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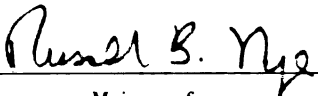
THE HEART AND THE EYE: EDWARD R. MURROW  
AS BROADCAST JOURNALIST, 1938-1960

presented by

LAWRENCE SHELDON RUDNER

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THE HEART AND THE EYE: EDWARD R. MURROW  
AS BROADCAST JOURNALIST, 1938-1960

By

Lawrence Sheldon Rudner

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## ABSTRACT

THE HEART AND THE EYE: EDWARD R. MURROW  
AS BROADCAST JOURNALIST, 1938-1960

By

Lawrence Sheldon Rudner

Edward Roscoe Murrow was a pioneer broadcast journalist whose distinct personalized style as a radio and television reporter contributed to the development of broadcast reporting in the United States. Murrow began his career with the young Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1935 in a nonbroadcast capacity. By 1938, however, Murrow was forced by circumstances to become a full-time correspondent during the Austrian crisis. As one of two CBS radio correspondents stationed in Europe, Murrow's style developed as a natural response to the conditions he was observing. He was, as his letters and broadcasts reveal, convinced that radio journalism must deal with the way in which events touched the lives of individuals caught up in those events. In so doing, Murrow began to focus almost all of his report-broadcasts on individuals and not, as many of his contemporaries in broadcasting believed, on the larger headline stories.

Murrow's broadcast reporting during the late 1930s and throughout the Second World War was heard by millions of Americans via short-wave broadcasts from London. He felt that the impact of any particular broadcast was a direct result of his own participation in an event. At the same time, a study of his work reveals Murrow's habit of reporting the news in an impressionistic manner: the small details, the atmosphere, and the role of the individual human being were all brought together in order to explain an event. As his correspondence states clearly, Murrow wanted to transport his audience to the scene he was observing at the moment. He discovered that to accomplish this goal, radio journalism had to become a visceral experience for the listener. Edward Roscoe Murrow wanted to capture a moment of time using an aural medium.

Murrow was present at the birth of television news in the late 1940s. He helped to form TV's first documentary news series, "See It Now," and believed it possible to use the same stylistic approach to visual journalism as he had used in radio. His television news series, as well as his radio commentaries, focused in on events in order to inform an audience about pressing public problems. Once again, Murrow wanted to show his audience that events have more meaning when they are shown affecting the lives of individuals. Television, however, did not prove to be the most open forum for the kind of probing journalism Murrow

engaged in with his "See It Now" series. While Murrow was producing and writing incisive public affairs programs throughout the 1950s, CBS was becoming increasingly apprehensive about the repercussions Murrow's work was having. CBS was afraid of controversy, especially after Murrow examined the impact of McCarthyism on American society during a series of explosive and influential television documentaries. Murrow continued to present public affairs programming the network considered too controversial within the framework of commercial television. By the fall of 1960, Murrow left CBS after he co-produced one of TV's most famous documentary films, "Harvest of Shame."

"The Heart and the Eye: Edward R. Murrow as Broadcast Journalist, 1938-1960," examines the sources of Murrow's style and the impact that style has on the development of broadcast journalism. The author has relied exclusively on primary material discovered in the Edward R. Murrow Papers housed at The Fletcher School, Tufts University. The material used (personal and corporate correspondence, radio and television transcripts and recordings) clearly shows why Murrow chose to follow the dictates of a personal form of reporting. At the same time, one sees how Murrow was convinced that even the less important news events had a kind of universal importance. Edward R. Murrow involved all of his senses in his reporting because he felt this was the only way to capture the

imagination and attention of an audience far removed from an event. But as his youthful euphoria began to diminish after confronting network attempts to censor and control broadcast journalism, Murrow saw that the future of broadcasting was endangered by the men who controlled the medium.

The career of Edward R. Murrow points to the great promise as well as the severe shortcomings of commercial broadcasting in the United States. Murrow shared the promise as a young radio reporter; and he saw the promise evaporate as the mass medium he helped to develop began to see itself as a purely profit-making institution.

This work is dedicated, with  
great love and respect, to my  
parents, Marion and Edward  
Rudner, and to their grandson,  
Joshua Michael Rudner.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been greatly assisted in my work by generous grants from the Graduate Student Council at Michigan State University and from Lakeland College. I am grateful to the staff of the Edward R. Murrow Library, Tufts University, for providing me with a place to work during the summer of 1975 as well as making the Murrow Papers accessible.

My doctoral committee has given me much needed criticism and advice over the years I was a graduate student at the university. Professors Douglas T. Miller, Russel B. Nye, and Arthur T. Weld have known me for many years; I, in turn, have learned more from them than I could ever list here.

So many people helped, cajoled, and literally comforted me during the low points, that I feel a special sense of gratitude to each of them: Dr. Lee Thornton was present when I first began this work, listened at odd hours as it was being written, and always gave of himself; Professors Thomas Baldwin and John Abel suggested many ideas; Professor Stephen Gould of Lakeland College was both a critic and a good friend; Linda and Joe Sobkowski were friends when lots of things were coming together;

Earl Rudner pushed me when times were tough; Eleanore and Burt Greenberg are what families are all about; and my parents gave all the love and support a son could ever ask for.

Without Lauren Rudner, very little would have been possible. It has been my greatest pleasure to live with her over the years.

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## INTRODUCTION

For in the immediate world, everything is to be discerned, for him who can discern it, and centrally and simply, without either dissection into science, or digression into art, but with the whole of consciousness, seeking to perceive it as it stands: so that the aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony . . . and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is.

James Agee, Let Us Now Praise  
Famous Men

Friday, November 25, 1960, was the day after Thanksgiving. On that day, President Eisenhower had just returned from a three day hunting trip, offered the country his "blessings" on the holiday just past, and prepared to take a few days off from his "pressing duties of office."<sup>1</sup> At the same time, John F. Kennedy, President-elect, was celebrating both his recent electoral victory and the birth of his new son. He, too, offered to "his fellow citizens" best wishes for a bountiful year "in this country so filled with abundance."<sup>2</sup> The New York Times' lead editorial on this day stated that the beauty of Thanksgiving lay in its appeal to "almost every American, for whom, it may be said, life is very good."<sup>3</sup>

The three major American television networks had good reason to be thankful. Each network was enjoying a profitable season. The quiz scandals of 1958-59 were finally fading from public and Congressional memory, and network executives were pleased with the prestige they received from their recent coverage of the Presidential campaign and the presentation of the Kennedy-Nixon debates during prime-time television hours. The 1960 television season was, as the major broadcast trade magazine observed, "getting better all the time."<sup>4</sup>

But on this particular Friday evening, the Columbia Broadcasting System presented, with some trepidation, a public affairs program called "CBS Reports," a program devoted to "crucial issues of our times."<sup>5</sup> CBS had advertised the program as "a chance to meet the millions of men and women whose life and whose labor are America's 'Harvest of Shame.'" At 9:30 P.M. "CBS Reports" began--with no lead-in narration, no title, but with several minutes of film footage. Four black men, a few standing on open, flat-bed trucks, were yelling out instructions to a group of milling men and women, each one of whom was also black:

First Hawker: Seventy over here. Over here . . . seventy cents. All day talkin'.

Second Hawker: Over here . . . seventy cents a day. We're payin' today. We'll pay more and the longest hours. Seventy cents. Here we is today.

Third Hawker: Seventy cents today. Seventy cents all day jumpin' . . . all you have to do is . . . .

Fourth Hawker: Eight cents a box and we guarantee you if you pull today you'll have eleven dollars in your pocket.

As the hawkers' instructions were repeated, the camera slowly panned over the faces of the men and women whose expressions revealed hopeless stares as acute as their apparent poverty. Then, the narration began:

This scene is not taking place in the Congo. It has nothing to do with Johannesburg or Capetown. It is not Nyassaland or Nigeria. This is Florida. These are citizens of the United States, 1960. This is a shape-up for migrant laborers.

The hawkers are chanting out the going piece-rate at the various fields. This is the way the humans who harvest the food for the best-fed people in the world get hired. One farmer looked at this and said, 'We used to own our slaves, now we just rent them.'

The deep, concerned voice of the narrator, Edward R. Murrow, was immediately recognizable. His voice had been a fixture in American broadcasting for over twenty years. "This is an American story," Murrow continued, "a 1960 Grapes of Wrath":

It is the story of the men and women who work 136 days a year, and average nine hundred dollars a year. They travel in buses. They ride trucks. They follow the sun.<sup>6</sup>

In the fifty-four minutes of the television documentary, "Harvest of Shame," Edward R. Murrow, narrator-reported, and David Lowe, producer-reported, presented to the American public an emotional plea for a forgotten, impoverished segment of American society. The message of the documentary was clearly stated by Murrow who, only three weeks before the final editing of the film, was asked by

Low to contribute to the final writing of the narration.

"The migrants have no lobby," Murrow wrote,

And only an enlightened, aroused, and perhaps angered public opinion can do anything about the migrants . . . They do not have the strength to influence legislation. Maybe we do.<sup>7</sup>

Reaction to "Harvest of Shame" was strong. New York Times TV critic Jack Gould wrote that the program "was uncompromising in its exposure . . . while the faces of the migratory workers were an editorial on a national disgrace. Murrow and CBS left no doubt of where they stood."<sup>8</sup> Saturday Review critic Robert Lewis Shayon added that "Murrow pricked our post-Thanksgiving consciences."<sup>9</sup> While the critics hailed the documentary, farm lobbyist groups condemned the program as a pernicious attempt to slander American agriculture. They complained so loudly that, as "CBS Reports" producer Fred Friendly wrote, "the pressure on the sponsor (Philip Morris, Inc.) was so intense that they buckled and sent agents through the agricultural community apologizing for the program."<sup>10</sup> Although CBS President Frank Stanton had congratulated the "CBS Reports" unit for the program ("I have never been so proud of CBS"), William Paley, Chairman of the Board at CBS and a powerful figure in American broadcasting, was not as pleased. "I liked everything but the ending," Paley told Friendly.<sup>11</sup> The "ending" that Paley disliked was Murrow's plea for action to alleviate the plight of the migrant workers.

"A communication system is totally neutral," Murrow once observed. "It will broadcast filth or inspiration with equal facility and will speak the truth as loudly as it will speak the falsehood. It is, in sum, no more or less than the men who use it."<sup>12</sup> For over twenty years, Edward Roscoe Murrow had used broadcasting as a medium through which the world could be reported and interpreted. He joined the fledgling news division at CBS in 1935, just prior to the events that would rock European and American complacency toward Nazi aggression in Europe. He was originally hired by CBS in a nonbroadcast capacity as "Director of Educational Talks." Yet, within two years he was actively reporting as a radio reporter from London, a post he held for eight years. From 1938 until his departure from CBS in 1961--when he left broadcasting to become head of the United States Information Agency--Murrow delivered thousands of radio reports from England. He organized, along with Fred W. Friendly, the first and most famous television documentary news series and, in so doing, he reached millions of listeners and viewers with his own very personal kind of journalism.

"All I can say I've done," Murrow noted in a 1958 radio interview, "was to have agitated the air for ten or fifteen minutes"; but when he was reporting he was, quite consciously, doing much more. "Despite all of the talk about me," he wrote to one of his former teachers, "I

guess I am really trying to chronicle the lives of human beings caught up in history, and that's all I'm trying to do."<sup>13</sup> Murrow tried to render history through his chosen medium as a series of events having meaning only when they were interpreted through an individual's life. He operated in much the same manner as the documentary photographer who captures an historical moment reflected through the image of a pair of hands, the reclining body of a wounded soldier, or a bare table in a migrant family's home. Murrow's style as a broadcast reporter consistently sought to enlarge public understanding of an event by reducing it to its most basic component: its meaning for one human being, whether during the wartime years in London, the liberation of the living-dead survivors of Buchenwald, or a falsely maligned individual during the political paranoia of the McCarthy years in America. "My style is really very simple," Murrow once observed. "I want little more than to transport my audience to a scene and they can make of it what they want."<sup>14</sup>

He entered broadcasting at a time when radio reporting was an ill-defined craft. No one within the growing radio industry really understood what broadcast journalism should be, the stylistic rules that applied for the new medium, or how radio reporting might differ from print reporting. The crisis in European politics in the late 1930s changed everything, however. The immediacy

of the events themselves conformed to the most attractive promise of radio broadcasting--instantaneous coverage of events. It was the war which finally acted as the midwife for broadcast journalism, and Murrow was there at its birth. Of all the radio reporters who covered the Second World War, Murrow received the greatest acclaim for his sensitive reporting. "Until Ed Murrow came along quite by accident," CBS news chief Paul White remembered,

We in radio news were not very distinguished. He made reporting via radio something different, new and vital . . . and he gave it a soul, a heart, that it never had before. The beauty of the whole business was that he did it all with such simplicity and such feeling for what he was reporting.<sup>15</sup>

The study that follows will deal with the development of Murrow's style as a broadcast reporter. Through an analysis of hundreds of radio and television reports, along with important primary material discovered in the Murrow Papers, now housed at Tufts University, the author hopes to show how the profession of broadcast journalism was enhanced by Murrow's reporting style to the extent that the craft became art and the art became communication. Murrow was convinced that what he was doing was little more than what any competent reporter does: a marshalling of the facts in a coherent manner so that they can be understood by a larger audience. But to the extent that his reputation far exceeded that of his contemporaries, his work deserves careful study.

When Murrow died in 1965 after an extremely painful bout with lung cancer, Eric Sevareid, a close colleague at CBS, knew that an era had ended and that broadcast journalism would never be the same again:

Ed was an artist, passionately alive; living each day as if it were his last, absorbing and radiating the miseries and glories of his generation. The men, the machines, the battles, the beauties--the poetry of America was in his bones.

He was a shooting star, and we will live in his afterglow a very long time.<sup>16</sup>

It is, then, the man who elicited such praise, whose style influenced all of those around him, who is at the center of this study.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The New York Times, November 25, 1960, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>4</sup>Broadcasting, November 3, 1960, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Columbia Broadcasting System (cited hereafter as CBS) promotional leaflet, circulated to CBS network affiliates in January, 1960, "What to Expect from CBS News," Publicity File, Edward R. Murrow Papers, Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy, Fletcher School, Tufts University, Medford, Mass. (cited hereafter as Murrow Papers).

<sup>6</sup>CBS television broadcast, "Harvest of Shame," November 25, 1960, CBS Reports File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>The New York Times, November 26, 1960, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>Saturday Review, December 17, 1960, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup>Fred W. Friendly, Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 122.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Edward R. Murrow (cited hereafter as ERM) Speech, delivered before the National Association of Broadcasters, April 2, 1962, Murrow Speeches File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Letter from ERM to Ida Lou Anderson, May 12, 1940, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>14</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul, January 30, 1942, Personal Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Memorandum from Paul White to William S. Paley, October 3, 1945, Personal Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>16</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS TV Evening News," April 27, 1965. Severeid's eulogy came at the end of the regular evening news show. Walter Cronkite, Lyndon Johnson, and Charles Collingwood also paid tribute to Murrow on that evening's broadcast.

## CHAPTER I

### THE BOY FROM POLECAT CREEK

"I have never forgotten where I came from," Edward R. Murrow wrote shortly before his death. "The land was a part of me, the people were in my heart, and it all defined my vision for a long time to come."<sup>1</sup> One of Murrow's great friends was the American poet, historian, and folksinger, Carl Sandburg, who, in a letter to the broadcaster in early 1953, noted that Murrow's "famous style" was a natural result of his birthright:

I really think, Ed, that what you are now is simply part of what you came from. You know, being around simple folks who loved the earth, who were originals who built this place out of sweat and life and loss. You knew them, listened to them and, I think, never forgot them. Maybe they caused you to look at the world in a very special way.<sup>2</sup>

"I think you're right," Murrow replied to Sandburg. "That land formed a big chunk of me as well as the language that everyone used, in that beautiful, lilting way, to tell about himself."<sup>3</sup>

The land that Murrow remembered so fondly was North Carolina where, on April 25, 1908, in the tiny village of Polecat Creek, Ethel Lamb Murrow gave birth to her third son, Egbert Roscoe Murrow. The beautiful

country surrounding Polecat Creek, with its gently rolling hills and dark, rich soil, had been farmed by Murrows since the Civil War. Murrow's father, Roscoe, was a "large, easygoing man" who believed in the values of a simple life, hard work, and direct speech. Roscoe Murrow owned nearly 320 acres of fertile farmland, a large frame house, and derived great pleasure fishing from the banks of the Polecat Creek. Several years after his father's death, Murrow remembered with great affection the way in which Roscoe would "always explain in great detail" how good it felt to be part of a community of people who cherished the land and their traditions.<sup>4</sup>

Murrow's mother, Ethel Lamb, was a deeply religious woman, a descendant of Scots transplanted in North America before the American Revolution. His ancestors became established farmers, contributed to the building of several communities, and furnished many sons to the Confederate cause. Although she was fully entitled to claim membership in any number of patriotic women's groups, Ethel Lamb Murrow preferred her privacy and the solitude of Bible study. "She ruled by copy-book maxim," Murrow's biographer wrote about Ethel Lamb, "and she hoped that Egbert, her youngest, would become a preacher."<sup>5</sup> Despite her strict moral code, Ethel Lamb was a gentle woman, a member of the Society of Friends, and she passed on to her family the pacifism and tolerance of Quaker teachings.

Her youngest son grew up surrounded by the oftold history of his ancestors and the vivid tales he heard from his maternal grandfather about the Civil War. Roscoe Murrow's sons--three, including Egbert--were forced to work the land along with their father, but were also allowed to roam free in the hills. "There was always time for personal freedom," Murrow remembered, "and also for hunting and listening to the local people talk about their lives and their dreams."<sup>6</sup>

In 1914, Roscoe Murrow was forced to leave North Carolina because of his wife's failing health. He sought a gentler climate for Ethel Lamb and a new life for himself in Washington state, eventually settling on a farm south of Bellingham. Within a year Roscoe was working full-time as a brakeman on a local railroad that served the logging companies. He introduced his sons to camping in the great forests, giving them, Murrow noted, "an appreciation of real estate, in the natural, not the legal sense."<sup>7</sup>

Murrow's early education was a product of the local two-room schoolhouse near his home, and, in the evenings, of his mother's Bible study sessions. Ethel Lamb's fervent belief in the necessity of teaching her sons "that tolerance is the key to the good life" became the prime lesson in the Murrow household. When her youngest son was old enough to read, she "almost beamed with joy" when he read passages aloud from the King James Bible. She derived

her greatest pleasure from hearing the simple eloquence "of good, simple words read with conviction and meaning."<sup>8</sup>

"I loved to escape to the woods," Murrow remembered about his boyhood in Washington. "I would read books about history, declaim great orations to an audience of lumberjacks, and just think."<sup>9</sup> When he was old enough to handle part-time jobs in the logging camps, his father used his influence to see that his son received "another kind of education" from the men who inhabited and worked the great timberlands near Bellingham. Murrow grew to love these men, both for the stories they told and--much to Ethel Lamb's dislike--for the "vivid and mighty direct way they had in the telling."<sup>10</sup>

One of Murrow's most vividly remembered impressions was of the labor troubles that broke throughout the northwest region's lumber camps. For some time the Industrial Workers of the World had been successfully organizing the migrant lumberjacks, exerting a great deal of effort appealing to "all those workers who their blood and sweat are being pounded down to less than animals." The I.W.W.'s message to the lumberjacks was simple and direct: "One Big Union" would protect them from the exploiting timberland owners. "Here were these men," Murrow wrote years after, "singing these fantastic songs, gathering in people from all over, telling them that society could be cured if only there was a will to do so."<sup>11</sup> The young Murrow saw

how the migrant lumberjacks were treated by their employers, in conditions that were often grim and dangerous, while working for subsistence wages. At the same time, he witnessed some of the violence that occurred in the summer of 1918 when union organizing efforts were met with violence by the camp owners. "I'll never forget," he wrote in college, "the faces of those men who were so badly treated."<sup>12</sup>

As a student at Bellingham's Edison High School, Murrow was actively involved in school affairs, both as a budding politician and debater. He read constantly, especially American history; but he found his other subjects "boring and senseless." Although he had to maintain a series of part-time jobs while he was in school, he would "escape to the woods to hunt and fish and yell a lot," and yet his natural charm was such that his fellow students elected him to every school office including the senior class presidency. "A man in the world's new fashion planted," read the inscription under his 1925 senior class photograph, "that hath a mint of phrases in his brain."<sup>13</sup>

Ethel Lamb wanted him to attend college when he graduated, seeing in the tall, handsome boy "a good deal of talent for getting on and reading." But money was hard to come by in the Murrow household, and the new graduate decided to take off one year to earn money to help pay his way through his first year of college. The job he chose

was a natural one for someone who had spent his youth around timber camps, for he was quickly hired as a timber survey crew member and was soon charting new timber properties throughout the Olympic peninsula. "It was one of the most enjoyable years of my life, learning how to run a compass and sketching topography as well as acquiring an extensive profane vocabulary."<sup>14</sup> He worked with a small survey crew that spent months in the woods, hiking through vast virgin forests, and meeting the native Indian populations in the area. "There is a naturalness to everything here," he wrote home, "that simply overwhelms me."<sup>15</sup>

In the fall of 1926, having saved enough from his earnings for at least two years of college, Murrow enrolled in the freshman class at Washington State College in Pullman. He was not sure what he would do with his life and "sort of aimlessly" enrolled in the business school without having, as he remembered, "any damn interest in such stuff."<sup>16</sup>

He soon became actively involved in student activities as well as maintaining part-time jobs as a dishwasher and stagehand for the college. After completing one semester "as the worst business student at WSC," he changed his major emphasis of study to speech and theater. Enamored of the theater since his high school days, he became an active member of the college's drama society, taking "any part that was offered." "God, how I loved



speaking aloud to people," he wrote to his mother, "giving them all a part of me . . . becoming different people, using language as an emotional tool."<sup>17</sup>

It was during his freshman year that Murrow came into contact with one of the major personal influences in his life, a teacher and friend who would guide the young student throughout college as well as during his early years as a broadcast journalist. Ida Lou Anderson, a speech and drama instructor crippled by infantile paralysis, took Murrow under her wing, reassured him when he felt discouraged. In letters as well as in "hours spent talking," she led him to believe "in the beauty of spoken language as a form of communication that becomes poetry." "She demanded not excellence so much as integrity," Murrow recalled about Miss Anderson, "and this was passed on to her students, and especially to me, with irresistible fervor."<sup>18</sup>

Under the watchful tutelage of Miss Anderson, Murrow took to his studies in speech and rhetoric with a natural flair that surprised many of his fellow students. "I remember how he would practice his speeches aloud," one of his classmates remembered, "and the way he always wanted to sway us by the use of language alone."<sup>19</sup> But he was also developing a lifelong interest in political philosophy, seeing that "complex messages could be recast

simply into easily understandable language if one spent the emotional energy and time."

Murrow would spend hours alone in Miss Anderson's office, practicing his speeches and, as he told his roommate, "being continually conscious of any criticism available." She imbued her young protege with "strong feelings" for the language and made him believe that he had both talent and critical abilities.<sup>20</sup> She felt that Murrow, as her favorite student, should live his life in "the most heroic of ways, by seeking out difficult situations in a fashion worthy of your courage."<sup>21</sup> "In explaining the world's troubles," she wrote to Murrow while he was a senior, "a sense of concentration on one person's travail in a focused manner can do more to persuade others than anything else." It was a lesson the "best speech student at Washington State College" never forgot.<sup>22</sup>

Between each one of his college years Murrow returned to the lumber camps around his home, "finding great pleasure as an accepted member of that company of wild, free men, who always knew what they wanted."<sup>23</sup> When he returned to campus he was a whirlwind of activity: participating in theater productions, serving as cadet commander of the campus R.O.T.C., working several part-time jobs, "and studying in between everything else." He became widely known throughout the collegiate debating circuit. By the time he received his degree in 1930, he

had won numerous campus honors including election to Phi Beta Kappa. His classmates would remember him as one of the few students "who literally cherished his instructors." He left Washington State College "with great determination, but also with great sadness." He was serious beyond belief in those years," his former roommate noted. "He didn't mind being told he was in error, but he did mind being told that what he thought wasn't important."<sup>24</sup>

The class of 1930, Washington State College, graduated just in time to face a growing economic depression that seriously eroded job prospects. Murrow was much luckier than most of his classmates. During his senior year, he had been elected to the presidency of the National Student Federation and was invited to spend a year in New York City running the national office. In June of 1930 he arrived in New York, "with total assets of 40 dollars and certain debts," coming to a job which offered only a small living allowance but with the prospect of being allowed to travel around the country as well as in Europe. He was not certain what he would do with his "newly minted degree in speech," but he recognized his natural aptitude for working with students. Shortly after he settled into his new job, he began to talk about working in education, "as some sort of administrator."<sup>25</sup>

For the next three years, he worked diligently for the cause of international student cooperation. He arranged exchange visits for students between American and European universities, and was instrumental in promoting one of the first American student tours of the Soviet Union. He even managed to include himself on a budget student tour of Europe during the summer of 1931. As chief executive officer of a major student federation, he felt that he had to "devote himself to speaking out for the cause of intellectual freedom." Although his position dictated that he try to remain as apolitical as possible, he became increasingly vocal in his condemnations of "students who become pawns in the hands of nationalistic powers." "This job has become a graduate school for me," he wrote to his mother. "I am learning about politics, people, and human nature; the latter is beginning to worry me a bit."<sup>26</sup>

Always in demand as a speaker at the various student meetings he attended, Murrow found that he was well-received as "something of a student celebrity, who constantly preaches about student cooperation."<sup>27</sup> While fully aware of the growing economic and social misery in his own country, he was too involved with his own work, "sorting out the affairs of the world" as he dramatically stated, to devote much time to domestic affairs. "He was awfully serious about what he was doing," a friend of his noted, "and he was always so involved in everything about

the world and what was going to happen to all of us."<sup>28</sup> During his first year as NSF president, he nearly worked himself to the point of exhaustion, and yet he willingly accepted nomination and election to a second term in office.<sup>29</sup>

Thus with his growing reputation as a national student leader, Murrow believed that his future would involve a commitment to education in one form or another. While considering what he would actually do upon the expiration of his second term, he was offered a salaried position as assistant to the director of the Institute of International Education, an organization jointly supported by the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations. Under the leadership of the noted political scientist and educator, Stephen Pierce Duggan, the IIE promoted international student contacts, arranged for exchange professorships between European and American universities, and supplied detailed memoranda for the League of Nations on comparative educational systems.<sup>30</sup> Duggan thought highly of his newly chosen assistant, having been thoroughly impressed with the recommendations he received about Murrow from educational administrators and students. "He had an aura of energy about him," Duggan wrote in an evaluation of Murrow, "that was incredible; but most importantly, he had a way of looking at problems I found fascinating, always being

concerned how individuals would be affected by a particular problem.<sup>31</sup>

Murrow's job with the IIE required a good deal of travel in Europe and America. The Institute was in the process of preparing a series of reports dealing with the erosion of academic freedom in Europe under the various fascist regimes. Murrow was responsible for preparing the bulk of these reports concerning "the status of free enquiry in European universities." He became increasingly angered and frightened by what he called "the continuing menace of political intrusion in the intellectual centers of Germany and Italy."<sup>32</sup> He and Duggan would spend days laboring over a single report, with the elder teacher acting as critic as well as observer.<sup>33</sup> "He helped to improve my style and critical abilities," Murrow remembered, "and gave me a continuing seminar on international politics and philosophies."

I began to learn how difficult it was to deal with problems on a grand scale. I learned how one can negate the seriousness of a human problem by putting it in terms of statistics. Like one of my old teachers (Ida Lou Anderson), I found that I could get my point across with more power if only I learned how to reduce a problem to its most basic essence--namely, how one human being suffered at the hands of political repression at, say, a European school. By reducing a problem in this way, it is much easier to feel the way a real person feels. This, I think, is a good thing to learn.<sup>34</sup>

Murrow was fascinated with his job and told Duggan that it was "the best thing that ever happened to me." But his daily routine also included answering anguished

letters from Jewish scholars and teachers in Austria and Germany who were desperately trying to find academic employment at any American schools that would take them. At the same time, he saw his idealistic notion of "international student solidarity" being rejected by students who had once been receptive to his ideas. The political situation in Europe "is bound to cause a major conflict," he wrote in one of his reports. "One can only hope that the madness will eventually be cured by reason."<sup>35</sup>

Late in 1933 Murrow accepted a nonpaying position as Assistant Secretary to the Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars. With Hitler now in firm control in Germany, the situation for Jewish academics, as well as for those non-Jews who dissented from the Nazi regime, was becoming more and more dangerous. Murrow's committee was stepping up efforts to bring these Germans to the United States and Canada. "This work," he wrote at the time, "contributed more to my knowledge of international politics and the human condition in this century than I could ever hope for."<sup>36</sup> Along with the great emotional burdens Murrow had to bare as chief correspondent for the committee, he was also in charge of raising and distributing millions of dollars to aid in the effort. He was frequently called upon to speak about the international situation in front of such august groups as the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City.

Throughout 1934, Murrow continued to divide his time between the IIE and his committee assignments. He worked frantically, keeping long hours in his cramped New York office. There was always a great many details demanding his immediate attention, and he felt compelled to answer all of his letters, no matter how trivial in nature. He sensed that the situation for educators around the world was deteriorating rapidly. He prided himself on his stamina and devotion to his jobs. Because he felt that time was running out for the "cause of academic freedom" in Europe, his IIE reports grew more pessimistic in their final evaluations. Despite his total involvement with his work and volunteer efforts, there was yet another task to which he had to devote his energy--one that would, within one year, change his life's work.

Murrow was asked by the "Director of Educational Talks" at the Columbia Broadcasting System to host a series of "radio chats" on international education. He finally agreed in early 1934 despite his extreme nervousness and he managed to handle himself well on the air. "My fear began to evaporate as soon as I began speaking about the subject that I knew best," he remembered about his first broadcast. "I was terribly impressed with the entire set-up of modern radio."<sup>37</sup> Murrow prepared and gave three fifteen minute talks. Each one dealt with educational



developments around the world, liberally sprinkled with allusions to John Dewey and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>38</sup> He was so pleased with the results of his first attempts as a "radio personality," that, as he wrote to his fiancé, Janet Brewster, "If I get the time, I would like to do some more broadcasting."<sup>39</sup>

He continued with his administrative work through 1934, finding time to marry and to visit Washington state "as a sort of renewal for my soul." With his new wife, Murrow spent time in North Carolina. He visited his relatives who were still farming "and talking in that lyrical way I love to hear."<sup>40</sup> He returned to his job with the IIE expecting to spend the rest of his life as an educational administrator hoping, in time, to become affiliated with a university. In the fall of 1935, however, Fred Willis, "Educational Director" at CBS and assistant to William Paley, chief executive of the young radio network, approached Murrow about a job opening. He encouraged Murrow to apply for the newly vacated position of "CBS Director of Talks," a nonbroadcasting position the network created in order to provide "cultural programming." After some hesitation, Murrow applied. He was interviewed by Edward Klauber, a gruff and demanding vice-president, and was selected for the job over his nearest competitor, journalist Raymond Gram Swing.

Murrow accepted the job "with high hopes for the future," although he realized that he would have little chance to do any on-air broadcasting. At the same time he was hired, another young man was brought to the network by William Paley. Frank Stanton, a Ph.D. in "Industrial Psychology" from Ohio State University, was a specialist in a newly discovered research field that fascinated Paley: radio listenership studies. The CBS president hoped that Stanton would be able to devise measures enabling the network to "scientifically discover how to increase CBS' appeal to listeners and advertisers."<sup>41</sup> Both Murrow and Stanton were the same age, and over the next twenty years both would have brilliant careers in the history of American broadcasting. Each man would, however, develop and maintain diametrically opposed views on the functions and goals of the mass media.

When Murrow began working for CBS, there were over thirty million radio sets in use in the United States and more than six hundred active stations. William Paley, scion of the "La Palina" cigar fortune, founded his network of sixteen radio stations in 1927 with an initial investment of under two million dollars. By the time Murrow formally joined CBS in 1935, the network had grown more than threefold in size and had begun to realize great profits for its stockholders. CBS was under great pressure from the Federal Communications Commission, created in 1927

to regulate the radio industry, to present "responsible public programming." The FCC required that CBS, as well as the other major networks, the National Broadcasting Company and the smaller Mutual Broadcasting Company, regularly schedule "some sort of news or public affairs shows."<sup>42</sup> In order to comply with the government, CBS had created a small department to facilitate the development of such programming. Prior to Murrow's arrival, CBS had begun short, "educational" talk shows that featured prominent politicians, businessmen, literary "stars" (Paley's favorite was George Bernard Shaw), clergy, foreign notables. Murrow was hired to direct this office, avoiding, as a memo to him in 1936 cautioned, "subjects or personalities of a controversial nature."<sup>43</sup>

For the next two years, Murrow was in sole charge of arranging most of the educational programs and the talk shows at CBS. His office took care of all the logistics involved in broadcasting talk shows. Since his office was close to the newly created news division at CBS, Murrow frequently visited the newsroom. His visits led to an increasing interest in the production of news programs. His own job was administrative in nature, yet he was fascinated by the possibilities for broadcasting "a new kind of news . . . the kind that will go beyond the headlines." But he was deskbound and spent his time arranging three weekly talk shows and only rarely ventured into the studios.

Murrow's attention to details pleased Paley. His growing friendship with the network's president led to rapid promotions in the executive hierarchy. Each promotion was outside of on-air work and Murrow was growing frustrated. He would "run off" to the studios whenever he had the chance and began to send lengthy memoranda to production personnel outlining his "ideas for public affairs/news shows . . . such as they are."

By 1937, there was a great deal of interest in improving radio journalism at CBS. The network's interest was prompted as much by the highly popular and competitive news division at NBC as by a concern for the journalistic possibilities of radio. Surveys conducted by Stanton's office showed that listeners were interested in receiving more news via radio. Since the political situation in Europe was growing more tense with a raging civil war in Spain and reports of rapidly increasing German rearmament, Paley decided that the network needed a man in Europe who would see to the arrangement of trans-Atlantic short wave broadcasts when necessary. "I want this person to be well aware of network needs, and that we need the kind of programs that don't get too heavily involved in hard news. That's not our business yet."<sup>45</sup> The position would require residency in London, and Murrow, impressed with what he called "the romantic adventure of life in England," was tapped by Paley for the job. The job, however, was still

an administrative one and would involve only rare on-air work. Murrow accepted Paley's offer, for he knew that events in Europe were gaining momentum and that "I would be a fool to sit in New York when the world might just blow up over there."<sup>46</sup>

In the spring of 1937, Murrow sailed for England to take over the European office from CBS' part-time man in Europe, Cesar Saerchinger. "My decision to go to Europe," he wrote home, "will give me the chance to see and learn a great deal. I doubt very much if my tour will last more than one year."<sup>47</sup> Murrow underestimated his probable tenure in England. Except for brief return visits to the United States, he would remain in London for the next eight years. Within a year of his arrival, Murrow would be in front of a microphone, forced by rapidly changing international events to become a reporter instead of an administrator. In so doing, he would change the content and quality of broadcast journalism. "I've come a long way from Polecat Creek," he wrote his mother when he first arrived. "But I doubt if its spirit will ever leave me . . . . I wonder what this has to do with my being in radio?"<sup>48</sup>

## CHAPTER I FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Letter from Edward R. Murrow (cited hereafter as ERM) to Lacey Murrow, September 12, 1964, Personal Correspondence File F, Edward R. Murrow Papers, Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy, Fletcher School, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts (cited hereafter as Murrow Papers).

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Carl Sandburg to ERM, October 12, 1953, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Letter from ERM to Carl Sandburg, November 11, 1953, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers. Murrow and Sandburg maintained a close relationship for nearly twenty years. Murrow admired the North Carolina writer greatly, finding in their common roots "a shared appreciation of this country that comes from the soil we both knew and still love," Letter from ERM to Sandburg, November 23, 1948, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Murrow wrote a memoir of his boyhood experiences for a possible article, never published, tentatively titled, "How I Grew Up," in 1955, Unpublished Writings File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Alexander Kendrick, Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1969), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>At the request of the CBS public department in 1949, Murrow wrote a thirty-five page description of his years as a boy in both North Carolina and Washington. This document also contains several pages devoted to his mother, Ethel Lamb Murrow, Personal Biography File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Letter from ERM to Carl Sandburg, December 17, 1954, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>11</sup>Letter from ERM to Lacey Murrow, June 16, 1947, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>12</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, May 12, 1927, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Kendrick, Prime Time, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Murrow, "How I Grew Up," p. 32.

<sup>15</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, October 7, 1926, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>16</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, June 24, 1927, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Murrow contributed an article to a testimonial booklet honoring his former college speech teacher upon her retirement in 1938 from Washington State College. His article can be found in manuscript form in the Unpublished Writings File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Letter from Ida Lou Anderson to ERM, June 11, 1929, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, August 22, 1928, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Kendrick, Prime Time, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup>Letter from ERM to Ida Lou Anderson, September 1, 1931, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers. He also noted in the above letter his "love for being in an academic setting, far removed from the hypocrisy of the outside world."

<sup>26</sup>Memorandum from ERM to the Executive Board, National Student Federation, April 16, 1932, National Student Federation File, Murrow Papers. Murrow's memoranda to the NSF Executive Board are collected in the above file, they deal with his feelings for his job, randomly collected thoughts about organizational improvement, and long, discursive notes concerning student organizations, both in the United States and in Europe.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Memorandum "On Daily Activities," from ERM to Executive Board, National Student Federation, July 2, 1932, National Student Federation File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Letter from James Simmons to Executive Board, National Student Federation, March 17, 1932, National Student Federation File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>30</sup>The Institute of International Education File, Murrow Papers, contains several examples of IIE reports: each one is a detailed summary of the state of academic freedom abroad, principally in Germany and Italy, as well as the academic standards of European universities.

<sup>31</sup>Professor Duggan evaluated Murrow's performance in a 1933 year-end report, Institute of International Education File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Letter from ERM to Stephen Pierce Duggan, March 1, 1934, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, April 29, 1934, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. Murrow was extremely fond of Duggan, and frequently wrote about him to his mother, always in praise of his superior at the IIE.



<sup>35</sup>Letter from ERM to Stephen Pierce Duggan, August 3, 1934, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul W. White, September 27, 1940, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Letter from ERM to Ida Lou Anderson, February 21, 1934, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers. Murrow frequently corresponded with his former college speech teacher, especially after he joined CBS in 1935. She often wrote to him criticizing his radio delivery, and was the first person to suggest that he open his famous wartime broadcasts with a powerful lead . . . "This . . . is London." Ida Lou Anderson died in 1941.

<sup>38</sup>CBS broadcast, February 11, 1934, Broadcast Transcript File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Letter from ERM to Janet Brewster, February 22, 1934, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>40</sup>Letter from ERM to Stephen Pierce Duggan, July 26, 1935, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>41</sup>CBS publicity release, January 7, 1935, CBS Publicity File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>42</sup>Federal Radio Commission (FRC) First Annual Report (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 8.

<sup>43</sup>CBS Network memorandum to ERM, January 1, 1936, CBS Program File A, Murrow Papers. This memorandum was written by William S. Paley who was in constant touch with everyone who had anything to do with radio programming at CBS.

<sup>44</sup>Letter from ERM to Edward Klauber, May 13, 1936, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers. Murrow frequently sent Edward Klauber, CBS executive vice-president, long letters with suggestions for future programming. He chose to write to him because of Klauber's long experience as a journalist with The New York Times. Murrow, however, was one of the few people at CBS who managed to get along with Klauber--an unusually difficult person to work for but one who, as Murrow wrote years later, "was one of the guiding lights of CBS in the early

days: honorable, tough, and loyal as hell," Obituary for Edward Klauber, Unpublished Writings File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Letter from William S. Paley to ERM, March 2, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>46</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, April 16, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, May 15, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

## CHAPTER II

### "FOR FURTHER DETAILS"--RADIO NEWS

#### COMES OF AGE

From almost every land under the sun there stream in reports of the multiple activities of mankind. They crowd each other so closely that the uninitiated will marvel at the foresight, the ingenuity, which shapes them, these great facts, for the ready understanding of the listener.

Advertisement, Yankee News  
Network, 1935

I really love you S.O.B.'s, especially the way your news shows entertain us. The only problem, though, is that some of us just might want to find out something about the world, too.

Letter to CBS News, 1934

"I'll tell you what this radio news business is," a disgusted Detroit News reporter told his editor in 1932. "It's an airy kind of nothing. No style. No language worth a damn, and lots of screaming headlines. Some journalism."<sup>1</sup> When Edward R. Murrow joined the Columbia Broadcasting System in 1935, radio journalism was in its infancy. It was scorned by print reporters as being little more than entertainment, tolerated by radio executives to please the newly created Federal Communications Commission, and cut off from use of the national wire services who

feared radio as a competitor. "I doubt very much if our network will ever push news," an NBC executive stated in 1931. "After all, this business is essentially about providing fun and entertainment; and of course it's about making money . . . who pays for news."<sup>2</sup>

The broadcast industry in the United States began during the early 1920s, enjoying both the enthusiastic backing of numerous financial investors and the visionary promotional schemes of men like RCA's David Sarnoff and Westinghouse's Harry P. Davis. By 1922 there were nearly six hundred radio stations actively broadcasting. Two years later over one thousand stations were on the air. Although most radio stations had little money to invest in program development during this early period, the future lay, most industry executives believed, "in being able to use radio as a great big stage . . . one that will be built and worshipped in the sitting rooms of millions of Americans."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the promotional promises made by the two largest manufacturers of radio receivers, RCA and Westinghouse, that "radio will become the great public educator for every good citizen," very few people in the growing radio industry believed that such a promise would be taken seriously. "If I wanted my radio station to spew out the world's troubles to my listeners," one station manager

wrote in 1923, "I rather doubt whether they would enjoy themselves in the evenings."<sup>4</sup>

Before 1921 there were few regularly scheduled news programs. In August 1920 the Detroit News owned station, 8MK, housed in the paper's basement, broadcast the first news show: the returns from the Michigan primary election. 8MK's operation was at best primitive. It provided only brief headlines about the election returns. Those listeners who managed to tune into the station that evening were repeatedly told that further information "will only be available in the morning News, where all of the important details will appear."<sup>5</sup> When the station's "headline news announcer" ran out of copy to read, he placed the large, pan-like microphone next to a Victrola and played, "for all the music lovers, light and snappy tunes, guaranteed to make your feet tap, tap, tap."<sup>6</sup> A cynical News reported, listening to 8MK's attempt at journalism, observed that "I sure hope this toy will never be used for serious reporting. Maybe they will keep it in the damn basement where it belongs."<sup>7</sup>

Within four years of 8MK's historic election eve broadcast, several northeastern stations joined together to provide radio news coverage of the 1924 Republican National Convention. In 1925 Calvin Coolidge's inaugural address was broadcast live over a twenty-one station hook-up. These early attempts at networking, however,

reserved their coverage of news only for the most "special and extraordinary events." There was little interest in providing any sort of continuous coverage of national or international news. Some efforts were made in the mid-1920s to develop regular news programs at several New York stations, but, as one station manager observed, "news is something we know precious little about. We have neither the personnel nor the resources to compete with the daily press. Nor should we."<sup>8</sup>

By 1926 the number of active radio stations declined to less than five hundred. Many stations were forced off the air because they simply did not have enough program material for original shows or the talent to appear on the air. Early surveys conducted by Radio Digest, one of the first journals devoted to developments in broadcasting, pointed out that "listeners are more and more interested in the quality of radio programs . . . they seek entertainment, but would also like to be better informed."<sup>9</sup> Individual stations, however, were hard-pressed by limited financial resources and untrained production personnel. They found it difficult to broadcast original programming. Few stations, in fact, were even able to maintain regular broadcast schedules. Sensing the obvious need for a centralized system where stations could receive well-produced shows, the National Broadcasting Company, the first radio network, was established in 1926. "We will provide our

member stations with the best shows money can buy," an early NBC brochure promised. "We can do this because we have the funds, knowledge, and the vision to capture the entire radio market."

NBC's network programming service was inaugurated over a twenty-five station hook-up in November 1926. Less than two months later demand for even more programming by other stations led to the creation of a second NBC network. Company engineers named the two networks "Red" and "Blue" as a convenience when drafting maps of network coverage. NBC was immediately successful with its affiliated stations. "I think we will be able to dominate American broadcasting," an NBC executive stated. "If we don't, we are mighty big fools."<sup>10</sup>

NBC's plan for domination of American broadcasting was short lived, however. Less than seven months after NBC began operation, a third network, the Columbia Broadcasting System, went on the air for the first time. William S. Paley began CBS with sixteen affiliated stations, a minimal investment, and "high hopes for the future." He told prospective station affiliates that the country was capable of supporting more than one major network.<sup>11</sup> Paley was excited by the potential of radio, seeing in "this new and wonderful device a conduit for entertainment and advertising messages."<sup>12</sup> Since he was bored with working for the family cigar business, he began to devote

his total energy into building up his own network into "what I hope will be a solid competitor for the NBC people."<sup>13</sup>

By the end of 1927 CBS' network salesmen were actively recruiting new stations for the fledgling network. Their promises were grandiose. They flooded the radio stations across the country with promotional literature promising, in bold type, "QUALITY PROGRAMMING WHICH WE WILL DELIVER."<sup>14</sup> CBS did not hold out any promises about possible nonentertainment programming shows becoming part of the regular schedule. But they did state that "our active news division will always be ready to supply up-to-the-minute news."<sup>14</sup> The network had only a tiny news division, however, whose major job was scanning the daily newspapers in New York, clipping stories of "significant import," and rewriting these stories into very brief "flash bulletins." Bulletins were never more than ten seconds long and they were always read by a station or network announcer. "If the public wants to have fun listening to the radio," another promotional leaflet stated, "then we at CBS will certainly give it to them, leaving the heavier cares of the day to the doomsayers of the press."<sup>15</sup>

With three full-time networks now providing radio programming, the industry began to grow and prosper. New stations were beginning to open elaborate facilities across the country. But much to the chagrin of the



professional stations, many of the newer stations were run by amateurs in grocery stores or garages. With the airwaves becoming crowded because of the constant battle between competing stations, the situation was chaotic. Finally in 1927, Congress took steps to correct "the tremendous confusion in the radio industry." The Federal Radio Act was passed to replace antiquated legislation from 1912 that dealt mainly with ship-to-shore communications. The new act authorized the establishment of a regulatory body, the Federal Radio Commission, to enforce the new rules for radio broadcasting. Stations were now required by law to be licensed by the FRC. The Federal Radio Act also stated, for the first time, the principle of "public ownership of the airwaves." "The radio air waves belong to all the people," the preamble noted, "and, as such, constitute a kind of natural resource held in common by all Americans." Finally, in a key phrase, the Federal Radio Act required that each commercial station set aside a certain amount of time in each day for "radio shows of a nature designed to inform as well as entertain."<sup>16</sup>

It was this historic piece of legislation which marked the acceptance by the major radio networks of the necessity to program news and public affairs shows in their regular schedules. The biggest obstacle for each network, however, was how to obtain the daily news and, once

obtained, how to make journalism fit the special requirements of the new medium.

Government recognition of the radio industry caused grave concern among newspaper publishers. Surveys showed radio advertising, particularly on the network programs, to be on the increase. Newspapers not only began to worry about losing paid advertisers to what one publisher called "this hot-shot radio business," but they feared radio might develop as a direct competitor in disseminating news, an area in which they held a total monopoly. Now that the government had stipulated, via the Federal Radio Act, that stations must begin to program news shows, the major publishers began to consider how they might cripple the attempts by the networks to become competitors in the news business.

In 1928, publishers met with the three major press associations--the sources of most national and international news--United Press International, the Associated Press, and the Hearst-owned International News Service, to establish a policy that would severely restrict radio from obtaining press association news. Under the leadership of the powerful American Newspublishers Association (ANPA), a decision was made to provide the networks with only "headlines, election returns, and news of supreme importance in the form of short news bulletins."<sup>17</sup> Since the

networks wanted to provide some limited coverage of the 1928 Presidential Election returns, they were allowed to broadcast returns furnished by the press associations. On election night, nearly six hundred stations carried returns and short election "informational bulletins." The networks had to agree, however, to state, at the end of each bulletin, that "further details are only available in your daily paper." The restrictive policy of the ANPA had the exact opposite effect. Despite the brevity of the radio news broadcasts that night, surveys conducted by the ANPA demonstrated the "overwhelming popularity" of radio's coverage. "It has simply created," one survey noted, "an even more solid demand for radio news."<sup>18</sup>

Both NBC and CBS were now convinced that a market existed for radio news. Within three days of the election night broadcasts, they formally requested from the press associations a "greater, more diverse supply of news material."<sup>19</sup> Each wire service was under intense pressure from the publishers and each in turn refused to sell news to the networks. "Radio must not receive more than the barest information," the ANPA stated, "or else we shall have to begin a boycott of wire service material." The Associated Press told Paley that "we are forced to confine our radio output to news of breaking headlines. No more, no less."<sup>20</sup> The networks replied by increasing their own news coverage of important events, though they were

hampered by a lack of personnel trained in journalism and were forced to rely upon station announcers to read, "with great force and clarity," rewritten newspaper stories.<sup>21</sup> Each network news division had a group of people who spent their days clipping stories from the major newspapers. "Clipping news was the only way we had to get stories," one CBS executive wrote. "It may have been a bit dishonest, but so were the attempts of the publishers to keep us out of the market."<sup>22</sup>

From 1928 until 1932, network radio news continued to plead with the press associations and the ANPA for a compromise arrangement. Yet with each attempt at compromise the ANPA grew more adamant in its refusals. Both the ANPA and the major newspaper publishers noted with great alarm the growing national popularity of radio. They feared, above all, that they would be "scooped," as the publishers of the Chicago Tribune stated, "by our 'brothers' who make their living in radio."<sup>23</sup> Finally, with the 1932 election promising to be an exciting race between Hoover and Roosevelt--"A race just meant to be covered by radio," Paley stated--CBS decided to provide even more election night coverage than in 1928. Paul White, newly hired head of "CBS News Division," promised that the network would "pour out the returns, put together by our own people . . . and to hell with the ANPA."<sup>24</sup> Plans called for the cancellation of regular evening broadcasts so that each

network could provide "minute by minute reports, along with suitable commentary, concerning this most momentous election in our history."<sup>25</sup>

The 1932 election night broadcasts were, as Variety's radio editor stated two days after the election, "a smashing success . . . with the brash, young CBS people really scoring a major coup in this new business of radio reporting."<sup>26</sup> Surveys showed that "nearly sixty-five percent of the American people listened, at one time or another, to the radio for election results." The ANPA was furious when the survey was made public, seeing in its results a dire threat to their news monopoly. But the networks were thrilled by their apparent success. They knew, however, they were still stymied by their lack of access to in-depth news stories that could only come from the sophisticated resources of the wire services.

At the 1933 ANPA convention the debate over radio news dominated the proceedings. The ANPA's "Radio Committee," headed by Indiana publisher Ed Harris, recommended that all newspapers discontinue radio program listings unless carried as paid advertising. Some publishers were not so negative toward radio, however. For example, New York Times publisher Adolph S. Ochs said, "it is important news be broadcast, for it whets the public's appetite to get hold of a good newspaper that contains all the news."<sup>27</sup> Scripps-Howard publisher Roy W. Howard disagreed. "The

great problem," he claimed, "is that radio news has the ability, that we have all seen, to skim the cream off the day's news and put it out before the daily press can be delivered. I, for one, want to protect my rights."<sup>28</sup>

Although the publishers were divided on the issue of whether wire service news should be sold to radio, they recognized that there could no longer be a press monopoly of news.

The outcome of the 1933 convention resulted in a slight relaxation of policy. Newspaper-owned radio stations were now told they would be allowed to purchase wire service news. Although these stations would receive more "bulletins" than before, they would be limited to "brief notices of news of a major stature."<sup>29</sup> Nonnewspaper owned stations were still barred from purchasing wire service news, a move that infuriated station owners. Despite their protests to the ANPA, the networks and the nonnewspaper owned stations were sternly told they would have to accept the decision "as final and irrevocable."<sup>30</sup>

Cut off from a supply of major news stories, the independent and network stations decided they would now have to form their own news-gathering organizations. They recognized the critical need for news on a daily basis, and were aware of the public desire for more news via radio. The ANPA boycott of radio news had the effect, much to the chagrin of the publishers and the wire services, of

creating a new competitor. Paul White told a group of publishers that "now you gentlemen are going to see the birth of a new journalism, with different rules, new techniques, and, above all, a new style."<sup>31</sup>

"Our time has finally come," Paul White wrote to CBS chief William Paley. "Now that we are being forced to set up our own shop, we should strive for the best. I think we can really make something of radio news."<sup>32</sup>

Within three months of the ANPA convention, CBS was actively forming its own news-gathering organization. The General Mills Corporation approached Paley with the suggestion that the network support a full-time news department. General Mills was willing to sponsor a news program, one that would circumvent the daily press and the wire services and provide its own "special type of stories for radio." They agreed to pay all of the bills providing that "not more than \$3,000 was spent per month."<sup>33</sup> Paley agreed. He gave Paul White, a former UPI writer and editor, full responsibility for organizing the CBS news division. In September 1933, White formally announced to network affiliates the birth of the Columbia News Service, Inc. "Our service will be totally comprehensive," White wrote in a promotional booklet sent around the country. "Our style will be informative and we will present the day's news in as entertaining a fashion as possible . . . without violating sound journalistic principles."

Under the energetic direction of White, the Columbia News Service moved quickly to assure itself of a continuous supply of news. Contracts were signed with the British Exchange Telegraph Agency for foreign news, and with the Dow-Jones Service for economic and domestic news. At the same time, White opened "radio news bureaus" in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington. CBS was also aided by over eight hundred part-time stringers who contracted to supply "breaking news" to the main office in New York. White was so excited by the future prospects of the CBS operation that he predicted in a memorandum to Paley, "a smashing success for radio journalism, probably within a few months."<sup>36</sup>

CBS also hired two "news readers" to broadcast the daily reports now being prepared by the New York office. Hans von Kaltenborn, former city editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, impressed White and Paley because he could talk "endlessly on any subject." To balance Kaltenborn's "liberal viewpoints," White chose Boake Carter, a conservative journalist and part-time broadcaster. "They are both engaging personalities," White told Paley, "and we would do well to keep them on for a long time."<sup>37</sup>

Kaltenborn and Carter agreed to alternate in anchoring the evening news. Both were promised the chance to "comment on the news from time to time" within the five minutes allotted per news show. The preparation and the



actual writing of each news broadcast, however, was the sole responsibility of White's New York office. "We will give them the best possible stuff," White noted to his staff, "but we don't want them fooling around with the material. They can stylize the news with their voices and presentations, not their copy-pencils."<sup>39</sup>

By December 1933, the Columbia News Service was flooded with congratulatory messages sent in by affiliated stations. "The quality of your news is superb," one California station wrote to White, "and I only hope that we will see more of the same."<sup>40</sup> "Please keep up the good work," a station in New Jersey added, "for I see the CBS work as a harbinger of things to come in radio news."<sup>41</sup> Paley was happy the daily news shows were so successful. He took great pride in the fact that Paul White built the organization from the ground floor, "exactly as we talked about for so long." He told his news chief he already had received CBS transcript requests, on twelve separate occasions, from The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. "It was a great year for us," White observed at the end of 1934. "We were pleasing our stations. We weren't getting into trouble with the government. And General Mills kept sponsoring us."<sup>42</sup>

Kaltenborn and Carter soon left their jobs as "news readers" in order to become what the network referred to as news "commentators." This allowed both men to spend more

time analyzing the news. CBS, however, continued to supply daily news programs to affiliates and now could boast that it was providing "news and comment" every day.

Despite the somewhat extravagant claims of the CBS publicity office that "never before has the news been presented in such a detailed and coherent manner," network news shows were little more than headline-providing services. Each show lasted only five minutes, and, although White believed radio news could provide "original reports," stories rarely lasted more than thirty seconds. There was very little on-the-spot reporting. White wanted to maintain complete control over each broadcast and demanded each show be written in New York. "Paul White ran an awfully tight shop," a CBS news employee remembered. "The problem in those days was that we never had enough time to do real detailed stories. White wanted to, but the clock was our master and he was the chief custodian of the network's minutes."<sup>43</sup>

Within the brief CBS news shows there was a solid line of factual stories. White felt strongly about the need for radio journalism to follow the accepted rules of newswriting, including strict adherence to objectivity and fairness. "We may have rushed through stories which should have been reported in more depth," he wrote, "but before the war at least, radio news was only the icing on the broadcaster's cake; there wasn't enough time for us."<sup>44</sup>

At NBC, however, a different standard for news shows existed. Under the leadership of A. A. Schecter, NBC's news programs were designed to provide "soft stories," an industry euphemism for feature reporting. "Our mighty radio-city newsroom was geared to highlight life," Schecter noted about the NBC effort. "We were not there to upstage newspapers, unlike one of our competitors."<sup>45</sup>

In the early 1930s, NBC hired several prominent journalists, including Lowell Thomas and Walter Winchell. Since NBC declared its sole interest was in "special events reportage," both Thomas and Winchell read prepared newscasts featuring short interviews, "man-in-the-street reports," and rewritten newspaper stories dealing with "the more humorous aspects of American life."<sup>46</sup> Paul White condemned the NBC news effort as "totally reprehensible . . . a scissors and paste job."<sup>47</sup> NBC consistently avoided presenting any sort of hard-news coverage. Instead, they strictly followed the guidelines set up by Schecter.

Though both networks paid lip-service to their "comprehensiveness" as news media, executives at NBC and CBS provided woefully inadequate coverage of international news. CBS received the bulk of its overseas news from British Telegraph Exchange Service, a conservative news service. At NBC, Schecter's idea of important international coverage was little more than a continuation of his domestic "special events reporting." At one point in 1937, for

example, he dreamed up a "Singing Mouse Contest," an event actually held in London's Earl's Court and broadcast live (and a broadcast that won, to the utter dismay of Paul White, an award for the "Best International Broadcast of 1937). Another typical Schecter "news program" included a widely publicized "Singing Canary Contest" held in Paris.<sup>48</sup> Schecter admitted his purpose in designing such programming in his memoirs.

I remember picking up one midwestern newspaper--it was a Sunday radio section--and it had an eight-column streamer saying: SINGING MICE ON AIR TODAY. And then a two-column head saying "Lilly Pons makes debut"--so you can see who's more important. People will listen to NBC instead of another network. If we can get them to do that, we will have accomplished our purpose.<sup>49</sup>

"There was no lack of serious radio news or commentary from Europe," Alexander Kendrick, a one-time CBS employee, has written. "It simply wasn't being done by American radio reporters--there were none."<sup>50</sup>

Finally in 1937, Paul White convinced William Paley "that a dire need for better radio coverage exists in Europe."<sup>51</sup> White knew that radio news had to be upgraded in Europe since the threat of war was beginning to appear as a distinct possibility. "The era of the 'Singing Mouse' is coming to an end, and though we at CBS haven't engaged in such tripe, we better be prepared to field a staff capable of reporting what I see coming: a life and death struggle."<sup>52</sup> "Send young Murrow," Paley told White. "He

has been in Europe before, is a capable administrator. Tell him, for God's sake, to get us a staff."<sup>53</sup>

Within two months Murrow arrived in London. He was directed to organize a CBS European staff on a small scale and to direct European broadcasts "on topics of interest to Americans." By the middle of 1937 Murrow, along with the staff he recruited, would bury the long-held notion that radio journalism could only serve as "just another form of entertainment."

Murrow began his London assignment with the ferocious energy he had already displayed as a minor CBS executive in New York. Although he had little on-air experience, he had firmly-held ideas about the form radio journalism should take in the future. His first major task required him to hire personnel for the staff. He gave long and serious thought to the kind of individuals who would best serve the interests of what he called, "this new type of reporting."

I tried to find people who were young and who knew what they were talking about. I wasn't worried too much about the way their voices sounded on-the-air. I thought they should be, above all else, good writers and good journalists. The rest would come.<sup>54</sup>

His first choice for "the new team" was William L. Shirer, a thirty-three year old reporter with years of experience in Paris working for the Herald Tribune. In August 1937 Shirer noted in his diary, "I have a job."

I am to go to work for the Columbia Broadcasting System. That is, I have a job if my voice is all right. Who ever heard of an adult, with no pretenses toward becoming a singer or any other kind of artist being dependent for a job on a good, interesting voice? Mine is terrible!<sup>55</sup>

Shirer's high-pitched, squeaky voice was not pleasing to the ears of the CBS executives in New York. But Murrow insisted on Shirer being hired because of his extensive background as a foreign correspondent and his fine writing style. "I wanted him for CBS knowing that he could do the job. Not only that, but he is a good linguist and is everything that radio news is not: sensitive to news events."<sup>56</sup> CBS reluctantly gave in to Murrow's request and Shirer was assigned to Vienna to cover both Austria and Germany.

Murrow told White that he intended "to make our broadcasts from here sensitive to the nuances of life."<sup>57</sup> As soon as he was settled into the cramped CBS office in London, Murrow began to arrange "international reports and talks" for short wave transmission to New York. He also began to cable his ideas for future stories. "Since Europe seems to be coming apart at the seams," his first cable stated,

I think we should try and develop a style of reporting that will go beyond anything that has ever been done before. Don't you think that by focusing in on people, narrowing down on how they live, we could then be saying a lot more about events than by merely reporting politics and economic news. I am interested in people--how they get by, the way they talk.<sup>58</sup>

Murrow tried to convince White "the old man-in-the-street stuff can be useful, provided we let the man speak his mind and not make him an extension of the reporter."<sup>59</sup> What Murrow wanted to do shocked the radio establishment at CBS. When he arranged for his first local story--an interview with a Cockney cab driver in London's East End, who agreed to talk about "this 'ere Nazi business" from a pub--several British papers carried stories about the broadcast. "Radio has never let the common man go on the air before," The Manchester Guardian noted in a lead article. "Perhaps our own dour BBC could learn something from the Americans at CBS."<sup>60</sup> White was pleased with the report, however. He encouraged Murrow to continue to find people like the cabbie. "They say a lot more than we thought they could," White told Murrow about the broadcast. "Sometimes, they even think a little more clearly."<sup>61</sup>

Throughout the spring and summer of 1937, Murrow continued to arrange broadcasts from London. He soon made important contacts with varied members of the British establishment. He was on a first-name basis with Winston Churchill, and frequently lunched with Churchill's ideological opposite, the socialist academic Harold Laski. "All of these people have something to say, and they introduce me to loads of people," Murrow wrote to his family. "They are also teaching me a lot about the human side of politics here. It's extraordinary."<sup>62</sup>

Broadcasting in England was not the same as in the United States. The state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation was a stodgy, uninspired system. Under the direct control of its powerful and conservative director, Sir John Reith--a taciturn believer in upholding what "is best in the Empire"--the BBC was a giant bureaucracy. Its programming was unoriginal, and its news division "played by the gentlemanly rules," with "news readers" appearing before their microphones in dinner jackets. When Murrow made a courtesy call on Sir John (as a matter of necessity, since CBS depended upon the BBC for studio space and technical assistance), the BBC's director was "somewhat shocked" by the gregarious behavior of the young broadcaster and his "ideas about radio." Murrow told Reith he hoped to "bring radio down to earth with simple language so that our journalism will have more meaning for people." "He is quite a young man," Reith noted in his diary, "but I doubt he will last long; things just aren't done as he wishes them to be done. A dreamer."<sup>63</sup> Murrow related to White his experiences with Reith in a short letter. He took pleasure in describing the expression on Reith's face when "I told him I have plans to broadcast from pubs, the Brighton Pier, banks, factories, downtown London."<sup>64</sup>

As Murrow settled into the daily routine of arranging broadcasts, he began to grow increasingly impatient with CBS. "They just don't want to give me my own air



time," he wrote his brother. "I want to cover something myself. God, I know I could do it if I had the chance." Murrow's frustration was short lived, however, and he soon got his "chance." European politics and diplomacy began to revolve around the personality of the German Chancellor, Adolph Hitler. Both Shirer and Murrow knew that Austria would be the next area of diplomatic conflict. Despite the overt hostility of Goebbel's Ministry of Propaganda, Shirer was continuing to send out broadcasts from Berlin. Hitler's eyes never turned away from his birthplace," Shirer noted on-the-air. "And I expect that trouble will come soon. Europe should prepare itself." By the fall of 1937, the Austrian Nazi Party was gaining more and more internal control in Austria, and Shirer cabled Murrow that CBS should be prepared to broadcast "the entire crisis when it happens." "Our time has come," he added as a post-script, "and you better be ready."<sup>65</sup>

The CBS European staff consisted of only two men, Murrow and Shirer. Murrow knew that if the Austrian crisis turned out to be the "first step toward war," he would be forced by events to go on-the-air himself to report. He sent an emergency cable to White in New York and stated he was fully prepared to "do my own work." "I will try to make listeners feel what it is like. It's like I've been preparing for this my whole life."<sup>67</sup> The two CBS correspondents prepared an elaborate code to be sent by cable

if the Germans actually marched into Austria. They agreed that Shirer would send out the following message, "The goal line has been crossed," indicating that Murrow should get to Vienna as soon as possible and help report the event. Both men agreed they would also have to "interpret as well as report," for, as Murrow told Shirer, "strict objectivity can often be a straitjacket."<sup>68</sup> Murrow felt that he must prepare CBS in New York for the kind of journalism "Bill and I want to do, and this can be done only when we make our stuff more than a lead sentence. We plan on transporting the audience to where we are."<sup>69</sup> Newspaper reporting had always been a report of what had happened. Radio reporting, at least as Murrow envisioned it, had to be a chronicle of what was happening at the moment.

By early March 1938, Shirer told Murrow that events were unfolding quickly in Austria. When the crisis actually came, Murrow knew that a better sense of the "event in the making" could be accomplished for radio news by means of multiple radio reports from around the continent. He planned an extensive system of multiple-point broadcasts, never attempted before. To CBS engineers in New York, Murrow's plans seemed outlandish giving the technical logistics and the need for split-second timing. But Murrow insisted that "radio must begin to

present in-depth coverage, so just cross your fingers.  
It's coming now."<sup>70</sup>

On March 13, early in the morning, Shirer's cable arrived at CBS in London: "The goal line has been crossed." Murrow now had eight hours to arrange the various radio pickups around Europe. In Paris, Edgar Ansel Mowrer was contacted and agreed to provide French reaction to the Nazi power-play. In Berlin, Pierre Huss, a friend of Shirer's agreed to deal with German sentiments. In Rome, Frank Gervais had arranged studio space with Italian authorities. And in London, Ellen Wilkinson, a Member of Parliament, was prepared to report British reactions. Each correspondent would receive a cue and begin talking for five to seven minutes. CBS in New York was informed they could expect a broadcast a little after 8 p.m. Murrow had already flown to Vienna and was now ready.

A little before eight in the evening, CBS' Robert Trout made the following announcement over the air:

The program "St. Louis Blues" will not be heard tonight. Instead there will be a special broadcast which will include pickups from London, Paris, and other European capitals [that] have communication channels available.<sup>71</sup>

After a tense ten second interval, the short wave static died down. Shirer's voice was heard clearly speaking from London. For the next thirty minutes, without any technical difficulty, the first multiple-point radio broadcast was heard over the entire CBS network system.

Shirer provided background information on the German march into Austria. He predicted that "Hitler's appetite was insatiable," and that his next move would probably come in Czechoslovakia. Shirer's style was very cut and dry with few wasted words. Ellen Wilkinson was next. She stumbled over her prepared text that dealt exclusively with Parliamentary reactions. She was followed by Mowrer in Paris and Gervasi in Rome. Finally, with less than five minutes of air time left, Murrow in Vienna got his cue to begin his first news broadcast. Unlike his fellow reporters, he tried to give a word portrait of what Vienna was like on the "last day of its independence." His voice sounded strained. "From the air," he stated,

Vienna didn't look much different than it has before . . . the crowds are as courteous as they've always been, but many people are in a holiday mood. They lift the right arm a little higher than they do in Berlin and the "Heil Hitler" is said a little more loudly.

Young storm troopers are riding about in the streets, in trucks and vehicles of all sorts, singling and tossing oranges to the crowd. I saw many couples walking . . . their primary interest seemed to be in enjoying the brisk sunshine of the day.

Murrow added a few political facts about what he had seen that day--"I saw the Minister of War, visibly sweating in his huge office"--but quickly returned to his description of Vienna. He told about the hundreds of German flags he saw, the huge crowds milling about, "waiting and watching, knowing full well that Herr Hitler would soon arrive." He concluded by noting "the certain air of expectancy

surrounding the city," and compared the hushed Viennese crowds awaiting Hitler's entourage to "the still poplar trees that ring the city's wide boulevards."

The first "CBS News Roundup" ended exactly on time. Murrow was too busy preparing for another multiple point broadcast to worry whether the initial broadcast had been a success. But in New York, the excitement was apparent. "I was certain that radio news finally came of age tonight," Paul White told William Paley. White sent Murrow a telegram immediately, congratulating him on his success. "Your voice and report came across loud and clear. Details great. Good focus. All are proud."<sup>73</sup>

On Monday, March 14, Hitler finally entered Vienna. Neville Chamberlain told the House of Commons the German Anschluss was a definite blow against European peace. He added that international "appeasement" was still a "sound policy." Murrow already told New York to expect another multiple-point broadcast that evening. "We are recording history being made," he told White.<sup>74</sup> Preparations for Monday evening's broadcast went smoothly. Shirer would again speak from London, this time with journalist Philip Jordan. Kenneth Davis would report from Paris. Albion Ross of The New York Times would analyze German reactions. Murrow would present the final three minutes from Vienna.

The second broadcast was completed faultlessly. Each reporter made factual reports, noting how the Anschluss

was being viewed in the respective capitals. Murrow, however, talked about the scene itself, a report based on his day's walk through the streets of Vienna.

The German soldiers are obviously enjoying themselves. They're sleeping on straw, and there are stacked rifles and iron helmets arranged neatly along the walls. They don't talk a lot with the Viennese, but they always give an impression of iron discipline.

Although his broadcast time was limited to three minutes, Murrow included in his report a simply stated fact of life in Vienna, a moment of time he observed when he "stopped for a cup of coffee,"

and at this quiet coffee bar a Jewish-looking man was standing. After a long while, he took an old-fashioned razor from his pocket and slashed his throat.

"This was Vienna today," he concluded, "now a part of the German Reich."<sup>75</sup>

The multiple-point broadcasts that originated in Europe during the Anschluss crisis soon became common fare in radio news reporting. CBS far outclassed any other American network during the five days of the German annexation of Austria. Quite soon, NBC would also successfully attempt its own multiple-point news show from Europe. Murrow returned to London knowing that the success of any future radio reporting would depend upon a "solid news organization," and not, as was the case during the Anschluss, upon last minute use of print journalists.

"Now that we have shown what we can do," Murrow told White,

"I am going to get some boys together. Things are popping over here."<sup>76</sup>

Murrow was flushed with excitement. He knew his first reporting efforts were well-received by his peers in New York. He took special pride in H. B. Kaltenborn's cable praising his "fine eye for detail, shadow and substance."<sup>77</sup> His Vienna broadcasts were prototypes of his future reporting style. He was firmly convinced that he could now concentrate on individuals caught up "in the fluctuations of history." "We can transport whole masses of people to a scene if the language used reflects the moment."<sup>78</sup>

At CBS headquarters in New York, there was little doubt Edward R. Murrow was now much more than a facilitator of "overseas talks." "His career as a reporter has now begun," White noted. "I imagine he will have a great deal to do in the future."<sup>79</sup>

By the beginning of June 1938, another troublesome specter was haunting Europe. Hitler was now turning his attention further east, toward Czechoslovakia and the "persecuted Germans of the Sudentenland." "If there is any trouble over here," Murrow wrote White, "I, for one, intend to be watching it."<sup>80</sup>

Radio journalism had finally come of age, as Paul White noted during the Anschluss crisis. The great war that was now coming would provide this newly-mature form

of reporting its big chance. For the thirty year old Murrow, the next seven years in London marked the emotional and professional highpoint of his life.



## CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>In 1957 CBS was considering a documentary on the growth of broadcast journalism. The program was researched by network staffers but never received final production approval by Paley. Tentatively titled, "20 Years of Broadcast Journalism," the file contains valuable research material: clippings, scripts, memoranda, letters. The quote used comes from an unsigned letter to the editor of The Detroit News, August 11, 1932.

<sup>2</sup>The New York Times, March 17, 1931, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Frank A. Arnold, Broadcast Advertising: The Fourth Dimension (New York: John Wiley, 1931), p. 76, quoting a speech given by David Sarnoff, President of NBC, in 1930.

<sup>4</sup>"The Future of Radio Programming," Radio Dealer, October 3, 1922, p. 12. The author of the above article identified himself as "Station manager, Boston."

<sup>5</sup>The Detroit News, August 19, 1920, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>The Detroit News, August 21, 1920, p. 28. The news article noted how "Mighty station 8MK stunned the world in its first news broadcast."

<sup>7</sup>Letter from S. Bremmer to Detroit News Editor, September 7, 1920, "20 Years of Broadcast Journalism" File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>8</sup>"How Managers View Radio News," Radio Digest, November 11, 1925, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>"New Developments in Audience Habits," Radio Digest, November 11, 1925, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup>Arnold, Broadcast Advertising, p. 173.

<sup>11</sup>William S. Paley wrote the first CBS promotional booklet that was sent to prospective network affiliates. The above quote is taken from a copy of that booklet, located in the CBS Publicity File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>"What You Can Expect From CBS," a promotional leaflet circulated by CBS in November, 1927, CBS Publicity File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>15</sup>"Future Programming Needs," a promotional leaflet circulated by CBS in 1928, CBS Publicity File A, Murrow Papers. CBS public relations releases were very honest about the direction the network planned to take in terms of future radio programming. Since they were designed to attract network customers--both affiliates and advertisers--they had to detail the precise direction, and policies, of future radio programming.

<sup>16</sup>Federal Radio Commission, First Annual Report (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>American Newspaper Publishers Association Bulletin, February, 1928, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup>American Newspaper Publishers Association Bulletin, March 30, 1928, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup>Letter from William S. Paley to Executive Committee, American Newspaper Publishers Association, June 11, 1928, "20 Years of Broadcast Journalism File," Murrow Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Letter from Sherman Kent to William S. Paley, July 28, 1928, Program File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Letter from William S. Paley to Paul W. White, September 15, 1930, Program File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>23</sup>American Newspaper Publishers Association Bulletin, April 11, 1931, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup>Letter from Paul White to Edward Klauber, November 1, 1932, Program File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. CBS also sent out promotional leaflets to its affiliates promising "massive, in-depth coverage of the coming election," CBS Publicity File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Variety, November 10, 1932, p. 31. Variety's radio columnist praised the CBS coverage "as the most comprehensive radio news effort to date."

<sup>27</sup>Proceedings of the 1933 ANPA Convention, May 9, 1933, pp. 45-67. The convention debate was dominated by the acrimonious debate over the future of radio news.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>29</sup>Letter from Edward Harris to Edward Klauber, June 17, 1933, Program File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Letter from Paul White to William S. Paley, July 1, 1933, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Memorandum from Paul White to Edward Klauber, July 21, 1933, Program File B, Murrow Papers. White added that he was "certain that we will be able to stay within the set budget."

<sup>34</sup>"News--From CBS to You," CBS promotional leaflet, CBS Publicity File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Letter from Paul White to William S. Paley, January 13, 1933, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>38</sup>Memorandum from Paul White to William S. Paley, November 12, 1933, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., White added in a postscript that "Kaltenborn has the reputation for being a rather head-strong man, so we will have to treat him with kid gloves."

<sup>40</sup>Letter from KUBV, San Francisco, to Paul White, December 11, 1933, Letters to CBS News File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Letter from WJNB, Newark, to Paul White, January 10, 1934, Letters to CBS News File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>42</sup>Letter from Paul White to Edward Klauber, n.d., Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Letter from Reginald Barons to ERM, October 1, 1955, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Letter from Paul White to ERM, January 22, 1942, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>45</sup>A. A. Schecter, I Live On Air (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1941), p. 217. Schecter's memoir of his "struggle to bring a new kind of news to Americans," is fascinating, for it accurately details how NBC felt about news. It also includes some fine photographs of NBC newsmen in action.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>47</sup>Paul W. White, News on the Air (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1947), p. 37. White loathed the NBC news organization and refused to speak with Schecter.

<sup>48</sup>At CBS, however, there was a limited attempt made to cover the Spanish Civil War. Kaltenborn was sent to Spain in September, 1936 and revisited Spain five more times. Most of his reporting was done from the French-Spanish border where he provided coverage of some fierce fighting, Erik Barnouw, The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, Volume II, 1933-1953 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 74-75. A thorough study of Kaltenborn's radio commentaries can be found in Giraud Chester's unpublished doctoral

dissertation, "The Radio Commentaries of H. V. Kaltenborn: A Case Study in Persuasion" (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1947).

<sup>49</sup>Schechter, I Live On Air, p. 87.

<sup>50</sup>Kendrick, Prime Time, p. 132.

<sup>51</sup>Letter from Paul White to William S. Paley, February 23, 1937, "20 Years of Broadcast Journalism File," Murrow Papers.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Memorandum from William S. Paley to Paul White, February 25, 1937, "20 Years of Broadcast Journalism File," Murrow Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, May 3, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>55</sup>William L. Shirer, Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934-1941 (New York: Knopf, 1941), pp. 78-80.

<sup>56</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, May 30, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Cablegram from ERM to Paul White, June 3, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>59</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, June 10, 1937, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>60</sup>The Manchester Guardian, June 12, 1937, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup>Letter from Paul White to ERM, June 14, 1937, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>62</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, June 28, 1937, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>63</sup> John Charles Walsham Reith, Into the Wind: A Memoir (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1949), p. 175.

<sup>64</sup> Letter from ERM to Paul White, July 12, 1937, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Cablegram from William L. Shirer to ERM, n.d., Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>67</sup> Cablegram from ERM to Paul White, February 25, 1937, Personal Correspondence File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>68</sup> ERM to William L. Shirer, March 1, 1937, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Cablegram from ERM to Paul White, March 3, 1937, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>71</sup> CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," March 13, 1937, Transcript File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum from Paul White to William S. Paley, March 14, 1937, "20 Years of Broadcast Journalism File," Murrow Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Cablegram from Paul White to ERM, March 14, 1937, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>74</sup> Cablegram from ERM to Paul White, March 14, 1937, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>75</sup> CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," March 14, 1937, Transcript File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from ERM to Paul White, March 17, 1937, Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Cablegram from H. V. Kaltenborn to ERM, n.d., Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>78</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, March 30, 1937,  
Personal Correspondence File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>79</sup>Letter from ERM to Edward Klauber, April 12,  
1937, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>80</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, April 16, 1937,  
Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

### CHAPTER III

#### BORN TO A NEW ART: THE LONDON YEARS

The only objection that can be offered to Murrow's style of reporting is that when an air raid is on, he has the habit of going out on the roof to see what is happening, or of driving around in an open car to see what has been hit. That is not the best way to make sure that you will go on getting it.

Elmer Davis, 1941

Over the period of your many months in London, you destroyed the superstition that what is done beyond three thousand miles of water is not really done at all; the ignorant superstition that violence and lies and murder on another continent are not violence and lies and murder here.

Archibald MacLeish, 1941

The CBS radio network's coverage of the Austrian crisis in March 1938 convinced William Paley that "Murrow is the key newsperson we have in Europe."<sup>1</sup> In London, Murrow was concerned that CBS continue to supply news and commentary from Europe on a regular basis, "no matter what the cost or trouble . . . since people have come to believe that radio news is worth something."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that the network was pleased with the prestige it received from the news operation, Paley refused to supply funding for an enlarged staff. "Do you



honestly believe there won't be a war soon, requiring coverage by more than three people?" Murrow cabled Paul White. "I suppose you are right," White replied, "but . . . until it happens, we count on you. What are your ideas?"<sup>3</sup>

Murrow never provided his superiors with a detailed list of "ideas" for future broadcasts. He was too busy organizing his office in London, "preparing for Hitler's next move." He told Shirer in Berlin the war "is coming so soon, I can taste it, and we have to be ready."<sup>4</sup> By the end of August 1938, the German State Radio was beaming out a repeated message: "The criminal, illegal Czechoslovakian government continues to persecute Germans in the Sudetenland." On August 23, 1938, Radio Berlin noted that "the crisis is now here."<sup>5</sup>

Although CBS headquarters in New York expressed little interest in the European situation, Murrow was sending Shirer cables daily outlining the kind of coverage CBS radio should provide. "We have to be more than scribes," one cable stated, "who do little more than report the big events. Maybe we should be sociologists, not journalists, hit for the little stuff, the details."<sup>6</sup> Murrow told Shirer the Austrian broadcasts in March were well received because "they dealt with people, their feelings, and the emotions of the moment."<sup>7</sup> He felt his own future role as a radio journalist was "quite clear

cut . . . an intention to show my audience how history hinges on people in trouble. People, always the people, Bill."<sup>8</sup>

On Monday afternoon September 12, Hitler spoke from the Nuremberg arena, and both CBS and NBC broadcast his closing address to the Nazi Party Congress. The German Chancellor referred to the Sudetenlanders as "our people exposed to the democratic hordes," and he warned the Czech government, "this cannot continue."<sup>9</sup> In London, Murrow notified White that a "crisis" was about to begin in Central Europe and the network should be prepared to broadcast continuous coverage. White agreed, and air time was cleared for the news division. Hans von Kaltenborn stationed himself at his radio news desk, ready "on a moment's notice" to act as the moderator and analyst of the CBS short-wave feeds from Europe. For the next eighteen days, Kaltenborn remained at his desk, sleeping on a cot when the need arose, delivering impromptu commentary following each broadcast from Europe. The diplomatic negotiations sealing the fate of Czechoslovakia had begun. The British and French Prime Ministers were now "actively working with" Hitler to "solve" a "minor problem."<sup>10</sup>

Since the Austrian broadcasts of March, the "CBS Radio News Roundup" had become regular radio fare over the network. The technical difficulties involved in sending

out multiple-point broadcasts still existed; however, CBS engineers perfected the system to such an extent that contact was almost always on time with Murrow in London. "The engineers know how to get our words out," Murrow told Kaltenborn. "All we have to do is make those words count for something."<sup>11</sup>

From September 12 until September 30, when Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich after having signed the agreement leading to the partition of Czechoslovakia, CBS News was constantly on the air. Regular network programs were interrupted with "flash bulletins" delivered by Kaltenborn and, on five separate occasions, bulletins were interrupted by bulletins. Fourteen full-length "News Roundups" were broadcast along with individual reports delivered by correspondents in Paris, Rome, Berlin, and London. Throughout the entire Czech crisis, however, Murrow in London provided the most unusual broadcast reports. "I wanted to give a sense of the atmosphere in England," he wrote to White after Munich, "to show how little all of it meant to the British."<sup>12</sup>

CBS had a strictly enforced policy forbidding the use of any previously recorded material from being used at a later time over the air. Murrow, therefore, was forced to broadcast live at all times from the studio. He could not rely upon "expert guests" to fill his air time, since Paley insisted each individual reporter summarize what he

had seen. To Murrow, Paley's request "made a lot of sense . . . since it is up to us to filter all of the colored details, the moods and reactions, and form them into coherent reports over the air."<sup>13</sup> He believed it was possible for the radio reporter to do just what the network wanted, and he knew the result would be a more comprehensive, personal kind of journalism. He told White his days were "filled with mad chases around London and the countryside . . . in constant search of the odd detail that makes for a larger picture of events."<sup>14</sup>

Murrow tried to provide a different emphasis to his broadcasts from London. In order to convey to the radio audience the idea that he was involved in what he was observing--he noted in his daily journal during Munich that "I hate being a passive observer of anything--he began to refer to his reporting as "the personal pronoun style." "There is no way I can avoid being part of the news I cover for CBS," he told Shirer, "because all of the information and sights are strained through my own consciousness. I am part of it. I saw it. The 'I' will stay in it."<sup>15</sup> For the first time in radio news, the reporter was participant as well as spectator:

Hello, America, this is London calling. I'm speaking from a little balcony on the third floor of Gridley's Bank in Whitehall. It's just about 12:15 in London. Everything is quiet. Not a soul at the entrance of Downing Street. The usual amount of traffic is passing along.

For the last four hours, I've been riding in buses, going about London, talking with cabbies, talking with doormen in hotels and clubs. And while it may be true that London is typical of England--and perhaps the people I've talked to aren't typical of London--nevertheless I've been impressed and instructed by the feelings I've received. A number of people said to me, 'Well, the only way to settle this business is man to man, and the P.M. has gone out of his way and had a try at it.'<sup>16</sup>

The "impressions" Murrow received that so "instructed" him allowed him to build his report around his perception of the atmosphere in London, a careful blending of small details that isolated that atmosphere in the words and reactions of common people. "I've let these people carry my reports," he concluded another broadcast, "so you can understand what is going on in the minds of a people who may have to fight a war someday."<sup>17</sup>

While Kaltenborn in New York was seriously "pondering these momentous European events," Murrow was using his own air time to render the news into understandable terms:

At times like this, one tries to get information by talking with people. Since things are moving so fast, primary and secondary issues are all mixed up, and one man's guess is as good as another's. Honesty forces me to tell you of my own confusion--a metaphor, perhaps, for what the feeling is in England today.<sup>18</sup>

His broadcasts were filled with details noting the manner in which specific individuals were coping with the current crisis situation. He spoke with and reported about the reactions of street cleaners ("most of whom fear a war and want little more than to keep working"), late night strollers in Piccadilly Circus ("one man looked so baffled

by a newspaper headline, he crumbled it up and tossed it away"), a veteran from the First World War ("who kept muttering that we should have 'buckled them up good the first time around"). He spent time with members of London's growing community of exiled Czechs, and he reported how "their faces visibly constrict when we speak of their young nation. They know it is all over."<sup>19</sup>

Murrow's London broadcasts did, however, include enough factual information to satisfy his network's requirement "that all reporters dig for the hard stuff, too." He devoted several broadcasts to the preparations being made ("often so quietly you can't even hear them digging and pounding") for a massive air-raid shelter system. But everything he broadcast was woven around what he referred to as "the small moments during the day's activities that speak to the greater history taking place."<sup>20</sup> He had come to believe, through his experiences in Austria and now during the Munich crisis, journalism should "strive for the re-creation of atmosphere via the medium it utilizes."<sup>21</sup> Murrow's style, therefore, concentrated on the life which existed beneath the surface of events:

Throughout most of the night, trucks loaded with sandbags and gas masks were to be seen. Trenches were being dug in the parks by the light of flares and automobile lights. The surface calm of London remains, but I think I detected a change in people's faces. There seems to be a tight, strained look about their eyes. It reminded me a little of the expressions I saw on the faces of Vienna's citizens

during the Anschluss. Occasionally, one sees a smile that appears to be stuck on. Faces that don't light up. There is, in the end, fear.<sup>22</sup>

The expressions on Londoners' faces, trenches being dug by the light of automobile lights were for Murrow the "real essence of what is happening here in London." He wrote White that "Munich, as I saw it here, was simply best reflected in what was happening outside of official buildings." He never claimed his reports were "inclusive or even that good." But they were, as he observed in his last broadcast, "giving you a glimpse, at least, into the way men lived their lives while others decided their fate."<sup>23</sup>

Murrow and Shirer agreed to meet in Paris to discuss plans for future radio coverage of European affairs. Both men were optimistic about their careers in radio journalism because of the growing acceptance of broadcast journalism in the United States. When Murrow returned to London he began to send daily cables to New York requesting increased funding and staffing. Paley, now basking in the reflected glory of his news division since Munich, agreed. He told Murrow "to personally select the people you want to work with."<sup>24</sup> One of the first correspondents he hired was a young reporter from the staff of the Paris Herald Tribune, Eric Sevareid. "There's only Shirer and myself," he told Sevareid over the phone, "but I think this radio thing may develop into something." Sevareid was worried

about his lack of radio training and "a raspy voice that breaks more often than an adolescent's." Murrow told him not to worry. "I'm not interested in how you speak," Murrow replied, "only in the quality of what you write . . . I have an idea people will like that."<sup>25</sup>

In a series of transoceanic cables, Murrow outlined to Paley and White his own personal plans as a radio reporter. He emphasized his determination to continue reporting "in a very personal way."

I don't want to be part of any news effort that relies upon the so-called 'experts' to report news. I know that what I am after is a style all my own, one that looks for the news in the personal documents of history. In other words, I will design my broadcasts around people. I know this will prove effective. It has to.<sup>26</sup>

Murrow had now reached a critical point in his professional life as a journalist. Europe was at the brink of war, and Murrow decided his role was, as he told White, "to convey a sense of what life is like for those people living close to the edge."<sup>27</sup>

Radio news after the Munich crisis was finally reaching a vast national audience. In 1939, Fortune magazine conducted and published a survey that showed, much to the surprise of publisher Henry R. Luce, that Americans were turning to radio for their basic news source. "They have given up, in part, the newspaper habit," the survey noted, "in favor of the new medium."<sup>28</sup> Not



only was radio news appealing to an enlarged audience, it was also pioneering a new approach to reporting. "The old newspaper rules don't apply anymore." White told a CBS stockholder's meeting,

because we at CBS cannot be bound by the strict requirements of headlines and inverted pyramids . . . and all of the other stylistic rules of print reporting. No, the CBS radio reporter now has the freedom to experiment with a new form of journalism, one that will let his audience feel what he is feeling at the moment. Murrow, for example, hasn't given up on honesty or objectivity, just pretension.<sup>29</sup>

Each member of the growing CBS radio news staff felt that radio journalism could be successful only if it rendered factual information in a more immediate fashion than newspaper reporting. Murrow summarized this feeling when he wrote Paley, in early 1939, "that we seek to convince people by the way we speak . . . that everything we are reporting has meaning for us as well."<sup>30</sup> The appeal of radio news, therefore, lay as much in the reporter's desire to involve his audience as it did in a professional desire to present the day's news in summary fashion. As William Stott argues so persuasively, radio news served as a particularly successful type of "documentary expression,"

because it joined two methods of persuasion, direct and vicarious. The listener witnessed, firsthand, yet through another's eyes. The relation of listener and speaker was paradoxical, and like all paradoxes, unstable. The listener never could get from the speaker just the information he wanted. Always an insuperable obstacle remained . . . 'These things must be experienced to be understood.' And yet,

radio's limitation became its strength. For as the speaker acknowledged his limits, the listener grew less observant of them. All that the speaker left unspoken--found unspeakable--testified to the reality of his experience.<sup>31</sup>

Murrow believed radio was only "an empty box with wires outside" unless it was used "for idealistic purposes." He wanted to use the medium to translate his own experiences "into terms anyone could understand." In effect, Murrow sought to become the radio listener's surrogate, "speaking in terms that are understandable, develop aural images that are forceful." He told a BBC interviewer that "news outside of the human dimension, that is, divorced from the listener's own experiences, means very little. I want to mean something."<sup>32</sup>

After less than two years as a working journalist, Murrow found a philosophy of reporting he would follow for the rest of his career. He never codified his theory, but his correspondence with CBS as well as his script notes and journal entries, reveal that he was comfortable only with a personal style of reportage. "I look for subjects in different ways," one journal entry in 1938 stated. "And of the most basic of these ways is the search for people's reactions . . . when they're in trouble, or confused, or even noble. In short, when they are surviving history."<sup>33</sup>

On September 1, 1939, the Germans invaded Poland. Two days later the British and French governments declared

war on Hitler's Third Reich. In London, Murrow was, as he excitedly told his small staff, "about to put the American radio audience in touch with events in a world that is about to explode."<sup>34</sup> During one all night session with BBC engineers, he outlined what he thought radio could do. "I, for my part, will try to make my reporting come alive . . . a damn egotistical notion, I know, but an absolutely necessary one for me to remember."<sup>35</sup>

There were very few journalists stationed in London who were as well prepared to report about the British reaction to war as Murrow was. He had been living and working in London since 1937 and his contacts and sources existed on all levels of British society. Fascinated by British society and culture, Murrow became an unabashed Anglophile. "I've grown to respect these people," he wrote White, "and it will be hard for me to be 'strictly objective' when I write and broadcast about them." He felt that objective reporting was hard, if not impossible, to accomplish if one chose to write about "people in all sorts of predicaments." "I don't mean that fairness is out, or honesty or even dedication . . . merely that a reporter's catalog-like listing of this side versus that side means little."<sup>36</sup> White responded in a long letter. He appreciated Murrow's "honesty" and gave his London correspondent "one of the few pieces of advice I have for you,"

The only thing I ask is that you be terribly honest in your work. Admit your biases, let the audience know you are indeed involved in what you are observing. Then, they will come to expect a certain kind of reporting from you. It will have your own style and meaning. Be honest. Be personal. Be what you want. But always, always, remember you are speaking to people who can't be where you are . . . take them there, Ed.<sup>37</sup>

In effect, White was speaking for CBS when he gave his approval to Murrow's style. He was interested in allowing his correspondents the chance to develop their beats "in whichever way is necessary." At the same time, Paul White wanted radio journalism to be respected not only as a vital competitor with the print media, but also as an informational medium with "unique potential."<sup>38</sup> He recognized in Murrow's work, especially his broadcasts during the Munich crisis, "an individual approach to news that is refreshing and moving, even, at times, quite openly emotional."<sup>39</sup> Murrow told White "the war as I report it from London will be interpreted as a peoples' war, and my style will accommodate itself to the topic."<sup>40</sup>

Murrow's decision to specialize in his reporting was a new concept in radio journalism. It made his job even more difficult, however, since he was allowed only about ninety seconds per broadcast. This meant he could deliver broadcasts which averaged between seven and eight hundred words. For a reporter who merely recited summary statements from the government or presented barely disguised and rewritten notices from public information agencies the

time allowed by CBS was adequate, if not generous. But to Murrow, broadcast reporting required much more time and effort since he had chosen to concentrate on what CBS eventually began calling "sight and sound journalism." Each report had to be a carefully worded, precise composition capable of conveying meaning as well as information. "Since my journalism uses an aural medium," he told White,

I can't waste one second or one word. I found during Munich that I have to practice my broadcasts over and over, to the point where they become so much a part of me that I can recite them without looking at my written script. Most important, though, is that I let the emotion of the story's content carry over into my presentation. In other words, the story determines everything. Maybe I am trying, hard as it is for me, to paint images with words. Very often, the image can carry the audience, can move them to where I am.<sup>41</sup>

The metaphor he used in his letter to White was an appropriate one. Murrow believed strongly in the "power of the spoken word"--a favorite admonition of his former teacher, Ida Lou Anderson--as a vital means whereby one individual could "literally transport" others to a scene. He viewed his kind of journalism as a way to inform Americans in an immediate fashion about "what war is going to be like for the British." He felt it could be simply done, as long as the messages he constructed bridged the gap between what he was observing and the audience's removal from those observations. "I just want people to see what I am seeing every day," a journal entry stated,

"and, quite often, what I see can be translated into language that is immediately understandable."<sup>42</sup>

He had learned a great deal from his experiences during the Austrian and Czech crises. He was also aware that he was working under different pressures than those of the newspaper correspondent. "They collect facts, organize them. But I am trying to become, if possible, an essayist using radio." He did not want to "get everything down . . . for it's much better for me to know a few things well . . . to know the people well and what they are enduring over here." Murrow had chosen London as his beat, and the British people as his specialty.<sup>43</sup>

Murrow knew London very well indeed. He was everywhere: interviewing people on the streets, talking with politicians, shopkeepers, ambulance drivers, schoolchildren. Each day, he drove around the city in an open air car. He wanted to visit as many sections of the city as he could, "so I can see what people here are doing and feeling." He noted in his journal, "that war gets to people in different ways,"

for some, it's just a matter of avoiding hurt and injury, both physical and emotional. Others see war as a grand patriotic crusade. And for others it's just a matter of plain survival. There is no one way the British are facing all of this. They are, however, doing it in lots of little ways that add up to something bigger. I am looking for the little ways and want my audience to find the bigger meanings for themselves.<sup>44</sup>

While other American radio correspondents stationed in London reported infrequently during early and late fall 1939, Murrow was on the air each evening. His broadcast reports dealt with the changes he noticed taking place in the daily routines of London's citizens. "These changes are often so subtle," he stated in one broadcast, "that one could miss them completely, but it seems to be my job not to miss them."

Throughout the fall of 1939 and the early months of 1940, Murrow's broadcasts followed the same general format: a brief announcement of any late-breaking news, an introductory statement about the evening's report, the report "essay" itself. Although he tried to treat a different subject each evening, there was a decided theme linking these early wartime reports: the tension and fear that lay beneath the surface of London's outward calm. "It's the feeling I get when I see the shadowy faces in an underground shelter during an alert, and the wet eyes of the man next to me when it is all over," he noted at the end of one broadcast in October 1939.<sup>45</sup> The city took on a special life of its own in "hundreds of small ways," he began another broadcast in December,

and the best service I can provide for you is to show you how these small events add up to larger meanings. For example, over the last several days I've reported to you how the sociological results of this war will be overwhelming someday. 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 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. But if he's caught in Piccadilly Circus when a siren sounds, he may have a waitress stepping on his heels and see before him the broad back of a day laborer as he goes underground. His dignity and image may suffer, he thinks, when he arrives half-dressed and sleepy minus his usual defenses. 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."<sup>46</sup>

Murrow told White that his reports "probably aren't quantifiable you know, the old journalist's trick: 'so many people in the shelters, men vs. women, so many boys, so many girls,' and all that."<sup>47</sup> As a reporter, Murrow was attempting to forget that London was a city filled with "lots of numbers" in order to remind his listeners that he was, instead, "observing life as it is being lived, each day."<sup>48</sup>

One of the "journalist's tricks" Murrow wanted to avoid was a reliance upon official government sources for his information. He knew most reporters stationed in London made a daily trek to the public information offices in Whitehall or at the House of Commons for their material. Since the British government imposed strict censorship on any "negative information," public information officers invariably presented handouts that were testaments to the normalcy of British life. "The newspaper correspondents, and some of my radio colleagues, are taken in by all of this stuff," Murrow noted at the time. "They make it seem as if nothing were happening here . . . the war, in short,



is a bore because all of them wind up at the handout factories of the government."<sup>49</sup> He sarcastically told White that government censors were working "hand in glove" with foreign correspondents, "many of whom are too damn lazy to check things out for themselves. No wonder America thinks things are just dandy over here."<sup>50</sup> An early 1940 broadcast reflected this disenchantment of Murrow's:

My reports are personal impressions . . . that sometimes don't coincide with official information. They cannot be taken as any sort of gospel truth, but I have an old-fashioned belief that Americans like to make up their own minds on the basis of different kinds of information. The conclusions you draw are your own affair. I have no desire to influence them, and shall leave such efforts to those who have more confidence in their own judgment than I have in mine.<sup>51</sup>

Almost every broadcast Murrow delivered throughout 1940 dealt with a topic he thought would have some impact "beyond the immediate moment." He chose topics that could be viewed in a universal context. The following example of a Murrow report was typical of his style. He noticed the effect the evacuation of London's children was having, not only on the city itself but also on the reporter who was observing.

A particular aspect of the war didn't hit me with full force until this afternoon--Saturday afternoon over here. It's dull in London now that the children are gone. For six days I've not heard a child's voice. And that's a strange feeling. No youngsters shouting their way home from school. One needs the eloquence of the ancients, I think, to convey the full meaning of it. There just aren't any more children.<sup>52</sup>

A journal entry Murrow made shortly after the above broadcast noted, "it is hard to separate my feelings from my

work. The missing children held a great deal of meaning for me; the report was better because of that fact."<sup>53</sup> William Paley sent him a short note and expressed his "fascination for the intense interest in human nature you evidence. You are developing an intriguing style, Ed." Paley was so pleased with Murrow's work he told White to "let Murrow have free rein in his broadcasts. He makes all of us look great."<sup>54</sup>

Murrow realized much of his reporting before the summer of 1940 was, as he referred to it, "impressionistic." He would spend hours each day going over his notes, searching for the right choice of words to describe an event. His initial drafts of broadcasts included everything he had seen, for example, while lunching with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the War Office. He noted down all he could about General Sir Edmund Ironside: the way he dressed, facial mannerisms, speech inflections. Since Murrow wanted to present a graphic "over-the-air illustration" of Ironside's personality, the changes in his draft rewrites are indicative of his intentions. The Ironside report went through five drafts before Murrow was satisfied he had "captured the idea."

#### First draft (lead)

General Sir Edmund Ironside is an important member of the British war establishment. Legends about him have followed in his wake since the First World War. He says he has prepared for war all his life, and he is sure he can provide the kind of leadership England needs to defeat Germany.

Second draft (lead)

I recently met with the top military man in England, General Sir Edmund Ironside. He is a big man whose appearance seems to inspire confidence in his subordinates. The people who surround him admire him for his devotion to the details of war. He is the total soldier.

Murrow was dissatisfied with the first two drafts. Marginal notations at the bottom noted: "doesn't tell about the guy . . . what about him? Why important? Rewrite." By the time he reached the fifth and final draft, he was happy with the lead and used it during the actual broadcast report. There were more details provided but, at the same time, he felt the choice of words would "impress strongly on the mind of one who has no idea what a man like this is really about."

Final draft (lead)

I should like to tell you about a man, a big man, six feet four inches of him, big and broad, with slender athletic legs which give him a top-heavy appearance. Legends about him have grown up. His name has a well-rounded sound calculated to inspire confidence, General Sir Edmund Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff and England's number one soldier. He is fifty nine and looks ten years younger. He is a storybook soldier, big, tough, brown-faced, gray hair and a little mustache. When you see him in a roomful of generals and admirals, he seems to be looking over the heads of a lot of them.<sup>48</sup>

Ironside's stature as a military leader, therefore, was described in terms of his "total presence." Murrow added more details about the general's ideas concerning total war, patriotism, and the fact that the war "would be fought much differently than the previous one." The phrases

Murrow used were simply constructed yet, in the end, contained enough information to introduce to his American audience the concept of "professional soldiering." Murrow believed that Americans at this point had little idea of what "total war" was like, and they did not have to rely upon the kind of military leadership the British did. But Britain was at war. They were, in fact, led by men such as Ironside, "whose stature was talked about endlessly by people on the street." Murrow wanted his audience to understand what it was like to be surrounded by the constant presence of military leadership. "And that presence," he added at the end of his report, "can sometimes be understood in terms of a physical image. It is, at any rate, one way of approaching the necessary understanding."<sup>55</sup>

Murrow was not as interested in the leadership of Britain as he was in "looking at the lives of average citizens." He found most of his story material within larger stories. For example, there were many reports in the British and American press concerning the state of British rearmament. American reporters frequently included War Office supplied statistics about armament production. During the summer of 1940, The New York Times ran a series of articles, "The Statistics of British Preparedness." Within this larger story Murrow saw the need to report, in a more limited fashion, one particular facet of rearmament production. He spent several days at a bayonet

factory in London, observing how pre-World War One methods were still being employed by British workers. He left the statistics to the Times and told about an old man, a worker who had been casting bayonet molds since the Boer War, and the way in which he spent his day.

Every day Jack Holston puts three hundred bayonets in small brown boxes. He is the only man at the end of a production line responsible for the final packaging. He has been doing this for over forty years, his hands showing the strain of innumerable cuts and bruises. In a way, Jack Holston can be used as an example when one talks about, or sometimes reads about, the state of British rearmament. He is the only packager in the only factory manufacturing bayonets in Britain. And this country, if she is to keep pace with her enemies, will need many more Jack Holstons if she is to supply an entire army. For his part, Jack Holston sees the problem in plain terms. 'Nobody ever thought they'd need there 'ere sticks again. Guess I knew all along . . . people just keep killin' each other off.' Jack Holston, seventy nine years old, seems to know as much, if not more, than those who kept believing peace 'in our time' was possible.<sup>56</sup>

Murrow called this kind of reporting "using a sort of close focus . . . like a photographer does to make a certain point." The broadcast was intended to convey a degree of understatement: if Britain was indeed unprepared for waging modern warfare, it could be understood, in part, when one knew of Jack Holston's lone vigil at the end of the bayonet production line.

As the war in Europe intensified, the bulk of the radio reports CBS received from correspondents in Europe dealt more and more with military activities. The Germans invaded Denmark and Norway in early April 1940 in

preparation for their onslaught against Belgium and France. Shirer was still managing to send out broadcasts from Berlin, but he was forced by the Ministry of Propaganda to restrict all reports to "information concerning military actions." At the direct order of Josef Goebbels, foreign correspondents, especially American radio journalists, were not permitted to report any news whatsoever dealing with "domestic matters within the Reich."<sup>57</sup>

In France, Eric Sevareid was interested in the state of French military preparations and the political machinations taking place within the crumbling Third Republic. His broadcasts were oriented toward military-political news, and included interviews with officials and members of the French General Staff.<sup>58</sup> Murrow admired Sevareid's work, found it to be "complete and accurate." But in London, Murrow was interested in providing another kind of reporting.

Murrow was delivering broadcasts dealing with people: fishmongers in Soho, teamsters in Covent Garden, schoolteachers in near-empty classrooms. He tried to counterbalance the political-military emphasis of his colleagues with "bits and pieces of life in London." Although he did not object to the kind of reporting being done by Shirer and Sevareid, he was not completely convinced every "News Roundup" need be about "battles, generals, and cabinet decisions."<sup>59</sup>

His reports continued to "focus down," as he told White, "on scenes that are much different than those Shirer sees in Germany." While Shirer was attempting to make some sense out of German military announcements, Murrow was looking at another, much quieter scene in London. "I walked for a long time today," he stated on one occasion,

and many of the streets were practically deserted. There were long services in Westminster Abbey--longer than usual--and the bells of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields echoed through the streets that were nearly half-empty. While some prayed, others attended the traditional fair on Hampstead Heath. In most of the parks in London the crocuses are out in full strength, looking like brightly painted toy soldiers marching through a green meadow.<sup>60</sup>

The day Sevareid reported "growing French military apprehension about the state of their defenses," Murrow ended the "News Roundup" with a detailed description of an air-raid drill in an East End elementary school.

When I watched these tiny children crouch under their seats, their faces filled with fear, I understood what this war means in a way. A small child came up to me, her face lost in a giant gas mask, and told me she wondered whether her mask was meant for a child. After the drill, many of these children could not return to their work. They were simply too frightened.<sup>61</sup>

A report about a Parliamentary speech dealt only in part with the speech itself. Murrow was much more concerned his audience understand the "mood of Commons" on the evening Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, spoke:

His arrival in the packed House of Commons was greeted by that low-pitched roar reserved by the House for ministers who enjoy the confidence and respect of all political parties, Mr. Churchill was tired, his face expressionless, as he walked down to his seat beside the Prime Minister. He rubbed his eyes, whispered a few words to Mr. Chamberlain, put on his spectacles, and began a speech that was to last for nearly an hour and ten minutes.

Before Mr. Churchill arrived, there was an air of exaggerated casualness, as if the members were determined not to display by words or facial expressions their uncertainty and desire for news. It was a fighting speech, full of confidence but with a warning that heavy blows are to be expected. When he spoke of dive-bombing, his left hand was the German cruiser and his descending right hand the British bomber. On one occasion he had difficulty reading his notes. One had the feeling that nearly everyone in the house wanted to help him.<sup>62</sup>

In almost every one of the broadcasts Murrow delivered during the spring of 1940, the central theme was always: how are individual British citizens coping with the war. He placed his subjects within the environments most familiar to them, and he devoted equal time to descriptions of both. "It is impossible to fully understand what a person is over here," a journal entry noted, "unless the surroundings are explained."<sup>63</sup> When the War Office began to cover pub walls with recruitment posters exhorting Britons to "Go All Out for the King," Murrow centered a broadcast around an overheard conversation between two London dockworkers.

The pub was gaily decorated with these posters. And the heavy smoke of the people there circulated around the dark red lettering of the posters, giving off a hazy quality to the written messages extolling patriotism. Two dockworkers were sitting beneath one poster. They began to argue whether it was worth



it to join the armed forces. One turned to his mate, raised his oil-stained arm and pointed to the poster. 'See this 'ere smoke,' he said. 'This is what you get caught up in during battle. That's what happens to your body in time. Makes a body think, don't it?'<sup>64</sup>

In late May 1940, as German forces pushed the British Expeditionary Force all the way up to the Channel port of Dunkerque, the war suddenly became more obvious to the British home front. Murrow spent May 29th on a troop train returning to London with wounded British and French troops evacuated from France. He wrote a broadcast report that tried, as he told Shirer years later, "to convey a sense of the vivid images I saw that morning. Everything I saw was wrapped around the haunting faces of the troops." "The white dust of France was still on their shoes," his broadcast began,

their uniforms were dirty. The men were brown and looked fit and tough. If they were disgusted or defeated, they didn't show it. Most of them were smiling and waving. Only occasionally did you see one who sat staring without seeing, as though trying to remember something he had seen, or perhaps trying to forget. And yet, despite the greater sense of relief, the low-pitched moan of the wounded permeated the atmosphere. That and the hushed prayers of Last Rites being spoken by French priests who rode along with us. Relief and pain were everywhere.<sup>65</sup>

When he returned to London, the city's mood was grave. Although the retreat from Dunkerque was being officially proclaimed as a "great tactical victory" by the British press and the BBC, Murrow sensed another mood among citizens in the streets. He wrote a short report

about his walk home from Victoria Station after leaving the troop train.

The Londoners are doing their best to preserve a sense of humor . . . but I saw more grave, solemn faces today than I have ever seen in London. Fashionable tearooms were almost deserted; the shops on Bond Street were doing little, if any business. People read newspapers as they walked along the streets. I saw one woman standing in line waiting for a bus begin to cry, quietly. She didn't bother to wipe the tears away. In a square off Regent Street a large man, carrying a sandwich board sign. The sign read: Watch and Pray.<sup>66</sup>

He devoted an entire week's broadcasts to Londoners' feelings about the British setback in Europe. After spending time with several families, he reported what "dinner conversations" were like when "constant talk of war totally dissolves appetites."<sup>67</sup> He ran to air-raid shelters when the sirens rang, noted the reactions of the people "huddling together for protection . . . stranger touching stranger without any sign of fear or apprehension." He told of the prayers he heard being mumbled in the shelters, "some of which I haven't heard since my mother prayed with me as a child. But these people seem to be praying for the whole world."<sup>68</sup>

The summer of 1940 saw France fall to the German army, "and the mood in the Lyons Corner House," Murrow stated on the air, "was so despondent that people simply could not speak coherently to one another."<sup>69</sup> By mid-summer, Goering's Luftwaffe began a massive air assault against Britain. The Germans started their bombing runs

over the countryside, striking at scattered British air bases. In early September Goering publicly stated that Britain would be "brought to her knees." London was now subjected to continuous bombing.

On September 2, 1940, seven hundred German bombers attacked London. The Battle of Britain began with heavy civilian losses. Paul White sent Murrow an emergency cable: Avoid getting hurt. Report only from studio." Murrow never answered, however. He was on the BBC's roof watching flames engulf the London docks. He was also speaking into a microphone.<sup>70</sup>

With the start of the Battle of Britain, Murrow's broadcasts became featured at the beginning of each "CBS News Roundup." White told him to extend the length of his reports. "All we want," White added, "is that you get down everything you see." Murrow's assignment was not only to record the air war against London, but "to treat the manner in which the war is being waged against all of England."<sup>71</sup> "I am more of a participant in this business than ever before," he wrote to Ida Lou Anderson, "for now I can tell what it's like to see bombs fall. To see destruction everywhere. And to know what fear is like."<sup>72</sup>

The German bombing of London held universal meaning for Murrow. He viewed the air-raids in terms of "highly individual responses to great danger."<sup>73</sup> In each act of

bravery, survival, or strength, Murrow attached an implicit moral message: the British were not only fighting a war for diplomatic and economic reasons, they were standing up against evil. Long after Murrow had achieved prominence as a television broadcaster, Robert Lewis Shayon, a co-worker of Murrow's at CBS, noted a peculiar ambivalence in Murrow's reporting during the war. "He was often caught in a strange nexus," Shayon stated, "between the role of journalist and that of a preacher, manifesting the religious spirit in his work he had learned from his early youth."<sup>74</sup> The "reporter-preacher" in Murrow, however, was one of the major reasons his work was so very different from the other radio journalists who flocked to London in 1940. "Murrow saw the news as a series of living events," Eric Sevareid said in 1947. "People, not numbers were involved."

He could absorb and reflect the thoughts and emotions of day laborers or airplane pilots . . . and report with exact truth what they were about. His whole being was enmeshed in the circumstances of those days and events. One can read his broadcasts years later and find London all around--its sights and sounds, its very smells and feelings. He was a kind of Boswell to a great city's trial by fire.<sup>75</sup>

The stylistic response Murrow made to what he observed rarely varied: a reconstruction of events through the reactions of individuals under severe pressure. This was not, of course, a new kind of journalism. There had been a long tradition in American journalism in which journalists concentrated on singular human reactions to

larger circumstances.<sup>76</sup> But Murrow was utilizing a different medium. Radio could, he felt, be used as "an intimate form of mass communication . . . one that allows me, for example, to speak directly to people, and when I am accused of being biased,"

I simply remind my accuser there is no way I can observe something happening, be it trivial or magnificent, and run back to a mike and speak blandly into that wired instrument. Obviously I emphasize events that impress me: what reporter doesn't? In newspaper reporting, a writer plays up one angle or another, organizes his story around a key quote or phrase. I do the same thing in radio reporting. But here I use my voice and my frail ability to describe. What, then, is the difference?<sup>77</sup>

Although Murrow continued to build his broadcast reports around individual lives, he began to include more than one such portrait within each separate broadcast. He told White he was following "an essay-like pattern, beginning with a mood piece, then a point-by-point description of things."<sup>78</sup> With the expanded air time provided by CBS, his broadcasts conformed to a set pattern: a short introduction, a description of one individual's reactions, a transitional paragraph leading into a second profile, a closing statement. And within each particular segment, he never allowed his participation in the event to become overbearing. He was simply trying to convey the feeling that, as he stated in one such broadcast, "I was there. I saw and tried to understand this particular point in time."<sup>79</sup>

He chose his words carefully when writing the introductory segment. Most often, he would begin slowly with a detailed description of his arrival at the scene of a particular event:

Yesterday afternoon--it seems days ago now--I drove down to the East End of London, the East India Dock Road, the Commercial Road, through Silvertown down to the mouth of the Thames Estuary. It was a quiet and pleasant trip through those streets running between rows of workingclass houses, with the cranes, the docks, the ships and the oil tanks off on the right. And then an air-raid siren, called 'Weeping Willie'<sup>80</sup> by the men who tend it, began its uneven screaming.

The above broadcast introduced an account of the first large-scale air raid over the London docks, quickly moved into a lengthy summary of Murrow's recollections: a profile of two London firemen fighting the blaze at the East India Dock "as the sky was darkening like a locust plague." As the German planes finally leave, Murrow slows the pace down. He introduces another lengthy description:

We went to a nearby pub for dinner. Children were already organizing a 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 bitters, confessed he had always gone to bed at eight o'clock and now found that three pints of beer made him drowsy so he could sleep through any air-raid.<sup>81</sup>

After several more paragraphs in which the two firemen are again referred to ("this young fireman kept beating his hands against the wall, crying, his two hour attempt

to free an old woman from the wreckage had ended in failure"), Murrow moved to his conclusion.

People all over the East End are now homeless, men with white scarves around their necks instead of collars and ties leading dull-eyed, empty-faced women across to the buses. Most of them carried cheap cardboard suitcases and sometimes bulging paper bags. That was all they had left. There was still fire and smoke along the river, but the firefighters and the demolition squads have done their work well.

And in a small line, a few dirty-faced, towheaded children, holding their thumbs up, the sign of the men who came back from Dunkirk.<sup>82</sup>

The moral message of the broadcast lay within this last sentence. In spite of everything they had endured during one night's bombing, people did survive. "They just don't give up too easily," Murrow wrote White, "and I can write about their fight to live without being dishonest or propagandizing a certain cause. It is, after all, a kind of universal thing . . . survival, that is."<sup>83</sup>

To make the war in Britain vivid to his listeners, to bring them to what William Stott has called "the real thing," Murrow found an almost poetic way of phrasing his observations. "I think I know what the mind retains," an entry in his journal stated, "and it pertains to a described reality."<sup>84</sup> "Reality," as Murrow saw it, appeared in the minute description as well as in the larger, more comprehensive picture. In an attempt to relate what it was like to feel "absolute terror, feeling someone was dying nearby," he compared the sound he heard

inside of a bombed-out shop to "a can of heavy syrup, slowly dripping to the floor."<sup>85</sup> On another occasion he placed his microphone next to the pavement in Trafalgar Square as people ran to an air-raid shelter during an alert. "This is what London sounds like these days," he stated, "and it is a sound of hundreds of feet running to hide."<sup>86</sup> And though Murrow told his staff "never to sound excited on the air," he would violate his own rule more than once. His voice would audibly quiver with emotion as he described what the bombing was like in different sections of London. On the night when Goering sent off yet another massive number of bombers over Central London, Murrow was on the roof of Broadcasting House, watching and talking into his microphone:

I'm standing on a roof top overlooking London. At the moment, everything is quiet. For reasons of personal as well as national security, I'm unable to tell you the exact location from which I'm speaking. Off to my left, far away in the distance, I can see the faint, red angry snap of anti-aircraft bursts against the steel blue sky . . . you may be able to hear the sound of the guns [here, Murrow's voice began to tremble] off in the distance very faintly, like someone kicking a tub.

The lights are swinging over in this direction now. [Murrow pauses between each word at this point; voice again trembling.] You'll hear two explosions. There they are! That was the explosion overhead, not the guns. Earlier this evening we heard a number of bombs go off slithering and sliding, to fall a few blocks away. The searchlights are directly overhead. Now, you'll hear two bursts a little nearer in a moment. There they are! That hard, stony sound.<sup>87</sup>



"I guess I've broken a rule," Murrow cabled White after the above broadcast. "But was too damn wrapped up in everything. Rule just no good!"

To White and Paley in New York, everything their London correspondent was sending via short wave "sounded great." White again instructed Murrow "to play it a little safer," but Murrow persisted in following the bombing as it was actually happening, followed by a BBC engineer carrying bulky remote equipment.<sup>88</sup> When the air raids against London finally ended in late September 1940, Murrow had been reporting at least once per day. He described massive fires, the widespread destruction of whole sections in London's poorer districts, profiled doctors, teachers, families sleeping underground in the subway shelters. He found a way of isolating the terror of those few weeks through his detailed, impressionistic studies of individuals. As the raids grew less intense, Murrow tried to sum up what he had seen for three straight weeks.

No one knows the dollar value of the damage done. Nobody talks about it. People who have had their homes or offices destroyed will tell you about it, but they never think to tell you what the loss amounted to, whether it be in so many tens or hundreds of pounds. The lead of any well-written news story dealing with fire, flood, or hurricane should tell you something of the total damage done in terms of dollars. But here, in London, it's much more important that the bomb missed you. Death has no price. Life does.<sup>89</sup>

The fact that Londoners had survived, had managed to continue living as their city burned around them, was

the major theme in Murrow's London broadcasts. He often conveyed this theme in subtle ways. A walk through the city was used as an example of Londoners' will to survive.

I walked through some of the streets I have known so well. The big red buses roll. The tolling of Big Ben can be heard in the intervals of gunfire. The little Italian and French restaurants in Soho bring out their whitest linens and polish their silver for the two or three guests who brave the blackout.

In many buildings tonight people are sleeping on mattresses on the floor. I've seen dozens of them, looking like dolls thrown aside by a tired child.<sup>90</sup>

William Paley told Murrow that he could take time off and return to New York, "for a rest." Murrow never took a vacation. He was, as he wrote to his mother, "too busy following British troops around."<sup>91</sup>

Throughout 1941 and 1942, Murrow's broadcasts from Britain were devoted to a continued examination of life during wartime. Along with his reporting duties for CBS, he hosted an interview program for the BBC, "Freedom's Forum." His broadcasts during the Blitz were also used by the BBC and he developed a large British following, many of whom wrote directly to the BBC's Director, Lord Reith, asking if Murrow "could please appear regularly." "Freedom's Forum" featured interviews with bus drivers and subway attendants, Londoners' living in the massive underground tube shelters, housewives--indeed anyone Murrow felt could talk about the pressures of living in Britain. He frequently found his subjects in the East End of London

and, much to the dismay of the proper and conservative Reith, allowed them to openly criticize food shortages and "the daily routine of checking the casualty lists to see if a husband or a son was among the missing or dead."<sup>92</sup>

With the Americans now actively involved in the war, Murrow felt his reports should include "profiles" of the service men who were pouring into Britain from "all sorts of places, like Montana and New York and Iowa."<sup>93</sup> He devoted seventy broadcasts in 1942 to detailed portraits of individual enlisted men, "most of whom," he noted in one broadcast, "are frightened by what's coming." He knew that his American audience "would be much more interested in the plight of the enlisted boys," he told White, "than in any mumbo-jumbo stuff about the Big Brass."<sup>94</sup> He followed around a few American privates for a week, observed "their confusion in a new setting," and found he had enough material for several broadcasts.

Sometimes, these boys look as if they are still looking for the corner drug store, or expect to see their old high school around the corner. But for Buck Private Wilson Thomas, Soho looked like nothing he had ever seen before: the sounds and smells of a place his geography teacher once told him about, ten years ago, in Ames, Iowa. Thomas' wide-eyed looks are punctuated, however, by the gnawing suspicion that this just won't last. For the British, you see, have a habit--a long time tradition going back to the 19th century--of posting casualty lists in public places. Wilson Thomas studies these lists, a nervous smile passing over his face. And he continues to walk, not talking to his companions. His geography teacher never told him about that.<sup>95</sup>

Although Murrow's reports were almost solely about British life, he began to take an interest in larger European affairs. By the end of 1942, reports began to reach his office--transmitted by escaped concentration camp inmates--dealing with the murder of nearly a million Jews in occupied Europe. The American media ignored similar stories, unable, as one correspondent told Murrow, "to really put any faith in such horror tales."<sup>96</sup> But Murrow trusted his sources, men he had known indirectly from his stay in Austria, and he felt responsible to "tell what I have learned, incredible as it may seem to someone in Manhattan or Seattle." In late December 1942, he broadcast the first word of genocidal activities in Europe. "I wanted to get maximum impact," he told White, "so I built up slowly."<sup>97</sup>

One of the nice things about talking from London on Sunday night is that one can sit down, review the events of the week. Sometimes it's like putting letters in a hollow log or talking to yourself in a dark room. But tonight it's a little different. One is almost stunned into silence by some of the information reaching London. Some of it months old, but it's supported by a wealth of eyewitness detail.

What is happening is this: millions of Jews, human beings, are being gathered up with ruthless efficiency and murdered. It is a horror beyond what the human imagination can grasp. Let me tell you what's happened in the Warsaw ghetto. It was never a pleasant place, even in peacetime. The business started in the middle of July. Ten thousand people were rounded up each day. The infirm, the old and the crippled were killed in their homes. The others were put in freight cars; the floors were covered by quick-lime and chlorine.

The phrase 'concentration camps' is now obsolete, as out of date as 'economic sanctions' or 'non-recognition.' It is now possible to speak only of extermination camps.

Murrow ended this particular broadcast with a long description of an "open, mass grave site . . . filled with the dead and the half dead. Men, women, children: all of them there." In another report, Murrow devoted a lengthy passage--once again supported by eye-witnesses he knew from Austria--about the brutality of concentration camp guards. "These men commit acts beyond my own comprehension," he wrote in his script, "and, at one camp outside of Munich--a city once filled with music--there are reports of inmates begging to be shot, often as they hold their children."<sup>98</sup>

Despite the dangers Murrow exposed himself to during the Blitz, he was beginning to feel that he was not providing enough "action reports" for CBS. He received permission to leave London to do some "battlefield reporting" in the spring of 1943. "I want to get out there and write," he told Shirer, "not so much because I want to see death, rather to see war as it is fought by men."<sup>99</sup>

Murrow arranged to be attached to a company of American infantrymen fighting in North Africa. He left his London desk to Robert Trout and John Daly. He spent a long, hard month with American troops there, most of whom were recent arrivals from training camps. When he began sending back broadcasts to London, Daly noticed that Murrow "was managing to capture something that we have

missed so often . . . a sense of what war is like."<sup>100</sup> Murrow was, as several American correspondents observed in their dispatches to their home papers, "following these boys around, always conscious of their behavior, writing down everything."<sup>101</sup> Murrow's idea of the fighting he witnessed was that "frightened young people are out here in a bizarre hell-like atmosphere . . . and I want to tell you about them, one by one." He tried to emphasize both the confusion and the fear combat inspired in the reporter as well in the "boys" he was observing.

There were two privates beside the road. One came from Delaware, the other from the Texas Panhandle. One said he thought he knew what this country was fighting for . . . maybe. The other confided he had received two valentines, one mailed last year. Neither one of them has figured what this war is all about. Neither one came back from patrol.<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, he would emphasize details about the North African landscape as if description alone was capable of serving as an ironic counterpoint to his narration of the fighting.

Finally you reach the point of the ridge. The guns are well behind you. At first there seems to be blue smoke floating knee-high in one of the little side valleys three miles away. You realize that little valley is knee-deep with morning glories . . . no trenches, no bayonets glinting in the sun. Just that peaceful valley and the explosions on the hill beyond.<sup>103</sup>

Murrow's intent was to place the radio listener at the exact scene the reporter was observing. His constant use of the personal pronoun was a device Murrow felt could, as he told White, "allow for a kind of audience

participation."<sup>104</sup> Hence, sentences appear, over and over again in Murrow's war reporting, that seek to draw his audience into the description: "You feel a cold, biting wind" or "You know what fear is like when you see a German soldier sitting, smiling against a tank. He is covered with dust and he is dead. You know what it is like."<sup>105</sup>

He noted in his journal:

Anyone who listens to news on the radio has to feel a sense of trust with the reporter. One does this by never allowing an individual listener to escape from the words one uses as descriptive or narrative tools. I stick people, or try to at least, in the middle of where I am at any one time. This is what I am trying to do/say/write about.<sup>106</sup>

Throughout his month in North Africa, Murrow was not able to escape from the more horrifying aspects of the campaign. In several broadcasts he detailed the events taking place in a busy field hospital, "where the sickening stench of death cannot be washed away. Even if you use Army-supplied detergent, that odor sticks to every pore."<sup>107</sup> The dead and dying soldiers were always present in his reports. "One describes them because it has happened, is happening," he began one report, "and death is a daily routine for all of us who are here." His descriptions more often than not concentrated on the individual soldier:

A young British lieutenant lies with his head on his arms, as though shielding himself from the wind. He is dead, too. Near him is a German anti-tank gun, its muzzle pointing at the sky.<sup>108</sup>

By the time Murrow reached the end of his month-long tour with his American company, he was convinced the war could

not be reported in terms of the tactics of Allied officers in Tangiers. "It is about the men, individually described, who are fighting in a war many knew would just keep going on and on and on."<sup>109</sup>

He returned to London physically and mentally exhausted. His coverage in North Africa was applauded by CBS as well<sup>as</sup> by thousands of listeners who wrote directly to William Paley. His state of mind, however, forced him to go on vacation for several weeks. White told the CBS news staff in New York that "Ed has just seen too many unpleasant things, and he cannot forget any of them."<sup>110</sup> Although Murrow recovered his strength soon after his return, he felt compelled to "get back to" the war zone as quickly as possible. "It's not that my being in England isn't important," his conclusion to a report stated, "merely that I feel the need to be a witness again."<sup>111</sup> He attached himself to the American air corps in England and, in December 1943, after "much arguing and pleading," was allowed to fly on missions along with American bomber crews over Germany.

For several weeks Murrow spent every moment with his American crew. He recorded his impressions in one of his most memorable wartime broadcasts, delivered almost immediately after he returned to his base. It was his longest report, "The Flight of D-Dog Over Berlin." After a thousand word description of the in-flight preparations



the crew of "D-Dog" made during the bombing run, Murrow related what it was like to see bombs drop over a large city:

Berlin was a kind of orchestrated hell, a terrible symphony of light and flame. It isn't the kind of warfare that is pleasant--the men doing it speak of it as a job. Yesterday afternoon, when the tapes were stretched out on the big map all the way to Berlin and back again, a young pilot with old eyes said to me, 'I see we're working again tonight.' That's the frame of mind in which the job is being done. The job isn't pleasant; it's terribly tiring. Men die in the sky while others are roasted alive in their cellars. Berlin last night wasn't a pretty sight. This is a calculated, relentless, remorseless campaign of destruction. Right now the mechanics are probably working on 'D-Dog' again, getting him ready to fly again.<sup>112</sup>

White told Murrow his broadcast "was probably the best I have ever heard at CBS; hell, anywhere. I hope, Ed, you are now cured. Please, please, don't do that stuff again. We need you in one piece."<sup>113</sup> Murrow's broadcast from England was reprinted by all of the American wire-services. It was, as a UPI bureau chief in Boston wrote, "simply superb . . . mainly because it was so different from our normal stuff."<sup>114</sup>

Murrow had little time, however, to glory in the accolades from White. He was busily preparing a series of reports about life in Britain, following a pattern he had established so early in his career. Now that the war was beginning to turn dramatically in the Allies favor, he found the British people were trying, "as best they can," to live "with a semblance of normality." He covered

the trials of conscientious objectors at military bases, the night life in West End clubs, the speeches of radical Labor politicians who still spoke about utopian society to their constituencies in Birmingham and Manchester.<sup>115</sup>

"It is as if the war here and in Europe is causing each element in British society to consider the future," he concluded one broadcast. "The war, it seems, is a catalyst of immense power. Things will never, ever be the same again."<sup>116</sup>

Throughout the beginning of 1944, Murrow was actively involved with his BBC program, "Freedom's Forum." At the same time, he received cryptic hints from New York that he "better start planning" for coverage of any possible land-based invasion of Europe by Allied forces. He received no details, no further explanation. But he knew what it all meant: the long-awaited invasion of Europe was getting closer.

Thousands of correspondents were pouring into London during 1944. Murrow's BBC office became a central meeting place for American journalists, many of whom depended upon the CBS radio news reporter for tips and contacts in Britain. They often expressed interest in the sources of so many of Murrow's broadcasts. "While I was hanging around Eisenhower's office in London," one reporter stated, "Ed Murrow was visiting prisoner-of-war camps and hanging about Soho fish stands getting his

material."<sup>117</sup> Murrow was still more impressed with what he referred to "as the bits and pieces of life" than he was in political or military planning. His broadcasts up to April 1944 were exclusively devoted to individuals "just getting by despite all of the privations war imposes."<sup>118</sup>

In late April, Murrow had finally made arrangements for "blanket coverage" of any impending military invasion. Under the threat of military law, he and the other correspondents were now pledged to total silence. As American, British, and Canadian troops massed along the southern coast of Britain, Murrow was there. He was writing furiously, gathering material for eventual reports when censorship was lifted. Security was extremely apparent to every journalist, but Murrow used his time to interview the troops and he stayed away from the official briefings sponsored by the Allied command. "Most of their stuff is useless, anyhow," he told Shirer, "and nobody can understand what they are saying."<sup>119</sup>

Murrow assigned Charles Collingwood, John Daly, Larry Le Seur, Wright Bryan, Charles Shaw of CBS to go in with the first invasion wave. On June 6, 1944, as Eisenhower gave the final order--and in turn released the press from its officially imposed silence--Murrow was on the air from London, coordinating the invasion broadcasts. At the same time, Murrow was using all of the

material he had gathered in the pre-invasion weeks for his own reports. He tried to "set the scene" by presenting carefully written reports about "the tension-ridden atmosphere" in London:

Here in London, people walk around the streets, staring at one another, hardly able to believe what is taking place. There was no excitement, just a steady undertone of remarkable expectation. I almost wanted to say to them, 'Don't you know that history is being made today?' They realized it, all right, but their emotions were under complete control.<sup>120</sup>

In between reports sent in by the CBS correspondents who were now with Allied troops, Murrow described the soldiers he had spent so much time with prior to the actual invasion. He profiled farmers from Iowa and "the cocky New York" teenagers who are suddenly faced with the thought that somebody will be soon trying to kill them." He spent two broadcasts explaining what it was like for glider pilots "to constantly worry whether their fragile ships--ships that will gracefully and silently settle behind enemy lines--will survive the journey." He told White after the invasion that "I saw too much of the human element in the war to ignore it toward the end. The boys did a good job covering the action. I was doing something different."<sup>121</sup>

As soon as the Allied beachheads were secured, Murrow managed to fly over to the continent. He visited hospitals and field aid stations. The misery he saw appalled him and the shell-torn landscape of France

blended together and formed the basis of broadcasts he sent via short wave to London. He described what he saw "as ghost-like, the empty faces of the wounded and the dying mixed together with the agonized sounds of war."<sup>122</sup> His reports were filled with lengthy descriptions of American and Canadian soldiers "in their various states of breakdown, or euphoria, or sheer exhaustion."<sup>123</sup> And in one emotional broadcast--eventually censored by Allied authorities who felt the subject too "controversial"--he told what it was like to sit beside the cot of a dying enlisted man, "watching the life disappear, the vacant look from eyes everywhere."<sup>124</sup> "The war has become a nightmare for me," a journal entry from this period stated, "and I feel everything is coming together as a bad dream, endlessly repeated."<sup>125</sup>

He returned to London at the end of June 1944. William Paley, now himself attached to Eisenhower's public information staff, asked Murrow to "stay away from the personal reporting stuff" and to concentrate on "just reading the complicated news." Information was pouring into London so quickly, one news release after another marked "Of Utmost Importance," that Murrow spent most of 1944 organizing the information, double-checking the veracity of reports from correspondents, and had no time to do any of his own reporting. He did not regret his "leave of absence" from the field. "I need a break," he

told White, "and I don't think I could escape from a responsibility handed down by Bill Paley."<sup>126</sup> He continued handling routine news chores until the end of 1944 when John Daly took over. In November, Murrow returned to the air with a "mood report" about London. It was as if he wanted to convey to his audience how the passage of time had "made its mark on this city,"

since you have been exposed to a lot of information about battles and politics, you may have forgotten London itself. There is a dim light here now. And when I leave this studio tonight I shall walk up a street where there is light. You come to know a street pretty well in five and a half years--the holes in the wooden paving blocks where the incendiaries burnt themselves out, the synagogue on the right, with the placard that has defied four winters. Tonight, there will be a little street light just near there, and I shall be able to read the legend: 'Blessed is he whose conscience has not condemned him and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord.' It is a street where in '40 and '41 the fires made the raindrops on the windows look like drops of blood on a mirror. It is an unimportant street where friends died.<sup>127</sup>

In 1945, Murrow requested a few weeks of vacation, claiming he was "too tired to go on." He returned to his work soon after, however, and once again was attached to American forces, this time with Patton's Third Army on its way to Germany. He broadcast very little during his tenure with Patton, using his time to send short dispatches back to London. As German forces retreated in April 1945, Murrow found he was "totally incapable" of writing and speaking about the horrors I have seen of late." His only

means of maintaining his "sanity" was to provide CBS with a continuous supply of rewritten announcements. In mid-April, he entered Buchenwald concentration camp, four miles outside of Weimar. He could no longer be silent. Although his report was not delivered until he flew back to London, it had an immediacy that caused several staff engineers in the cramped BBC studio to weep aloud. Its content had the same impact on the reporter:

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 the Germans have done, now is a good time to switch off the radio, for I propose to tell you of Buchenwald.

Murrow's voice, carried live from London, was audibly breaking. He described his entrance into the camp.

And now, let me tell you 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 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 ploughing.

When I reached the center of a barracks, a man came and said, 'You remember me, I'm Peter Zenkl, one-time mayor of Prague.' I remembered him, but did not recognize him. I asked him how many men had died in that building . . . he called the doctor, we inspected his records. They were only names in a little black book.

And 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 and showed

me his arm, tattooed. D-6030, it was. An elderly man standing beside me said, 'The children, enemies of the state.'

The remainder of the report was a catalog of horror: the crematoria, the bodies stacked in a ten foot high pile, the emaciated look of the survivors, the great cavernous hole the Germans had dumped bodies in as "production was stepped up." By the time Murrow reached the conclusion of his broadcast he was determined that his audience understand.

As I left the camp, a Frenchman . . . 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 for at least two years, and after that--you don't want to write anymore.'

I pray you to believe what I have said about Buchenwald. I have reported what I have seen 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 around was pleasant to the eye, and the Germans were well-fed and well dressed. If I have offended you by this rather mild account, I'm not in the least sorry.<sup>128</sup>

The Buchenwald broadcast was one of the last reports Murrow delivered from London. It was, as he noted in his journal, "the summation of the war for me . . . the final agony."<sup>129</sup>

After the German surrender in May 1945, Murrow turned over his London post to Charles Collingwood. He made his farewells to the BBC engineers he had worked with for so many years. Paley told him that "a secure future now lay ahead" as a major broadcast journalist.



Although Murrow was exhausted from his assignments, he looked forward to his return to America. As he was preparing to make his final broadcast, a young CBS staff member asked him what the war had meant to "all of us." "I can't answer for 'all of us,'" Murrow replied, "but I saw lots of people . . . saw them as individuals, saw them when they acted nobly and base. I tried to look closely. And what I saw was human reaction to hard times."<sup>130</sup>

The war had forced American broadcasting to deal with journalism as a serious and important function. To Murrow, a journalist who had seen the birth of specialized coverage in Austria and during the Munich crisis, the future of broadcast reporting would be, as he told William Paley, "in the hands of men who direct this industry. Somehow, we have to keep the promise alive. People have listened, have been informed."<sup>131</sup> For nearly eight years, Edward R. Murrow had contributed to the promise and had, in the words of one radio critic, "made the war a study of humanity in crisis."<sup>132</sup>

### CHAPTER III FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Letter from William Paley to Paul White, April 19, 1938, Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, March 28, 1938, Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Cable from Paul White to ERM, April 19, 1938, Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Letter from ERM to William L. Shirer, July 29, 1938, Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Cable from William L. Shirer to ERM, August 23, 1938, Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>6</sup>Cable from ERM to William L. Shirer, August 20, 1938, Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Cable from ERM to William L. Shirer, August 21, 1938, Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Cable from ERM to William L. Shirer, August 22, 1938, Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Cable from William L. Shirer to ERM, September 12, 1938, Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Letter from ERM to H. V. Kaltenborn, September 11, 1938, Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>12</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, October 3, 1938, Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, October 10, 1938, Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Letter from ERM to William L. Shirer, October 5, 1938, Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>16</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 16, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>17</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 18, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>18</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 19, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>19</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 20, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>20</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 21, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>21</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 28, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 30, 1938, Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Letter from William Paley to ERM, October 7, 1938, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Letter from ERM to Eric Sevareid, October 22, 1938, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Cable from ERM to Paul White and William Paley, November 2, 1938, Cable File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>"America's New Journalism Habits," Fortune, January 1939, pp. 31-34.

<sup>29</sup>Speech given by Paul White to CBS Stockholders, February 12, 1939, CBS Corporation File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Letter from ERM to William Paley, January 10, 1939, Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>31</sup>William Stott, Documentary Expressionism and Thirties America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 90.

<sup>32</sup>BBC broadcast, "The Foreign Press," November 22, 1939, Interview File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>33</sup>ERM Daily Journal, September 10, 1938, Personal Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Memorandum from ERM to CBS Staff: London, September 1, 1939, Program File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>35</sup>ERM Daily Journal, September 4, 1939, Personal Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, October 12, 1939, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Letter from Paul White to ERM, October 19, 1939, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>38</sup>Letter from Paul White to ERM, October 21, 1939, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Letter from Paul White to William Paley, November 5, 1939, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>40</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, November 16, 1939, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>ERM Daily Journal, December 10, 1939, Personal Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, December 22, 1939, Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>44</sup>ERM Daily Journal, September 11, 1940, Personal Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>45</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," October 15, 1939, Transcript File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>46</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," December 30, 1939, Transcript File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, January 3, 1940, Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Letter from ERM to William Paley, January 11, 1940, Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>50</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, January 16, 1940, Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>51</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," January 13, 1940, Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>52</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," March 11, 1940, Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>53</sup>ERM Daily Journal, March 14, 1940, Personal Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Letter from William Paley to ERM, March 3, 1940, Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>55</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," July 21, 1940, Transcript File D, Murrow Papers. Several of the transcript files contain drafts of broadcasts written by Murrow. He frequently wrote at least four full drafts.

<sup>56</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 11, 1940, Transcript File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Letter from William L. Shirer to ERM, April 17, 1940, Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers. Shirer was fond of writing key passages in his letters in code. He told Murrow merely to reverse the meaning of each sentence.

<sup>58</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 11, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>59</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, April 30, 1940, Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>60</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 1, 1940, Transcript File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>61</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 3, 1940, Transcript File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>62</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 7, 1940, Transcript File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>63</sup>ERM Daily Journal, May 11, 1940, Personal Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>64</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 12, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>65</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 21, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>66</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 22, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>67</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 10, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers. Murrow wrote to White shortly after this broadcast, "that, if I had the time, I would like to spend more time with British families, for they present wonderful studies of social life during the crisis." Letter from ERM to Paul White, June 15, 1940, Correspondence File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>68</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 23, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>69</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," May 23, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>70</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," September 3, 1940, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>71</sup>Letter from Paul White to ERM, September 7, 1940, Correspondence File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>72</sup>Letter from ERM to Ida Lou Anderson, September 18, 1940, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Robert Lewis Shayon, "The Two Men Who Were Murrow," Columbia Journalism Review, Fall 1969, p. 51.

<sup>75</sup>Eric Sevareid, Not So Wild a Dream (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1947), p. 177.

<sup>76</sup>George A. Hough 3rd, "How New," Journal of Popular Culture, Volume IX, Summer 1975, pp. 114-123.

<sup>77</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, October 21, 1940, Correspondence File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," November 5, 1940, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>80</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," December 11, 1940, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, December 16, 1940, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>84</sup>ERM Daily Journal, January 7, 1941, Personal Papers File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>85</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," November 11, 1940, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>86</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," November 4, 1940, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>87</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," October 14, 1940, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>88</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, October 17, 1940, Correspondence File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>89</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," October 12, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>90</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," October 1, 1940, Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>91</sup>Letter from ERM to Ethel Lamb Murrow, November 28, 1940, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>92</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," January 11, 1941, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers. Lord Reith also wrote directly to Paley complaining about Murrow's "too detailed" reporting, Letter from William Paley to ERM, January 23, 1941, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>93</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," January 18, 1942, Transcript File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>94</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, January 21, 1942, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>95</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," February 11, 1942, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>96</sup>Letter from William Lawrence to ERM, December 16, 1942, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers. Lawrence, then working for the Chicago Tribune, added that "this war produces too many similar reports; for me, I just remain skeptical until I actually see what people are talking about so much."

<sup>97</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, January 2, 1943, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>98</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," December 29, 1942, Transcript File I, Murrow Papers.



<sup>99</sup>Letter from ERM to William L. Shirer, May 12, 1943, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>100</sup>Letter from John Daly to Paul White, June 16, 1943, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>101</sup>The quote was extracted from an article by Associated Press correspondent, Tony Smith, and distributed to all AP subscribers in the spring of 1943. "How the War is being Covered in North Africa," AP dispatch, May 2, 1943, Coverage File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>102</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 2, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, July 2, 1943, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>105</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 3, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>106</sup>ERM Daily Journal, July 22, 1943, Personal Papers File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>107</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 4, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>108</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 5, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>109</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 7, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>110</sup>Memorandum from Paul White to CBS News Staff: New York, July 5, 1943, Program File C, Murrow Papers. White added that "Murrow is doing an excellent job, but he is paying the price of being where he is."

<sup>111</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," July 26, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>112</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup,"  
December 19, 1943, Transcript File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>113</sup>Cable from Paul White to ERM, December 20, 1943,  
Cable File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>114</sup>Letter from Paul White to ERM, December 22,  
1943, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>115</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup,"  
January 11, 1944, Transcript File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Letter from Edward Samuels to Paul White,  
February 2, 1944, Correspondence File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>118</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," April 16,  
1944, Transcript File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>119</sup>Letter from ERM to William L. Shirer, April 20,  
1944, Correspondence File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>120</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," June 8,  
1944, Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>121</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, July 20, 1944,  
Correspondence File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>122</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," July 14,  
1944, Transcript File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

<sup>124</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," July 16,  
1944, Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>125</sup>ERM Daily Journal, August 3, 1944, Personal  
Papers File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>126</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, n.d.,  
Correspondence File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>127</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup,"  
November 24, 1944, Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>128</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," April 17,  
1945, Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>129</sup>ERM Daily Journal, May 29, 1945, Personal  
Papers File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Letter from ERM to William Paley, June 11, 1945,  
Correspondence File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>132</sup>"America Listens to Murrow," Variety, August 21,  
1945, p. 7.

## CHAPTER IV

### A NEW FORUM: CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country . . . . Yet panics in some cases have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and they bring men and things to light which might have otherwise lain forever undiscovered. They sift out the hidden thoughts of men and hold them up to the public eye.

Thomas Paine, The Crisis,  
Number I

The documentary idea, after all, demands no more than that the affairs of our time shall be brought to the screen in any fashion which strikes the imagination and makes observation a little richer than it was. At one level the vision may be journalistic; at another it may rise to poetry and drama.

John Grierson, 1939

"I am amazed at how this business has grown,"  
Murrow observed in a speech about broadcasting in 1945.  
"In a very short time, what we all do in broadcast journalism has come to be valued by millions of people."<sup>1</sup> When  
Murrow returned to the United States after the war, he was  
hailed by both his network and the public. CBS News won  
nearly every major award for its coverage of the war

including the Peabody Award for "Excellence in Reporting." Murrow was cited by the Peabody Committee as "one who has done more for a new craft than any other practitioner."<sup>2</sup> He expected to return to broadcasting as soon as possible, "perhaps as a commentator," he told White. But William Paley had other plans for Murrow. "I have decided to elevate you to the executive level," Paley wrote to Murrow in a lengthy memorandum, "because I think you will fit right in as a decision-maker in broadcasting."<sup>3</sup> "I guess I better accept," Murrow responded. "But I don't guarantee I'll like being a boss."<sup>4</sup>

For the next eighteen months, Murrow spent one of the most unhappy periods in his life with CBS. He was now working along with sponsors who wanted to underwrite further network news productions as well as "taking on the burden of hiring and firing." The Campbell Soup Company put up over one million dollars for a weekly news and commentary program. Murrow was responsible for seeing to the organization of the show and arranging further corporate sponsorship. "God, how I hated this stuff," he wrote soon after. "The worst place for a former reporter is the board room."<sup>5</sup>

As a CBS vice-president, Murrow saw how the network was devoting more and more time to commercially sponsored entertainment programming. Paley's plans included a much greater emphasis upon "shows that will sell."<sup>6</sup>

Although news personnel consistently asked for expanded news and commentary programs, Paley was anxious to "make CBS the number one network in the nation."<sup>7</sup> Murrow pleaded for his former colleagues in the news division. "We can't give up the prestige we earned before and during the war," he wrote Paley, "because now, more than ever, the public is hungering for solid news programs."<sup>8</sup> After Murrow managed to arrange commercial sponsorship of a daily radio news show, Paley relented. The "CBS Radio News Roundup," a program concept that gained so much prominence in the war, was, by the spring of 1946, a regular part of the evening radio schedule. Murrow was not, however, doing any reporting.

Throughout 1946, Murrow pushed for, and was granted, permission to begin a variety of radio news and commentary programs. He formed a documentary unit and assigned it to special news projects. He was the motivating force behind "CBS News Views the Press," the first news show ever to treat the press' role in America. "Murrow wanted to demonstrate," Alexander Kendrick wrote,

that the press itself was not above criticism, and that the Fourth Estate was often less the public service it pretended to be, and more the repository of the private views and interests of individual publishers and their friends.<sup>9</sup>

In an early memorandum to the producer of "CBS News Views the Press," Murrow suggested an examination of how the New York press, through its gossip columns, "was often a

morass of personal prejudices, press agency, jingoism, and often complete invention." The reaction of the press was violent. The New York Daily News condemned CBS and Murrow as "vicious and incompetent to judge how the real press works," while the New York Sun saw in the CBS press reviews the sinister hand of "the Communist Party line."<sup>10</sup> The network hierarchy at CBS was not pleased with Murrow's programming ideas, especially the publicity received by "CBS News Views the Press." Paley grew alarmed when the Hearst newspaper chain began to criticize "any radio programs, in the guise of news shows, that seek to criticize basic American institutions." Soon, right-wing organizations instituted a massive letter-writing campaign to the FCC complaining about the CBS program and its host, Murrow's friend, Don Hollenbeck.<sup>11</sup>

In 1947, Murrow was approached by the Campbell Soup Company and asked if he had any interest in personally returning to the air. The company was prepared, they told Murrow, to spend three million dollars a year on a new evening news show. "I know you really want to," Paley told Murrow, "so why don't you accept their offer."<sup>12</sup> He happily left his executive position and began his duties as "CBS News Anchorman" in New York. He went on-the-air on September 29, 1947. Since he had been away from the microphone for so long, he felt compelled to make a general "statement of principles" during the first broadcast.

After quoting from the complicated language in his contract which outlined his duties, and noting that "this is the type of thing lawyers like to write," Murrow added a personal "interpretation."

This program is not a place where personal opinion should get mixed up with ascertainable facts. We shall do our best to identify sources and to resist the temptation to use this microphone as a privileged platform from which to advocate action. It is not, I think, humanly possible for any reporter to be completely objective, for we are all . . . prisoners of our experience. And we shall try to remember that the mechanics of radio which make it possible for any individual voice to be heard . . . don't confer great wisdom or infallibility on that individual.<sup>13</sup>

Murrow was ecstatic over his new job. But, within one year, he began to grow restless again.

Radio journalism had changed a great deal since Murrow's early years at CBS. It had become as sophisticated as the network it served. The CBS news staff included over one hundred individuals working around the country and abroad. There were now correspondents stationed in Europe and Asia as well as in major American cities. The news headquarters in New York was now staffed by myriad writers and producers and technical directors. "I used to know everyone here," Murrow noted about CBS news, "and now I feel sort of lost; the old days are dead and gone."<sup>14</sup>

Despite the fact that Murrow was the major news personality at CBS, he was now removed from almost all of the reporting duties he once enjoyed as a correspondent in Europe. He hosted the "CBS Nightly News" show, but did not



write the "hard news" he delivered on-the-air. His copy, although edited by Murrow, was written by Jesse Zousmer, a veteran news writer for CBS. Murrow would introduce the day's major stories, provide lead-ins for the news-roundups, and, at the end of each program, "do a think-piece" on any topic related to contemporary affairs. At the same time, Murrow was beginning to feel "sort of useless" as a reporter. He no longer was a participant in the news he was "reading" over the air. One fan letter he received in 1948 observed that "you sound like a defrocked Bishop, Mr. Murrow; too bad you aren't back out in the world again."<sup>15</sup>

Murrow's evening news programs soon won several major awards, and the broadcaster was cited for his "perceptive commentaries on world and domestic affairs." By early 1949, however, he told Paley that "I am not enjoying this desk-bound news status of mine."<sup>16</sup> In the spring, Murrow met Fred W. Friendly, a radio documentary producer from Rhode Island. Friendly suggested he and Murrow work on an album of "aural history," a compilation of famous CBS newscasts along with a narration by Murrow. After three months work, the Murrow-Friendly albums, called "I Can Hear It Now," were finished. Both men were excited by the public's acceptance of the albums. For Murrow, the production and editing tasks provided a chance to "relive some strenuous times I had once been a part of."<sup>17</sup> He

told Friendly that he wanted to "get much more involved" as a reporter,

They tell me that television will soon become a very powerful medium in this country. It's still an infant, but just think of the possibilities for news and public affairs shows. I think I will talk to Mr. Paley and see what he says.<sup>18</sup>

Murrow did talk to Paley about a new kind of news show for television. "It will take us a long time to figure out what we are doing," Murrow told Friendly, but Paley seems to agree that you and I can make the transition to television."<sup>18</sup> Although he was still very busy as a commentator and anchorman in New York, Murrow began to devote every free moment to learning about television. He was uncertain about the nature of news that was both aural and visual. "Most news is made up of what happens in men's minds. How do you put that in pictures?"<sup>19</sup>

Television was still regarded by broadcasters as "radio's little brother."<sup>20</sup> In late 1949, there were nearly two million American homes with TV sets, and the industry trade journal, Broadcasting, reported that over one hundred thousand new sets were being installed each month.<sup>21</sup> As early as 1945, NBC began experimenting with a regularly scheduled evening "newscast." The network believed that television news should be very similar in scope to the popular newsreel concept pioneered by the Hearst-owned "Movietone News" during the 1930s and 40s.

When the networks began to expand full-force into television production in 1947, NBC found a sponsor for its evening news program--a fifteen minute "wrap-up" narrated by John Cameron Swayze accompanied by one-to-two minute newsreel inserts. CBS followed suit with its own news program, "Television News With Douglas Edwards." Since both networks anticipated huge financial losses from their respective television operations, little money was spent on developing any original approaches to televised news.<sup>22</sup>

By the time Murrow and Friendly began working on "program concepts" for CBS in late 1950, the network had a full panoply of entertainment programs. Paley was wary of investing too much time and expense in broadening the range of his news operation on television. But CBS had a very profitable season in 1950, and Paley was gradually giving in to the pressure brought by Murrow to increase "our scant offerings in news/public affairs."<sup>23</sup>

There were, however, reasons for Paley's misgivings concerning any expansion of television news. The outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950, along with the growing Cold War fear of "communist subversion in the entertainment and broadcasting industries," was causing great anxiety among network executives. An anti-communist pressure group called "American Business Consultants" published a "hand-book" in June of 1950. Red Channels, a 213-page book, stated that "it is high time Americans . . . become aware

of Cominform and Communist Party, USA attempts to transmit pro-Sovietism to the American public." The book was offered "as a portrait" of the infiltration being carried on for this purpose. Red Channels listed one hundred and fifty one names of entertainers, writers, newsmen, and directors, all of whom, the book charged, "were, or are, agents of the communist conspiracy."<sup>24</sup> The book was eagerly read by Paley and his staff and, after a massive letter-writing campaign was mounted by a Syracuse, New York grocer, Laurence Johnson, Paley and his newly chosen top assistant, Frank Stanton, instituted a "loyalty oath" at CBS. "We have to be careful what we do," Stanton wrote to Paley, "especially in the news area; these people mean business, and we can't offend their sense of patriotism. Not now, anyway."<sup>25</sup>

The names listed by Red Channels became the basis for a blacklisting effort that permeated the entire broadcast industry. At CBS, several entertainers who were cited by Red Channels as well as its parent publication, Counter-attack, were released from their contracts. The network made an arrangement with Thomas Kirkpatrick and Vincent Hartnitt, both of whom were affiliated with Counterattack magazine, to "check out" the names of all production personnel involved in network programs.<sup>26</sup> Sponsors and advertising agencies also worked along with Kirkpatrick and Hartnitt. Ed Sullivan, whose "Toast of the Town" variety

show on CBS was extremely popular, relied exclusively on the two men for "advice and counsel." Sullivan told his newspaper column readers on June 21, 1950:

Kirkpatrick has sat in my living room on several occasions and listened attentively to performers eager to secure a certification of loyalty. On some occasions, after interviewing them, he has given them the green light; on other occasions, he has told them: 'Veterans' organizations will insist on further proof.'<sup>27</sup>

Counterattack and Red Channels, though they did not specifically mention Murrow's name, warned against the "liberal-left-wing news personnel at the major networks." But both Murrow and Friendly believed the paranoia at the executive level at CBS would pass in time. They were too busy trying to figure out what they would do with television news. "These witch-hunters are mighty dangerous folks," Murrow told Friendly. "I think it best we just go about our business; we'll meet these guys again someday-- but let's get our weapons straight first."<sup>28</sup>

For the next ten months, Murrow and Friendly spent every available minute talking about their ideas. Both were convinced that current TV news programs were meek and dull. In June of 1951, Friendly sent a long memorandum to CBS vice-president, Hubell Robinson, chief of network programming. Friendly attempted to outline what he and Murrow believed to be "the real future of television news":

Ed and I have been talking many long hours about TV. The more we talk, the more convinced I am that television news can never be just a translation of radio news into a medium of pictures.

I think we must concern ourselves with an entirely new concept . . . this is a big phrase I will use over and over again. I think we are in the position newspapers were in before they were newspapers. We cannot merely copy or translate. With a medium to challenge the imagination, it is time we started to stagger it. We must not be content to cover the news; we must make the news. The discussion program, the forum, the interview, as we knew them on radio, are dead. The 'new kind' of public affairs program is part of this new concept. All we know so far is that the industry has not yet begun to move in this direction. I think Ed and I know where to start. This is the first 'theory letter' I have written since coming to CBS. I hope it is the last.<sup>29</sup>

The "new concept" Friendly alluded to was not really new at all. Friendly convinced Murrow that the "best of the war-time reportage" stemmed from the "personal approach you and a few others took."<sup>30</sup> Murrow felt his success as a journalist was due to the way in which the content was handled by the reporter: the more an issue was examined in minute detail, the more an audience understood. "What we have to do, then," Murrow told Friendly, "is make our new TV news similar in style to the documentary approach CBS pioneered during the war."<sup>31</sup> Both agreed on one central concept for television news: it had to become an instrument capable of "transporting people to a scene." There were no precedents on television for what Murrow and Friendly wanted to do. Variety became aware of the Murrow-Friendly "soul-searching about TV public affairs" in the spring of

1951. "We understand that Edward R. Murrow and his associate, Fred R. Friendly, are planning something new,"

and we can only hope that their ideas will be looked upon with favor by the CBS brass. As of yet, American TV has not developed its full potential as a medium of information as well as entertainment. We cannot allow this marvelous force to be used to sell commercial messages and bad drama. We want, and, we suspect this of Murrow and Friendly, to see TV used for the public good . . . as a window on the world of sorts.<sup>32</sup>

Although William Paley and Frank Stanton still had serious misgivings about Murrow and Friendly's "plans for news," they gave in to the two men and allowed them to go ahead with their "program concept." "We still have to watch what they do," Stanton wrote to Paley, "because I believe overly controversial material will inflame our critics. We'll just wait and see."<sup>33</sup> Murrow was given a basic thirteen week contract for his program to be called "See It Now." Air time was cleared for November of 1951. "They have stuck us in the Sunday afternoon basement slot," he wrote to his brother. "I think they feel nobody will notice us and we will, therefore, just fade away."<sup>34</sup>

"See It Now" appeared for the first time on November 18, 1951. The program was the result of nearly two years work by Murrow and Friendly and a small crew assigned to the project. It was not intended to be a weekly news program. Its purpose was not only to report what happened, but to tell what it meant "and explain how and why." Murrow was convinced that a "deliberative" kind of

public affairs program could show an audience much more than a "hop-sotch" race through events. "We are going to narrow our reporting down to the smallest possible unit," he told Stanton, "the individual."<sup>35</sup> Murrow had written up detailed plans for the program, outlining his and the other correspondents' duties. Each half-hour slot allotted to "See It Now" would be broken up into no more than two major segments: Murrow would be responsible for editing and the narration.

Murrow told the "See It Now" correspondents and cameramen, that "simplicity of presentation" was the absolute requirement for any program report. "We are going to show people some of their world; we want to draw them into it, make them feel that what we see and write about has importance for them," he wrote to each member of the "See It Now" unit.<sup>36</sup> He tried to appear confident before the first show, but he brooded for months, fearing, as Friendly recalled, "he wouldn't be able to live up to his expectations . . . and they were very, very high at that point."<sup>37</sup>

"See It Now" began that Sunday with what first appeared to be some kind of technological trick: the studio camera focused on two TV monitors, one showing a view of the Atlantic Ocean, the other the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Murrow appeared on the screen, cigarette in hand, and opened his narration: "Good evening.



This is an old team trying to learn a new trade." He explained the purpose of the program and, in an unusual mention of the sponsor's relationship to "See It Now," he noted:

This program's sponsor, the Aluminum Corporation of America, and we intend that their commercials not distract you from the content or meaning of this program. We are not going to conclude that because we have these powerful instruments at our disposal, this makes us unnecessarily wise or omnipotent in any fashion. You will, of course, be the judge of the extent to which the sponsor and ourselves succeed in this venture.<sup>38</sup>

Murrow followed with a pledge to be "responsible at all times, and to aid the listener in understanding world developments." He turned to the two studio monitors and explained how, since it was now possible for TV to "span the continent," TV news had to probe the world and not merely rehash what has already happened. He introduced a report about American casualties in Korea using a small Army platoon as a typical example. The camera zoomed in on soldiers' faces, hands, and the machinery of war; it established shots of several individual soldiers and allowed them to speak directly about the conflict; the last shot was a slow fade-out of a mud-hole on "Hill 525." The program ended with a live hook-up with Eric Sevareid in Washington and Howard K. Smith in Paris, both of whom discussed war atrocities.<sup>39</sup>

The first "See It Now" program set the pattern for a unique kind of public affairs program. Its subject

selection was limited to a few major topics. Both camera technique and narrative were as simply constructed as possible. It strongly suggested that a new form of program-sponsor relationship was necessary and "wise." Finally, it assumed that larger events often are most graphically understood through the reactions of individuals. "We fully intend to move beyond the constraints of daily journalism," Murrow told Stanton, "because there is nothing less satisfying than the world presented as a series of newsreel clips, hastily assembled. We are going to always take our time."<sup>40</sup>

During the 1951-52 season, "See It Now" pioneered the use of the television documentary. To a large extent, Murrow found he was working in much the same manner as he was during his early days as a CBS correspondent. Although he was working along with Friendly and other network news personnel, he had direct control over program format and design as well as major editorial responsibilities. In lengthy, detailed memorandums, he outlined future topics, suggested possible approaches to filming techniques ("always directly on faces to catch expressions," he told Martin Barnett, "See It Now's" chief cameraman), and spent time pleading for more funds with the network. He continued to divide his time between delivering radio commentaries each night and working with Friendly on future productions.<sup>41</sup>

"See It Now" was well-received by critics and the audience. Despite its Sunday afternoon scheduling, the program consistently drew high ratings. The Nielsen index for 1951-52 showed "See It Now" as "the number one public affairs show in the country, viewed in over two million television homes."<sup>42</sup> The rest of the season was devoted to reports on British politics, profiles of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, training procedures in two U.S. Army divisions, and the United States Senate via a study of Everett Dirksen and Robert Taft. At the end of the year Murrow complained to Friendly about the "lack of controversial material we have featured." He was concerned that the program move beyond an examination of mundane events "and begin to explore" problems not treated by television "or any other medium." There were moments in that first season's productions which pleased Murrow. For example, the way in which the camera caught Senator Dirksen gloating over a recent speech he made, or the pained expressions on the faces of Army recruits being drilled by a tough drill sergeant.

The network was continually upset by Murrow and Friendly's requests for "more money, more time for their series." Stanton, however, was relieved that "'See It Now' has not gotten us into any trouble with sponsors or outside groups."<sup>43</sup> Stanton was always worried about the news division at CBS. He felt that criticism of "newscasters"

by conservative pressure groups would lead to eventual problems with sponsors and advertising agencies. When "See It Now" finished its first season well ahead in the ratings and did not become the source of "any scandal," Stanton, by now a senior vice-president, gave his approval for a new contract.<sup>44</sup>

For the 1952-53 season, Murrow removed himself from any active involvement with "See It Now." Paley asked him to return to the CBS administration "for one year at most." The network was undergoing some major organizational changes. Paley wanted Murrow to work with "all phases of our news operation and, if possible, encourage further commercial sponsorship of public affairs programs."<sup>45</sup>

Murrow was unhappy about his one year's return to "being a big man with a small desk." He did not care for the job Paley had given him. "The one thing I will be able to do, though," he told Friendly,

is to begin to rethink what we will do in the future . . . with "See It Now." I have been so busy with radio commentaries, that I haven't given enough thought to the program. We need to spend more time in one area . . . to get back to a thorough study of events. Less variety, more detail, Fred.<sup>46</sup>

Murrow found time to talk with the "See It Now" crew about "what has gone wrong." By the end of 1952, both Murrow and Friendly decided to feature only one topic per program. "Our next season will be our best," Murrow told Stanton,

for we will be getting away from a superficial view . . . toward a greater examination of detail. I plan to be much more involved than I was a year ago. I plan to invest more of myself in television . . . and will seek out public issues that trouble us.<sup>47</sup>

Frank Stanton was not pleased with Murrow's note. "I am a little concerned with the "See It Now" plans for next year," he wrote Paley, "because I fear any sort of trouble for the network."<sup>48</sup> Murrow was bothered by Stanton's "corporate language" warning him about "the need to keep clean." "I told him I didn't plan on using the series as a pulpit," he observed to his secretary. "But that didn't seem to help . . . maybe what we will be doing will prove bigger than any one person."<sup>49</sup>

Murrow was quite sensitive to criticism implying that he had done little to expose blacklisting. Some of Murrow's admirers even suspected he had been "swept along" by McCarthyism. Friendly was aware of the criticism of Murrow:

When one visitor accused Murrow of not denouncing McCarthy, declaring it was fear of upsetting his comfortable nest that prevented him from speaking out, Murrow politely replied, 'You may be right.' When a McCarthy supporter criticized Murrow . . . and proclaimed his faith in McCarthy's crusade against Communism in government ('His methods may be a little harsh but he's doing a job that needs doing'), Ed took a long drag on a cigarette and again said, 'You may be right.' It was his way of conserving his convictions and energy for the proper foe. In the meantime we kept compiling the McCarthy record without a shooting budget while waiting for the right incident that would provide us with a 'little picture'--our shorthand for a real situation which would illustrate a national issue.<sup>50</sup>

For the next two years, "See It Now," under the direction of Murrow, moved away from its "magazine type" treatment of events. Murrow was convinced that his new forum "must be used" to stir public consciousness. He now understood what the medium could do. It was now, he wrote in his journal, "a question of what we all must do."<sup>51</sup>

In October of 1953, Murrow gave Friendly a clipping from a Detroit newspaper. "Here, read this," Murrow told Friendly,

It may be our case history. I don't know we missed it on the wires, but the Detroit News has been doing a hell of a job with it. It's the story of an Air Force lieutenant who is losing his commission because his father and his sister are supposed to be left-wing sympathizers. Let's have someone check it out.<sup>52</sup>

Murrow assigned Joe Wershba, a "See It Now" staff producer, to gather the facts about the Detroit slipping. After spending several days in Michigan, Wershba returned with "an amazing story." Lieutenant Milo Radulovich, a twenty-six-year-old meteorology student at The University of Michigan who was a reserve officer in the Air Force, had just been asked to resign his commission. An Air Force hearing's board accused Radulovich of "disloyalty" because his family was involved in subversive activities. Wershba brought back a copy of the official hearing transcript as well as several thousand feet of filmed interviews with Radulovich and his family. An interview with the chief Air Force personnel officer in charge of the case revealed

that Radulovich's loyalty "was not, in any way, the question." It was, on the other hand, as Murrow discovered, Radulovich's father and sister who were suspected. The Air Force maintained that they had allegedly "read subversive newspapers" and engaged in "highly suspicious activities." These activities were not, however, specified.

Murrow reviewed the transcripts and the film footage over and over again. He was moved by one particular segment in the film: an interview with Radulovich's father, a Serbian immigrant. The older man read a copy of a letter he had just sent to President Eisenhower. "They are doing a bad thing to Milo . . . . He has given all his growing years to his country . . . . I am an old man. I have spent my life in a coal mine. I ask nothing for myself . . . but justice for my boy."<sup>53</sup> Further research by Murrow and Friendly revealed that Radulovich and his family, as well as friends and acquaintances, were willing to talk to the CBS team for eventual use in a "See It Now" program. The Air Force refused to talk at all.

Murrow sent another film crew back to Detroit to record further interviews. He notified the Air Force and the Pentagon of his plans. He wanted to present "a balanced picture of the case."<sup>54</sup> At the same time, Murrow informed Stanton and Paley. "They are not very happy," he told Friendly. "Not happy at all."<sup>55</sup> The Pentagon finally sent two officers to speak with Murrow in New York. One,

an Air Force general, told Murrow "he doubted if this program will ever be aired." He stated that "Murrow has always been a friend of ours, and that should continue." Murrow just stared at the officer and, as Friendly recalled, "just kept smoking one cigarette after another."<sup>56</sup>

When the program was ready, after a ten day period on nonstop editing and writing by Murrow, the CBS promotional staff informed him that "there can be no revenue allocated for promotional messages for your upcoming film on Radulovich."<sup>57</sup> Murrow and Friendly contributed fifteen hundred dollars out of their own personal money for a half-page advertisement in the New York Times. The advertisement did not carry the CBS logo. It simply noted the name of the "See It Now" program: "The Cast Against Milo Radulovich, A0589839." It was signed, "Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly.

Murrow was aware of his precarious position with the CBS management: by airing the Radulovich program he was consciously going against the wishes of Paley and Stanton. Thirty minutes before air time, Murrow told Friendly: "I don't know whether we will get away with this or not . . . things will never be the same around here after tonight."<sup>58</sup>

"The Case Against Milo Radulovich, A0589839" was a milestone in televised public affairs programming. Through a simple process of editing, Murrow had fashioned a



documentary film focusing on the Radulovich case. The problem inherent in the controversy was explained by Murrow at the very beginning of the program. With a close-up shot of Radulovich sitting in his living room in Ann Arbor, Murrow noted:

A few weeks ago there occurred a few obscure notices . . . and a Lieutenant Milo Radulovich . . . and also something about Air Force Regulation 35-62. That is a regulation which states that a man may be regarded as a security risk if he has close or continuing ties with Communists or people believed to have Communist sympathies. Lieutenant Radulovich was asked to resign. He declined.

At the end, a board was called to examine his sympathies. At the end, it was recommended that he be severed from the Air Force, although there was no question whatsoever as to the lieutenant's loyalty. We propose to examine, in so far as we can, the case of Lieutenant Radulovich.

The camera focused in on Radulovich's street in his hometown of Dexter, Michigan. Murrow, trying to place the lieutenant as an individual caught up in circumstances beyond his control, described the street as "typically American." Radulovich was described as being "no special hero, no martyr."

The remaining twenty-five minutes of the film detailed the development of the case. Radulovich explained his position, a voice-over by Murrow described the Air Force's refusal to comment or to present, during the Radulovich hearing, any evidence denigrating his "personal disloyalty." Radulovich's civilian attorney stated that "guilt by relationship was . . . inhumane and cruel." A

series of interviews with the lieutenant's neighbors in Dexter pointed out the way in which the "case was received" in a town that "for over one hundred years has had no spectacular news stories, no causes célèbres." Each person expressed his or her feelings as the camera tightly focused on facial expressions. One man, who observed that "he wouldn't know Radulovich if he walked down the street," alluded to the larger issue involved in the case. It was a problem Murrow realized existed from the very beginning when he was editing the film.

Murrow: (intro to interview) . . . Steve Sorter is a post commander of the American Legion and drives a beer truck.

Steve Sorter: What I want to say is this: that I do believe that if the Air Corps or United States Army or who they are that are purging this man--and I believe they're purging him--gets away with it, they are entitled to do it to anybody. You or me or anybody. If it comes to the point where you and I are held responsible for the activities . . . of our families, then we better all head for cover.

Radulovich's father and sister were then interviewed. They maintained their right to read "what they wanted"--in fact, both were reading Serbian nationalist literature and had ties to anti-Tito groups in Detroit--and voiced their support for Milo. Radulovich was again introduced by Murrow as the camera focused directly on the lieutenant's face.

Radulovich: If I am going to be judged by my relatives, are my children going to be asked to denounce me? . . . Are they going to have to explain to their friends why their father's a security risk? . . .

This is a chain reaction if the thing is let stand  
 . . . . I see a chain reaction that has no end.

As the camera faded out, there was a fifteen second period of silence. Murrow appeared on the screen. He spoke slowly, looking directly into the camera. He summarized the Radulovich case again, and offered a comment.

We believe that 'the son shall not be made to bear the iniquity of the father,' even though the iniquity be proved; and in this case, it was not.

Whatever happens in this whole area of the relationship between the individual and the state, we will do it ourselves--it cannot be blamed on Malenkov, or Mao Tse-tung, or even our allies. And it seems to us that--that is, to Fred Friendly and myself--that it is a subject that should be argued about endlessly.<sup>59</sup>

Friendly remembered the "high tension" in the control room the evening the program was aired. As the last segment ended, "See It Now" staff members crowded around Murrow. "Some had tears in their eyes." The phone began to ring and telegrams of support soon flooded the newsroom. There was no message of congratulations from the CBS management.<sup>60</sup>

The Radulovich program was soundly condemned by conservative groups and newspaper columnists. Jack O'Brian, a nationally syndicated writer for the Hearst newspapers, stated, "Murrow and his left-wing companions have begun a new trend in television: fellow-travelling."<sup>61</sup> Counterattack urged its readers "to begin a massive letter-writing campaign to the CBS people. Tell them we won't stand for pinko-liberalism polluting the airwaves."<sup>62</sup>

But Murrow was both excited by the program and buoyed by the prospects for "a new wave of public affairs programming begun by the Radulovich show."<sup>63</sup> He knew that the "executive suite" was upset by the program. "Their job is much different than mine, however; and we are bound to clash."<sup>64</sup>

Murrow now knew that he was not merely examining the judicial processes of the Air Force and the Pentagon, but he was beginning to deal with the whole syndrome of McCarthyism in America. The Radulovich program was the first step. Both Murrow and Friendly were fully aware of how "the disease" had infected government. It was now, Murrow suspected, as apparent in broadcasting, too.

Several advertising agencies began to pressure CBS about "the obvious trend toward advocacy-liberalism certain of your employees are taking on-the-air."<sup>65</sup> Murrow's own sponsor for his evening news commentaries, the Campbell Soup Company, wrote Murrow directly. Ward Wheelock, advertising manager for the company, told Murrow to "give five minutes to a good, solid anti-communist on your show . . . a Pole, a Czech, or someone like that." Wheelock emphasized that "this comes straight from the Campbell people." Murrow was furious. He saw the letters as "a direct attempt to influence the news." In a scathing reply to Wheelock, Murrow ended by writing: "Here is some correspondence on our Radulovich show, from people who

liked it. Maybe you would like to ask the Campbell folks to eat it all."<sup>66</sup>

The response Murrow received from all sides about "See It Now" provided the impetus he needed to "rethink," as he told Friendly, "what we have been doing and will do." He realized he must continue to present an impartial survey of events. However, the experience he had in writing and editing the Radulovich program demonstrated that the material ("the raw stuff," Murrow called it) often had a built-in theme. He saw his role as "being the man responsible for finding the basic message." Although he knew that he and the "See It Now" staff could be accused of "taking one side or another," such accusations, he felt, were false:

I do not 'make up' the stuff we use. It is all there for the taking. The job of a good reporter, in or out of broadcasting, is simply to isolate salient points, let the people speak what they believe to be true, and organize the whole mess. The best way to approach the job, then, is to get the facts first and, when that is done, speak your mind. I feel it's right to end a program with an observation concerning what it all meant. In effect, Friendly and I are saying: 'This is indeed what we think it means.' This is a service we should provide.<sup>67</sup>

The Radulovich program also convinced Murrow that the techniques employed in presenting visual news material were crucially important. He began to work directly with Palmer Williams, one of the chief cameramen for "See It Now," on the best ways to film interviews. He wanted the visual elements to "work right along" with the narrative,

never totally dominating the program. "We are telling a story," a memorandum to Williams stated, "and we have to let the story tell itself . . . get in close, let the subjects speak their minds . . . that way the audience gets a clear idea that we are dealing with live people."<sup>68</sup> He cautioned his staff about treating subjects in a context that "is too broad." By isolating one facet of a larger controversy, Murrow believed "a universal message will emerge."<sup>69</sup>

The "See It Now" staff had little time to gloat over what they had accomplished in the Radulovich program. Murrow pushed his staff constantly. He was so involved with his work that he rarely left the CBS studios before midnight. He knew that he was probably one of the few working broadcast journalists who could defy management. While the network vice-presidents for advertising and public relations pleaded for "a softer approach to the news," Murrow was busily preparing more programs. "Few people knew what we were doing," Murrow wrote to his brother, "for we just couldn't afford to have any interference; we needed every working minute of every day."<sup>70</sup> Program ratings released after the controversial Radulovich show demonstrated that Murrow was now being watched in over four million television homes. Murrow called the ratings "my margin of safety."<sup>71</sup>

The 1953-54 "See It Now" season was a period of "sheer exhilaration for all of us," Friendly wrote. "Murrow was everywhere--cajoling us when we got down, writing, editing, sending out long notes about what we should do."<sup>72</sup> The Radulovich program was followed by "Trieste," a detailed study of training tactics in the Army. It was part of a long-time interest of Murrow's to show his audience "just how well-prepared our forces are." Again, the bulk of the program was made up of interviews with soldiers undergoing, in Murrow's words, "the less appealing aspects of training." The narration was sparse and Murrow directed Palmer Williams to "capture all of the grunts and groans, the looks of homesickness . . . and avoid the officers' rhetoric."<sup>73</sup> Coupled with a second program, "Hunter-Killer Sub Force," both programs examined the ways in which soldiers and sailors dealt with highly complex jobs in a regimented fashion. Murrow left most of the production work for these programs to Friendly. He was working under great pressure to complete the final editing of another program he hoped would complement the Radulovich film. "It's going to be another case study," he told Stanton. "We think the subject is extremely important."<sup>74</sup>

"Argument in Indianapolis" was shown in late November, 1953. The American Legion in Indianapolis objected to the formation of a local chapter of the

American Civil Liberties Union, and it was using its influence to prevent the ACLU from hiring a hall to organize its membership. The ACLU finally persuaded a Catholic church to rent its hall to the group. The American Legion was convinced the ACLU was a subversive organization "since it has consistently defended agitators." For the ACLU, the entire controversy centered around a basic constitutional question: the right to meet and speak freely.

Murrow introduced the topic that evening by a simple summary of what had already happened. Both sides were given equal time as the filmed interviews cut back and forth between the contending parties, thereby giving the effect of a running controversy. Murrow's voice was heard between interviews. Palmer Williams' camera caught in one close-up shot after another the tension and the bitterness the interviewees felt. For example, the president of the "Minute Women of Indiana," a patriotic organization, appeared horrified when she complained about the ACLU as "a travesty of American principles . . . with an avowed purpose to overthrow our government by force and violence, as well as by infiltration." Her feelings were shared by those opposing the ACLU: the American Legion Commander, a Legionnaire at a mass meeting of the group. The ACLU presented its case via Arthur Garfield Hays, General Counsel of the ACLU who stated, "the preservation of civil liberties was crucial." Hayes denied the allegations made



by the Legion. Several more interviews followed: each one on a different side of the issue. The closing scene was yet another interview with the Catholic priest who allowed the ACLU to use his church. As in the Radulovich program, Murrow saw in one man's comments "the kernel of the issue."

"When the climate is such," Father Goosens stated,

that so many people are so quick to take the law into their own hands, I should say perhaps, to ignore the law and to deny others the right to peaceful assembly and free speech--somebody has to take a stand . . . and if the church and religion do not uphold these principles which come from God, then who will?

"That was the argument in Indianapolis last week," Murrow said at the very end, "and the controversy is everywhere."<sup>75</sup>

The substance and style of "Argument in Indianapolis" were similar to Murrow's "ideal conception" of a public affairs program. The issue of free speech was located within a particular controversy in a local community. The intercutting of interviews allowed the two contending sides to be heard. And, at the end of the program, Murrow's "comment," short though it was, pointed to the need for further discussion by an informed public. He felt that the success of any kind of "news related show" depended upon its ability to generate debate about public issues. "I am in the position, along with several others," he observed in a 1953 speech,

to make known to a wider public important events. This is a heavy responsibility, and it is one that I don't take lightly. I have always felt that if the audience in this country is simply allowed to make up their own minds about various issues--and

they are given the chance to do so by my medium--well, they are bright enough to do so. This is a concept that goes back to Jefferson: the right to choose at the free marketplace of ideas.<sup>76</sup>

In American broadcasting, however, "the marketplace of ideas" often conflicted with the less idealistic dictates of the corporate marketplace. Once again, a "See It Now" program caused anxiety within the CBS management. Murrow and Friendly never heard from Paley about "Argument in Indianapolis."

At the end of November 1953, Murrow told his production staff to begin gathering material for a program on Senator McCarthy. Murrow was scheduled to spend several weeks in Korea for a planned program on American soldiers in the front lines, but he wanted to confront the McCarthy issue "by the spring." He had learned that McCarthy was "angry as hell" about recent "See It Now" programs and was about to "release something about me to the press."<sup>77</sup> "Now we are ready to take this guy on," he told his staff. "But we have to be very sure of our stuff."

Murrow's return to the field as a correspondent "was like a tonic for me," he wrote to his wife. He took along a small film crew and planned on doing almost all of the writing himself. The final result was "Christmas in Korea," a program Murrow considered one of his best. He followed American troops for ten days, gathered impressions of the fighting and the destruction. When

he returned to New York he had less than six days to edit the entire film. He worked around the clock ("in a kind of frenzy," Palmer Williams noted), and the program was finally completed one day before air time on December 29, 1953. "I invested a lot of my heart in this program," Murrow told Friendly.<sup>78</sup>

"Christmas in Korea" has been generally neglected by broadcast historians. It appeared during the "See It Now" season that featured the series of programs about McCarthyism and has been overshadowed by their publicity. Murrow often referred to "Christmas in Korea" as the ideal television news program because "it demonstrated just how important human beings are as actors in 'the big event.'"<sup>79</sup>

As he had done so many times in London during the Second World War, Murrow concentrated on the human face of war. He spent his time with several Army platoons: the camera captured their faces and the way they attempted to survive the cold and the loneliness. The narration Murrow read as the camera panned over the desolate landscape at the beginning of the film was tightly constructed:

This is Korea, where a war is going on. That's a Marine, digging a hole in the ground. They dig an awful lot of holes in the ground in Korea. This is the front. Just there, no-man's land begins, and on the ridges over there, the enemy positions can be clearly seen. In the course of the next hour we shall try to show you around Korea a bit.

Murrow's voice introduced various interviews with the soldiers. He chose to edit in close-ups of their faces

as well as their equipment. Men were shown digging fox-holes, playing guitars, with bandaged faces and arms. A priest was filmed reading a prayer as the camera dissolved into a tight shot of one soldier crying openly as a Christmas carol was heard in the background. Korean children were shown as being "the real casualties of this conflict"; several of the children tried to smile. At the end of the film, Murrow introduced some soldiers and identified their hometowns. Artillery was exploding in the distance. Murrow appeared on camera and, as an Army patrol was seen walking off beyond the fortified perimeter, he stated: "There is no conclusion to this report from Korea because there is no end to the war."<sup>80</sup>

The juxtaposition of the scenes provided the basic theme for "Christmas in Korea." Murrow saw the war as an endless struggle. One scene would show a priest reading "a prayer for universal peace" and was followed immediately by a shot of a wounded Marine on a stretcher. A note he made during the editing of the program pointed to "the real notion of what this is about . . . action and inaction, hope and disillusion, life and death; all of this is here . . . in this footage."<sup>81</sup> He saw the war, as he saw another struggle in London, as a series of opposing images thrown together. As the chief producer and writer it was Murrow's job, as he told Friendly, "to make sense out of the confusion . . . and, perhaps most of all, to show that

there can be no easy answers, only a lot of questions."<sup>82</sup> In the blending of narrative and pictures, irony, understatement, and pathos were obvious in "Christmas in Korea." It was almost as if Murrow was trying to demonstrate to his audience how difficult it was to reconstruct history in a neat package. "What Murrow saw in Korea, we saw," Variety commented after the program was aired, "for a battle front was brought into the parlor." The headline over the column on the Korean show was Variety's attempt to categorize Murrow's approach: "Murrow's Korea: The New Journalism."<sup>83</sup>

While Murrow was in Korea, his staff began to assemble film footage about Senator McCarthy. They were well aware of the potentially explosive nature of the material. Murrow and Friendly examined the accumulated film--McCarthy's speeches since 1950, his Senate testimony before his own and other committees--and agreed that the "time was right" for a program about McCarthy himself. Although they had touched upon the erosion of civil liberties in previous "See It Now" programs, they had left the Senator alone. "From what we have got here about McCarthy," Murrow told Palmer Williams, "the guy is going to hang himself."<sup>84</sup>

Murrow informed William Paley that the March 9 "See It Now" was about Senator McCarthy. The following

week another "See It Now" program, "Annie Lee Moss Before the McCarthy Committee," was also scheduled. Paley told Murrow "to be careful . . . and, if he [McCarthy] asks for time to reply, give it to him." When Murrow requested money for newspaper advertisements, Stanton refused. Once again, Murrow and Friendly paid the the fifteen hundred dollar advertisement in the New York Times out of their personal funds.<sup>85</sup>

On March 2, 1954, "See It Now" featured a profile of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. It ended with a note by Murrow:

We desired to do one report that has nothing whatever to do with the cold war, with current crises, or with the retreat into unreasoning fear that seems to be a part of the climate in which we live. We shall try to deal with one aspect of that fear next week.<sup>86</sup>

On March 9, the New York Times published the Murrow-Friendly notice on the television page: "Tonight at 10:30, on 'See It Now,' a report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy over Channel 2. Fred W. Friendly and Edward R. Murrow, co-producers." "Ed and I knew that the timing of this broadcast was crucial," Friendly wrote. "If we waited much longer, history or McCarthy--or both--might run us down."<sup>87</sup>

Production of the McCarthy program was completed at the last moment. Murrow slept at the studio and worked along with film editors. He was most concerned that his narration and summation be precise and fair. He rewrote the script a dozen times before he was finally satisfied.

When the program was finished, Murrow asked Paley and Stanton if they would like to preview the show. Both refused. Murrow gathered the "See It Now" staff together and asked each individual "if there was anything you are afraid of?" One man admitted his wife had been a member of the Communist Party for a brief time during the late 1930s. "It just doesn't matter," Murrow replied,

because we, like everyone else in this business, are going to be remembered and judged by what we don't broadcast. If we pull back on this, we'll have it with us always.<sup>88</sup>

"Senator McCarthy" was probably the most simply constructed of all the "See It Now" programs. Murrow insisted during the editing process that McCarthy be examined in light of his own peculiar personality, and not in terms of any "ideological movement" that might have attached itself to the man.<sup>89</sup> McCarthy was presented as a politician prone toward making contradictory statements and, at times, false accusations. Murrow's narration was live and, as he stated at the outset of the program, "Senator McCarthy's story will be told mainly in his own words."

The film footage assembled by the "See It Now" production staff was devastating: McCarthy was shown in Committee hearings badgering witnesses, changing his mind about the number of "Communist agents" supposedly employed by the U.S. State Department, and referring to Adlai Stevenson as "Alger, I mean Adlai." Murrow appeared on

camera and read newspaper statements critical of McCarthy's attacks on the U.S. Army as the scene shifted to a picture of the Senator laughing during the Army-McCarthy hearings. Murrow wanted to show just how McCarthy functioned during his investigation of the State Department. Footage of his questioning of Reed Harris, a civil servant, was played for nearly five minutes. McCarthy was questioning Harris' loyalty because of a book Harris wrote in 1932 about international relations. The camera caught McCarthy's expressions as he proceeded to denigrate Harris' "patriotism" and, before Harris could reply, McCarthy turned to his side and ignored the response. Murrow stated that McCarthy succeeded only in proving that Harris had "once written a bad book, which the American people had proved twenty-two years ago by not buying it."

When McCarthy twisted the truth, or simply lied, Murrow's narration acted as an antidote. At one point, McCarthy stated that the ACLU was a "subversive organization, and has been listed by the FBI and the Attorney General's office." Murrow read from a script on his desk. He noted that the ACLU had never been designated as "subversive . . . and the group holds in its files letters of commendation from President Eisenhower and President Truman." The technique of the entire broadcast was to present McCarthy as a public figure who had on many



occasions distorted the truth. For the first time on television, however, someone provided a direct refutation.

The film footage ended with three minutes of air time left. Murrow requested that he be given time to comment upon the program's central "issue." As was Murrow's practice in previous programs, he found his point in McCarthy's own words.

Murrow: Earlier the senator asked, 'Upon what meat does this our Caesar feed.' Had he looked three lines earlier in Shakespeare's Caesar he would have found this line, which is not altogether inappropriate: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.'

This is not time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent. The actions of the junior senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies, and whose fault is that? Not his, really. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it, and rather successfully. Caesar was right: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.'

Good night, and good luck.<sup>90</sup>

The McCarthy program was coupled with the March 16 "See It Now," "Annie Lee Moss Before the McCarthy Committee," as a case study of the senator's methods. Murrow wanted Americans to understand exactly how McCarthy worked to undermine investigatory processes. At the opening of the Moss program, Murrow stated that he believed the purpose of "See It Now" was to present "the little picture." In this instance, the "little picture" revolved around a clerk in the Pentagon, Mrs. Annie Lee Moss, whom McCarthy

had accused of being an active member of the American Communist Party.

Murrow edited the film from footage taken from the McCarthy hearings. Once again, the senator did not listen to responses even when Mrs. Moss, a diminutive woman who looked totally frightened, denied membership in the party. Unlike the McCarthy program, Murrow allowed the edited hearings to be shown without narrative interruption. McCarthy kept insisting that Mrs. Moss had delivered "coded messages" to suspect persons. When it became clear that there was a case of mistaken identity involved--the "agent" McCarthy alleged had had contact with Mrs. Moss lived in another city at the time of the supposed clandestine meetings--abruptly "excused himself" from the hearings. Senator Symington of Missouri examined Mrs. Moss and very quickly absolved her of any guilt. He discovered that she had lost her job at the Pentagon and had never been allowed to face her accuser, or to see any written evidence implicating her as a spy. He pledged to her his help in reinstating her in another job.

With two minutes left to go in the program, Murrow introduced a film clip of President Eisenhower's recent speech to the American Bar Association. Eisenhower ended his address with the admonition that "every American has the right to face his accuser. He cannot come from behind the shadows." "That was the thirty-fourth President of the

United States," Murrow concluded on camers, "speaking rather eloquently about due process of law. Good night, and good luck."<sup>91</sup>

The two McCarthy programs generated more publicity than had any previous "See It Now" shows. McCarthy held a press conference and alleged that Murrow, "the Director of Talks at CBS," had once sponsored a "Soviet inspired trip to that great Communist bastion."<sup>92</sup> He denied "everything Murrow said," although it was McCarthy himself who provided the entire focus of the shows in his own words. Hate messages, as well as warmly worded telegrams of support, poured into the CBS newsroom. But the one telegram that meant the most to Murrow came from the CBS news staff:

You have fought many battles for all the rest of us in the past, but none bigger, we suspect, more difficult to join than this one. Because of what you are and what you have done, you can say things that the rest of us may not. We are happier in our work these days because of the other night.<sup>93</sup>

Carl Sandburg also sent a short note: "Lately, you maintain your status as one of the best of the liberty boys."<sup>94</sup>

The "See It Now" programs during 1953-54 had an extraordinary impact on broadcasting. Not only did Murrow and Friendly raise the television news program in stature and the public esteem, but they became the first broadcast documentarians. Murrow decided after the first year of "See It Now" that television journalism must be more than "a trick employing visual and aural magic . . . it must

show an audience something about the 'why' of the world."<sup>95</sup> He chose his subjects carefully, always believing in his audience's ability to "sort out the good from the bad and the bigger message within."<sup>96</sup>

Because of his prestige as a journalist, Murrow was indeed able to study public questions that other journalists would not touch. The temper of the times was such that McCarthyism, for example, was totally avoided by any broadcast treatment. At the same time, Murrow saw in the troubles surrounding "the little people" he was so fascinated by the crux of a much larger issue: how was it possible for civil liberties to be negated by a peculiar kind of political paranoia? To a large extent, Murrow provided the answer in his summation at the end of the McCarthy program. Quoting Shakespeare, he noted, "the fault . . . is in ourselves." If the "fault" lay within individual human responses, so did, Murrow believed, the ability to "correct" those faults.

Murrow had always viewed his role as a journalist in idealistic terms. "People should be moved by what they see or hear or read," he wrote after the Korean program. "We who are responsible for one of those tasks are, in effect, trying to transport them to places, and to show the people, otherwise unavailable to them."<sup>97</sup> News was more than just instant history regurgitated "in an acceptable manner via a pleasant medium," he told his staff at CBS

news after the end of the Second World War. Rather, it was up to the serious journalist to set the mood of a story as well as a broad factual outline. "It's involving your heart and your eye and all of your senses," he observed in his journal. By the end of 1954, Murrow had also included "conscience" on his list of required responsibilities.<sup>98</sup>

#### CHAPTER IV FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>ERM "Speech to the Peabody Awards Committee," September 21, 1945; ERM Awards-Speeches File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Peabody Award Citation, "Excellence in Reporting," ERM Awards-Speeches File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to ERM, October 5, 1945, Program File F, Murrow Papers. Paley noted his "gratitude" for Murrow's work during the war, and added that "we can only hope that CBS News continues the tradition."

<sup>4</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, October 6, 1945, Program File F, Murrow Papers. Paley always insisted that official messages be transmitted in memorandum form. Hence, even a promotion was written in the "correct CBS manner" by all employees, including Paley.

<sup>5</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, January 12, 1946, Correspondence File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>6</sup>William Paley, "Speech to the CBS Stockholders, 1946 Meeting," Corporate Business File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, January 14, 1946, Corporate Business File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Alexander Kendrick, Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow (Boston: Little Brown, 1969), p. 279.

<sup>10</sup>The New York Daily News, December 15, 1946, p. 23; New York Sun, December 18, 1946, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>A right-wing pressure group, "Action for Safety, Inc.," sent over one thousand letters to the Federal Communications Commission protesting the CBS program. Carbon copies were sent to CBS. Program Reaction File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>12</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to ERM, August 30, 1947, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>13</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," September 29, 1947, Transcript File T, Murrow Papers.

<sup>14</sup>Letter from ERM to William L. Shirer, November 26, 1947, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Letter from Gerald T. Manner to ERM, February 13, 1948, Audience Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>16</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, January 11, 1949, Program File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Letter from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, April 23, 1949, Correspondence File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>ERM Daily Journal, May 12, 1949, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>20</sup>"The Growth of Television in the United States," Broadcasting, March 18, 1948, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup>"TV Use in American Homes," Broadcasting, December 17, 1949.

<sup>22</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to ERM, January 3, 1949, Program File G, Murrow Papers. Paley maintained that "since we know little about TV news, we better hold back on any substantial investments for time and personnel. It might not go anywhere."

<sup>23</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, November 3, 1950, Program File H, Murrow Papers. Murrow told Paley "that by increasing our TV news coverage we could help to maintain the status we got during the war . . . it's now or never."

<sup>24</sup> American Business Consultant, Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television (New York: Counter-Attack Publications, 1950). The list of names appearing included: Larry Adler, Luther Adler, Stella Adler, Edith Atwater, Howard Bay, Ralph Bell, Leonard Bernstein, Michael Blankfort, Marc Blitzstein, True Boardman, Millen Brand, Oscar Brand, J. Edward Bromberg, Himan Brown, John Brown, Abe Burrows, Morris Carnovsky, Vera Caspray, Edward Chodorov, Jerome Chodorov, Mady Christians, Lee J. Cobb, Marc Connelly, Aaron Copeland, Norman Corwin, Howard Da Silva, Roger De Koven, Dean Dixon, Olin Downes, Alfred Drake, Paul Draper, Howard Duff, Clifford J. Durr, Richard Dyer-Bennett, Jose Ferrer, Louise Fitch, Martin Gabel, Arthur Gaeth, William S. Gailmor, John Garfield, Will Geer, Jack Gilford, Tom Glazer, Ruth Gordon, Lloyd Gough, Morton Gould, Shirley Graham, Ben Grauer, Mitchell Grayson, Horace Grenell, Uta Hagen, Dashiell Hammett, E. Y. Harburg, Robert P. Heller, Lillian Hellman, Nat Hiken, Rose Hobart, Judy Holliday, Roderick B. Holmgren, Lena Horne, Langston Hughes, Marsha Hunt, Leo Hurwitz, Charles Irving, Burl Ives, Sam Jaffe, Leon Janney, Joe Julian, Garson Kanin, George Keane, Donna Keath, Pert Kelton, Alexander Kendrick, Adelaide Klein, Felix Knight, Howard Koch, Tony Kraber, Millard Lampell, John LaTouche, Arthur Laurents, Gypsy Rose Lee, Madeline Lee, Ray Lev, Philip Loeb, Ella Logan, Alan Lomax, Avon Long, Joseph Losey, Peter Lyon, Aline MacMahon, Paul Mann, Margo, Myron McCormick, Paul McGrath, Burgess Meredith, Arthur Miller, Henry Morgan, Zero Mostel, Jean Muir, Meg Mundy, Lynn Murray, Ben Myers, Dorothy Parker, Arnold Perl, Minerva Pious, Samson Raphaelson, Bernard Reis, Anne Revere, Kenneth Roberts, Earl Robinson, Edward G. Robinson, William N. Robson, Harold Rome, Norman Rosten, Selena Royle, Coby Ruskin, Robert St. John, Hazel Scott, Pete Seeger, Lisa Sergio, Artie Shaw, Irwin Shaw, Robert Lewis Shayon, Anne Shepherd, William L. Shirer, Allan Sloane, Howard K. Smith, Gale Sondergaard, Hester Sondergaard, Lionel Stander, Johannes Steel, Paul Stewart, Elliot Sullivan, William Sweets, Helen Tamiris, Betty Todd, Louis Untermeyer, Hilda Vaughn, J. Raymond Walsh, Sam Wanamaker, Theodore Ward, Fredi Washington, Margaret Webster, Orson Welles, Josh White, Ireene Wicker, Betty Winkler, Martin Wolfson, Lesley Woods, Richard Yaffe.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to William Paley, June 23, 1950, Corporate Affairs File C, Murrow Papers.



<sup>26</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to William Paley, July 2, 1950, Corporate Business File D, Murrow Papers. Stanton told Paley he "was in contact with Hartnitt, and he is being very helpful."

<sup>27</sup>Erik Barnouw, Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 121.

<sup>28</sup>ERM Daily Journal, August 19, 1950, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Memorandum from Fred W. Friendly to Hubell Robinson, June 2, 1951, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Memorandum from Fred W. Friendly to ERM, June 5, 1951, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>31</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, July 12, 1951, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Variety, May 14, 1951, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to William Paley, May 23, 1951, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Letter from ERM to his brother, October 11, 1951, Correspondence File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>35</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, November 15, 1951, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff, November 17, 1951, Program File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Memorandum from Fred W. Friendly to Hubell Robinson, December 12, 1951, Program File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>38</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now," November 10, 1951, TV Transcript File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, December 21, 1951, Program File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>41</sup>There are several copies of Murrow's daily schedule in the Murrow Papers. They show just how busy he was; each moment of his working day--which usually began at eight in the morning and ran well after midnight--was devoted to one broadcast project or another. Murrow Daily Timetable and Schedule, Personal Business File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>42</sup>Television Nielsen Ratings, 1951-1952, Program File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, January 9, 1952, Program File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, January 15, 1952, Program File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to ERM, March 12, 1953, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>46</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, February 6, 1953, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, June 2, 1953, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, June 12, 1953, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>49</sup>ERM Daily Journal, June 14, 1953, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>50</sup>Fred W. Friendly, Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control . . . (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 5.

<sup>51</sup>ERM Daily Journal, August 11, 1953, Personal Papers File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>52</sup>Friendly, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: The Case of Lt. Milo Radulovich," October 20, 1953, TV Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Letter from ERM to Public Information Office, United States Air Force Command, Pentagon, October 11, 1953, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>55</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, October 13, 1953, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>56</sup>Friendly, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup>Memorandum from CBS Business Department to ERM, October 16, 1953, Program File I, Murrow Papers.

<sup>58</sup>Friendly, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup>CBS broadcast, "The Case of Lt. Milo Radulovich."

<sup>60</sup>ERM Daily Journal, October 21, 1953, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>61</sup>"The Case Against Mr. Murrow," New York Post, October 22, 1953, p. 46.

<sup>62</sup>"Murrow's Big Pinko Mistake," Counterattack, October 31, 1953, pp. 8-10.

<sup>63</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, November 5, 1953, Program File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>64</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, November 17, 1953, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>65</sup>Letter from McCann and Erikson Advertising Agency to Dr. Frank Stanton, November 21, 1953, Advertising File B, Murrow Papers. McCann and Erikson, the agency handling the Campbell Soup account, was especially vociferous in its complaints to the network.

<sup>66</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Hubell Robinson, December 3, 1953, Advertising File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>67</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, December 5, 1953, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>68</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, December 10, 1953, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Letter from ERM to Lacey Murrow, January 2, 1954, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>71</sup>Letter from ERM to Hubell Robinson, December 11, 1953, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>72</sup>Memorandum from Fred W. Friendly to Hubell Robinson, n.d., Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>73</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Trieste," November 10, 1953, TV Transcript File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>74</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, November 13, 1953, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>75</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Argument in Indianapolis," November 24, 1953, TV Transcript File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>76</sup>ERM "Speech to the National Education Association, December 18, 1953," Awards-Speeches File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>77</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, November 22, 1953, Program File B, Murrow Papers. Murrow was remarkably candid with his staff about each broadcast's possible repercussions. This was especially true during the McCarthy period.

<sup>78</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, December 27, 1953, Program File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>79</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, December 30, 1953, Program File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>80</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Christmas in Korea," December 29, 1953, TV Transcript File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>81</sup>"See It Now" shooting scripts File A, "Christmas In Korea." Murrow frequently made notations calling for changes, additions, and editing sequences on his draft scripts. These shooting scripts reveal how he decided to edit a film during the actual editing process in New York.

<sup>82</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, December 28, 1953, Program File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>83</sup>Variety, December 30, 1953, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Palmer Williams, December 2, 1953, Program File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>85</sup>Friendly, p. 31.

<sup>86</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Anatomy of a Symphony Orchestra," March 2, 1954, TV Transcript File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>87</sup>Friendly, p. 32.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>89</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Palmer Williams, March 4, 1954, Program File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>90</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy," March 9, 1954, TV Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>91</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Annie Lee Moss Before the McCarthy Committee," March 16, 1954, TV Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>92</sup>The McCarthy press conference was taped by CBS. A full transcript of the conference is located in a special file devoted to Senator McCarthy in the Murrow Papers. "The Case of M," File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>93</sup>Telegram from CBS News Staff to ERM, March 10, 1954, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>94</sup>Letter from Carl Sandburg to ERM, March 19, 1954, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>95</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Palmer Williams, April 13, 1954, Program File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, January 5, 1954, Program File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>98</sup>ERM Daily Journal, December 15, 1954, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FORUM EXPANDS

Television can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely wires and lights in a box. There is a great and perhaps decisive battle to be fought against ignorance, intolerance, and indifference. This weapon of television could be useful.

Edward R. Murrow, 1958

The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness.

John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems, 1927

In late May of 1954, Murrow had just finished the final editing of a "See It Now" program about the south. "A Study of Two Cities" dealt with the impact of school integration in Gastonia, North Carolina and Natchitoches, Louisiana. Murrow called the program "a mirror behind a way of life and a new aspect of an old problem."<sup>1</sup> As he finished looking at the newly edited film, he was asked to come to the control room by one of the engineers. Several people were gathered around a studio monitor watching a new CBS prime-time show, "The \$64,000 Question." Murrow was horrified by the program. Later that evening

he wrote to Frank Stanton, asking if "CBS is really interested about quiz-junk being passed off in the 'public interest?'" Stanton replied immediately, obviously angry that Murrow would "try to question decisions out of your competence." "A program in which a large part of the audience is interested," Stanton stated, "is, by that very fact, in the public's interest."<sup>2</sup>

By 1954 commercial television in the United States was earning tremendous profits. At CBS, Frank Stanton and William Paley decided to support production of more entertainment and quiz programs. The growth of the network's national audience created a much wider market for advertisers, most of whom, according to Stanton, "want to get the most bang out of their bucks."<sup>3</sup> Stanton honestly believed that advertising revenue was attracted to sponsorship of "noncontroversial shows." "It's a fact of life," he told Murrow."<sup>4</sup>

CBS management was concerned about the "vast expenses incurred" by the "See It Now" series. Murrow had always insisted that film be generously supplied in order to provide a large stock of film footage from which to choose during editing. Stanton's office told Murrow to "hold back" expenses "since it is not possible to provide everything you want." Although "See It Now" enjoyed a large audience during 1954, the major sponsor of the series, ALCOA, was beginning to lose faith in what its corporate



advertising manager referred to as "controversial program material."<sup>5</sup> "Times are getting tough for us," Murrow told his staff, "and I think we better work even harder."<sup>6</sup>

The McCarthy broadcasts caused a great deal of alarm at the highest executive levels of CBS. Stanton, for example, felt that "See It Now" was becoming a "partisan for certain views . . . leaving the protective halo of journalistic objectivity."<sup>7</sup> When Murrow received an award from the Freedom House Foundation for "Outstanding Contributions to Free Expression" in the summer of 1954, his acceptance speech irritated Paley. "There is a false formula for personal security being peddled in our marketplace," Murrow stated,

and this product, if it be bought by enough people, leads to paralysis. It is this, though not so labeled: Don't join anything. Don't associate. Don't write. Don't take a chance on being wrong. Don't espouse unpopular causes. Button your lip and drift with the tide. Seek the ease and luxury of complete equanimity, by refusing to make up your minds about issues that wiser heads will one day decide.<sup>8</sup>

Paley interpreted Murrow's remarks as a direct attack on the kind of television CBS believed in. "Maybe Bill is right," Murrow noted in a memorandum. "Maybe he and I are on opposite sides of the question as to how we use the medium." For Murrow, public affairs programming meant that the audience had to be exposed to "everything possible of public importance, no matter how frightening the issues

become . . . or how threatening they are to certain special interest groups."<sup>9</sup>

Murrow was determined to use his unique position at CBS to try to influence the course of public affairs programming. He wanted to demonstrate that "TV has such absolute promise as an aid for Americans to understand a wider world." Through his continued participation in several crucially important "See It Now" productions, Murrow intended to prove to Paley and Stanton and the broadcasting industry as a whole that "the public's right to know has always been our job."<sup>10</sup> He simply refused to accept the notion of a CBS executive who told him that "TV's job is to give people what they want: escapism, entertainment, and spectacular diversions."<sup>11</sup>

Roscoe Murrow once told his famous son that "it don't seem quite right, you gettin' paid all that money just for talking'--especially since you don't sound any different than you did when you were talkin' and hangin' around the porch years ago." His son framed his father's words over his desk. "It's good to remember where I came from," he told his brother. "Important, too, is that I remember the real people in America in my work."<sup>12</sup>

Murrow knew the McCarthy programs served a decided purpose. He viewed the senator and his followers as "aberrations" in American politics and told Friendly

"that I want to deal with the genius for good in this country, too."<sup>13</sup> By presenting the programs, Murrow earned a larger audience for "See It Now." He intended to use the series as vehicle "for the exploration of the perfectly ordinary events, as well as the extraordinary people, who contribute to society."<sup>14</sup>

Several months before the Supreme Court's public school desegregation decision in 1954, Murrow planned a "See It Now" program about race relations in the south. Born in North Carolina, he knew the deep antipathies that existed between blacks and whites. "If the south can solve this problem, or at least move away from its history for a moment," he told his staff before the actual production, "it will prove an amazing feat." He outlined his plans to Friendly in a lengthy memorandum, pointing out what "television could do to introduce the country to the complexity of the issue." Suggesting that the film crew "be specific" in its choice of shots, Murrow demanded that attention "be paid" to capturing the "essence of the south." "All this means," he told cameraman Palmer Williams, "is that you look for those images which reveal a greater meaning . . . get in close, get the nuances."<sup>15</sup>

Williams' film footage arrived in New York just as the Supreme Court delivered its historic opinion in "Brown v. Board of Education" on May 17, 1954. In the final editing, Murrow was able to select from nearly ten

hours of film. "A Study of Two Cities" was aired on May 25, 1954, and it was the first television documentary to examine a potentially explosive racial situation. By concentrating on the words and faces of community leaders in Gastonia, North Carolina and Natchitoches, Louisiana, Murrow fashioned a portrait of the two towns that went beyond the question of segregation versus desegregation. Rather, the program pointed out that the South was facing a massive social and political problem and, as Murrow observed in his narration, "is being forced to deal with its past as well as its present."<sup>16</sup>

Murrow's careful editing allowed him to point out how the "irony and tragedy" of the modern South was evident in the imagery of her communities. For example, when he opened the program with an explanation of the "issue involved," he selected some footage Williams took of a statue in the town square of Natchitoches. As the camera pulled in closely, one saw the statue: a black man submissively bowing his hat. Murrow read the inscription: "Erected in grateful memory of the good darkies of Louisiana." The scene quickly dissolved into a shot of another inscription, this time the motto of the Supreme Court, "Equal Justice Under the Law."<sup>17</sup>

The interviews that followed explored the perceptions of various individuals toward race relations: schoolchildren, teachers, shopkeepers, farmers. Each one

revealed his fears and, in several moving examples, a sense of guarded optimism about the future. One black student stated that "integration could be the most wonderfulest thing in the world." He then began to cry as he walked around his decrepit school yard at the "colored folks school."<sup>18</sup> Murrow made no comment. "The scene simply stands by itself," he noted at the bottom of his shooting script.<sup>19</sup>

The "See It Now" cameras followed the controversy to local Baptist churches. Of all the scenes Murrow had to choose from in the editing, he saw "the realization of the problem there, in God's house." At the white church music was playing in the background. The congregation listened attentively as their minister spoke about the need "to implement this court action lovingly, patiently." While he spoke, the camera panned over the faces of individuals nodding their heads in approval or, in one case, of a man visibly angry. The program ended when Murrow's voice-over narration stated, "that these communities are beginning to debate, soberly and seriously, their combined futures."<sup>20</sup>

As a composite picture of the way in which the prospect of school integration was being faced, "A Study of Two Cities" was successful. Murrow discovered the means by which visual realities could be deftly combined in a public affairs program. While offering no solutions, the

program did manage to suggest the complexity of the issue in two specific communities. "Our object is to confront the audience with the issues," he wrote to Friendly, "and they must choose from among the options we present."<sup>21</sup> This was the "mirror" Murrow wanted to employ in order to reflect what he felt was at the "heart of the American soul"--a willingness to consider new and perhaps uncomfortable ideas.<sup>22</sup>

After "A Study of Two Cities" was broadcast, Murrow immediately began working on another program. For many years he admired and corresponded with Carl Sandburg. Fascinated by Sandburg's ability to evoke "everything I have felt lay at bottom about America," Murrow wanted to devote an entire "See It Now" program to a profile of the poet/historian. Murrow took a small camera crew to North Carolina to spend several weeks with Sandburg on his farm. "Carl and I talked for a long time," he wrote Friendly, "and after a while, he just avoided the camera, spoke from his guts . . . the naturalness of it was great."<sup>23</sup>

Of all the "See It Now" productions, Murrow was most relaxed during the filming and editing of "A Visit to Flat Rock--Carl Sandburg." He saw the program as an attempt to "document an American original . . . as one who writes about enduring topics." He instructed his film crew to "just follow us around, allowing us to talk and ramble." The profile was constructed around a simple theme:

the inherent value in any artist's effort to understand his country's past and its future. Murrow told Friendly that "what I am doing . . . has shown me that some men, like the Senator, want to scare us to death; but with others, like Sandburg, there is the effort to enlighten."<sup>24</sup>

To Murrow, "the effort to enlighten" was also the primary responsibility of broadcast journalism. In the Sandburg program he felt he was able to isolate, in part, "some of the genius of this country." By fixing the camera's attention on Sandburg's rambling conversations, songs, poetry and history, Murrow was presenting what he called "the life of the mind as it works its way through problems and ideas." He wanted his audience to see how one man was capable of dealing with his country's history as well as its present "in ways," he noted in his journal, "that are lyrical and truthful." "It is what television can do best," Murrow told Sandburg, "if it is allowed to by those who control the medium."<sup>25</sup>

Sandburg dominated the entire program. He told anecdotes about American politics, Lincoln as a young lawyer in Illinois and as "an anguished war leader." Murrow had introduced Sandburg in a simply written statement that opened the program. As the camera caught the two men walking through the woods at the edge of the poet's farm, Murrow's voice was heard off-camera:

There are men who can point to a skyscraper, to a railroad, to a billion-dollar corporation, and say: 'That's mine. I did that. That's my life's work.' These twenty eight volumes represent the life work of Carl Sandburg . . . who spends his life writing.<sup>26</sup>

Murrow's careful editing of the film footage was tightly structured: Sandburg was always on camera, "talking away like a man possessed . . . about Ty Cobb and bad poetry, Lincoln's humor and his tears, goat's milk and goober peas."<sup>27</sup> Close-up shots caught Sandburg's hands playing the guitar, singing old Civil War songs, stating that he wanted to "be known as a man who says: 'What I really want and need is three things in life: to be out of jail, to eat regular, to get what I write printed, and then a little love . . . .'"<sup>28</sup> And at the very end of the program, Murrow edited in a short segment in which Sandburg read a short passage from his early novel, Remembrance Rock. He had asked Sandburg to read something "that has meaning for today . . . for our frightened times." Sandburg knew Murrow meant the program to end on a hopeful note to balance "the hopelessness of McCarthy." "When we say a patriot is one who loves his country," Sandburg read, "what do we mean?"

A love that can be thrown on a scale . . . a love that we can take apart to see how it ticks . . . where with a yardstick we record how long, how high, how visible? Or is a patriot's love . . . a thing invisible, a quality, a human shade and breath beyond all reckoning and measurement? But the mockers came, and the deniers were heard. They forgot where they had come from. It has cost to build this nation.



"Mr. Sandburg does not like adjectives," Murrow's closing added, "so we shall say that we are beholden to him for having written and read."<sup>29</sup>

Although the Sandburg program received critical acclaim, word reached Murrow that the CBS "management" was not pleased with the broadcast. "It seems they were not very happy with the ending," Murrow told cameraman Charlie Mack.<sup>30</sup> Stanton wrote to Murrow "quietly suggesting" that "See It Now" was becoming "more of an advocate for certain political-social positions." Murrow replied with a lengthy memorandum outlining his "thinking" about the role of broadcast journalism. "If certain people found the Sandburg film disturbing," he wrote, "then so much the better . . . for I believe that our purpose is best served when we do indeed shake up opinions, or challenge beliefs. This is still possible."<sup>31</sup> He never received a reply from the CBS president.

Murrow proposed a "working arrangement" with Friendly whereby Murrow would concentrate his attention on several forthcoming "See It Now" programs. Since his schedule was so filled with commitments for continued radio commentaries as well as to another primetime program, "Person-to-Person," Murrow decided to work on a "select few" "See It Now" films.<sup>32</sup> "They will be profiles, for the most part," he told Friendly, "for that's what I do best

. . . . I get down to people, let them talk and provide the focus."<sup>33</sup>

For the first time, Murrow began to speak about his "documentary television work." He saw the "See It Now" staff as somehow different from the regular news operation at CBS because, as he wrote in a memorandum to his staff, "we are in the business of challenging the audience, in hopes of starting a dialogue about important issues."<sup>34</sup> He did not deny that he was presenting "factual material," but he did see the difference between a straight recitation of news "events" and "See It Now's" in-depth examination of key personalities and issues. "Not only does it make my work different," he noted in his journal, "but it makes it potentially more controversial . . . for there is a point-of-view built into the editing process."<sup>35</sup>

Murrow's conviction that the television public affairs-documentary was based upon a "point-of-view" was apparent in a "See It Now" program about The Union of South Africa. And though his feeling about the somewhat nebulous definition of "journalistic objectivity" was shared by his staff and Fred Friendly, the CBS management felt otherwise. Along with correspondent Howard K. Smith, Murrow wrote a small part of the narration for "Report on South Africa," a two-part "See It Now" series aired in December 1954. Smith had completed the bulk of the reporting and supervised the filming, while Murrow helped him

edit and prepare the opening and closing segments of the programs. The film footage Smith brought back from his three week stay in South Africa was devastating: the contrasts between the obvious affluence of the white minority and the disenfranchised Africans was captured in scene after scene. Murrow was clearly moved and horrified by Smith's film. "When I see human beings treated like garbage," he told Charlie Mack, "I quite naturally become incensed . . . but as far as the South Africa program goes, I think it will be obvious to the audience that there is something terribly wrong with their system."<sup>36</sup> Although Murrow did not allow his personal feelings about Apartheid to intrude too heavily into the final editing process, his belief that "a society cannot exist when the majority of its population suffers, quite overtly, at the hands of the minority" was clearly stated in the choice of film and narrative design.<sup>37</sup> He allowed the film to present the message of "South African life."<sup>38</sup>

"Report on South Africa" was filled with statistics comparing whites and nonwhites: the high illiteracy rate among Africans; the lavish educational system for whites and the primitive school system of the Africans; the widespread "passport" system of registration for all "non-whites"; the manner in which Apartheid worked throughout the entire society.<sup>39</sup> Murrow called the "system" an "unfortunate one," stating that it was "perhaps

self-defeating . . . for how long can a minority continue to deny basic rights to a majority . . . . But, in spite of it all, the economic boom continues."<sup>40</sup>

Murrow knew that CBS would receive complaints from those viewers who objected to a perceived "moral stand." Not the least of these complaints came from the South African government itself in a formal letter to Paley immediately after the second program. Paley passed the letter to Murrow, noted in a separate note that "it might be necessary to answer this." But Murrow felt that the programs provided "more than enough proof, evidence, if you will, of what they are doing to people." He added that as a journalist "and documentarian" his role was to "sum up the evidence . . . and this I did."<sup>41</sup>

Although William Paley understood the need for his network to program news and "the occasional public affairs show," he was not happy over Murrow's decision to refer to "See It Now" as a documentary series. "It is too easy to inflame people," he wrote Murrow, "when you consciously attempt to persuade them of a particular point of view . . . for it leads to misunderstanding and, worse, to negative feedback from sponsors."<sup>42</sup> Murrow was not prepared to abandon his approach, however. He felt strongly that any detailed examination of an issue would "necessarily cause some criticism." At the same time, he refused to consider the opinions of corporate sponsors, "since, if we allow

them to intrude in our work they can, in effect, act as censors."<sup>43</sup> He was certain that the American public was capable of recognizing "the value" of public affairs programming that was willing to concentrate on "special topics." And though he believed in the importance of any journalist trying to be fair to his material, he dismissed a rigid adherence to "cold calculated theories of pure objectivity" as "an impossible dream."<sup>44</sup>

As soon as Murrow finished working on the South African programs, he began production of three major "See It Now" films: profiles of Doctors J. Robert Oppenheimer and Jonas Salk, and an examination of how a small Texas newspaper successfully investigated a major land scandal. Murrow viewed the three programs as "case studies of creativity and courage." He told Friendly that the profiles "were meant to celebrate genius . . . and if CBS thinks that I will back out of any one of them because of certain pressures, well, they're nuts."<sup>45</sup>

Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, Nobel Laureate in Physics and Director of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, represented the ideal of the intellectual life for Murrow. He had known the scientist for several years and finally persuaded him to do a program about the Institute, "seen," as Murrow wrote in his narration, "through the eyes and mind of one man."<sup>46</sup>

Oppenheimer's opposition to further development of nuclear weaponry and official government secrecy about nuclear power had cost him his security clearance. Though he fought the government concerning its decision, he was, as Stanton admonished Murrow, "a very controversial man . . . whose politics might cause raised eyebrows." Stanton warned Murrow "not to aggravate the situation by asking Oppenheimer about politics." "I will ask him about everything," Murrow replied. "I intend to learn something, so will the audience, so might you."<sup>47</sup>

The outline Murrow drew up prior to his series of interviews with Oppenheimer was filled with ideas he hoped would be realized in the final program. He told his staff that he wanted the profile "to be more than just an interview,"

since I think I can make a film about the life of the mind in America. Television with very few exceptions has ignored, for various reasons, studying the native genius that exists here . . . . Oppenheimer is, in many ways, a public intellectual: standing up for ethical values in science, pushing others to consider the implications of their own work, providing a haven for free thought at Princeton University. When it was dangerous to do so, he told the government to rethink its positions. This is, I believe, especially important when, as Sandburg said last year, patriotism is often measured with a yardstick.<sup>48</sup>

The interviews with Oppenheimer were conducted throughout one weekend at Princeton. Murrow had spent weeks preparing for the filming, reading what he could about Oppenheimer, physics, and nuclear power. He wanted the program "to

touch upon everything that may be of interest to the uninformed layman." At the same time, he noted in his shooting script that his subject should "be pushed into answering . . . why a devotion to passionate searching and testing" was so important to the intellectual health of society."<sup>49</sup>

The interviews resulted in over twelve hours of film footage. The editing was, as Murrow told Friendly, "fairly easy since I had a firm idea of where the program was going." He found that Oppenheimer was an eclectic intellectual, his interests ranging over a variety of topics: the value of the scientific method, the need to guard free thought at the Institute, the relationship between theoretical and applied science, the role of the scholar in a "mechanistic, technological world." Oppenheimer was distinctly uncomfortable talking about his own accomplishments, and he kept directing the interview back to a broader examination of the issue of science and society. At several points in the program, he turned to his bookcase, located a copy of Plato's Republic or Albert Einstein's Collected Works, and quoted long passages. When Murrow admitted "a profound ignorance of physics," Oppenheimer went to the blackboard and outlined a "simple problem" in theoretical physics. "Sometimes it's not the result that counts," he told Murrow, "but the sheer excitement of the search."<sup>50</sup>

Murrow saved the final ten minutes of "A Conversation With Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer" for "that moment when . . . he began to address himself to a pointed discussion of government secrecy." Toward the end of the filmed interviews, Murrow discovered that the scientist had "really focused in on" why he had become such a figure of controversy within the defense establishment. "Oppenheimer suddenly looked quite sad at this stage," Murrow told Charlie Mack, the cameraman in charge of the program, "and he looked all around as if he were making a plea to a silent audience . . . your camera caught him beautifully."<sup>51</sup> The segment Murrow chose for inclusion into the final program was a summary of Oppenheimer's feelings.

"There is a point I deal most deeply," Oppenheimer stated,

and I think I really speak now the voice of my profession. I mean the integrity of communication. The trouble with secrecy isn't that it doesn't give the public a sense of participation. The trouble is that it denies to the government itself the wisdom and the resources of the entire community. There aren't secrets about the world of nature. But there are secrets about the thoughts and intentions of men.<sup>52</sup>

When the Oppenheimer program was aired in early January Murrow noted in his journal, "that the beauty of what I am trying to do is the possibility of freezing time, a moment of life . . . and in Oppenheimer's remarks, those carefully selected moments did stand for something larger." For Murrow, the success of any "See It Now" had to be judged against the quality of "universal meanings" in any given program. He told his staff that "truth can be



approached in a variety of ways, and we have our own peculiar way of getting there."<sup>53</sup>

Murrow quickly began production of another "See It Now" program about science and the process of discovery. In the achievements of Dr. Jonas Salk and his research colleagues, Murrow saw a sustained attempt to "better the human condition."<sup>54</sup> In a live broadcast from The University of Michigan, Murrow and the "See It Now" crew carefully presented a series of interviews with Dr. Salk, several of his research assistants, and Dr. Thomas Francis, the scientist responsible for the nation-wide testing of the polio vaccine. Though Salk was not as articulate about his role as a scientist as was Oppenheimer, he did speak about "the constant frustrations" of research and the ensuing "joy" he felt when a breakthrough was achieved. Murrow's leading questions forced Salk to address himself to several issues: the need for increased government sponsorship of basic research and "how research methodology could be used to combat other medical and societal problems." Salk talked about both areas with, as Murrow noted after the program, "a great deal of passion." "We have a vast responsibility," Salk stated, "and the one intangible ingredient is determination . . . that alone will make the difference."<sup>55</sup>

Murrow had so thoroughly prepared for the Salk program that, despite the live broadcast, he managed to

centralize the interviews around a major theme: the relationship between the individual scientist and the society he served. He viewed the work of Salk and Oppenheimer as part of "their implied responsibility to the rest of us." By carefully drawing the discussion back to this theme, he hoped that not only would science become "less mysterious" to his audience but would also become part of a necessary public discussion. To a large extent, therefore, Murrow acted as a facilitating agent, hoping, as he noted in his journal, "to start the ball rolling . . . so that the public can see that there are hundreds of issues they are capable of understanding and discussing."<sup>56</sup> As the critic Gilbert Seldes observed in a letter to Murrow shortly after the Salk program: "The way in which public affairs programs have been handled by you lately, leads me to believe that you indeed cherish the concept others in your profession forget--the public's right to know and be constantly informed."<sup>57</sup> Seldes' praise was cherished by the broadcaster. It was, he replied, "the most honorable compliment I could receive for my work."

Both the Oppenheimer and Salk programs essentially revolved around the personality of each man. When Murrow found out about a tiny Texas newspaper that was providing detailed coverage of a major land scandal--while other Texas newspapers ignored, or played down the details--he

immediately planned a "See It Now" profile of the paper and its editor. Along with correspondent Ed Scott, he went to Cuero, Texas to produce a "case study" of "how the little guys sometimes win." In "Texas Land Scandal: The Power of the Press," Murrow attempted to demonstrate how one man, working under tremendous pressure in his own community, was able to expose a public fraud. At the same time, Murrow was consciously designing a program that would honor his profession and one of its practitioners, Ken Towery, editor of the three thousand circulation Cuero Record.<sup>58</sup>

When the film footage was assembled in late April of 1955, Murrow painstakingly edited in both the history of Towery's efforts and the results of the investigation. The "See It Now" camera caught moments of tension as Towery related his story and the manner in which he was threatened for "trying to bring down the good name of Texas landholders." He had discovered a fraudulent scheme to steal bonuses from semi-literate Texas veterans, many of whom, according to Murrow's narration, were attempting to use their bonus money for small land purchases. "Only Towery wrote these kinds of stories," Murrow noted at the opening of the program, ". . . but now it is a major story; and it was the small press in Cuero that had the power to start it."<sup>59</sup>

As he was editing the film, Murrow noticed how, in scene after scene, Towery, "a normally quiet, subdued man with one year's experience as a reporter," became terribly animated as he told his story. To Murrow, the small town editor represented "the best" of a journalistic tradition with "roots in American history." At one point Towery had tears in his eyes as he told why he was so "furiously engaged in the matter." "Only because," he observed, "I'm afraid of what happens when people don't realize what happens when they are manipulated for the wrong reasons. That's why I did it."<sup>60</sup> In a startling dramatic moment, as Towery was speaking to Murrow, the phone rang on camera. Towery answered. "It was the city desk of The Houston Post," Murrow noted, "and they wanted to get Towery's reaction to the big news: he had just won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting." Murrow had the last word in the program. It was a comment he hoped would be understood by all journalists and those who, as he told Ed Scott, "are the owners of our media."

Thirty-eight hundred isn't much of a circulation--not much power as newspapers are generally measured, but courage and power aren't always found in the same package. There are newspaper the television networks with much greater circulations and much more potential power than the Cuero Record. The Pulitzer Committee merely called attention to courage, perhaps with the hope that it might be contagious.

Good night and Good Luck.<sup>61</sup>

Murrow was pleased with his work during the 1955 season. Although he confined his direct participation in

"See It Now" productions to five major programs, he actively worked along with Friendly "in coming up with new ideas." The series was, however, in deep trouble with its sponsor, ALCOA. As company salesmen reported "how irate" certain "big customers" were with "See It Now's" programs, pressure grew within the company to drop its sponsorship. "ALCOA said it was having difficulty in explaining why their company was against McCarthy and for Oppenheimer, and why they were for socialized medicine--which is what some doctors thought our Salk program advocated," Friendly wrote. When the 1955 season ended, ALCOA decided to withdraw its commercial support of "See It Now." The land scandal program was, as Murrow was told by an ALCOA representative, "the final straw." The company viewed the program as a "direct attack" on business interests in Texas. Murrow was told that the company was "enlarging its interests" in Texas, and the feedback from Texas to Pittsburgh was "instantaneous." On May 5, 1955, only two days after the broadcast, ALCOA officially notified Murrow of the non-renewal decision. "TV's SEE IT NOW SPONSORLESS: TO BE SEEN ONLY NOW AND THEN," a headline story by Jack Gould in the New York Times stated. Gould called ALCOA's decision "disturbing . . . since TV has only one program like it, and one Murrow."<sup>62</sup>

Paley told Murrow "See It Now" would be "cut back" in 1956. He cited increasing costs for the series (now

in excess of \$150,000 per show) and added how the network could not find a sponsor "in prime-time hours" to generate the necessary revenue to underwrite the program. He had decided to schedule "See It Now" in a far less expensive time-slot on Sunday afternoons. "Life was no longer as simple as it was in the days when Murrow could say, 'Let's do Radulovich,'" Friendly told the staff.<sup>63</sup>

During the late summer of 1955, CBS distributed a promotional booklet to its affiliates around the country outlining the "coming season." "Prime time viewing is going to be better than ever next year," the front page stated in bold letters. Prime time did not include Sunday afternoon.<sup>64</sup>

Since 1950, Murrow continued with his radio work for CBS. Although he wrote very few of his own commentaries--leaving the bulk of the writing to Jesse Zousmer and John Aaron, his chief writers--he felt strongly about "the value of radio as news medium." His participation in "See It Now" left him little time to spend "agonizing over one minute think pieces," but he had never quite forgotten how much he loved radio and, as he told Zousmer, "the intimacy of speaking into a pictureless microphone."<sup>65</sup>

Murrow's commentaries were very personal and were unlike the copy prepared by his writers. When Zousmer and Aaron provided the basic writing, the one minute commen-

commentaries were invariably about world politics, education, or political affairs in Washington. They were, as Murrow jokingly told Aaron, "real heavyweights." But when Murrow wrote his own copy there was a marked difference in both style and delivery. "Sometimes I think people appreciate a personal confrontation with news events," he told Friendly. "And, more often than not what I write has nothing to do with 'news,' rather they are observations, memories, off-the-cuff stuff."<sup>66</sup>

His favorite subjects, however, were always about individuals he had known either professionally or personally over the years. In 1952, for example, he devoted five radio commentaries to British politics and the changes taking place in post-war Britain. He wanted his audience to understand "how the unique has been institutionalized in British political life . . . through such people as Churchill and Clement Atlee."<sup>67</sup> In describing Churchill's bid for office against the Labor Party, Murrow wrote with great affection about both Churchill and Atlee. To Murrow, each politician represented "power tempered by a degree of humanity." He wrote about Clement Atlee as a "man with . . . little in his manner that distinguishes him from thousands of bank clerks, yet he is a man who has presided over the government that has produced a great social revolution."<sup>68</sup> Churchill was "one of the most considerable men of our age," yet a man who, as Murrow added, "was

adept at the application of power."<sup>69</sup> Each man had his faults, and Murrow documented them in order to "demonstrate to my audience that politicians share all of the faults and sins of the rest of us."

When he returned to Korea in December 1952, he wanted to "make a very personal plea, of sorts" to those who would hear his commentary. Because he felt that most Americans could only understand the "bitterness of armed conflict" in terms of his own "subjective reactions," he dedicated the commentary to his young son, Casey. He spoke of children he saw everyday in Korea, "their eyes are black, their skin a sort of golden brown . . . but without much clothing." He added that there were "a lot of fathers thinking about their children in Korea, because loneliness on Christmas Eve must be felt, not written about."<sup>70</sup> But Murrow, as journalist, was writing about what it was like to be in Korea on a Christmas Eve, or on a troop transport pulling into a Korean port, or in a hospital filled with maimed soldiers from both sides. It was, he observed on the air, "his role to deal with feelings and mood." And most of all, he was consciously attempting to express to his audience the common humanity "of all people, who for various reasons, can be either noble or base, frightened or brave, or who are somewhere in the great middle . . . bouncing off extremes just trying to survive as best they can."<sup>71</sup>



The ability of men to survive was a major theme in many of Murrow's radio commentaries. He saw evidence of this in the work of nuclear scientists searching for "more peaceful uses for atomic energy," the "young men who fly into the eyes of hurricanes for the National Weather Service," and in "the work of civil rights lawyers" prior to the violence at Little Rock's Central High School. He would single out those elements of "strength, either moral or intellectual or physical" and describe them as they were demonstrated in difficult situations. He talked about teachers who were in overcrowded classrooms because he had visited such classrooms all over the country, and he would detail "the sheer struggle to educate in abnormal conditions." There was always an understated plea to the audience to "listen to what I am saying, for, if you were here, or had the time, some of these things and events would make you angry or proud."<sup>72</sup>

In late 1956, Murrow returned to Europe for a short visit. He found it difficult to fly over the continent without publicly remembering for his audience "what it was like" to "have my head buzzing with memories."

The memories were from the war:

Somewhere down there is Dover, and you wonder what's happened to that grey, old seagull who used to sound the warning of approaching German aircraft. You notice that the seats in this chartered job are covered with plaid. And, for no reason that reminds you of Bob Sherwood over the Bay of Biscay in 1942 asking for a prayerbook. And you remember the drop

across the Rhine, the big sergeant from New Jersey, how he looked down and saw English girls digging potatoes and you decided that middle-aged reporters should not fly alone.<sup>73</sup>

And there were moments when he mourned the passing of political leaders "my own generation has known so well." He wrote about former Vice-President Alben Barkley, for example, with great affection:

In the woods, when a great and ancient tree that has weathered many storms suddenly comes crashing down, there is a sound of smaller trees snapping back into place. And then there is silence, more complete and oppressive than any silence that went before. Frequently this happens on a dead calm day for no apparent reason. So it was today with Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky. The tributes will flow, some will be eloquent. But mostly they will resemble the sound of smaller trees snapping back after a giant tree has come crashing down.<sup>74</sup>

There were times when Murrow found radio the "only real way to speak what I am seeing." He knew that the CBS management would not allow him the television time for "the hundreds of subjects" he wanted to explore. He did, therefore, use his radio commentaries as vehicles for his interests. At the same time, he was well aware of what he called "my certain talent for radio writing," and he believed that a carefully constructed commentary still had "importance" for a visually oriented audience.<sup>75</sup> "The trick to this business," he told Zousmer, "is to be very, very selective about word choice . . . every sentence should bring the audience to where you are."<sup>76</sup> Thus, a commentary about the abortive Hungarian revolt in 1956 was not about the politics of the situation but concerned the

Hungarian exiles Murrow had known over the years, and the reactions he noticed when they "talked about their home, their eyes telling all, their hopes for freedom smashed by Soviet tanks."<sup>77</sup> And he would try to relate his immediate reaction to a "new place or a new group of people" by writing his commentaries in a manner that evidenced his own, as well as his subject's enthusiasm. When he was in Israel filming a "See It Now" profile of the young nation, he took time to write a future broadcast. He was not interested in telling about the "complex politics," rather it was the "fervent participation of the young" that caught his attention:

In this kibbutz . . . most of the youngsters come from the cities. They will tell you that we have brought in an oil well and that we are developing cotton crops. They can leave if they want to. They get no pay. This isn't free enterprise, but it is enterprising. They sing in the cowsheds and in the showers, and I'm assured this isn't an act put on for a visiting fireman.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout his long career as a radio commentator, Murrow's style rarely varied from the pattern he had used as a young journalist in Europe. He always devoted the major section of each broadcast report to individuals he considered "to be interesting even though they may not be important or powerful."<sup>79</sup> He called radio "a peculiar sort of medium . . . more intimate than any other system of mass communication, its microphone serving as a direct individual contact between speaker and listener." He would gently remind his staff that "needless complexity"

in writing only served to confuse the listener. Although he never regretted his deep commitment to "See It Now" as a "powerful journalistic tool," he seemed to "feel more at home" in the CBS radio studio.

The CBS radio staff asked Murrow to devote more time to radio commentaries. He told them that "there just aren't enough hours in the day for what I want to do." "We could see how upset he was," John Aaron noted, "as if a part of his life was gradually slipping away from him."<sup>80</sup> In a half-mocking tone, Murrow wrote to a listener and expressed "amazement" that "people like to hear my ramblings on-the-air over radio." "They may be ramblings," the man replied shortly after, "but at least they are about all of us . . . and that counts for something in our age."<sup>81</sup>

Murrow was relieved when the General Motors Corporation agreed to underwrite "See It Now's" six scheduled programs for 1955-56. He told the company that the first program of the season would be a "detailed study" of the American Vice-Presidency. The basic idea for the program stemmed from his conviction that "most Americans have little idea of how their political system works . . . especially this office." When his staff complained about "the somewhat boring material they had to work with," Murrow brushed aside all negative comments. "It doesn't

matter if the show is exciting--this is TV's big problem; merely that it informs will be enough."<sup>82</sup>

After nearly six weeks of work, "The Vice-Presidency--The Great American Lottery" was completed. The final program included both historical narrative about the office as well as interviews with President Eisenhower and Vice-President Nixon. Murrow was convinced that the American Vice-Presidency was an ill-defined position, hampering its occupants and rarely allowing them any "real power to lead." Although he excised any personal opinions from the narrative--he was not fond of Nixon, and told his staff "to watch out for the man, he has the rather slippery ability I detest in politicians"--General Motors decided after previewing the film to cancel its sponsorship.<sup>83</sup> In a note to Murrow, GM insisted the program "was a direct attack on Mr. Nixon, a result of your criticism of the office as a 'form of political patronage.'" Murrow did indeed consider the Vice-Presidency as a political tool, "often used as a vote getter at conventions," but he in no way "attacked" Nixon. As a journalist he was merely attempting to point out the obvious faults in an office that was, as he noted in his shooting script, "underused and maligned."<sup>84</sup> Murrow was angered by GM's decision to cancel, and he was equally enraged at the ease by which the company convinced CBS to let them drop sponsorship. "It is pure cowardice," he told his staff, "and I am

discovering how intolerable it is to work in a situation wherein decisions are based on corporate expediency."<sup>85</sup>

The network could not find another sponsor for "See It Now" and was forced to underwrite the series with an in-house division, Columbia Records. The Vice-Presidential program was finally aired in October and received much critical acclaim as a "worthy public affairs show about a subject the American public knows little."<sup>86</sup> Murrow felt that his "strong questioning" of Nixon "made the show." By carefully preparing his questions, Murrow was able to elicit candid answers from the Vice-President. Nixon revealed, for example, his frustration in office and the way in which he was often "avoided" when policy decisions were made by Eisenhower. In Nixon's statements Murrow found the central point of the program, and he said so in his closing remarks: "We can no longer afford to underestimate the importance of the Vice-Presidency, because it demands . . . not the least objectionable person, or even the most convenient political choice of the moment . . . but the best." In a dramatic sixty second film clip, Murrow ended the program with a shot of President Eisenhower being taken away to Walter Reed Hospital following his near-fatal heart attack. When General Motors saw what Murrow had done with the last two minutes of the program, they asked him to delete--or at

least soften--his remarks. He refused, and the program ran as originally edited.<sup>87</sup>

In a memo to Paley, Murrow defended his "right" to explore public issues, "no matter whom they might offend." Paley was upset about GM's decision to cancel sponsorship of "See It Now" and he felt there was "no need to purposely anger corporate sponsors." "It may be in the nature of things," Murrow stated, "that journalists should have freedom to probe and discuss without being shackled by economics or censorship (one often leads to the other)."<sup>88</sup> Murrow saw how broadcast journalism was being restrained by the commercialism of the medium, and he told Friendly "we have to watch out . . . for I think it will get all of us in the end."<sup>89</sup>

Although he promised his family he would "ease off" of his grueling work schedule, Murrow immediately began working on another "See It Now" production. For several years he had been interested in the plight of the small farmer in America. He told Friendly that American agriculture had "long been ignored" by the media as being "either too complicated, or too dull a subject." He admitted having a "moral interest in the subject that may sway me toward a certain position," but he assured his co-producer that "moral passion" could be beneficial to the journalist. He equated "moral passion" with a dedication to work as hard as possible, "making the topic,"

he noted in a preliminary draft script, "come alive . . . looking for the nuances, the details."<sup>90</sup>

At the same time, Murrow equated the journalist's "moral interest" with the public's right to know. He constantly wrote memorandums to his staff urging them to "take a stand on certain public issues." He did not demand, however, that objectivity or fairness of presentation be submerged beneath "polemical opinions," rather that each member of the staff be "aware" of certain "critical problems" which required in-depth examination. He never forgot, or allowed his staff to forget, that television journalism reached a vast national audience. "Insofar as our voice is so magnified," he noted in his journal, "it makes our work doubly important . . . for to shirk our jobs, or to take the easy way out by doing the 'exciting topics' at the expense of more mundane subjects, is, I think, tantamount to a kind of treason to ideals."<sup>91</sup>

Murrow's program about American agriculture was a clear attempt to demonstrate his ideal of "concerned journalism." He told Friendly the "See It Now" film crew had "captured a way of life . . . moments which reveal the pressures and strains of the small farmer." From the collected footage, he was able to find the theme of the program: despite the government's contention that "never before has the small farmer had it so good," evidence showed the opposite taking place throughout the country.



"And we are going to present it all in human terms," Murrow stated, "all of the farm auctions, the poverty, the hopelessness."<sup>92</sup>

"The Crisis of Abundance" was aired during an election year. Ezra Taft Benson, the Secretary of Agriculture, had been traveling around the country extolling the virtues of the Eisenhower administration's farm policies. When Frank Stanton previewed the final production of Murrow's program, he was a little more than apprehensive. "We can't afford to inflame the government," he told Murrow, "and we certainly can't be on the 'offensive' during an election year."<sup>93</sup>

But CBS management made no moves to censor the broadcast in any way. When the program was aired in late October, the American audience was presented with a detailed study documenting the decline of the family farmer. Murrow introduced the program using statistics supplied by the Department of Agriculture. The figures showed a "healthy" farm economy and especially pointing out the "continued vigor of the small family farmer." The government's statistics, however, were directly contradicted by the film footage which followed: farm auctions in the midwest, personal testimonies by several Iowa farmers, agribusiness agents bidding on bankrupt farms in Minnesota and Nebraska. Murrow edited in the emotional plea of one Nebraska farmer who, as Murrow noted, "seems to sum up the

real problem." "I just go by bank account," the man stated, "and it just don't add up no more."<sup>94</sup>

Murrow saved the last three minutes of the program for a reply by Secretary Benson. Benson angrily denied Murrow's "emotional attempts" to denigrate the Agriculture Department's "highly scientific statistics." By giving Benson time to reply, Murrow felt the program had afforded both sides a chance. "We stated our view, Benson gave his own and the government's. The audience will have to decide who has made the best case."<sup>95</sup>

Immediately after the broadcast, Murrow and a small crew left for a three week trip to Israel. He planned a "See It Now" profile of the young nation built around "a very detailed look at the people and their environment."<sup>96</sup> Shortly after he arrived, however, he received an urgent cablegram from a member of his staff. The network had decided that, "because of the delicacy of the agriculture program, and the possible political consequences for CBS," time would be given to Secretary Benson for a "formal reply" to Murrow's program about the American farmer. Murrow was enraged. Not only was CBS providing "equal time" for Benson, but they were doing so during prime time. "This damn thing violates all we are trying to do," Murrow cabled Stanton, "for you know that Benson will make a purely political speech . . . speaking for the Republican Administration."<sup>97</sup> To Murrow, CBS was buckling

under to a "perceived threat," and, as he told Stanton, "it just stinks." Despite Friendly's pleas and arguments, Murrow was convinced that a "gulf" was growing between the network and the "See It Now" operation. "The old days of freedom are gone," he noted in his journal . . . and it's a damn shame."<sup>98</sup>

Murrow was almost prepared to return to New York. Friendly convinced him to finish the Israel program and, by the time Murrow began filming, he was too involved in the work to "leave it all in the middle."<sup>99</sup> The Israeli guides assigned to the "See It Now" crew were surprised when Murrow showed little interest in touring new buildings or the recently constructed University City in Tel Aviv. He kept dragging the film crew back to the small settlements along the border and the kibbutzim outside of the cities. "The people who live in these places," he noted in an early shooting script, "are the ones who are making this country come alive." He told the cameraman that he wanted to be out of all of the film. "It's the people you are after. Not me. Watch them."<sup>100</sup> The finished product, edited in a three day marathon session back in New York, was a sensitive, detailed portrait of a struggling nation. Murrow chose the title: "Israel--Portrait of a Nation."

In the thousands of feet of film footage shot by Murrow and his crew, almost each scene dealt with individual Israelis. Critic Gilbert Seldes observed that

Murrow "found a kind of universal message in Israel . . . one that revolved around a spiritual identity and a dedication to nationhood."<sup>101</sup> As Murrow talked about "the idealism of the young men and women who live here," for example, the camera concentrated on a group of construction workers who continued to work long after their foreman told them "to just go home for the day." At another point in the film, a beautifully framed shot of an Israeli family planting a small tree included their conversation. "We are giving life where none existed before," an old woman noted, her hands grasping a heavy shovel, "and we define patriotism as the giving of life."<sup>102</sup> Throughout the entire film little mention was made of the tense political situation in the Middle East. Instead, Murrow had designed a program about people "in a constant process of struggle." At the same time, however, it revealed his own deep sympathies with Israel and, as he told Paley, "with those individuals who make their lives out of nothing."<sup>103</sup>

The praise Murrow received from the critics was overshadowed by the huge volume of hate mail that poured into the network after the broadcast. Arab groups as well as American anti-Semitic organizations condemned the program as being "little more than Zionist-Jew propaganda." Despite the fact that Murrow commissioned Howard K. Smith to do a profile of Nasser's Egypt--some three months before the Israel program--even the CBS management began

to voice concern over "See It Now's" "continuing affinity for controversy where none existed before." In the network's executive management meetings, Stanton began to worry aloud over "a news division that seeks to make news rather than report what is already happening."<sup>104</sup>

"See It Now's" Sunday afternoon time slot made it difficult to attract sponsors for the series. Murrow was convinced that CBS was prepared to accept "the slow death" of the series and, as he told his staff, "to mourn for about five minutes should it actually happen." He decided to complete production plans for the 1956 season. "I may even have to hustle sponsors by myself," he told Friendly.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, after several days of negotiations, Pan American World Airways agreed to underwrite one "See It Now" program dealing with Danny Kaye's world tour for UNICEF. Murrow arranged for a film crew to follow Kaye on his trip. Pan American was happy with the edited version for, as they told Stanton, "we have avoided any controversy . . . it's just good, clean informational programming." Although Murrow had little to do with the program--he introduced the film in a brief two minute opening segment--"The Secret Life of Danny Kaye" did not impress the company enough to "warrant further sponsorship." A Pan American official wrote to Murrow explaining the company's position, stating that "it is difficult for

a Sunday afternoon show, good though it may be, to attract a large enough audience."<sup>106</sup>

When Murrow announced to his staff that he had arranged an interview with Premier Chou En-lai of the People's Republic of China, the reverberations from network management were quickly felt in the news division. Murrow had been secretly negotiating with the Chinese for almost five months trying, as he wrote his brother, "to convince them I was sincere." Through the offices of U Nu of Burma, Murrow received word in late 1956 that Chou was willing to be interviewed. The interview was produced as a special "See It Now" show in early 1957. Stanton told Murrow that "Mr. Paley is not altogether pleased with your Chinese plans."<sup>107</sup>

In preparation for the Chou interview, Murrow spent several weeks reading everything he could find about contemporary Chinese affairs. Although Chou stipulated, as a precondition of acceptance, that "spontaneous questions cannot be allowed," Murrow felt the program was important enough to warrant "an otherwise intolerable intrusion into good journalistic practice." The program was aired in February 1957. Chou answered prepared questions with stock responses. But he did reveal that "there was a distinct possibility" for some improvement in Sino-American relations." To Murrow, the program represented an attempt

to penetrate "a nation much maligned because of propaganda that is often uninformed."<sup>108</sup>

The CBS management responded to the Chou interview by scheduling "a counter-program" featuring anti-Chinese speakers. Murrow was totally disenchanted when he discovered the network had chosen the guests more for their "obvious cold war views" than for any expertise in Chinese affairs. CBS followed the exact same pattern when Murrow produced and interviewed a program about Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia. Tito was quite candid in stating his views about international politics. He castigated both the Soviet Union and the United States for "creating a tense international situation." Once again, Paley insisted that Tito's remarks be followed by, "at some appropriate time," a rebuttal by "well-known authorities." "It's becoming obvious that CBS has little, if any faith in its audience's ability to judge issues for themselves."<sup>109</sup>

By the end of 1957, CBS decided that "See It Now" was "something of an economic liability." Sponsors backed away from the series despite Murrow's personal pleas to several large corporations. Stanton told him the network "cannot carry the economic burden of total sponsorship much longer, especially when a series, such as your own, is getting to be so costly."<sup>110</sup>

Murrow rushed to complete two more scheduled productions: a profile of singer Marion Anderson and an

examination of the controversy surrounding the Alaska-Hawaii statehood question. He assigned the statehood program to Friendly and produced the Anderson profile himself. "The Lady From Philadelphia" was, as Murrow noted in his journal, "a labor of love." Murrow and his film crew returned with raw footage Murrow found "exceptionally beautiful and sensitive." He noticed that "the evidence" he collected was a tribute to the artist's survival.

When the Anderson program was aired, critics were quick to notice that Murrow's style was, as Jack Gould wrote in the New York Times, "evident throughout . . . with a firm eye for detail and nuance and, above all, an intense feeling for the subject as a unique individual."<sup>111</sup> Murrow's narration was simply written. He wanted the audience to concentrate on Anderson. He opened the program with a brief biographical sketch of the singer followed by a ten minute film segment showing her laborious preparation for a public concert in New York City. As Anderson rehearsed a song over and over again, Murrow's voice-over narration observed "how some artists create for all of us, even though, at times, some of us try to prevent this from happening." A quick dissolve into a film clip showing the President of The Daughters of the American Revolution announcing the group's decision to forbid Miss Anderson from singing in the massive DAR hall in Washington. "The DAR has a color ban," Murrow stated, "and they do not



see beyond their own ideas of color, or art, or song." The program ended with a series of close-ups of the singer performing outside of the Lincoln Memorial. "On this day," Murrow added as the camera drew away from Anderson's face, "the lady from Philadelphia sang for all of us."<sup>112</sup>

Ironically, it was the much less interesting "See It Now" program on the statehood issue that finally caused the death of the series. Murrow did not consider the question of statehood "to be all that important at the moment," but he knew there was a continuing debate in Congress and the issue was "almost forgotten by most Americans." When he saw Friendly's film footage, he knew that "there will be some debate by those who do not like Fred's chosen interviewees." Friendly interviewed the pro and anti-statehood factions in Congress. He also included impassioned defenses of Hawaii by Patsy Mink, the Hawaiian Territorial Representative in Congress, and Harry Bridges, the controversial leader of the International Longshoremen's Union. Friendly strove for balance in the arguments presented but, soon after the program was aired, Congressman Harry Pillion wrote directly to Paley protesting the "totally distorted show . . . all of which was pro-statehood." Pillion asked for equal time in which to make a reply citing, for example, "the need to counter-act the pro-communist leanings of Harry Bridges." He added that CBS would "increase its chances for survival" by

"blackballing all leftists from your airwaves." Paley agreed with Pillion. His decision precipitated an angry confrontation with Murrow.<sup>113</sup>

Paley told Murrow that "See It Now" had become a "constant headache every time it tackled a controversial subject." He added that financial "exigencies" prevented the continuation of another season for the series. At the direct order of the Chairman of the Board of CBS, "See It Now" was officially cancelled. The decision was announced by the network the following day. "See It Now" was eulogized by Herald Tribune critic John Crosby. "Murrow's program was born in the early days of television," Crosby wrote,

when it was thought TV was a tremendous medium for the exchange of information of ideas. The game shows came along in the later phase when it was discovered that television was better suited to parlour games and give-away money. 'See It Now' enlightened us. 'Twenty-One' stupefied us. The fact that CBS can afford 'Beat the Clock' but not Murrow is shocking, to say the least.<sup>114</sup>

Three days after Paley's announcement about "See It Now's" cancellation due to "financial exigencies," the network released its financial report to stockholders. During the 1957-58 season, the Columbia Broadcasting System earned over twenty-seven million dollars in profits. The report noted that "it has been a great year for the network," and, in a section titled "Future Plans," announced corporation intentions to "make a substantial investment in an amusement park in Southern California." CBS, the report added, wanted to "compete with Disneyland."<sup>115</sup>

In October 1958, Murrow was asked to deliver the keynote speech at the Radio and Television News Directors Convention in Chicago. He intended to use the occasion to criticize medium he had worked in for over twenty years. "There is more sadness than reproach in this talk," a note on one of his draft copies stated, "because that is the way one talks about a tarnished dream."<sup>116</sup>

Murrow had been openly critical of American broadcasting prior to the Chicago speech. But his appearance at the RTNDA meeting was his first attempt to "bring the message home to the industry itself." The RTNDA was the major professional association of all working broadcast journalists. Although the convention organizers told Murrow that "you could do us a real service by plumping us up a bit . . . by making the audience feel there is a real future for our business," Murrow was not prepared to deliver any sort of "soft-spoken praise where it is not warranted."<sup>117</sup> "It is my desire, if not my duty," he stated at the beginning of his speech, "to talk to you with some candor about what is happening to television."<sup>118</sup>

Murrow reviewed his idealistic hopes for broadcasting, mentioned the "dreams" the young CBS staff had for the medium "when it was considered a miraculous invention for the transmission of information and ideas." He told the assembled news directors commercialism was

destroying broadcast journalism, "and this is cause enough for an abiding fear for the future."

Our history will be what we make of it. And if there are any historians about fifty or a hundred years from now, and there should be preserved the kinescopes for one week of all three networks, they will find there evidence of decadence, escapism, and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live.

If Hollywood were to run out of Indians, the program schedules would be mangled out of all recognition. The some courageous soul with a small budget might be able to do a documentary telling in fact what we have done--and are still doing--to Indians in this country. But that would be unpleasant. And we must at all times shield the sensitive citizens from anything that is unpleasant.<sup>119</sup>

He ended his speech as he had begun it: with an expression of "absolute sadness" at the state of American television. "If we go on as we have been, retribution will not limp far behind in catching up with us."<sup>120</sup>

Murrow's speech became a front page story in the national press. When he returned to New York the CBS news staff gave him a standing ovation. "I guess I should have said that stuff years ago," he wrote in his journal, "but I always maintained a kind of hope things would change."<sup>121</sup> He told a young staff member from the now-defunct "See It Now" film crew that "I never had the right forum for what I said in Chicago." "You found it years ago," the young writer replied, "as soon as you began working for CBS."<sup>122</sup>

Murrow asked Paley to give him "a year off, a sabbatical leave, if you will." Paley agreed, and Murrow finished several more radio commentaries for the network.

He intended to use his year off, as he told his radio audience in his last commentary, "reading, listening, keeping silent. And my thanks to those of you who have reminded me that an amplified voice does not increase the wisdom or understanding of the speaker."<sup>123</sup>

## CHAPTER V FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Palmer Williams, May 29, 1954, Program File K, Murrow Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, May 30, 1954, Program File K, Murrow Papers. Stanton would always send a memorandum outlining the major points covered in any telephone conversations.

<sup>3</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to Hubell Robinson, CBS Business-Corporate Affairs Office, March 13, 1954, Corporate Affairs File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, February 19, 1954, Corporate Affairs File J, Murrow Papers. Although Stanton was usually quite reserved in his relationships with subordinates, he would frequently state his point of view, quite openly, within official correspondence. Murrow was always soliciting opinions concerning network policy from Stanton who, in turn, wrote long, detailed memorandums.

<sup>5</sup>Letter from ALCOA, Inc., Advertising and Promotion Department, to ERM, April 17, 1954, Corporate Business File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>6</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, May 13, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, May 15, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>8</sup>ERM "Speech to the Freedom House Award Committee, June 28, 1954," Awards-Speeches File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, June 12, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Memorandum from Hubell Robinson to ERM, June 14, 1954, Corporate File C, Murrow Papers. Robinson was an important account executive at CBS. He eventually became the chief corporate officer in charge of relationships with network sponsors.

<sup>12</sup>Letter from ERM to Lacey Murrow, September 10, 1952, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, February 18, January 5, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Palmer Williams and Fred W. Friendly, April 12, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>16</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: A Study of Two Cities," May 25, 1954, TV Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>"See It Now" shooting scripts File C, "A Study of Two Cities," Murrow Papers.

<sup>20</sup>"See It Now: A Study of Two Cities."

<sup>21</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, May 27, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>22</sup>ERM Daily Journal, May 29, 1954, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>23</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, September 10, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Letter from ERM to Carl Sandburg, October 11, 1954, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>26</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: A Visit to Flat Rock--Carl Sandburg," October 5, 1954, TV Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Charlie Mack, October 9, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>31</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, October 11, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Murrow was involved with "Person-to-Person" from 1954 until 1958. I have not dealt with the series for several reasons: Murrow had nothing to do with setting up the interviews he conducted (they were organized completely by John Aaron and Jesse Zousmer, his chief writers); he merely showed up several hours before air time, quickly read over prepared notes, and conducted the interview. Secondly, there are only a limited number of transcripts of "Person-to-Person" shows extant--the Murrow Papers contain very few references to the show. Murrow was always distinctly uncomfortable doing the program. He received a great deal of money from the program, but set it aside in a trust for his wife and young son. Murrow devoted almost no effort to the program and, when Friendly complained about the "show business-like" quality of "Person-to-Person," Murrow agreed. He did maintain, however, that the program kept his face in the news and was, therefore, good for the news division at CBS. Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, February 3, 1954, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>33</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, April 7, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, November 12, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.



<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Charlie Mack, December 2, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Report on South Africa," December 14, 1954, TV Transcript File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to ERM, December 18, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, December 19, 1954, Program File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, December 15, 1954, Program File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>46</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: A Conversation With Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer," January 5, 1955, TV Transcript File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, December 28, 1954, Program File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Memorandum to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, December 9, 1954, Program File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>49</sup>"See It Now" shooting script, "A Conversation With Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer," Shooting Script File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>50</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: A Conversation With Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer.

<sup>51</sup>Memorandum to Charlie Mack, January 3, 1955, Program File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>52</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: A Conversation With Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer."

<sup>53</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, January 7, 1955, Program File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: The Victory Over Polio," April 12, 1955, TV Transcript File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>56</sup>ERM Daily Journal, April 15, 1955, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>57</sup>Letter from Gilbert Seldes to ERM, April 29, 1955, Personal Papers File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>58</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Texas Land Scandal--Power of the Press," May 3, 1955, TV Transcript File M, Murrow Papers.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>The New York Times, May 6, 1955, p. 48.

<sup>63</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, January 25, 1956, Program File N, Murrow Papers.

<sup>64</sup>"The Coming Season: CBS Network Plans," Corporate Affairs File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>65</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Jesse Zousmer, April 4, 1952, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," March 13, 1952, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>68</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," March 15, 1952, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>69</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," March 17, 1952, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>70</sup>CBS broadcast, CBS Evening Radio News," December 24, 1952, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," June 13, 1957, Commentary Broadcast Transcript File G, Murrow Papers. From time to time, Murrow would end a broadcast commentary with a summary report. He would try to "tie up" his various reactions to domestic and international events. He would, therefore, cite other broadcasts he had delivered over the years. This was one such broadcast.

<sup>73</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," November 28, 1956, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>74</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," April 30, 1956, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>75</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Jesse Zousmer, May 11, 1955, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," November 10, 1956, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>78</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," February 1, 1956, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>79</sup>Memorandum to Dr. Frank Stanton, March 6, 1956, Personal Papers File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>80</sup>Memorandum from John Aaron to Palmer Williams, January 12, 1957, Personal Papers File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>81</sup>Letter from Frank Zito to ERM, February 19, 1956, Personal Papers File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>82</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, December 2, 1955, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>83</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, August 23, 1955, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>84</sup>"See It Now" shooting script, "The Vice-Presidency--The Great American Lottery," Shooting Script File E, Murrow Papers.

<sup>85</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and Crew, n.d., Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>86</sup>The New York Times, October 27, 1955, p. 45.

<sup>87</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, October 18, 1955, Program File O, Murrow Papers. Murrow defended his right to air the program as originally edited, adding "that I cannot, in good conscience, bow to the wishes of a sponsor--any sponsor."

<sup>88</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, October 12, 1955, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>89</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, November 2, 1955, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>90</sup>"See It Now" shooting script (draft 2), "The Crisis of Abundance," Shooting Script File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>91</sup>ERM Daily Journal, January 14, 1956, Personal Papers File D, Murrow Papers.

<sup>92</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly,  
October 12, 1956, Program File N, Murrow Papers.

<sup>93</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM,  
October 11, 1956, Program File N, Murrow Papers.

<sup>94</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: The Crisis of  
Abundance," October 13, 1956, TV Transcript File N,  
Murrow Papers.

<sup>95</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton,  
October 15, 1956, Program File N, Murrow Papers.

<sup>96</sup>Memorandum from ERM to "See It Now" Staff and  
Crew, October 17, 1956, Program File N, Murrow Papers.

<sup>97</sup>Cable from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, October 31,  
1956, Personal Papers File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>98</sup>ERM Daily Journal, November 3, 1956, Personal  
Papers File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>ERM Daily Journal, November 6, 1956, Personal  
Papers File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>101</sup>Letter from Gilbert Seldes to ERM, December 19,  
1956, Personal Papers File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>102</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: Israel--Portrait of  
a Nation," January 22, 1956, TV Transcript File O, Murrow  
Papers.

<sup>103</sup>Memorandum from ERM to William Paley, February 24,  
1956, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>104</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM,  
March 3, 1956, Corporate Affairs File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>105</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly,  
March 7, 1956, Corporate Affairs File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>106</sup>Letter from Ronald Jamatz, Vice-President for Public Relations, Pan American World Airways, to ERM, April 16, 1956, Corporate Affairs File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>107</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, January 22, 1957, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>108</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, February 12, 1957, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>109</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to ERM, March 12, 1957, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>110</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, November 16, 1957, Program File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>111</sup>The New York Times, March 28, 1957, p. 38.

<sup>112</sup>CBS broadcast, "See It Now: The Lady From Philadelphia," March 25, 1957, TV Transcript File O, Murrow Papers.

<sup>113</sup>ERM Daily Journal, June 13, 1957, Personal Papers File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>114</sup>New York Herald Tribune, June 16, 1957, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup>CBS promotional booklet, "Financial Report and Projections, 1957-58," p. 11, Corporate Affairs File L, Murrow Papers.

<sup>116</sup>A draft copy of the speech is located in the Awards-Speeches File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>117</sup>Letter from RTNDA Steering Committee, National Convention, to ERM, October 1, 1958, Awards-Speeches File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>118</sup>ERM, "Speech to the Radio and Television News Directors Association," October 15, 1958.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>ERM Daily Journal, October 24, 1958, Personal Papers File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>122</sup>Letter from Arthur Johnson to ERM, October 30, 1958, Personal Papers File J, Murrow Papers.

<sup>123</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," June 26, 1959, Commentary Broadcast-Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEPARTURE

Among those upset by what Lyndon Johnson was doing to the country and the networks was Ed Murrow. He was sick and dying, out of the government by then, out of CBS, full of misgivings both about Vietnam and Lyndon Johnson. The night of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, he called Fred Friendly in a rage. "By what God-given right did you treat it this way? What do we really know about what happened out there? Why did it happen? How could you not have Rather and the boys do some analysis?"

David Halberstam,  
"CBS: The Power and the  
Profits," Atlantic Monthly,  
February 1976

Murrow left CBS for his "sabbatical" at the end of the 1958 season. "See It Now" was cancelled and the network substituted another public affairs series, "CBS Reports," under the direction of Fred Friendly. The new series would appear infrequently during the coming year. Murrow took his family for a brief vacation in Europe, returned in a month, and spent his year off at his farm in Pawling, New York. Although he did not follow CBS' programming during the 1959 season, he kept in close contact with former colleagues in the news division. "They are complaining about the commercialism, the paucity of



public affairs programs and documentaries," he noted in a letter to a staff member at CBS, "and, from what I see occasionally on TV, I can hardly blame them."<sup>1</sup> Variety magazine called the 1959 TV season "one of the worst we have ever seen, with special after special, cops and cowboys and, sadly, no Murrow."<sup>2</sup> Out of one hundred and six programs scheduled by all three networks during the season, six were devoted to public affairs.<sup>3</sup>

The period of Murrow's absence from CBS was marked by the growing influence of Frank Stanton as a top executive, and a decreasing emphasis placed upon public affairs programming. Under Stanton's leadership, CBS was making a concerted attempt to become the "number one network." And to Frank Stanton being number one meant devising program schedules heavily laden with situation comedies, drama, and variety shows.<sup>4</sup> "It isn't a good time for us," CBS correspondent Larry LeSeur wrote Murrow. "You should be glad you're off at the farm."<sup>5</sup>

Murrow returned to CBS two months before the end of his leave of absence was due to expire. He claimed he was "too damn bored" to stay away from his job. He was also interested in working "in some sort of capacity," for Friendly's "CBS Reports" unit.<sup>6</sup> Despite his strained relationship with Stanton, Murrow accepted an assignment to interview India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for the CBS series, "Small World." The interview was edited

by CBS in New York and, much to Murrow's chagrin, "was badly chopped out . . . since they took out all of Nehru's criticism of American policy, much of which was fascinating."<sup>7</sup> While he was in India, he suggested a "possible stop-over, if it can be arranged, in Mainland China." The network refused. Murrow flew home.<sup>8</sup>

Murrow continued to write and deliver commentaries for network's evening radio news show. Once again, his commentaries reflected his "personal interest" in the politics of America as well as the "tense" international situation. Throughout the summer of 1960, Murrow devoted many of his commentaries to the upcoming Presidential election year. He tried to present carefully structured profiles of the major candidates. When it became clear that the race between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon would be extremely close, Murrow devoted seven broadcasts to the "media campaigns" of each candidate, including a stinging critique of the debates between Kennedy and Nixon on prime time TV ("the great debate that wasn't," he stated on the air).<sup>9</sup>

Something was missing from Murrow's commentaries. His radio work was losing much of its former documentary-like precision, with its devotion to details and personalities. Although he ranged over a number of topics, he was beginning to sound slightly oracular as he "began to think aloud about the state of the nation and the world."<sup>10</sup>

"I know something is wrong," a scribbled journal entry stated. "I can't quite figure out what; maybe too tired of fighting battles with everyone."<sup>11</sup> In part, Murrow's own feelings of inadequacy were due to his deteriorating health. He was constantly short of breath and tired, the beginning signs of his lung cancer. At the same time, Murrow was worried about his "less than wonderful" relationship with the network. CBS was beginning to promote younger correspondents--Walter Cronkite and Marvin Kalb were now featured on most CBS news "specials"--and Murrow realized "it may be time to move over, since the old days are long dead and buried."<sup>12</sup>

By the fall of 1960, Murrow was seen infrequently on television. He did "co-host" the 1960 Democratic Convention along with Walter Cronkite, but felt distinctly uncomfortable working with "all of the other floor people who, it seemed to me, didn't really get to the heart of the news. We just reacted to people; no probing, no in-depth stuff."<sup>13</sup>

When David Lowe, a film producer and writer working with "CBS Reports," approached Murrow and told him about his work dealing with migrant laborers, Murrow immediately agreed to help edit and, if need be, write part of the script. The final film rushes were ready by late September. "It's like the old days," Murrow noted in a letter to his brother, "for I am actually sitting here helping to put

together this fine documentary; should make some folks mad . . . damn well should!"<sup>14</sup> He worked himself to the point of exhaustion on the film, "Harvest of Shame." Lowe wanted to air the documentary as soon as it was edited in late October. Murrow suggested they wait until Thanksgiving. "It will have more impact," he told Lowe, "and the film will become a symbolic message, a universal kind of message."<sup>15</sup> Three weeks before the program was finished, Lowe asked Murrow to rewrite the conclusion, "to give it more force."<sup>16</sup>

David Lowe had lived with migrant laborers for over a year in preparation for "Harvest of Shame." CBS was fully aware of what Lowe was doing, but Stanton, for example, assumed the program would deal more with "the problems of American agriculture" than with the migrants' problems. "We cannot afford advocacy journalism," Stanton told Lowe, "for it simply raises too many troubles for us in the end."<sup>17</sup>

Murrow's contributions to "Harvest of Shame" included editing, writing of several lengthy parts of the script, and final responsibility for the program's conclusion. He knew his work on the program would probably involve his last full-time participation on a CBS documentary. He was, therefore, interested in making "Harvest of Shame" "something that stands for my own feelings about public affairs programming."<sup>18</sup> When the program aired the

day after Thanksgiving, Murrow was applauded by the critics and, as a staff member at CBS told him, "damned by the network."<sup>19</sup>

"Harvest of Shame" was Murrow's last documentary. Its focus was on the tragedy of migratory labor as it permeated the lives of thousands of people. During the editing process, Murrow convinced Lowe of "the absolute necessity" of concentrating on selected individuals: migrants, farmers who employed them, public officials caught up in the bureaucratic machine that paid little or no attention to the migrants' problems. He was satisfied as to the "relative balance" of the program. But he knew, as he told Lowe the evening before airtime, "that 'Harvest of Shame' takes a strong position, despite the fact several points of view were presented."<sup>20</sup> Fred Friendly noted that: "The two sides to the migrants' problem could not counterbalance each other, and no reporter could end such a report without letting the viewer know how he felt."<sup>21</sup> Murrow's conclusion ("They do not have the strength to influence legislation. Maybe we do.") was a statement of the reporter's own views. At the same time, however, it represented Murrow's strongly held feelings as to the "real, the honest" purpose of the television documentary: a vehicle for information that could, if properly labeled, serve as a catalyst in a public debate.<sup>22</sup>

When CBS decided to cut back on "CBS Reports" by moving it to a time slot out of the prime time schedule, Murrow and Friendly angrily approached Stanton about the lack of "dedication to public affairs at CBS." Friendly suggested Murrow as a regular host-narrator for the series, Stanton refused to commit himself to the idea, and Murrow knew it was time to finally leave the network.<sup>23</sup> He had been approached by Robert Kennedy and asked if he would consider a position in the new Kennedy Administration. John Kennedy considered Murrow to be the logical choice to head the United States Information Agency. Although Murrow was upset about leaving journalism for government, he was convinced he could rebuild the credibility of the USIA. The offer was transmitted to Murrow two weeks after Kennedy's election. Murrow accepted and offered his official resignation to William Paley.

On January 31, 1961, Fred Friendly arranged a farewell broadcast for Murrow to be delivered via closed circuit TV to all CBS employees. It was an emotional moment for both men. "We are losing the best pitcher, outfielder, infielder in the business," Friendly stated in his introduction. "Not only do I think Ed is the best newsman in the business, but I think he's better than the next three guys." Murrow appeared on the screen, his voice barely under control. He talked about the difficulty of leaving a job "I have held for 25 years,"

And I would think it's fair and honest to say that some part of my heart will stay with CBS. I am grateful to the CBS management for releasing me, grateful to the affiliates who have carried what we have done, although not always approving.

The CBS REPORTS audience is now about to be increased by one, and I wish you all good luck and good night.<sup>24</sup>

When the broadcast was over, Larry LeSeur noticed "a silence so complete, lasting for ten minutes. Then, someone at the back of the newsroom yelled out: 'It's the end of an era, and all of us have lost, dammit!'"<sup>25</sup>

The lost era mourned by the anonymous CBS staff member had its origins in the late 1930s world of radio broadcasting. When Edward Roscoe Murrow began working as a radio journalist, he, as well as many others at CBS, had visionary hopes for the new medium. Although Murrow's own career as a reporter began quite by accident during a tense international crisis, he quickly began to understand the unlimited possibilities for what he called "this new kind of journalism."<sup>26</sup> He recognized what other journalists working in radio seemed to forget: that radio journalism could not, should not, try to mimic the style of print reporting in order to become "a kind of newspaper of the air."<sup>27</sup> Instead, Murrow discovered radio allowed a reporter the chance to reach the audience by orally recreating the news. He once told Hans von Kaltenborn that "for me it is simple, since I have someone read back my

copy to me, I close my eyes, and try to imagine whether my words have taken me anywhere. It has to be a sensate experience."<sup>28</sup>

Murrow came to journalism untrained in the formal rules of newswriting. But he brought with him a belief in the power of carefully delivered speech, an intense interest in human nature, and an eye for detail. At the same time, he realized that to write about events without reducing them into understandable concepts, the meaning of history would be lost in a jumble of terms. "To say a war is being waged on a ten mile front has meaning," he wrote to Paul White during the Second World War, "only in a limited sense,"

but to write that one soldier, at a given time and place (all described) was lonely or brave or wounded, well, this is the way I can best show that history is made up of living events. It is simplicity. In terms of style, this reliance upon simplicity explains more than most people in our business care to admit. Sometimes we get caught up in the huge mural at the expense of the smaller, more detailed photo. This is only a personal theory . . . it's what I do, though.<sup>29</sup>

Those journalists who worked with Murrow during the late 1930s and throughout the war realized, as Paul White stated in 1941, "that Ed Murrow literally feels the news as few others can, or will."<sup>30</sup> It wasn't bravery or a craving for public recognition which drive Murrow to watch the bombing of London from various rooftops, but it was a conviction of his that for events to be understood they must be experienced as well as observed by the journalist.



He maneuvered the audience from one scene to another by relying upon graphic descriptions, the only means he found effective to assure the attention of the listener. "Lots of us tried to imitate him," Larry LeSeur noted during the war, "but there was something he had none of us could ever replicate in our own work--that sense of personal involvement that said: 'I am here. I am watching. Understand me.'"<sup>31</sup>

The freedom Murrow enjoyed as a young reporter during the early years of radio journalism was due, in large measure, to the undefined nature of the medium itself. Men like William Paley and David Sarnoff knew broadcasting was a proven vehicle for entertainment. They understood how to program and advertise. But when it came to news and public affairs, they were lost. At CBS, a network its chief executive hoped would become "the most important radio conglomerate in the nation," there was no pressure to confine news personnel to a definite style. Paley was anxious to increase his network's audience and, as he discovered during the Austrian crisis of 1938, the radio audience did listen to reporters like Murrow. "If people listen to us, we have succeeded," Paley told Paul White. "And I like everything that works!"<sup>32</sup>

Reinforced by his superiors at CBS, Murrow continued to provide the kind of coverage he felt the American audience wanted to receive. Throughout the war his style

rarely varied from the pattern he established for himself during the formative years of radio journalism at CBS. And because the war offered to Murrow a chance to explore human actions during periods of crisis, he found that his style conformed to the subject under study. "People made this war. They are fighting as individuals. I am telling you about individuals," he told his audience in a 1940 broadcast, "because, to this reporter, nothing else seems to matter at the moment."<sup>33</sup> If the network occasionally feared the impact of a controversial broadcast, it was never mentioned to him. He had such a large audience for his war reportage that his autonomy was virtually assured.

The war made broadcast journalism an accepted and valued medium of information. Murrow learned to refine his style while working under tremendous pressure: he simply was forced to write quickly and concisely while still retaining those personal qualities he considered to be his own contribution to broadcast reporting. He saw no reason why the style he developed should not be continued during the post-war years when, as he told William Shirer, "our audience will still want to be transported around the world via our work."<sup>34</sup>

But with the expansion of broadcasting as it entered the television age, there were other considerations he neglected to understand. The audience CBS informed during the war listened to Murrow because he was on the

scene, and he brought to his reporting a feeling for an audience far removed from London and Europe. To network executives, anxious to retain and exploit an even larger market, the war was a special event: the audience had to tune in. There was, as Frank Stanton wrote to Murrow, "no other place to go." With the increased competition offered by other networks, CBS knew public affairs and news programs would play a minor role in the overall scheme of things. Entertainment was the magic key to the American market. "We get our bucks by making folks happy," a station affiliates' meeting was told by a CBS executive in 1949, "not by making them angry or upset."<sup>35</sup>

Murrow brought to his television work the same kind of interest in details and singular human reaction that he had emphasized during his radio years. The obvious difference he saw was the added dimension of a visual experience for the viewer. "It's not that seeing something I am describing takes away from the words," a journal entry noted, "it just adds another emphatic proof of what I write. So, I work just as hard on the visual, as a film editor, as I did on the words as a writer."<sup>36</sup> Looking back on his work, one can indeed see how Murrow combined the best of both aural and visual technique: one element underscoring the other, working together to accentuate an event in order to bring the audience "even closer" to the reporter's observations in the field. He saw in

Senator McCarthy a kind of "demonic force," for example, and knew that if others could see him as he actually manipulated, persecuted, and lied to the public, the senator's carefully wrought image would erode. "You have to show Americans some sort of proof before they will decide anything," he told Frank Stanton. "But you have to let them make up their own minds. I show them, or try to."<sup>37</sup>

"See It Now" was Murrow's way of contributing to the audience a catalyst to begin, or enhance, public debate about crucial issues and events. The series was frowned upon by network executives because they considered it "too controversial." To a large extent, the network's perceptions of controversial material were solely based upon advertisers' responses. If a sponsor thought any one show would needlessly anger part "of the American market," tremendous pressure was exerted upon the network to modify or change the content or focus of a program. Time after time, Murrow tried to stave off these commercial intrusions. Although his own prestige as a reporter managed to win several battles with sponsors and executives like Stanton, it was inevitable that Murrow could not always hope to maintain the integrity of unimpeded and uncensored public affairs programs. By 1958, Murrow saw the writing on the wall: commercial television was simply too insecure to

support the kind of work he thought was important.

Edward R. Murrow did not like compromise in any form.

Despite the frustrations Murrow experienced during the late 1950s at CBS, he produced and contributed to some remarkable news programs. Some owed their character to the nature of the issues they deal with: McCarthyism, civil rights and school desegregation, science and governmental secrecy. While others explored less explosive, but in Murrow's opinion still salient, topics: public health, a poet's vision of America, the vice-presidency. Each added to the all-important debate Murrow saw as the key element in a democratic society. He wanted to make television into another version of Thomas Jefferson's marketplace of ideas.

The bitterness of Murrow's 1958 speech to his fellow news broadcasters was the result of the industry's failure to exploit the vast potential of television. "Because if they are right," he wrote of the men who controlled the medium, "and this instrument is good for nothing but to entertain, amuse and insulate, then the tube is flickering now and we will soon see that the whole struggle is lost."<sup>38</sup>

Murrow left CBS for the United States Information Agency in 1961. Throughout the brief tenure of the Kennedy administration, he helped to bring, as a USIA

staff member wrote at the time, "sense of purpose to an agency that hitherto acted as little more than a blatant propaganda machine."<sup>39</sup> When Lyndon Johnson became President in 1963, Murrow continued to serve despite his reservations about defending American policies in Asia, especially the growing American involvement in Vietnam. By early 1964 his health had badly deteriorated. A bout with pneumonia, coupled with the painful lung clot spreading throughout his respiratory system, forced him to resign from the government. He knew he was dying.

Murrow spent the last year of his life at his beloved farm in Pawling, New York. He kept in contact with CBS colleagues, frequently calling Fred Friendly--now President of CBS News--directly to complain about "lack of incisive coverage and documentaries."<sup>40</sup>

On March 3, 1965, Edward Roscoe Murrow died. CBS paid tribute to its former employee in a special one hour television program. William Paley, Frank Stanton, correspondents Murrow had worked with, all spoke in glowing terms about his contributions to the development of broadcast journalism. William Paley noted his network's continuing commitment to "the traditions established by Ed Murrow," and vowed to "the American public" a "well-staffed news division in the Murrow image."<sup>41</sup> As Paley spoke, James Aubrey, the brash young executive Paley had hired to replace Frank Stanton, was preparing to cut "CBS Reports"

out of the prime time television schedule. He replaced CBS' only documentary public affairs show with an entertainment program called "Mister Ed," a show Aubrey felt was certain to get "excellent ratings." It was about a talking horse.

Of all the eulogies devoted to Murrow's passing, one that Murrow wrote marking the death of his one time boss and teacher, Edward Klauber, best serves as a tribute to Murrow himself:

He knew that just because injustice and indignity and inhumanity was not happening to him--he knew that it was still happening. I do not know whether he believed in the essential goodness or badness of man. But I do know that he believed passionately that the communication of information, unslanted, untarnished and undistorted, was the only means by which mankind would progress.<sup>42</sup>

## CHAPTER VI FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Letter from ERM to Palmer Williams, July 12, 1959, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Variety, November 8, 1959, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to Hubell Robinson, August 23, 1958, Corporate Affairs File, Murrow Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Letter from Larry LeSeur to ERM, September 5, 1959, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>6</sup>Letter from ERM to Larry LeSeur, November 12, 1959, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, January 19, 1960, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Cable from Dr. Frank Stanton to ERM, January 16, 1960, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>9</sup>CBS broadcast, "CBS Evening Radio News," October 2, 1960, Commentary-Transcript File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>ERM Daily Journal, November 1, 1960, Personal Papers File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>12</sup>Letter from ERM to Lacey Murrow, October 3, 1960, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.



<sup>13</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Fred W. Friendly, September 12, 1960, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>14</sup>Letter from ERM to Lacey Murrow, September 15, 1960, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Memorandum from ERM to David Lowe, October 18, 1960, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>16</sup>Memorandum from David Lowe to ERM, November 5, 1960, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Frank Stanton to David Lowe, November 1, 1960, Program File P, Murrow Papers.

<sup>18</sup>ERM Daily Journal, November 27, 1960, Personal Papers File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Fred W. Friendly, Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 122.

<sup>22</sup>ERM Daily Journal, November 30, 1960, Personal Papers File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>23</sup>Friendly, p. 124.

<sup>24</sup>CBS closed circuit broadcast, "Murrow Farewell to CBS," January 31, 1961, Special Projects File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Letter from Larry LeSeur to ERM, n.d., Personal Correspondence File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Letter from ERM to Ida Lou Anderson, January 25, 1939, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Letter from ERM to Hans von Kaltenborn, September 30, 1938, Personal Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>29</sup>Letter from ERM to Paul White, May 1, 1942, Personal Correspondence File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Letter from Paul White to Elmer Davis, November 7, 1941, Personal Correspondence File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>31</sup>Letter from Larry LeSeur to Fred W. Friendly, April 16, 1962, Special Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>32</sup>Memorandum from William Paley to Paul White, July 17, 1939, Special Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>33</sup>CBS broadcast, "European News Roundup," March 13, 1940, Program File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Letter from ERM to William L. Shirer, September 17, 1945, Personal Correspondence File F, Murrow Papers.

<sup>35</sup>"Report to CBS Station Affiliates, 1949 Season," p. 3, Corporate Affairs File C, Murrow Papers.

<sup>36</sup>ERM Daily Journal, October 12, 1952, Personal Papers File B, Murrow Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Memorandum from ERM to Dr. Frank Stanton, December 19, 1955, Program File H, Murrow Papers.

<sup>38</sup>ERM, "Speech to the Radio and Television News Directors, 1958," October 15, 1958, Speeches-Awards File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Letter from Frank B. Angely to ERM, March 19, 1963, Special Correspondence File A, Murrow Papers.

<sup>40</sup>Letter from ERM to David Lowe, April 19, 1964, Personal Correspondence File G, Murrow Papers.

<sup>41</sup>CBS broadcast, "A Tribute to Edward R. Murrow,"  
April 29, 1965, TV Transcript File N, Murrow Papers.

<sup>42</sup>ERM, "Tribute to Edward Klauber," Speeches-Awards  
File B, Murrow Papers.

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The Milo Ryan Radio Archives, School of Communications, The University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. The Ryan Phonoarchive contains nearly 4,200 tape-recorded radio programs; 2,500 broadcasts were donated by a CBS affiliate, KIRO, Seattle, and deal solely with CBS radio news broadcasts during the late 1930s and continuing throughout the Second World War. The broadcasts have been meticulously catalogued in Milo T. Ryan's History in Sound. The broadcasts are available for study by broadcast historians.

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