On January 11, 1952, Frederick C. Oechsner, acting special assistant to the assistant secretary of state for public affairs, sent a memorandum to Assistant Press Secretary Roger Tubby, outlining a program for President Truman’s participation in ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the Voice of America, which was to be celebrated on February 22, 1952 (Washington’s Birthday). The original idea was for President Truman to deliver a five-minute address on or near the U.S. Coast Guard vessel Courier, which was equipped to transmit and rebroadcast the Voice of America signals with tremendous power. The program was scheduled for between 2 and 4 P.M. on February 22 and was to include remarks by the secretaries of state and treasury, the commandant of the Coast Guard, and several members of Congress. It was hoped that Senators Lodge, Benton, and Mundt would participate.

On several occasions early in February, there was some brief mention of the State Department request. Since February 22 was a holiday and the president planned to be cruising on the Williamsburg at that time, he requested that the Voice of America program be shifted to Sunday afternoon, February 24, at 3 P.M. This would enable the president to complete his cruise uninterrupted, step off the Williamsburg, and take part in the Courier ceremonies at the Navy Yard without much lost motion. The Department of State wanted members of Congress from the Appropriations, Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Relations committees there because of their role in funding the Voice of America. In discussions at the White House staff meetings, the occasion was described as an opportunity for psychological warfare, rather than simply as a way to
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commemorate the achievements of the Voice of America on its tenth anniversary.

Primary responsibility for drafting the president's remarks was given to David Lloyd. On February 8, Lloyd handed me Oechsner's memorandum, along with a first draft by the State Department which Lloyd labeled as "rather rambling and tepid." To get started on a discussion of a new theme, Lloyd called a meeting for Monday, February 11, attended by Joseph Phillips and Ben Crosby of the Office of Public Affairs at the Department of State; Walworth Barbour, acting director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs at State; Marshall Shulman, Secretary Acheson's special assistant and top speech writer; and myself. Roger Tubby was to have been there, but he was ill that day.

At the meeting, Barbour and Phillips warned that many Western European countries were actually afraid of this type of propagandistic operation; and Barbour and Phillips felt it was dangerous to give the Western Europeans strong evidence that we were inciting the Soviet Union. We generally agreed that the best approach would be for the president to emphasize that this ship was on a mission of peace rather than to signal the start of a large-scale, aggressive or provocative program.

On Saturday, February 15, Ben Crosby called me to say that because of strikes, lack of spare parts, etc., the captain of the Coast Guard ship was not sure he could get the Courier to Washington in time for the February 24 ceremonies. Understandably, Crosby was very agitated. I told him that it was the State Department's responsibility to get the vessel to Washington since they had committed the president to a definite speaking date. The State Department then turned to the assistant press secretary, Irv Perimeter, for help in getting the White House to intervene. Perimeter told me that the State Department ought to fly the ship down to Washington piece by piece if necessary once they had committed the president to the date of February 24.

But the problem remained and was bucked back to the White House again. So at a White House staff meeting discussion, the president agreed to postpone the speaking date until March 4. Now, with the date firmly set, getting a good draft together became a must. On Thursday morning, February 27, I telephoned Joe Phillips at the State Department and said it was imperative that we have the State Department's current ideas by that afternoon. At a meeting that morning in Charles Murphy's office with Dave Bell and myself, I remarked that the State Department was concerned that the president's remarks might be "too provocative." Dave Bell exploded: "What can a little ship do? It has no guns. It just has a radio. There's nothing provocative about that, for crying out loud!"
Late Thursday afternoon, State sent over their draft, along with two other drafts which Phillips said they had rejected but sent along "because we might want to see them." Lloyd looked them over and then suggested we concentrate on broadcasting a message of peace and friendship directly to the peoples of the Soviet Union and China. Lloyd pointed out that we had helped both nations when they were invaded and suggested I look into the 1951 congressional resolution of friendship for the peoples of the Soviet Union, which had been transmitted to President Shvernik. I promised to produce a new draft by the next morning.

I read the congressional resolution, but found little inspiration except in the technique of piercing the Iron Curtain to get directly to the Russian people. Then I read the State Department draft and picked out those portions that seemed appropriate. But the central theme was missing. In desperation, I picked up the two "rejected" State Department drafts. Buried in one draft was a brilliant phrase, thrown in by a chap named Holder of the Eastern European Affairs desk, to the effect that the ship carried not weapons of destruction but a cargo of truth. I decided to salvage this concept and feature it, and the "cargo of truth" phrase not only stayed in every subsequent draft but also was selected as the title of the address.

The draft started with a brief description of the mission of the ship and led into the "cargo of truth." Then I worked in the idea that many peoples had contributed to the construction of the ship. There followed a simple message to the peoples behind the Iron Curtain. Then to personalize the president's message came this sentence: "I say to you with all my heart that we yearn for peace, and we want to work with you to secure peace." (This latter thought survived.) I wasted some time going through John Masefield's poems, including one called "Truth," which included a phrase about man having "but an hour of breath to build a ship of Truth in which his soul may sail," but it turned out to be a bit macabre for this purpose.

Dave Lloyd took the draft and polished it. He observed that "this was not a Christmas speech" as he struck out the last four words of the expressed aim: "to bring peace on earth, good will toward men." I protested that this was a natural phrase, but Dave took it out. (It did not reappear, incidentally, until the president in delivering the speech looked up from his manuscript when he read "peace on earth" and ad-libbed "and good will to all men.")

Some phone calls came in from the State Department, imploring us to emphasize that the ship was only one part of our whole "campaign of truth" and not to give the impression this was everything. Lloyd worked this in during the day on Friday (February 29). Jim Loeb (re-
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cently added to Charles Murphy's staff) looked at my draft and made a few useful suggestions. One was that we use the Courier's name and indicate that it was carrying a message. Jim also suggested that I strike out the section that indicated that listeners were assembled peacefully to hear the message, as though at corner grocery stores. After some discussion, Lloyd rewrote the ending so it would sound less like we were working closely together with the peoples of the Soviet Union and China.

Just before lunch on Friday, February 29, Lloyd and I spent about an hour and a half tightening up the draft, pepping it up a little, and honing it down to three legal-sized pages. Then we sent copies over to Charlie Murphy and to State. State had two comments: first, that the ship was broadcasting in a manner designed to increase the volume; and second, to say that we should have faith that all peoples will "once again" walk in the sunlight of peace and justice was not historically accurate, inasmuch as some people had not always lived in peace and justice.

Murphy's reaction was that the three-page draft was too thin and could use more affirmative substance. He rewrote the middle section, adding some stirring phrases about the meaning of truth and its relation to peace. He also added a paragraph denouncing the wickedness of the Communist doctrine.

Just after lunch on Saturday, March 1, Murphy, Bell, Loeb, and I assembled in Murphy's office to review the redraft. Lloyd attacked the paragraph about the wickedness of communism, contending we were directing a message to these people and should not denounce them as wicked before we extended the olive branch of friendship. After some argument about the relation of this thought to the domestic political situation, the phrases were eventually dropped.

We had one sentence that read: "Our arguments, no matter how meritorious, are not going to influence people who never hear them." Dave Bell said, "My Aunt Minnie would have to stop and think when you got to the word meritorious," and he suggested replacing it with good. Jim Loeb fought hard on this, saying that an argument could be a good one, without necessarily being a right one, so he suggested valid as an adjective. Whereupon, Bell commented: "Oh, Jim, you're splitting hairs." Loeb responded: "Isn't that what we're supposed to be doing here?" After some laughter, the adjective good remained.

In commenting on the sentence, "We must use vigorous, hard-hitting methods," Murphy said that "methods" sounded too much like government gobbledygook. Suddenly he asked, "What was that thing Phil Spitalny and his all-girl orchestra used to open their program with?" Bell laughed and sang out, "We must be vigilant, we must be diligent, American Patrol!"
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In my first draft, I had the phrase: "As president of the United States, I say with all my heart that we yearn for peace . . . ." Dave Bell contended that yearn always made him think of someone sitting off in a corner and sobbing for something he couldn’t get. But for reasons I couldn’t quite comprehend, the word yearn stayed.

About 2:30 P.M. on Saturday, March 1, the revised draft was sent to the White House staff room for retyping. Murphy asked me to clear it with the State Department so we could have it ready for a freezing session with the president at noon Monday. This was a pretty tough assignment, since everybody had gone home over the weekend.

The speech was retyped by 4 P.M. I roused Marshall Shulman at home. He protested he had had a total of four hours of sleep in the past three days preparing Dean Acheson’s television speech of the night before reviewing the Lisbon conference. We agreed that it would be difficult to get clearance at that hour and decided to have a crash clearance session early Monday morning. By 10 A.M. Monday, however, there were agonized wails from the State Department. They were bitterly upset by the omission of the paragraph that the Courier was only one small part of the Voice of America and the “campaign of truth.” They strongly insisted that this paragraph be reinserted and that there also must be included something on the exchange-of-persons program.

Lloyd harrumphed: "I'll put in the libraries and information centers, but unless and until the State Department gets a better phrase for 'exchange of persons,' I refuse to have the president endorse something that sounds so much like white slave traffic." At 1 P.M., Monday, March 3, the speech was again retyped. Murphy then asked for a final review of the draft with Lloyd and me prior to the scheduled 4 P.M. freezing session. The changes were generally minor, like the last-minute protest by the State Department objecting to the statement that Russian and Chinese rulers were attacking us, in light of the fact there was no physical attack. I suggested assailing instead of attacking, which was accepted all around.

We got the eight copies of the finally retyped Courier speech just about at 4 P.M., and I brought them to the Cabinet Room. There Murphy, Bell, George Elsey, and Marshall Shulman were hard at work on the mutual security message to Congress, which was due to be sent to Capitol Hill within forty-eight hours. Drafts, books, papers, and notes were splattered all over the Cabinet Room; and in the midst of the confusion the president came in. He immediately said to George Elsey, "Well, having you here is just like old times." Elsey and Shulman swept up their papers and adjourned to work on the mutual security message elsewhere.
Then Press Secretary Joe Short came in. Bell and Murphy sat to the president's right; Short, Lloyd, and I sat to his left.

Fingering the Courier draft, the president commented: "Well, this certainly has the virtue of brevity. That's more than you can say for the one I have to give on Thursday on mutual security. I worked on that one last night, and the Madam says it's a darned good speech—and she's my best critic. I'm going to work on the Tuesday speech this evening. By the way, can you get me a final of the Thursday speech by Tuesday because I want to have at least two days to work it over before delivering it?"

Murphy and Bell pursed their lips into a silent whistle. They had counted on finishing the message to Congress first and then going to work on the March 6 fireside chat on mutual security; now they knew they had to drop their work on the message and go to work on the fireside chat instead.

Someone asked the president how his eighty-nine-year-old mother-in-law, Mrs. Wallace, was getting along. The president said: "Well, she feels OK in the mornings, but not so good in the afternoons. I thought I ought to summon her sons, and they all came in. She appreciates the thought, but you know the old lady called them all in this morning and said: 'Boys, I want you to know that I love you even more for coming here this way. But I'm old enough to go, and you have big jobs to take care of back home. When I go, I'll know you've been here, so that's all that matters—you can go home now.'"

Then the president picked up the Courier draft and started reading it aloud, pausing after each page for comments. After the first page, Bell pointed out that there were an unusually large number of s sounds in the first two paragraphs: speaking, ship, special, ship, special, mission, precious, etc. The president laughed good-naturedly and responded: "That s sound doesn't bother me near as much since the dentist fixed my teeth. I don't whistle on 'em nearly as much as I used to, Dave."

Joe Short said, "Can't somebody get me a better and clearer page 3 so the girls in the Staff Room won't go blind retyping this?" I made a hurried search and discovered to my horror that the carbons were all faulty on page 3. The president quipped, "Page 3 has pernicious anemia."

Joe Short asked that a colon be inserted at one point, and the president recalled that "Charley Ross was the greatest guardian of the colon and the semi-colon in days gone by." I suggested that the word particularly be changed to especially since it was easier to pronounce, and the president said, "I'm 225 percent in favor of that change."

The president commented that the sentence about libraries, motion pictures, newspapers, and magazines was very dull. Lloyd pointed out
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how strongly the State Department had fought to leave it in. The president made a kindly, but somewhat derogatory remark about the ability of some people in the State Department to take a very simple and declarative statement and stretch it out into something of extreme complexity.

When we reached page 4, Bell wondered aloud how many people would understand the word *assailing*. Joe Short quickly defended *assailing*, stating it was a good old headline word which all newspapermen and readers would comprehend. There was a rather spirited discussion of the word, with attempts to find a substitute. I then made a rather weak pun: "Since it's a ship, isn't it OK to have it assailing?" There was deep silence; then with his deep Mississippi drawl, Joe Short expressed throaty disgust: "Oh, God, no!" But the president laughed enough to keep the word *assailing*, and that's the way he delivered it.

When he had finished reading and commenting, the president said: "Well, that's a very fine statement. I'm going to work on it some more tonight."

It was drizzling on the morning of March 4. I went aboard the *Courier* and up to the top deck, where there were seats for about two hundred people. The audience was enthusiastic. The president delivered his address in clear and measured tones. He had his heart in it, and the entire address was inspiringly delivered. The audience reaction was warm, positive, and enthusiastic. There was a genuine ring of conviction in the president's delivery. The chilled crowd gave him a rousing reception.

Within an hour of my return to the White House, I received three telephone calls—from Ben Crosby, Joe Phillips, and Doug Knox of the State Department. They all offered congratulations and said that the Department of State was highly pleased with the entire ceremony and in particular with the president's address.

I telephoned Bob Thompson, chief of publications at the State Department, and asked him for printed copies of the speech. Thompson did a quick and beautiful job on the printing, and we had the 1,500 copies by 9 A.M. March 5—less than twenty-four hours after the president delivered the speech. I called Charley VanDevender, director of publicity at the Democratic National Committee, and India Edwards, chairman of the Women's Division, and forwarded them copies when they were printed. I told Executive Clerk Bill Hopkins he could have five hundred copies for inclusion in the president's correspondence.

I asked Park Armstrong, special assistant to the secretary of state in charge of intelligence, to run a special survey abroad to gauge the reaction in foreign countries, and the results were enthusiastic and positive. Dave Lloyd said the president was highly pleased with the speech and
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had commented to him favorably on several occasions since its delivery. The newspaper and editorial reaction was very favorable, and they were still writing and editorializing about it on March 9—five days after the speech.

I called Frank Kelly of Senate majority leader Ernest McFarland's office and arranged to have him place the text of the speech, along with an editorial from the New York Times, in the Congressional Record. The New York Times editorial of March 5, 1952, read in part:

Going over the heads of their Governments, President Truman yesterday broadcast directly to the peoples of Soviet Russia and Red China a message of peace, hope and friendship.

He told the Soviet peoples and the Chinese that, contrary to the flood of lies and calumnies unloosed against us by Communist propaganda, we remain their friends. He recalled to them that only a decade ago we went to their aid to liberate them from the most savage invasions in history. Finally, he assured them that it is only the aggressive policies of their own rulers that compel us to arm in self-defense, and that if these rulers would abandon their senseless policy of hate and terror and follow the principles of peace there are no differences between us and their countries that cannot be settled by peaceful means.

Mr. Truman spoke from the new radio ship Courier, which has been equipped for "Operation Vagabond" to carry the campaign of truth waged by the United States through the Voice of America closer to peoples behind the Iron Curtain. But in thus dedicating this new instrument of the campaign he also inaugurated a whole new phase of the campaign. For his broadcast was one of the most direct appeals made by an American President to the peoples of other countries over the heads of their hostile rulers since President Wilson's days.