

"Man-on-the-Street", Bloomington, Indiana, December 10, 1941

AFS 6360A

[some voices difficult to distinguish from one another]

Paul Martin: This is Wednesday, December 10th, 1941. Last Sunday, three days ago, on December 7th, the United States of America was attacked by armed forces of the Japanese Empire. Indiana University, in cooperation with the Library of Congress of the United States, has arranged to record some of the opinions of five representative students concerning the war at this point. These students, we believe, have opinions which should be taken into consideration because they are the people who will be bearing the brunt of this war after the war actually gets underway.

First, I have upon my right, Mr. Mike Fox, a sophomore. Mr. Fox, tell us just nearly as you can just what you thought of the war when you heard of the declaration of war by Japan? I mean the attack of the Japanese planes upon Pearl Harbor last Sunday?

Mike Fox: Well, I was stunned and at first I didn't believe it.

Paul Martin: Did not believe it at first. Well, after that period left you, then what did you think about it?

Mike Fox: Oh, I'd say it was one a feeling of fury and anger that we had been betrayed.

Paul Martin: That we had been betrayed by the people who negotiated in Washington at the time of the actual attack did take place.

Mike Fox: Yes.

Mr. Boyer: I think our secretary of state must have been asleep if we were betrayed. Clearly, we need somebody in the Naval Intelligence Corps to kind of find out what's going on. If we didn't know what was going on prior to the attacks.

Paul Martin: I see. Mr. Royer believes —

Mr. Boyer: Boyer.

Broadcast: — Mr. Boyer believes that we were asleep. Ms. Fargo?

Ms. Fargo: And yet, don't you feel at the same time that perhaps it wasn't a matter of their being asleep, but rather of holding out to the very end and maintaining an American policy which we have attempted to follow?

Male Student: I agree with Ms. Fargo very much. We weren't asleep. After all the Japanese asked for two extra weeks in negotiations. Believing this to be in the guise of friendship we did so. They even sent another ambassador, Mr. Kurusu, to interview the secretary of state. And after all under this guise, I don't think we can say anything but treachery.

Paul Martin: Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell: You think we could trust the Japanese or any other of the Axis powers since 1939?

Male Student: Isn't it better to trust than to shed the blood of so many millions of people?

Mr. Russell: Do you think that we have not been at war with Japan, Germany, and Italy since 1939?

Male Student: We have had an un-belligerent status.

Mr. Russell: Un-belligerent status in what sense?

Male Student: We have not actually engaged in armed conflict with either of these people.

Mr. Russell: Then you're defining war merely as armed conflict?

Male Student: Yes, I am.

Mr. Russell: And you're willing to cry treachery and betrayal that the other country gets the jump on us?

Ms. Fargo: Paul, before we get off track here, I wonder getting back to your first question if any of the rest of you felt that Germany, as a first reaction, was behind this as a very well thought out, well-timed plan? Rather than Japan itself taking a lead on this?

Paul Martin: Ms. Fossil, what was your opinion about that?

Ms. Fossil: Well, of course it was a shock. We just got in from a hike Sunday afternoon. Along came these headlines that war had been declared on the United States by Japan. I got sort of confused and told a Jewish dialect story to a bunch of Jewish students [*laughter*]. Then we thought things

over a while, but it just didn't seem right that Japan should be the ones making attack. I would have expected an attack on the Atlantic, first.

Paul Martin: Well, now since we have some of the attitudes which some of you hadn't at the time when you heard of the attack by Japan I'd like to get just what some of your attitudes were concerning our foreign policy before this bombing. In other words, whether or not your attitudes were drastically changed by this bombing. Mr. Fox?

Mike Fox: Well, I was definitely a cooperationist before this, I don't believe in isolation, and never have.

Paul Martin: Cooperationist? Would you tell us what a cooperationist —

Mike Fox: Well, I believe that we should work in concert with the other democratic nations of the world. Long I have felt that the difficulty of the United States has been that we, after framing the idea of the League of Nations, dropped out of it. Since the war broke out in 1939, I have felt that we should give England and later Russia every assistance short of war. Now, my feelings are exactly the same now that we're in it.

Mr. Boyer: I think Mr. Fox has been reading too many newspapers [*laughter*]. Of course, that is the traditional attitude. The democratic nations of the world, which there aren't any democratic nations outside of the United States, and the . . . we have cooperated economically, but we are keeping the other countries of the world on, I can't express what I mean to say. Let someone else take over.

Ms. Fargo: Paul? From a student's standpoint I wonder if we don't lean a little bit towards this. Especially when we heard the president's speech the other day and heard this unanimous enthusiastic reaction from our Congressmen. We've been brought up for the past nineteen and twenty years to abhor war and to treat it as something that is not a part of our culture. And then in the past few years, I don't believe we are too surprised at the Japanese action, because we've seen what they've done in the past and we've watched them fairly closely. But, weren't we a little bit used to the idea that we wanted to avoid everything at all costs and then this sudden foreign war policy thrown upon us was rather a shock to this generation because, I for one was rather surprised at the Congressmen the other day cheering so enthusiastically. And yet, I think if I were there, I'd probably would have done the same thing.

Mr. Russell: Yes, the other idea, I think, has been instilled into the minds of the youth of this country ever since the World War that war is the greatest of all evils.

Paul Martin: Mr. Fox, getting back to what you said just a moment ago, you said that you believed in helping Great Britain and the other democracies win this war by every means short of war. In other words, you do not feel that the United States is at war with Germany at the present time to the same extent to which she is with Japan?

Mike Fox: I would say morally yes, but looking at the problem realistically and practically, I believe that as a military standpoint it is far better to fight on one front than on two. By concentrating our efforts on Japan, I am of the opinion that we can knock her out of the war much more rapidly than we can if our efforts are split by an AEF, for example, in Africa and an Atlantic fleet which must see action in the Atlantic.

Mr. Russell: Don't forget that's just exactly what Hitler wants us to do. If we concentrate entirely upon Japan, then we must stop our flow of goods to Great Britain and Russia. And evidently, the grand strategy pact of the Axis powers is to divert our flow of materials.

Ms. Fossil: But according to what the president said in his speech last night, he is intending to continue our shipments to Russia and to England.

Mr. Boyer: I'd like to call to Ms. Fossil's attention the fact that the only road left to Russia is now the road through Persia. And there's a lot of stock lies behind the Japanese archipelago. Therefore, I believe that we can help Russia by sending all these supplies to Persia. But if we do get into the war with Germany it means splitting our resources. And just as Germany did not want to fight on more than one front, neither should we.

Ms. Fossil: In regard to that, we don't even know Russia's stand yet.

Mr. Boyer: Yes, in Germany, Germany is the base for the whole thing. I think that we should get at the base of this thing instead of going around the fringes and taking the longest way in, just go to the base and wipe that out and then the whole thing will be solved.

Paul Martin: Then you would favor an immediate declaration of war —

Mr. Boyer: That's right.

Paul Martin: — against Germany?

Mr. Boyer: That's right.

Ms. Fargo: Well, it hasn't been our policy in the past to do that.

Mr. Boyer: Well, I think we've gone too much on tradition now and that's the reason this Pearl Harbor incident has come out. We have thought of this non-combatant tradition of the United States and I think we should quit fooling around with ideologies and get down to actual fighting and what is really happening here in the world.

Ms. Fossil: But the more time we have before we go to war with Germany, the more war planes we have, the more equipment we have, the better preparation we have. If we can put it off two weeks, then we have just two weeks advantage on supplies.

Mike Fox: I'd like to make just one more point and that is that we have no common battlefield to meet Germany on. Against Japan, it is true, that we can meet them at sea since they have a navy and we have also. Germany, on the other hand, has virtually no navy. We would have to send an A.E.F. to Africa which there is a presence, a rather strong force of British, which are at the moment at least successful.

Paul Martin: Mr. Fox, do you feel that we must see the eventual defeat of Germany before we can see any kind of a peace ??? world?

Mike Fox: Absolutely.

Paul Martin: Then what course do you recommend that we follow in order to achieve that defeat?

Mike Fox: Well, I say to retain our present status toward Germany and toward Italy. It is a status of actual non-belligerency. In other words, we're at war morally, emotionally, and physically, but we're not actually fighting. And yet, I say, continue to fight the Japanese in an actual armed way. Eventually I feel that Japan will be the first to drop out for matter of internal weakness. Then we can turn our attention completely to the Germans after having eliminated one front completely.

Paul Martin: And do you feel that an expeditionary force sent to the continent of Europe to fight Germany will be necessary?

Mike Fox: Eventually, yes.

Paul Martin: Eventually. But at the present we must dispose of Japan.

Mike Fox: I believe so.

Paul Martin: ???

Mr. Boyer: Can you imagine if we didn't have any common battlefield? We're on Iceland, we have it occupied. We could fly from Iceland to the continent and back and we would have a common battlefield there.

Paul Martin: How about an AEF up through the Scandinavian countries?

Mike Fox [?]: You'll have to land at Norway, which is at present, in control of the Germans. Sweden is a neutral, and I feel certain, were any attempt made to land on Sweden they would call in the assistance of Germany.

Male Student: I doubt it.

Ms. Fossil: What about South America's position in this too? I think that's a pretty important point that we haven't brought in as far as the concentration of German feelings in those countries.

Mike Fox [?]: Well, several of the small South American countries have declared war and others have said that they will not recognize a state of belligerency between the United States and Japan.

Which is in the favor of the United States because it means that we can use their ports just as we could in time of peace. I think they all are definitely sympathetic. Of course they have been somewhat on the position that Japan has been in. Namely that they want to be on the winning side, but they are so close to the United States that I think that they all realize that their destinies are pretty inevitably wrapped up with those of the United States. I don't think that any of us are alarmed over what the South American countries might do in regards to this war, are we?

Mike Fox [?]: I don't —

Mr Boyer: Well, there isn't much they can do.

Male Student: No.

Mr. Boyer: They're forced to do whatever they are doing. If they did want us to do different, I think because of their intimate relationship with the United States they would be cut off completely, economically and physically [*laughs*] and every other way.

Paul Martin: Well, I think that we're all pretty generally agreed then that the United States must see to the eventual defeat of the Axis powers in order to achieve a peace.

Male Student: I believe that's right.

Female Student: Mm, hmm [*affirmative*].

Paul Martin: I think that's more or less a universally consented to at this discussion. Well, now after this war is over we're going to have a problem which is even more important. And that is this — just what part the United States can and will play in the formation of some kind of a post-war world. Mr. Fox?

Mike Fox: Well, thereby hangs I believe the entire problem. I think personally that if the United States will take part in the peace treaty, and we will, we shouldn't make the mistakes that we made back at Versailles in nineteen hundred and seventeen, eighteen. And which caused us to remain at war, officially, with Germany until the Twenties. If we are going to set up an international association of nations then we must be in it.

Male Student: Right.

Mike Fox: We must give that association some form of teeth so that it will work. Certainly, if Germany is beaten, we cannot kick her when it's down because the same situation will occur at the end of twenty years that has occurred now. A great deal I feel to blame for this war must be laid at the doors of those nations which were victorious in the last world war.

Ms. Fargo: And then we want force as our leading policy so far as we're concerned?

Mr. Boyer: I said that we can not kick Germany down and keep her down. There's always the possibility that we can keep her down as we did not do after the last world war. We kicked her down, but we let her get back up.

Paul Martin: And then may I ask one question to those people who are here? Do you believe it's Christian or do you believe it's even decent or democratic to carry on that sort of a policy toward a ??? nation?

Female Student: I don't think so.

Mike Fox [?]: I don't think it's good sense. It doesn't seem practicable.

Female Student: I think our fight's with the German government, not with the German people.

Male Student: I agree.

Mr. Boyer: Yes [*laughs*], but there wouldn't be any German government if the German people didn't sanction it. Hitler can't fight the war by himself. He can't form all the public opinion. Someone is putting him there. Just the same as all leaders are put there. They have to have a backing, someone behind them. They can't [*several voices begin speaking at once*] — just go out with their bare fists and say “Come on boys, all of you follow me.”

Ms. Fargo: Well, then again you've got to look at the Germany which resulted from what we did and what we didn't carry out. Because Hitler himself is a product of, we might say, of what we as an entire group of nations did then. The German people, [*male student begins speaking at same time*] when you're ready for something naturally are going to vote in someone —

Male Student: Oh certainly, and I agree with you there, but you certainly ??? Hitler out on a little space of his own and say he's the cause of all this, that's —

Female Student: Well, no one is doing that [*other female student speaks at same time*]. No.

Mike Fox [?]: You can't hope when I say to [*disc skips*] Germany and keep her down. What will you do, I mean you can't wipe out an entire people, even Hitler has tried that and found it extremely unsuccessful. So, I think that a just and beneficial peace must come out of this. And furthermore, I believe this peace must be based on a disarmament policy.

Paul Martin: You don't think then that it will be wise nor necessary for the United States to police the world, so to speak, after this war is over?

Mike Fox: Why no, I think that's going back to the Dark Ages.

Female Student: Mike, I disagree with you. I thought you were getting at another point. When I said force, I meant that as an immediate step towards reconstruction you would of necessity have to use force. Otherwise, you would have the same thing reoccurring and that's what we didn't do.

Mike Fox: If you have an international police force which apparently the United States is going to supply then you're simply going to leave the world [*disc ends*].