

MUSIC: TRANSITION

HOST Murrow reported frequently on Britain's preparations for war. In this report, November 27, 1939, he talks about his visit to the Central Control Station of London's air raid precaution system.

SFX: MURROW-AIR RAID PRECAUTION SYSTEM, NOV. 27, 1939.

MURROW "The other afternoon, I spent several hours underground studying the Central Control Station of London's Air Raid Precaution System. One man can sit in that room and move ambulances, stretcher parties, gas decontamination squads, and repair parties just as though he had them on the end of string. The maps covering the walls resemble those in an Army headquarters. The whole system is linked to local units by direct telephone. And if the telephones don't work, there are motorcycle dispatch riders standing by to carry messages.

"If London is bombed one can sit in that room and by reading colored pins and discs on the maps tell just where bridges have been blown up. Where fire engines are needed. Where additional ambulances are required. And the position of reserve units which might be needed.

"It was quiet down there the other day. The elaborate maps on which could follow the approach of enemy aircraft were clear. The bright little pins which mean gas or railroad destroyed, or serious fire, were sitting in a little box like

toy soldiers. ~~The telephone operators, young girls who might have been college sophomores at home, sat at their instruments knitting, or reading. One was reading the life of Madame Curie. Another Tolstoy's War and Peace. And the latest detective thrillers were also in evidence. Occasionally, they practice a little. The telephone rings, the operator takes down a message, passes it through a slot to the control officer, and in a few minutes time an ambulance brigade or a covey of fire engines go racing through the streets in a remote part of London on a practice trip.~~ The whole scheme seemed to be efficient and at the same time, easy to operate.

~~"The appeal of the British Admirality for sailors to man the mine sweepers was answered by the long lines of merchant sailors and fishermen signing on at Grimsby yesterday and today. The Admiralty also asked for a small fishing ship to join the mine-sweeping fleet. This was met with an immediate offer of some two hundred drifters and trawlers, all working fishing craft.~~

~~"The Minister of Food will announce in the House of Commons Tomorrow the date for the introduction of rationing in Britain and it is reported from Oslo that the Norwegian Nobel Committee has reached a decision on its annual peace award. It has decided NOT to award a peace prize for 1939.~~

"I return you now to Columbia in New York" (Murrow, *This Is London*, 43-46).

MUSIC: TRANSITION

ACT 3--CHURCHILL BECOMES PRIME MINISTER

HOST On May 10, 1940, Murrow reported another change in Great Britain's government.

SFX: MURROW-CHAMBERLAIN RESIGNS, MAY 10, 1940.

MURROW "This is London. History has been made too fast over here today. First, in the early hours this morning came the news of the British unopposed landing in Iceland. ~~Then the news of Hitler's triple invasion came rolling into London climaxed by the German air bombing of five nations. British mechanized troops rattled across the frontier into Belgium.~~ Then, at nine o'clock tonight a tired old man spoke to the nation from number 10 Downing Street. He sat behind a big oval table in the Cabinet Room where so many fateful decisions have been taken during the three years that he has directed the policy of His Majesty's government. Neville Chamberlain announced his resignation.

"Mr. Chamberlain's announcement of his resignation was entirely impersonal. Many people consider that it was the best speech he has ever made.

"Winston Churchill, who has known more political offices than any living man, is now Prime Minister. ~~He is a man without a party. For the last seven years he has sat in the House of Commons, a rather lonesome and often bellicose figure voicing unheeded warnings of the rising tide of German military strength. Now at the age of sixty five, Winston Churchill, plump, bald, with massive round shoulders is for the first time in his varied career of journalist, historian, and politician, the Prime Minister of Great Britain.~~ Mr. Churchill now takes over the supreme direction of Britain's war effort at a time when the war is rapidly moving toward Britain's doorstep.

~~"Mr. Churchill's critics have said that he is inclined to be impulsive and at times vindictive but in the tradition of British politics he will be given his chance. He will probably TAKE chances but if he brings victory his place in history is assured. The historians will have to devote more than a footnote to this remarkable man no matter what happens. He enters office with a tremendous advantage of being the man who was right. He also has the advantage of being the best broadcaster in this country. Mr. Churchill can inspire confidence. And he can preach a doctrine of hate that is acceptable to the majority of this country. That may be useful during these next few months.~~

~~"Winston Churchill has never been known for his caution and when he has completed the formation of his new government you may expect this country to begin to live dangerously. Hitler has said that action begun yesterday will settle the future of Germany for a thousand years. Mr. Churchill doesn't deal in such periods of time but the decisions reached by this new Prime Minister with his boyish grin and his puckish sense of humor may well determine the outcome of this war.~~

"I return you now to Columbia in New York" (Murrow, *In Search of Light*, 22-23).

MUSIC: OMINOUS TRANSITION

ACT 4--DUNKIRK

HOST The German Army advanced rapidly across Europe, into Denmark, Holland, Finland, and France, where it pushed British Army forces to the English Channel at Dunkirk. Murrow reported on efforts by young Royal Air Force pilots to protect the evacuation of British troops.

SFX: MURROW-RAF AT DUNKIRK, JUNE 2, 1940.

MURROW "This is London.

NOTE: The following paragraph is not included in transcriptions of this talk, Murrow, *This Is London*, pp. 121-123 or Murrow, *In Search of Light*, 25-26. This

suggests the audio actuality used here was edited together from different sources.

~~The Allied rear guard is still holding Dunkirk against increasing German pressure. Heavy German field guns are pounding the beaches and efforts to remove more men are continuing. According to Mr. Anthony Eden more than four fifths of the British Expeditionary Force have been evacuated. The Air Force claims at least one hundred and twenty five German planes shot down in the Dunkirk area in the last two days. Today's score has given us thirty five Germans down and eight British fighters lost.~~

"Yesterday I spent several hours at what may be tonight or next week Britain's first line of defense, an airfield on the south-east coast. The German bases weren't more than ten minutes' flying time away -- across that ditch that has protected Britain and conditioned the thinking of Britishers for centuries. I talked with pilots as they came back from Dunkirk. They stripped off their life jackets, glanced at a few bullet holes in wings or fuselage and, as the ground crews swarmed over the aircraft, refueling motors and guns, we sat on the ground and talked.

~~"Out in the middle of the field the wreckage of a plane was being cleared up. It had crashed the night before. The~~

~~pilot had been shot in the head but had managed to get back to his field. The Royal Air Force prides itself on never walking out of plane until it falls apart.~~

"I can tell you what those boys told me. They were the cream of the youth of Britain. As we sat there, they were waiting to take off again. They talked of their own work, discussed the German Air Force with all the casualness of Sunday morning quarterbacks discussing yesterday's football game. There were no nerves, no profanity and no heroics. There was no swagger about those boys in wrinkled and stained uniforms. The movies do that sort of thing much more dramatically than it is in real life.

"They told me of the patrol from which they'd just returned. 'Six Germans down. We lost two.' 'What happened to Eric?' said one. 'Oh, I saw him come down right alongside one of our destroyers,' replied another. 'The Germans fight well in a crowd. They know how to use the sun, and if they surprise you, it's uncomfortable.' If twenty or so of them catch five of us, we stay and fight, they said. 'Maybe that's why we got so many of them,' added one boy with a grin. They all told the same story about numbers. 'Six of us go over,' they said, 'and we meet twelve Germans. If ten of us go, there's twenty Germans.' But they were all anxious to go again.

"When the squadron took off, one of them remarked quite casually that he'd be back in time for tea. About that time a boy of twenty drove up in a station wagon. He weighed about 115 pounds. He asked the squadron leader if he could have someone to fly him back to his own field. His voice was loud and flat; his uniform was torn, had obviously been wet. He wore a pair of brown tennis shoes three sizes too big. After he'd gone I asked one of the men who had been talking with him what was the matter with him. 'Oh,' he replied, 'he was shot down over at Dunkirk on the first patrol this morning, he landed in the sea, swam to the beach, was bombed for a couple of hours, came home in a paddle steamer. His voice sounds like that because he can't hear himself. You get that way after you've been bombed for a few hours,' he said."

NOTE: The following paragraph does not appear in the transcription of this talk in Murrow, *This Is London*, pp. 121-123, or Murrow, *In Search of Light*, pp. 25-26. This suggests the audio actuality used here was edited together from different sources.

"~~An air gunner with grease and powder marks on his face and neck walked in from his plane, unwound his scarf, had a smoke, and sat down to talk over things with his companion.~~

I return you now to Columbia in New York (Murrow, *In Search of Light*, 25-26; Murrow, *This Is London* 121-123).

MUSIC: TRANSITION

ACT 5--LONDON AFTER DARK

HOST

In August 1940 CBS and BBC radio began a joint venture. Titled *London After Dark*, and described as a "sound-seeing tour," this half-hour Saturday series provided listeners in America an idea of how Londoners were coping with the war.

With the impressive subtitle "Life in a blackout in the capital of Great Britain," the first episode, August 24, began at 11:30 PM London time, to accommodate the 7:30 PM live broadcast schedule in New York.

~~On this night, there were three air raid alarms, but no actual bombings. Commentators in Trafalgar Square, the kitchen at the Savoy Hotel, an anti-aircraft battery, an Air Raid Precautions Station, Hammersmith Palais -- a large London dance hall -- the silent streets of Piccadilly Circus, Euston Train Station, and Whitehall, at the center of British government, shared what they saw and heard.~~

Introduced by an unknown BBC announcer, Murrow's broadcast, live from Trafalgar Square, is iconic with its references and descriptions of sound. More than once, Murrow held the microphone up to

the sounds heard in Trafalgar Square and let THEM be story. Let's listen . . .

SFX: ACTUALITY. MURROW, "TRAFALGAR SQUARE" FROM "LONDON AFTER DARK" BROADCAST, 24 AUGUST 1940.

ANNOUNCER And now we take you to the streets of blacked out London. Down shapely crescent-shaped Regent Street, along Shaftsbury Avenue of theatre fame, into Charing Cross Road, London's Tin-Pan Alley, and so to Trafalgar Square. Waiting there is Edward Murrow, known to you as Columbia's European Director. Come in Ed Murrow.

MURROW THIS . . . is Trafalgar Square. The noise that you hear at the moment is the sound of the air raid siren. I'm standing here just on the steps of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. A search light just burst into action off in the distance, one single beam sweeping the sky above me now. People are walking along quite quietly. We're just at the entrance of an air raid shelter here and I must move this cable over just a bit so people can walk in. I can see just straight away in front of me Lord Nelson on top of that big column. There's another search light, just square behind Nelson's statue. I'll just let you listen to the traffic and the sound of the siren for a moment. Just a few people here, walking rather hurriedly toward the air raid shelters. Some of them casually. A man stops in front of

me to light a cigarette. Here comes one of those big red buses around the corner. Double deckers they are. Just a few lights on the top deck. In this blackness it looks very much like a ship that's passing in the night and you just see the portholes. There goes another bus, more search lights come into action. You see them reach straight up into the sky and occasionally they catch a cloud and seem to splash on the bottom of it. The little traffic lights here just a small cross on the normal globe are now red. The cars pull up and stop. I'll just ooze down in the darkness here along these steps and see if I can pickup the sound of peoples' feet as they walk along. One of the strangest sounds one can hear in London these days, or rather these dark nights, just the sound of footsteps walking along the street, like ghosts shod with steel shoes. A taxi draws up just in front and stops, just waiting for that red light to change to green while the sirens howl. There it goes and the cars move off. More search lights are in action. We've not yet seen any bursts of anti-aircraft fire overhead. An air raid warden walks out this shelter. The shelter here, you know, is the crypt underneath this famous old church just on the edge of Trafalgar Square. The crypt where in days of peace homeless men and women were able to find a night's lodging.

HOST The next evening, August 25, Murrow spoke about the unreality of the bombing attacks in London . . .

SFX: MURROW-UNREALITY OF BOMBING ATTACKS, 25 AUG. 1940.

MURROW "The damage done by an exploding bomb to windows in a given area is a freakish sort of thing. A bomb may explode at an intersection and the blast will travel down two streets shattering windows for a considerable distance, while big windows within a few yards of the bomb crater remain intact. The glass, incidentally, generally falls out into the streets rather than being blown inwards.

~~During the last two weeks I spent a considerable amount of time wandering about the south and southeast coast in an open car. Much of the time was spent in that section which has been termed by some journalists, but not by the local inhabitants, as Hell's Corner. Now an open car is not be be recommended under normal conditions, for the weather isn't right, but it's helpful these days to be able to look and listen as you drive along.~~

"I've seen a number of air battles and bombings and heard more. Perhaps this is a good time to give one observer's impressions, something in the nature of an interim report.

"~~There are no refugees filling the roads leading inland from these coast towns. I saw a double-ended baby carriage containing twins being wheeled along the streets of Dover and rather wished something could be done about that. But . . .~~

"The strongest impression one gets of these bombings is a sense of unreality. Often the planes are so high that even in cloudless sky you can't see them. I've stood on a hill watching an aerodrome being bombed two miles away. It looked and sounded like farmers blasting stumps in Western Washington. You forget entirely that there are men down there on the ground. Even when the dive bombers come down, looking like a duck with both wings broken, and you hear the hollow grunt of their bombs, it doesn't seem to have much meaning. It's almost impossible to realize that men are killing and being killed even when you see that ever thickening streak of smoke pouring down from the sky which means a plane and perhaps several men going down in flames.

"On the other hand, when the bombs fall nearby it's possible to assume the most undignified position in the world without effort and without thinking. The position officially recommended, flat on the ground, face down, mouth slightly open, and hands covering ears. Even then, the bombs somehow don't seem to make as much noise as they should. But they do seem real. In one village you

will see people standing in doorways, all staring in the same direction. Their faces expressionless reflect no fear, and little anxiety. It's another village, or another town, that's being bombed. I don't believe the proceeding seem very real to them either.

~~"The other night I heard that screaming bomb come down--the one that fell in the City of London. My own thought was: that one's a safe distance away; there is no need for me to take up the officially recommended position.~~

"I'm trying to tell you that this business of being bombed and watching air fights is the sort of thing which fails to produce the anticipated reactions. The sense of danger, death, and disaster comes only when the familiar incidents occur, the things that one has associated with tragedy since childhood. The sight of half a dozen ambulances, weighted down with an unseen cargo of human wreckage, has jarred me more the roar of dive bombers or the sound of bombs.

"Another thing that has meaning is fire. Again, that's something one can understand. Last night, as I stood on London Bridge [with Vincent Sheean] and watched that red glow in the sky, it was possible to understand that that fire was the result of an act of war. But the act itself, even the sound of the bomb that started the fire, was still unreal.

What had happened was that three or four high school boys, with some special training, had been flying around over London in about a hundred thousand dollars worth of machinery. One of them had pressed a button. The fire, and a number of causalities, was the result. We could see the fire, and hear the clanging of the fire engine's bells, but we hadn't seen the bomber. Had barely heard him.

"Maybe the children who are now growing up will in future wars will be able to associate the sound of bombs, the drone of engines, and the tearing sound of machine guns overhead with human tragedy and disaster. But for me, the ambulances, and the red flare of fire in the night sky are the outward signs of death and destruction" (Murrow, *This Is London*, 146-149).

MUSIC: RIR BREAK THEME

BREAK #1--THE FUSEBOX BREAK

HOST This is John Barber, producer and host. We'll return to our episode in just a moment. But first I want to introduce you to The Fusebox Show . . . It's a different kind of radio storytelling, with its own form of proximity. Here's a sample . . .

SFX: THE FUSEBOX SHOW TEASER

HOST The Fusebox Show is available wherever you get your podcasts, or at *The Fusebox Show* website, thefuseboxshow dot com.

MUSIC: RIR THEME. ESTABLISH, THEN FADE OUT UNDER THE FOLLOWING

HOST You're listening to Re-Imagined Radio. Our episode is "Proximity Effect." We're sampling the World War II reports by Edward R. Murrow from London. So far Murrow has reported sporadic bombing. No invasion. Let's continue our story.

MUSIC: TRANSITION

ACT 6--THE BLITZ BEGINS

HOST With the German Army just 23 miles away, on the other side of the English Channel, the invasion of England by sea seemed imminent. Instead, there came German airplanes dropping bombs on London and other cities. Edward Murrow vividly described what he saw and heard, in his September 8, 1940 broadcast.

SFX: MURROW, REPORTING FIRST NIGHT OF LONDON BLITZ, 8 SEP. 1940. LENGTH: 3:55

MURROW "Yesterday afternoon -- it seems days ago now -- I drove down to the East End of London, the East India Dock Road, Commercial Road, through Silvertown, down to the mouth of the Thames Estuary. It was a quiet and almost pleasant trip through those streets running between rows of working-class houses, with the

cranes, the docks, the ships and the oil tanks off on the right. We crossed the river and drove up on a little plateau, which gave us a view from the mouth of the Thames to London. And then an air-raid siren, called 'Weeping Willie' by the men who tend it, began its uneven scream. Down on the coast the white puff-balls of anti-aircraft fire began to appear against a steel-blue sky. The first flight of German bombers were coming up the river to start the twelve-hour attack against London. They were high and not very numerous. The Hurricanes and Spitfires were already in the air, climbing for altitude above the nearby aerodrome. The fight moved inland and out of sight. Things were relatively quiet for about half an hour. Then the British fighters returned. And five minutes later the German bombers, flying in V-formation, began pouring in. The anti-aircraft fire was good. Sometimes it seemed to burst right on the nose of the leading machine, but still they came on. On the aerodrome, ground crews swarmed over those British fighters, fitting ammunition belts and pouring in gasoline. As soon as one fighter was ready, it took the air, and there was no waiting for flight leaders or formation. The Germans were already coming back, down the river, heading for France.

"Up toward London we could see billows of smoke fanning out above the river, and over our heads those British fighters, climbing almost straight up,

trying to intercept the bombers before they got away. It went on for over two hours and then the all clear. We went down to a nearby pub for dinner. Children were already organizing the hunt for bits of shrapnel. Under some bushes beside the road there was a baker's cart. Two boys, still sobbing, were trying to get a quivering bay mare back between the shafts. The lady who ran the pub told us that these raids were bad for the chickens, the dogs and the horses. A toothless old man of nearly seventy came in and asked for a pint of mild and bitter, confided that he had always, all his life, gone to bed at eight o'clock and found now that three pints of beer made him drowsy-like so he could sleep through any air raid.

"Before eight, the siren sounded again. We went back to a haystack near the aerodrome. The fires up the river had turned the moon blood red. The smoke had drifted down till it formed a canopy over the Thames; the guns were working all around us, the bursts looking like fireflies in a southern summer night. The Germans were sending in two or three planes at a time, sometimes only one, in relays. They would pass overhead. The guns and lights would follow them, and in about five minutes we could hear the hollow grunt of the bombs. Huge pear-shaped bursts of flame would rise up into the smoke and disappear. The world was upside down. Vincent Sheean lay on one side of me and cursed in five

languages; when there was a pause I the firing he'd talk about the war in Spain. Ben Robertson of PM lay on the other side and kept saying over and over in that slow South Carolina drawl, 'London is burning, London is burning.'

~~"It was like a shuttle service, the way the German planes came up the Thames, the fires acting as a flare path. Often they were above the smoke. The searchlights bored into that black roof, but couldn't penetrate it. They looked like long pillars supporting a black canopy. Suddenly all the lights dashed off, and a blackness fell right to the ground. It grew cold. We covered ourselves with hay. The shrapnel clicked as it hit the concrete road nearby, and still the German bombers came.~~

~~"Early this morning we went to a hotel. The gunfire rattled the windows. Shortly before noon we rang for coffee. A pale, red-eyed chambermaid brought it and said, 'I hope you slept well, sirs.' This afternoon we drove back to the East End of London. It was like an obstacle race: two blocks to the right, then left for four blocks, then straight on for a few blocks and right again- streets roped off, houses and shops smashed; a few dirty-faced, tow-headed children standing on a corner, holding their thumbs up, the sign of the men who came back from Dunkirk; three red buses drawn up in a line waiting to take the homeless away; men with white scarfs~~

~~around their necks instead of collars and ties, loading dull-eyed, empty-faced women across to the buses. Most of them carried little cheap cardboard suitcases and sometimes bulging paper shopping bags. That was all they had left. There was still fire and smoke along the river, but the fire fighters and demolition squads have done their work well~~" (Murrow, *In Search of Light*, 30-32; Murrow, *This Is London*, 157-160).

HOST What Murrow reported was the beginning of "The London Blitz," 57 nights, September to October, 1940, of sustained bombing of non-military targets in England by German air forces.

Murrow wanted to help American listeners understand what was happening in London. For better understanding, he wanted to report live, DURING an air raid.

Murrow argued that radio was like an ear extending the range of human hearing over great distances. He wanted to bring that ear close to the action, give it direct access to the sounds of war around London -- wailing sirens, droning bombers dropping below the clouds, the thump of exploding bombs. Sounds represented the significance of the moment. Without them, without the immediacy of live, on location reporting, Murrow felt there could be no understanding. "[These] things must be experienced to be understood" he often said (Murrow, *This Is London*, 178).

At first, The Air Ministry denied his requests. Live broadcasts of air raids might provide details helpful to the enemy. Eventually, however, Murrow was approved to broadcast live during an air raid.

The first broadcast was a disappointment. An intense air attack moved away from Murrow's location on the roof of building just near BBC headquarters. Despite this setback, Murrow gave a compelling, live report of what he saw and heard the night of September 21, 1940.

SFX: MURROW REPORTS FROM ROOFTOP, 21 SEP. 1940.

MURROW "I'm standing on a rooftop looking out over London. At the moment, everything is quiet. For reasons of national as well as personal security, I am unable to tell you the exact location from which I am speaking.

Off to my left, far away in the distance, I can see just that faint red, angry snap of anti-aircraft bursts against the steel-blue sky. But the guns are so far away that it's impossible to hear them from this location. About five minutes ago, the guns in the immediate vicinity were working. I can look across, just at a building not far away, and see something that looks like a splash of white paint down the side and I know from daylight observation that about a quarter of that building has

disappeared, hit by a bomb the other night.

Streets fan out in all directions from here, and down on one street I can see a single red light, and just faintly, the outline of a sign standing in the middle of the street. And again I know what that sign says because I saw it this afternoon. It says, 'Danger! Unexploded bomb.' Off to my left, still, I can see just that red snap of the anti-aircraft fire.

I was up here earlier this afternoon, and looking out over these housetops, looking all the way to the dome of St. Pauls, I saw many flags flying from staffs. No one ordered these people to put out the flags. They simply feel like flying a Union Jack above their roofs. No one told 'em to do it, and no flag up there was white. I can see one or two of them just stirring very faintly in the breeze now.

You may be able to hear the sound of guns off in the distance, very faintly, like someone kicking a tub. Now they're silent. Four searchlights reach up, disappear in the light of a three-quarter moon. I should say at the moment that there are probably three aircraft in the general vicinity of London 'cause one can tell by the movement of the lights and the flash of the anti-aircraft guns. But at the moment, in the central area, everything is quiet.

More searchlights spring up, over on my right. I think probably in a minute we should have the sound of guns in the immediate vicinity. The lights are swinging over in this general direction now. You will hear two explosions, just . . . There they are. Again, moving in, still a considerable distance away. Moving still, just a little closer. There you heard two. The searchlights are stretching out now in this general direction. I can hear just the faint whisper of an aircraft high overhead. Again, those guns are a considerable distance away. You'll hear them just vaguely in the background. Straight in front of me now, you'll hear two sounds in just a moment, there they are. That was the explosions overhead, not the guns themselves. I should think in a few minutes there should be a bit of shrapnel around here. Coming in, moving a little closer all the while.

The plane is still very high and it's quite clear that he is not coming in for his bombing run. Earlier this evening . when we could hear occasionally . . again, those are explosion overhead . . . Earlier this evening we heard a number of bombs go sliding and slithering across to fall several blocks away. . . . Just overhead now, the burst of the anti-aircraft fire . . . still the nearby guns are not working, and the search lights now are feeling almost directly overhead . . . now you'll hear two bursts a little nearer in a moment . . . There they are . . . That hard,

stony sound" (Murrow, *This Is London*, 179-180).

MUSIC: TRANSITION FOR MOOD

ACT 7--GRIM NIGHTS AND CHRISTMAS

HOST After his nightly broadcasts, Murrow often walked the streets of London. Here's his December 2, 1940 report about London at night.

SFX: MURROW-LONDON AT NIGHT, DEC. 2, 1940.

MURROW "These broadcasts are done from London at a quarter to one in the morning. Sometimes when they're ended, there's no desire to sleep. Only the urge to go out and walk familiar streets at a time when the night is left to darkness, and to me.

"Wandering around the streets of this city in the early hours of the morning is sometimes exciting. There may be fires, gunfire, and bombs. One may see in the light of flares, carefully hidden under canvas, human beings, looking like broken, cast away, dust-covered dolls being lifted with careful hands out of a tunnel driven through to the basement of a bombed house.

"But more often, the streets are empty, the guns silent, and one walks the streets of this proud city accompanied only by a rabble of undisciplined,

random thoughts. The sight of a familiar church spire reminds one of Churchill's remarks that it will take ten years to destroy half the city, and that after progress will be slower. ~~Or of Duff Cooper's comment that most of Europe, if not the world, will be destroyed in this war.~~

"Occasionally, during November and December a cold, choking fog comes down to take command of the streets. It seeps down into the shelters in the subways. After a visit to one of those shelters, one climbs the stairs into the damp darkness of the night pursued by the sound of coughing. And hoping that it will be mild winter in Europe.

"During a heavy raid, courage varies in direct proportion to the cold. It's difficult to be brave when you're cold.

"Sometimes looking into a fashionable hotel with its bright lights, music, and champagne, and the empty, unfeeling faces of the dancers on the floor we're reminded again of the Prime Minister's phrase, 'grim and gay.' Those people are neither grim nor gay. One must go to the subways and see men playing poker for a twopenny limit. Women brewing tea. Or cab drivers talking on the ranks to understand that phrase.

~~"There are times, too, when thoughts of English writers who have sought refuge in the States recur. For them there can~~

~~be only sympathy. No matter how able they may be, they will have no language and no words to move or impress those who have lived through this.~~

"~~Stumbling through the darkness, you're inclined to think of shipping losses-- aboud 60,000 tons a week since June--and to wonder how many ships of medium size that represents.~~ There is time too to think of British courtesy as well as courage. The great humored courtesy of taxi drivers and bus conductors, or people who still thank you for asking them to do you a favor, even when it is hard to hear their thanks above the roar of the guns.

~~"One night during a terrific barrage I saw a little man wearing a tin hat running down the middle of the street. He tripped over a rope stretched across the street to prevent traffic from passing an unexploded bomb. His tin hat rolled into the gutter. He retrieved it and said to no one at all -- he was quite alone in the street -- 'sorry. So sorry.' And then he went on his way.~~

"Those of us who have been trying to report this war have said too much about courage, and too little about courtesy. People who remember to be courteous are not greatly afraid.

~~"Walking from Regent's Park to the Embankment there is time to think of the frequent comments overheard during the~~

~~day. Londoners saying they wish it had been Liverpool or Southhampton that was bombed last night. They know the value of their ports. But it's interesting that they would rather have had the bombs aimed at them than at more vital points.~~

"In the early hours of the morning, sometimes between five and seven, the high steady note of the 'all clear' cuts through the cold, frosty air of London. Hundreds of thousands of humans come oozing up from underground, many of them stiff and tired from a night in the shelters. The ducks in Green Park step up their questioning quacking. And the pigeons come back from some mysterious place to Trafalgar Square. Buckets of boiling water are poured into the muzzles of hard-worked guns as they're swabbed out and prepared for another night's work. And always as one walks home with the winter's sun boring through the autumn mists there's the question, 'how long can this go on?'" (Murrow, *This Is London*, 214-216).

MUSIC: FOR MOOD CHANGE

HOST Christmas, 1940, was grim for Londoners. Murrow captured the feeling in his report to America . . .

SFX: MURROW-GRIM CHRISTMAS IN LONDON, DEC. 24, 1940.

MURROW ~~"This is London, reporting all clear. There was a single German aircraft over East Anglia this afternoon, but there are no reports of German raiders over Britain tonight. Whether this inactivity is due to good will or bad weather, I don't know, nor do we know whether the RAF bombers are flying tonight.~~

"Christmas Day began in London nearly an hour ago. The church bells did not ring at midnight. When they ring again, it will be to announce invasion. And if they ring, the British are ready.

NOTE: The audio actuality used here includes the following paragraph, which seems to have been edited from another report and added here.

~~Tonight, as on every other night, the rooftop watchers are peering out across the fantastic forest of London's chimney pots. The anti-aircraft gunners stand ready. And all along the coast of this island, the observers revolve in their reclining chairs, listening for the sound of German planes. The fire fighters and the ambulance drivers are waiting, too. The blackout stretches from Birmingham to Bethlehem, but tonight over Britain the skies are clear.~~

"This is not a merry Christmas in London. I heard that phrase only twice in the last three days. This afternoon as the stores were closing, as shoppers and office workers were hurrying home,

one heard such phrases as 'So long, Mamie' and 'Good luck, Jack' but never 'A Merry Christmas'. It CAN'T be a merry Christmas, for those people who spend tonight and tomorrow by their firesides in their own homes realize that they have bought this Christmas with their nerve, their bodies and their old buildings. Their nerve is unshaken; the casualties have not been large, and there are many old buildings still untouched.

~~Between now and next Christmas there stretches twelve months of increasing toil and sacrifice, a period when the Britishers will live hard. Most of them realize that. Tonight's serious Christmas Eve is the result of a realization of the future, rather than the aftermath of hardships sustained during the past year. The British find some basis for confidence in the last few months' developments. They believe that they're tearing the Italian Empire to pieces. So far, shelter life has produced none of the predicted epidemics. The nation's health is about as good now as it was at this time last year. And above all they're sustained by a tradition of victory.~~

"Tonight there are a few Christmas parties in London, a few expensive dinners at famous hotels, but there are no fancy paper hats and no firecrackers.

~~Groups determined to get away from the war found themselves after twenty minutes inspecting the latest amateur diagram of the submarine menace or the night bombers. A few blocks away in the underground shelters entire families were celebrating Christmas Eve. Christmas carols are being sung underground. Most of the people down there don't know that London is not being bombed tonight. Christmas presents will be unwrapped down underground before those people see daylight tomorrow. Little boys who have received miniature Spitfires or Hurricanes will be waking the late sleepers by imitating the sound of whistling bombs, just as we used to try to reproduce the sound of a locomotive or a speeding automobile.~~

~~So far as tonight's news is concerned, we're told that Herr Hess, Hitler's deputy, has offered a prayer, and has asked God to assist Hitler to fight and to work for our eternal wonderful Germany, so that Germany shall continue to be worthy of God's blessing. We are told, too, that on the occasion of Christmas the King of Italy has sent a message to his fighting forces in which he says that his grateful thoughts are with them--no obstacles can stop the glorious ascent of Italy. King Victor Emmanuel is confident of a radiant future.~~

"I should like to add my small voice to give my own Christmas greeting to friends and colleagues at home. Merry

Christmas ~~is somehow ill-timed and out of place, so I shall just use the current London phrase~~ -- so long and good luck" (Murrow, *In Search of Light*, 41-42, Murrow, *This is London*, 221-224).1

MUSIC: TRANSITION OF SEASONS

ACT 8--SPRING

HOST After a grim winter, Londoners looked forward to change. On March 9, 1941, Murrow spoke about the coming of spring.

SFX: MURROW-SPRING, MARCH 9, 1941.

MURROW "This is London. Soon it will be spring in England. Already there are flowers in the parks, although the parks aren't quite as well kept as they were at this time last year.

~~But there's good fighting weather ahead. In four days' time the moon will be full again, and there's a feeling in the air that big things will happen soon.~~

"The winter that is ending has been hard, but Londoners have many reasons for satisfaction. There have been no serious epidemics. The casualties from air bombardment have been less than expected. And London meets this spring with as much courage, though less complacency, than at this time last year.

~~Many ancient buildings have been destroyed. Acts of individual heroism have been commonplace. More damage has been done by fire than by high explosives. The things cast down by the Germans out of the night skies have made hundreds of thousands of people homeless. I've seen them standing in the cruel cold of a winter morning with tears frozen on their faces looking at the little pile of rubble that was their home and saying over and over again in a toneless, unbelieving way, 'What have we done to deserve this?' But the winter has brought some improved conditions in the underground shelters. It has brought, too, reduced rations, repeated warnings of the imminence of invasion, shorter restrictions upon the freedom of the individual and organizations.~~

~~When spring last came to England the country was drifting and almost dozing through a war that seemed fairly remote. Not much had been done to gear manpower and machinery to the demands of modern war. The story of the spring, summer and fall is well known to all of you. For the British it was a record of one disaster after another - until those warm, cloudless days of August and September when the young men of the Royal Air Force beat back the greatest air fleet ever assembled by any nation. Those were the days and nights and even weeks when time seemed to stand still. At the beginning they fought over the English Channel, then over the coast of Kent, and when the German bombers~~

~~smashed the advance fighter bases along the coast the battle moved inland. Night after night the obscene glare of hundreds of fires reddened, the bellies of the big, awkward barrage balloons over London, transforming them into queer animals with grace and beauty. Finally the threat was beaten off. Both sides settled down to delivering heavy blows in the dark. Britain received more than she gave. All through the winter it went on. Finally there came bits of good news from the western desert. But even Tobruk and Benghazi seemed far away. Victories over the Italians are taken for granted here. Even the children know that the real enemy is Germany.~~

~~It hasn't been victories in the Middle East or promises of American aid that have sustained the people of this island during the winter. They know that next winter, when it comes, will probably be worse, that their sufferings and privations will increase. Their greatest strength has been and is something that is talked about a great deal in Germany but never mentioned here - the concept of a master race.~~

~~The average Englishman thinks it's just plain silly for the Germans to talk about a master race. He's quietly sure in his own mind that there is only one master race. That's a characteristic that caused him to adopt an attitude of rather bored tolerance toward all foreigners and made him thoroughly~~

~~disliked by many of them. But it's the thing that has closed his mind to the possibilities that Britain may be defeated.~~

~~The habit of victory is strong here. Other habits are strong, too. The old way of doing things is considered best. That's why it has taken more than a year and a half to mobilize Britain's potential strength, and the job is not yet finished. The other day, watching a farmer trying to fill in a twenty-foot-deep bomb crater in the middle of his field, I wondered what would happen before he harvested the next crop from that bomb-torn soil. I suppose that many more bombs will fall. There will be much talk about equality of sacrifice which doesn't exist. Many proud ships will certainly perish in the western approaches. There will be further restrictions on clothes and food. Probably a few profiteers will make their profits.~~

~~No one knows whether invasion will come, but there are those who fear it will not. I believe that a public opinion poll on the question 'Would you like the Germans to attempt an invasion?' would be answered overwhelmingly in the affirmative. Most people, believing that it must be attempted eventually, would be willing to have it come soon. They think that in no other way can the Germans win this war, and they will not~~

change their minds until they hear their children say, 'We are hungry.'

So long as Winston Churchill is Prime Minister, the House of Commons will be given an opportunity to defend its traditions and to determine the character of the government that is to rule this country. The Prime Minister will continue to be criticized in private for being too much interested in strategy and too little concerned with the great social and economic problems that clamour for solution. British propaganda aimed at occupied countries will continue to fight without its heavy artillery, until some sort of statement on war aims or, if you prefer, peace aims, has been published.

And in the future, as in the past, one of the strangest sensations for me will be that produced by radio. Sometime someone will write the story of the technical and military uses to which this new weapon has been put; but no one, I think, will ever describe adequately just what it feels like to sit in London with German bombs ripping through the air, shaking the buildings, and causing the lights to flicker, while you listen to the German radio broadcasting Wagner or Bavarian folk music. A twist of the dial gives you Tokyo talking about dangerous thoughts; an American senator discussing hemisphere defence; the clipped, precise accent of a British announcer describing the

proper method of photographing elephants; Moscow boasting of the prospects of the wheat harvest in the Ukraine; each nation speaking almost any language save its own, until, finally, you switch off the receiving set in order that the sounds from the four corners of the earth will not interfere with the sound of the German bombs that come close enough to cause you to dive under the desk.

The bombs this spring will be bigger and there'll be more of them, probably dropped from a greater height than ever before. Berlin and London will continue to claim that their bombs hit the military targets while the enemy's strike mainly churches, schools, hospitals, and private dwellings.

The opening engageent of the spring campaign is now being fought in the Atlantic. The Admiralty has taken over control of the shipyards in an effort to speed up production and repairs. Merchant sinkings will probably reach alarming proportions, but there will always be men to take ships out. The outcome of the battle in the Atlantic will be decisive. This island lives by its ships, and the ships will be carrying supplies from America.

There was no dancing in the streets here when the Lend-Lease Act was passed, for the British know from their own experience that the gap between

~~legislation and realization can be very wide. They remember being told that their frontier was on the Rhine, and they know now that their government did very little to keep it there.~~

~~The course of Anglo-American relations will be smooth on the surface, but many people over here will express regret because they believe America is making the same mistakes that Britain made. For you must understand that the idea of America being of more help as a non-belligerent than as a fighting ally has been discarded, even by those who advanced it originally. Maybe we hear some frank, forthright talk across the Atlantic instead of rhetoric, but I doubt it. One thing that is not doubted is that the decisions taken in Washington between now and the time the crops are harvested will determine the pattern of events for a long time to come. British statesmen are fond of repeating that Britain stands alone as the defender of democracy and decency, but General Headquarters is now on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. Many Britishers realize that. Not all of them are happy about it, for the policies of Washington have always been the practice of the Tory party, which still rules this country. Presumably, the decisions of Washington will be taken in the full light of publicity and debate, and no mere radio operator has the right to use the weight of monopolized opportunity in an effort to~~

~~influence those decisions. We can only deliver to you an occasional wheelbarrow load of stuff, tell you where it comes from, and what sort of air-raid shelter or bastion you build with it is a matter for free men to decide, but since part of reporting must necessarily be personal, I'd like to end this with my own impression of Britain on the verge of spring and big events.~~

~~There's still a sense of humour in the country; the old feeling of superiority over all other people remains. So does class distinction. There is great courage and a blind belief that Britain will survive.~~

"The British aren't all heroes; they know the feeling of fear; I've shared it with them. They try to avoid thinking deeply about political and social problems. They'll stand any amount of government inefficiency and muddle. They're slow to anger, and they die with great dignity. They will cheer Winston Churchill when he walks through block after block of smashed houses and offices as though he'd brought them a great victory. During a blinding raid when the streets are full of smoke and the sound of the roaring guns, they'll say to you, 'Do you think we're really brave, or just lacking in imagination?'

"Well, they've come through the winter; they've been warned that the testing days are ahead. Of the past months, they

may well say, 'We've lived a life, not an apology.' And of the future, I think most of them would say, 'We shall live hard, but we shall live'" (Murrow, *In Search of Light*, 42-46; Murrow, This Is London, 231-237).

MUSIC: A TRANSITION OF TIME

ACT 9--LIBERATION OF BUCHENWALD

HOST You're listening to Re-Imagined Radio. Our episode is "Proximity Effect: Edward R. Murrow's Radio Storytelling."

Now, we fast forward to April 15, 1945, and the liberation of the German concentration camp, (BUGEN-vald) Buchenwald, by Allied Forces. Murrow was there. After his visit, and without a backdrop of droning airplanes, grunts of exploding bombs, or stony sounds of anti-aircraft guns, Murrow gave this searing report which forever should remind us of the human tragedy in war.

SFX: MURROW-LIBERATION OF BUCHENWALD, APR 15, 1945.

MURROW ~~"[During the last week, I have driven more than a few hundred miles through Germany, most of it in the Third Army sector- Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Weimar, Jena and beyond. It is impossible to keep up with this war. The traffic flows down the superhighways, trucks with German helmets tied to the radiators and belts of machine-gun ammunition draped~~

~~from fender to fender. The tanks on the concrete roads sound like a huge sausage machine, grinding up sheets of corrugated iron. And when there is a gap between convoys, when the noise dies away, there is another small noise, that of wooden-soled shoes and of small iron tyres grating on the concrete. The power moves forward, while the people, the slaves, walk back, pulling their small be- longings on anything that has wheels.~~

~~"There are cities in Germany that make Coventry and Plymouth appear to be merely damage done by a petulant child, but bombed houses have a way of looking alike, wherever you see therm. But this is no time to talk of the surface of Germany.]~~

"Permit me to tell you what you would have seen, and heard, had you been with me on Thursday. It will not be pleasant listening. If you are at lunch, or if you have no appetite to hear what Germans have done, now is a good time to switch off the radio, for I propose to tell you of Buchenwald. It is on a small hill about four miles outside Weirnar, and it was one of the largest concentration camps in Germany, and it was built to last. As we approached it, we saw about a hundred men in civilian clothes with rifles advancing in open order across the fields. There were a few shops; we stopped to inquire. We were told that some of the prisoners had

a couple of SS men cornered in there. We drove on, reached the main gate. The prisoners crowded up behind the wire. We entered.

"And now, let me tell this in the first person, for I was the least important person there, as you shall hear. There surged around me an evil-smelling horde. Men and boys reached out to touch me; they were in rags and the remnants of uniform. Death had already marked many of them, but they were smiling with their eyes. I looked out over that mass of men to the green fields beyond where well-fed Germans were plouging.

"A German, Fritz Kersheimer, came up and said, 'May I show you round the camp? I've been here ten years.' An Englishman stood to attention, saying, 'May I introduce myself, delighted to see you, and can you tell me when some of our blokes will be along?' I told him soon and asked to see one of the barracks. It happened to be occupied by Czechoslovakians. When I entered, men crowded around, tried to lift me to their shoulders. They were too weak. Many of them could not get out of bed. I was told that this building had once stabled eighty horses. There were twelve hundred men in it, five to a bunk. The stink was beyond all description.

"~~When I reached the centre of the barracks, a man came up and said, 'You remember me. I'm Peter Zenkl, the one-~~

~~time mayor of Prague.' I remembered him, but did not recognize him. He asked about Benes and Jan Masaryk.~~

"I asked how many men had died in that building during the last month. They called the doctor; we inspected his records. There were only names in the little black book, nothing more -- nothing of who these men were, what they had done, or hoped. Behind the names of those who had died there was a cross. I counted them. They totaled 242. Two hundred and forty-two out of twelve hundred in one month.

"As I walked down to the end of the barracks, there was applause from the men too weak to get out of bed. It sounded like the hand clapping of babies; they were so weak. The doctor's name was Paul Heller. He had been there since 1938.

"As we walked out into the courtyard, a man fell dead. Two others -- they must have been over sixty -- were crawling toward the latrine. I saw it but will not describe it.

"In another part of the camp they showed me the children, hundreds of them. Some were only six. One rolled up his sleeve, showed me his number. It was tattooed on his arm. D-6030, it was. The others showed me their numbers; they will carry them till they die.

"An elderly man standing beside me said, 'The children, enemies of the state.' I could see their ribs through their thin shirts. The old man said, 'I am Professor Charles Richer of the Sorbonne.' The children clung to my hands and stared. We crossed to the courtyard. Men kept coming up to speak to me and touch me, professors from Poland, doctors from Vienna, men from all Europe. Men from the countries that made America.

"We went to the hospital; it was full. The doctor told me that two hundred had died the day before. I asked the cause of death; he shrugged and said, 'Tuberculosis, starvation, fatigue, and there are many who have no desire to live. It is very difficult.' Dr. Heller pulled back the blankets from a man's feet to show me how swollen they were. The man was dead. Most of the patients could not move.

~~"As we left the hospital I drew out a leather billfold, hoping that I had some money which would help those who lived to get home. Professor Richer from the Sorbonne said, 'I should be careful of my wallet if I were you. You know there are criminals in this camp, too.' A small man tottered up, saying, 'May I feel the leather, please? You see, I used to make good things of leather in Vienna.' Another man said, 'My name is Walter Roeder. For many years I lived in Joliet. Came back to Germany for a visit and Hitler grabbed me.'~~

"I asked to see the kitchen; it was clean. The German in charge had been a Communist, had been at Buchenwald for nine years, had a picture of his daughter in Hamburg. He hadn't seen her for almost twelve years, and if I got to Hamburg, would I look her up? He showed me the daily ration -- one piece of brown bread about as thick as your thumb, on top of it a piece of margarine as big as three sticks of chewing gum. That, and a little stew, was what they received every twenty-four hours. He had a chart on the wall; very complicated it was. There were little red tabs scattered through it. He said that was to indicate each ten men who died. He had to account for the rations, and he added, 'We're very efficient here.'

"We went again into the courtyard, and as we walked we talked. The two doctors, the Frenchman and the Czech, agreed that about six thousand had died during March. Kersheimer, the German, added that back in the winter of 1939, when the Poles began to arrive without winter clothing, they died at the rate of approximately nine hundred a day. Five different men asserted that Buchenwald was the best concentration camp in Germany; they had had some experience of the others.

"Dr. Heller, the Czech, asked if I would care to see the crematorium. He said it wouldn't be very interesting because the Germans had run out of coke some days ago and had taken to dumping the bodies

into a great hole nearby. Professor Richer said perhaps I would care to see the small courtyard. I said yes. He turned and told the children to stay behind. As we walked across the square I noticed that the professor had a hole in his left shoe and a toe sticking out of the right one. He followed my eyes and said, 'I regret that I am so little presentable, but what can one do?' At that point another Frenchman came up to announce that three of his fellow countrymen outside had killed three S.S. men and taken one prisoner. We proceeded to the small courtyard. The wall was about eight feet high; it adjoined what had been a stable or garage. We entered. It was floored with concrete. There were two rows of bodies stacked up like cordwood. They were thin and very white. Some of the bodies were terribly bruised, though there seemed to be little flesh to bruise. Some had been shot through the head, but they bled but little. All except two were naked. I tried to count them as best I could and arrived at the conclusion that all that was mortal of more than five hundred men and boys lay there in two neat piles.

"There was a German trailer which must have contained another fifty, but it wasn't possible to count them. The clothing was piled in a heap against the wall. It appeared that most of the men and boys had died of starvation; they had not been executed. But the manner of death seemed unimportant. Murder had

been done at Buchenwald. God alone knows how many men and boys have died there during the last twelve years. Thursday I was told that there were more than twenty thousand in the camp. There had been as many as sixty thousand. Where are they now?

~~"As I left that camp, a Frenchman who used to work for Havas in Paris came up to me and said, 'You will write something about this, perhaps?' And he added, 'To write about this you must have been here at least two years, and after that -- you don't want to write any more.'~~

"I pray you to believe what I have said about Buchenwald. I have reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it. For most of it I have no words. Dead men are plentiful in war, but the living dead, more than twenty thousand of them in one camp. And the country round about was pleasing to the eye, and the Germans were well fed and well dressed. American trucks were rolling toward the rear filled with prisoners. Soon they would be eating American rations, as much for a meal as the men at Buchenwald received in four days.

"If I've offended you by this rather mild account of Buchenwald, I'm not in the least sorry. I was there on Thursday, and many men in many tongues blessed the name of Roosevelt. For long years his name had meant the full

measure of their hope. These men who had kept close company with death for many years did not know that Mr. Roosevelt would, within hours, join their comrades who have laid their lives on the scales of freedom.

"Back in 1941, Mr. Churchill said to me with tears in his eyes, 'One day the world and history will recognize and acknowledge what it owes to your President.' I saw and heard the first installment of that at Buchenwald on Thursday. It came from men from all over Europe. Their faces, with more flesh on them, might have been found anywhere at home. To them the name 'Roosevelt' was a symbol, the code word for a lot of guys named 'Joe' who are somewhere out in the blue with the armour heading east. At Buchenwald they spoke of the President just before he died. If there be a better epitaph, history does not record it" (Murrow *In Search of Light* 90-94).

HOST Less than a year later, March 10, 1946, Murrow concluded his final radio broadcast from London saying, "and now, for the last time, this is Edward R. Murrow in London" (Persico 242). He returned to New York, and began a career as a CBS executive, and later as director of the United States Information Services.

MUSIC: RIR THEME, OPEN. ESTABLISH, THEN FADE OUT UNDER THE FOLLOWING.

BREAK #2--THE RIR BREAK

HOST You're listening to Re-Imagined Radio. I'm John Barber, producer and host. With each episode we explore radio storytelling using voice, sound effects, and music.

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HOST Visit our website for more information and listening opportunities. That's reimaginedradio dot net

MUSIC: RIR THEME, RETURN. ESTABLISH, THEN DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING

HOST CONCLUSION

HOST This . . . is Re-Imagined Radio. Our episode focused on Edward R. Murrow and his World War II reports from London during "The Blitz," fifty-seven nights of bombing of civilian, non-military targets by German air forces.

We sampled several of Murrow's broadcasts from London to America.

Radio historian Jeff Porter says Murrow's "figurative . . . narrative voice and language, conversational on-air persona, vivid imagery, short understated sentences, and bold sound effects" created a sense of immediacy, "the proximity effect," that distinguished Murrow from his peers, and

created a new form of radio storytelling (Porter 85, 90).

Murrow created this new form of radio storytelling in three ways.

First, proximity. Being close to the event helped Murrow better understand what he sought to share with listeners.

Second, for Murrow, being close meant hearing the sounds of the event. These sounds BECAME the story. Murrow used sounds to spark a sense of immediacy in his listeners' minds.

Third, Murrow set out to help American listeners understand what Londoners were experiencing. He told realistic stories about daily life in wartime London. About ordinary people during extraordinary times. As Murrow said, his reports should "describe things in terms that make sense to the truck driver without insulting the intelligence of the professor" (Nachman 406). He succeeded.

MUSIC: RIR THEME, ESTABLISH, THEN DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING

HOST CREDIT ROLL

HOST Re-Imagined Radio is produced with support from KXRW-FM and KXRY-FM. Vancouver, Washington's, and Portland, Oregon's community radio stations.

Content curation and script by John Barber.

Sound Design, music composition, and post-production by Marc Rose.

Graphic design by Holly Slocum Design.

Our announcer is Jack Armstrong.

This is John Barber, producer and host. Thank you so much for listening, and please, join us again for another episode of Re-Imagined Radio as we continue our exploration of radio storytelling.

MUSIC: RIR THEME UP, THEN DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING

CLOSE

ANNOUNCER This is a production of Re-Imagined Radio. Our radio broadcasts are heard on local, regional, and international community radio stations.

For on demand streaming, point your browsers to our website, reimaginedradio (all one word, no punctuation) DOT net.

Thank you so much for listening, and please, join us again for another episode of Re-Imagined Radio where we'll continue our exploration of radio storytelling.

MUSIC: RIR THEME UP, AND TO END

Notes

1. Murrow's closing, "so long and good luck," seems to be the origin of the phrase "Good night and good luck" with which he concluded his broadcasts after the war (Bliss 42).

Murrow's 22 September 1938 broadcast was the first to use the greeting, "This is London." Following advice from his University drama teacher, Ida Lou Anderson, Murrow paused after enunciating the word "This" for dramatic effect (Sperber 184-185). "This . . . Is London." and "Good night and good luck." became Murrow's trademark openings and closings to his reports from London.

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