

press release

WALTER CRONKITE VIVIDLY EVOKES LONDON UNDER ATTACK DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE CRUCIAL IMPACT OF FELLOW AMERICAN REPORTERS WHEN THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK PREMIERES *CITY AT WAR: LONDON CALLING*, MAY 21 ON PBS

Cronkite Tours Key London Sites 60 Years After He Reported From The Besieged City, Accompanied By Rich Archival Footage Of Wartime London, Recordings Of Winston Churchill, Edward R. Murrow And More

It was the city that Hitler's Third Reich could not defeat. Led by one of the 20th century's most indomitable statesmen, Winston Churchill, London during World War II confronted each threat with stoic heroism – from the ferocious Blitz of German bombers to the indiscriminate carnage wrought by V-1 and V-2 “robot” bombs. Throughout, such American radio and print correspondents as Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite – names that would become synonymous with journalism of the highest integrity – reported from the frontlines.

Premiering Monday, May 21 at 10 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings), *City at War: London Calling* chronicles the city's great courage and resilience in the face of terrifying Nazi bombing raids. It recalls a kinship between America and Britain forged in the fires of wartime. And it recognizes the crucial role of pioneering American journalists who, by conveying the urgency of Germany's threat, helped steer a tentative U.S. Congress and public from isolationism to engagement, ultimately changing the course of history.

“Walter Cronkite earned a deep respect for Britain and its people during his time in London covering the war,” said Stephen Segaller, executive producer of *City at War*. “His moving firsthand recollections, and his commitment to recounting the Allies' enormous struggle for

freedom in World War Two, resonate throughout the documentary.”

City at War follows Cronkite through London, where he arrived as a United Press correspondent in 1942. Among his stops is the Duxford aerodrome, the aviation branch of Britain’s Imperial War Museum. There, Cronkite repeats the immortal words of Churchill describing the heroic deeds of young British pilots in the Battle of Britain: “Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.”

Other locales where Cronkite recounts Churchill’s steadfast conduct of the British campaign include Chartwell, the prime minister’s beloved country house, and the British Cabinet’s secret, fortified war rooms under the heart of London. At St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Cronkite describes his colleague Edward R. Murrow’s brave eyewitness coverage of the Blitz from the church’s roof. And he revisits his old London haunts with a scotch on the rocks at the aptly named American Bar at the Savoy Hotel, a legendary gathering spot for American journalists covering the war.

Cronkite concludes his trip by attending Sunday service at the Guards Chapel near Buckingham Palace, site of the deadliest V-bomb attack of the war. On June 18, 1944, Cronkite witnessed the carnage – 121 soldiers and civilians killed and the chapel reduced to rubble – from his nearby apartment. With Lady Margaret Thatcher in attendance, the service concludes with the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” in honor of Cronkite’s presence, and the Anglo-American relationship, 60 years on.

Providing a counterpoint to Cronkite’s tour of London is Alastair Stewart, anchor of ITV London News, who reports from Washington, D.C. There, Stewart chronicles the impact of the reporting by Murrow, Cronkite and others within the corridors of power on Capitol Hill. From the National Archives, he unearths riveting film shot by American cameramen in London, including scenes of London residents – made homeless by German bombs – sleeping in neat rows on Underground train platforms. An interview with Casey Murrow sheds further light on his father’s

reporting and its effect on American isolationism in the years before Pearl Harbor.

“Here in England, almost a lifetime later, I have a new perspective,” says Cronkite in *City at War*. “Our reports and the broadcasts of Ed Murrow that brought London’s War – England’s War – into American living rooms had much more impact than we ever knew.”

City at War: London Calling is a co-production of Colonial Pictures and Thirteen/WNET New York in association with ITV London. It is produced and directed by Alastair Layzell. Stephen Segaller is executive producer for Thirteen; Scott Davis is supervising producer. Funding is provided by the following individuals and foundations: The Norman & Rosita Winston Foundation, Vera Eberstadt, Saul Goldhamer, Drue Heinz Trust, Susan and Elihu Rose, Ellen M. Violett, James D. Bishop Sr., Elizabeth Dickinson, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel P. Peabody, Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Swain, Mr. and Mrs. John Elliott, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Tyrrasch, Mrs. R.B. Etherington, and Alfred I. Sutton.

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