

Orchestrated Hell! - December 3, 1943

By 1943, the war was in full force. On the northern European continent it was still essentially an English war. The Allied Expeditionary Force had invaded Africa and was moving into Italy, but the British were doing most of the fighting and bombing in France, Germany and other northern countries.

Ed Murrow and his “boys” were reporting regularly to the United States via CBS News feeds. While many of Murrow’s reporters were in the countries where the main fighting was going on, CBS specifically directed Murrow to manage the whole news organization from the relative safety of London. Though he had come through much of the London blitz, Murrow was growing restless wanting to “get into the war” as reporter too.

In 1943, the British had begun regular bombing runs into Germany giving back to the Nazis a taste of what the Nazis had given to them. And it was effective. Berlin was experiencing regular bombings with much destruction. The bombers were the English four-engine bomber, Lancasters. Though there were many that never returned, having been shot down, many got through dropping their bombs and incendiaries and returning to English soil.

Murrow wanting some way of getting a look at the war front begged a ride on one bombing run on the night of December 2nd, 1943. The next day he broadcast back to America his experiences on the run. The piece became well-known as “Orchestrated Hell” and was a marvelous piece on the brave men who regularly faced death to achieve victory. ([Play the audio](#))

After the run, CBS explicitly forbid its star newsman to ever place himself in harm’s way again. Murrow was too valuable to the organization.



A typical flight-deck crew of a Lancaster bomber in 1943. The average age of crew members was 20-25 years old.