

## "Man-on-the-Street", Washington, D.C., December 8, 1941

### AFS 6357B

Newspaper Man: Japs take the Philippines tonight. ???

Philip Cohen: ???

Alan Lomax: Is that it?

Philip Cohen: Not too excited by the news.

Identified man: [*unintelligible*]

Philip Cohen: Would you give us your reaction to this?

Unidentified Man: My reaction? I ain't got none.

Philip Cohen: How do you feel about it? You think we're going to win?

Unidentified Man: Sure we're going to win. Why, you don't think we will?

Philip Cohen: I hope so.

Unidentified Man: All right. Of course we going to win.

### Cut B3

Philip Cohen: Just give us your name. We don't do anything with it, we just keep it in our record.

Man from New York: That's all right.

Philip Cohen: What is your name?

Man from New York: [removed]

Philip Cohen: Do you live in Washington?

Man from New York: Yes, I live in Washington.

Philip Cohen: Is this your home?

Man from New York: No, I come from New York.

Philip Cohen: Well, how did you feel about it when we first heard about the Japanese war.

Man from New York: Well, I felt [*horns honking*], I'll be called into the draft pretty soon. I'm eligible, I'm in the 1-A classification and it hit me pretty bad. I was expecting something to happen, but this, even when it did come along, well it does surprise me. I didn't expect it so soon.

Philip Cohen: How do you feel do you about the chances, I mean generally?

Man from New York: Well, I believe that the United States will eventually win out.

Philip Cohen: What do you think it means in terms of the other axis powers?

Man from New York: Well, I believe that if we do defeat Japan it won't be the end, but we'll have to finish off the other axis powers before anything else be settled. Because the other axis powers, I believe, will fight until either Japan is fixed up again or until they're defeated.

Philip Cohen: Did you hear the president's speech today?

Man from New York: No.

Philip Cohen: Didn't hear it?

Man from New York: No.

Philip Cohen: Do you have — could you speak for us, we're not going to play this on the air. We want a record in the Library of Congress. What's your name please?

Government Worker: [removed]

Philip Cohen: Do you live in Washington?

Government Worker: Yes.

Philip Cohen: Work for the government?

Government Worker: That's right.

Philip Cohen: How did you feel when you first heard the news of the Japanese attack?

Government Worker: Well, I was surprised that it was so sudden. I think Japan has an awful lot to lose by doing such a thing.

Philip Cohen: What is your — are you eligible for the draft too?

Government Worker: Yes. I'm in the July draft.

Philip Cohen: In the July?

Government Worker: That's right. I expect to be called any week now.

Philip Cohen: Are you the lady friend or can we interview you? [*laughs*]

Woman: No.

Government Worker: She's my friend though. [*laughter*]

Philip Cohen: What is your name? Could we have your?

Woman: [removed]

Philip Cohen: How did you feel when you first heard the news of the Japanese attack.

Woman: Well, it really surprised me.

Philip Cohen: You didn't expect it. Did you expect that that's where the war would begin, from everything you'd heard and read?

Woman: No, no, I thought sure it would be Germany.

Philip Cohen: And what do you think's the job now of the United States?

Woman: Well, I haven't heard much, I mean I haven't read the papers much and I [haven't (?)] heard over the radio. But, if . . . they have signed, I mean, there is war isn't there? [*Government worker laughs*]

Philip Cohen: That's right, sure is. As of 12:30 today.

Woman: [*horns honking*] Well, I think that's about the only way out.

Philip Cohen: We've got to see it through you think?

Woman: Yes.

Government Worker: Best thing to do is to try to keep it away from the United States anyway. We've got our most valuable possessions right here.

Philip Cohen: Right here at home.

Government Worker: That's right.

Philip Cohen: Now, do you think that we can defend our own country without [*pauses for car to pass*] going too far away? Do you think that's our main job to defend our home?

Government Worker: Our main job is to try to defend our country outside of it, but not have another AEF.

Philip Cohen: That's right. Keep, in other words, to do everything we can to keep the war off the American shore, that's the point?

Government Worker: That's right. Destroying American soil here.

Philip Cohen: Do you think we can do that just by a Naval victory?

Government Worker: That's hard to say, but I think most of it can be done now by Naval victory. That's the way it looks.

Philip Cohen: All right, well thanks very much.

Government Worker: You're welcome. [*laughter*]

Philip Cohen: OK, thank you.

#### **Cut B4**

Philip Cohen: [*removed*] How did you feel when you first heard about it?

Riggs Bank Employee: Well, I've been expecting it all along, but I didn't expect it to come so soon.

Philip Cohen: Did you expect that it would be with Japan?

Riggs Bank Employee: Yes, I did all along I have.

Philip Cohen: Are you eligible for the draft or —

Riggs Bank Employee: Well no, not until April.

Philip Cohen: Not until the eighth though?

Riggs Bank Employee: Not until April.

Philip Cohen: Oh, I see. Are you working for the government?

Riggs Bank Employee: No, I work for Riggs Bank.

Philip Cohen: I see. What — how do you — what do you think we're fighting for now, I mean, just in your own words, this war is about?

Riggs Bank Employee: [*laughs*] Well, that's kind of hard to say. The way the thing developed, I mean it's one grand mess look like to me.

Philip Cohen: How do you feel about it now that we're in? What are you [*disc skips*].

Riggs Bank Employee: Right now is to take care of Japan and eventually I think we'll get involved with Germany and Italy.

Philip Cohen: You do think we will get involved?

Riggs Bank Employee: Yes I, I do think we will.

Philip Cohen: There's some headline here in this tonight's paper that seems to indicate that we already are. This paper I just bought over here.

Riggs Bank Employee: I didn't see it.

Philip Cohen: [*reading*] "Nazis, Italy, War on U.S. says Rome."

Riggs Bank Employee: Yes . . . [*interviewer talking*]

Philip Cohen: I don't know if that's just a guess.

Riggs Bank Employee: That was a guess on my part, yes. I mean I hadn't seen the paper at all.

Philip Cohen: Well, thanks very much.

Riggs Bank Employee: You're quite welcome sir [*laughs*].

Philip Cohen: Thank you. Cut Jerry.

### **Cut B5**

[*horns honking*]

Philip Cohen: Do you mind?

Unidentified man: How will she know for posterity ???

Philip Cohen: What's that?

Unidentified man: How is she supposed to know for posterity?

Philip Cohen: Posterity? Well, I would just — the only thing you're going to accept is our guarantee that the Library won't be bombed. [*laughs*]

Unidentified man: No, I mean the Library . . . No you can't guarantee that.

Philip Cohen: No we can't, nobody can guarantee that.

Unidentified man: Well, what opinion are you trying to get, I mean ??? —

Philip Cohen: We just want to know what people feel about the war. How they felt when it was first announced that the United States was at war. Just how it affected various people. How did you feel, for example, when you first heard the news?

Unidentified man: Well you're naturally you're shocked that something that you more or less expected. At the same time you're shocked when you see it's finally happening. It's more or less like when you hear of a person being seriously sick, in my opinion. You expect them to die or something

and when you finally hear they did die, you do feel shocked about it just the same. I mean that's the reaction I got to it.

Philip Cohen: And how do you feel about it now that we're in? I mean what do you think is the —

Unidentified man: Well, I think it was the only thing [*horn honking*] for us to do. For us to get into this thing and I don't think that we were quite prepared for it, but I think that the fact in the last year we have been preparing has certainly been of some help to us. And I think we need an awful lot of preparation right now.

Philip Cohen: And how do you think it will come out? I mean, how do you feel our chances are?

Unidentified man: Our chances our very good, I think. There's no country that can beat this country in my opinion.

Philip Cohen: Do you see this paper I just bought here on the corner says that Nazis and Italy have declared war on us? Did you — had you seen that?

Unidentified man: No, I didn't notice that. I'm not surprised — [*Phil Cohen interrupts, unintelligible*] I mean I naturally thought that this was a forerunner of what will happen and naturally that Italy and Germany being allied with Japan would naturally be our common enemy right now. They were up to now, except it was an undeclared state of war.

Philip Cohen: Undeclared. Thanks very much. How did you feel? Would you?

Unidentified Woman: Well, my sentiments are exactly the same.

Philip Cohen: You felt the same way? It came as a surprise to you?

Unidentified Woman: Apparently so.

Philip Cohen: I heard some people say that they thought it was a made-up broadcast.

Unidentified Woman: Oh no.

Philip Cohen: Did any of your friends feel that way?

Unidentified Woman: No. Definitely not [*cars driving by*].

Philip Cohen: As a result of the Orson Welles broadcast they thought it was another one of those things. I heard a couple people . . .

Unidentified Woman: Oh no. *[laughs]*

Unidentified Man: Well, some people stretch it too far. I mean I thought it was the inevitable happening. That was my opinion of it. While true I was shocked to hear it, but at the same time I did think that it was something that had to happen sooner later. And especially with the Japanese and representatives here this time it wasn't surprising that, although it did surprise me a little to think that it happened at a time when they were practically negotiating —

Philip Cohen: While they were still negotiating.

Unidentified man: — While they were still here, you'd think after they went back that something like that would have occurred.

Philip Cohen: All right, thanks.

### **Cut B6**

Alan Lomax: This gentleman here Phil, is from the Defense Housing Administration, ask him about it.

Philip Cohen: Actually, would you mind saying a word? What is your name sir?

Government Housing Builder: My name is Government Housing Builder.

Philip Cohen: And where do you work sir?

Government Housing Builder: I'm self-employed. I'm building a hotel to house government workers up near Dupont Circle.

Philip Cohen: Has there been a tremendous influx of people? Are there a lot of *[a lot of voices and noises on street]*—

Government Housing Builder: Yes sir. We're quite overcrowded and I think our place is typical of all Washington. And we're making space for two hundred fifty girls which we expect to accommodate about March 1.

Philip Cohen: I see. Do you expect more people to come in all the time, do you?



Government Housing Builder: According to the report, they expect thousands within the next year.

Philip Cohen: Is that so? As a result of the —

Government Housing Builder: — war activity.

Philip Cohen: — war declaration. How did you feel about the war itself when you heard about it?

Government Housing Builder: Oh, I regard the result as inevitable, but I think with our superior manpower and materials we'll eventually win, but it will probably be a long fight.

Philip Cohen: Did you see the report in tonight's paper that I'm holding here that the Nazis and Italy have declared war? Had you seen it?

Government Housing Builder: No, I hadn't seen it, but that's quite natural they should.

Philip Cohen: You think that's the —

Government Housing Builder: That's the natural outcome. Yes sir.

Philip Cohen: How do you feel it's all going to turn out?

Government Housing Builder: I think eventually we'll win, but it will be a long fight. [*horns honking*]

Philip Cohen: Do you have any of your friends or relatives very closely affected, I mean who are in the Armed Forces —

Government Housing Builder: No, none.

Philip Cohen: — in this war?

Government Housing Builder: No sir.

Philip Cohen: Wonder if any of you folks do — would like to say a word? Thank you very much sir.

Philip Cohen: Would you tell us what you feel about this present thing?

Writer: I think the line of our forces are clear now. It seems to me we have the alliances in Britain, Russia, China to defeat the aggressors over the entire world and on all the fronts. And I think the American people believe that and will be glad of the opportunity now to stop aggression.

Philip Cohen: Do you think it's going to be a long fight or what are your feelings?

Writer: I wouldn't make any estimate of that sir.

Philip Cohen: But you think that we're going to see the thing through is that it?

Writer: I'm certain we'll see the thing through.

Philip Cohen: I wonder, would you mind telling me what you do? Are you in the government?

Writer: I'm a writer, I just came down to work with the War Department.

Philip Cohen: With the War Department, do you mind giving us your name?

Writer: Yes. Yes, I won't give you my name.

Philip Cohen: Oh, this isn't to be broadcast really, I mean it's just a [*unintelligible due to street sounds and voice that begins talking over*].

Alan Lomax: Will you tell us what you believe the fight is going to be about?

Unidentified Man: Yes, I think it's a fight now of a country whose people influenced their government, who have effect on their own economic life and cultural life, and who will know what they are fighting for and be able to fight it better against a group of countries whose dictatorship, and the political life and the economic life of those countries, that will weaken them and give us the final edge that means victory without any question.

Philip Cohen: All right, thanks very much. Well, Alan will you take over?

Is there anybody else who would like to go on record? We're not broadcasting. This is for the Library of Congress. We just want to have on record what people feel and think about the war today. Would you say a word sir? What is your name sir?

Man with British Air Command: [removed]

Philip Cohen: How did you feel when you first heard this report of war?

Man with British Air Command: I expected it, but not so abruptly.

Philip Cohen: Did you expect it from that quarter, Mr. Tergeson?

Man with British Air Command: Yes.

Philip Cohen: Rather than from across the sea?

Man with British Air Command: Mm, hmm [*affirmative*]. Yes. I'm with the British Air Commission and our studies along that line led us to believe that.

Philip Cohen: I see. Then it wasn't, you think, totally unexpected in all quarters that the attack would come there?

Man with British Air Command: No, it wasn't.

Alan Lomax: How do you feel about it now that the issue is joined as Churchill said that [*disc begins skipping.*] What do you feel will be the future?

Man with British Air Command: [*sound fades out*]