

THE DRAFTING OF THE PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE OF MARCH 12, 1947

Chronology

February 28, 1947

The President had been concerned from the beginning not so much about the decision he had to make regarding Greece and Turkey as about the extent to which Congress and the American people could be convinced that a program of aid was necessary. As indicated in the previous Chronology, the President, Marshall, Acheson, Vandenberg, and the Cabinet as a whole had emphasized the central importance of the public approach. Once the basic decisions had been made, therefore, the drafting of the President's Message to Congress and the working out of an information program came to occupy a central position.

As stated in the previous chronology, at Mr. Acheson's meeting with his staff on February 28, responsibility for working out an information program was assigned to Francis Russell, to be aided by Jernegan, Thompson, and Jones (and Russell, upon Acheson's suggestion invoked the aid of the SWNCC Foreign Policy Information Subcommittee). Specific responsibility for drafting the President's Message was not assigned, but Jones proceeded on the assumption that he would be so assigned. For the first few days after February 28, in considering what should be said publicly, and how, there was no distinction between what should be said in the President's Message and what should be said in supporting speeches and documents used before Congress and in a public information program. Jones attended all information meetings for background.

2:30 p.m. Meeting of the SWNCC Subcommittee on Foreign Policy Information in the Department Conference room on the top floor of the Dep't Annex at 18th and Pennsylvania. Present were: State: Russell, John Jernegan, Llewellyn Thompson, Joseph Jones, Stevens (EUR), Friedman and George Morgan (PA); Navy: Dennison, Tichenor; War: Maj. Gen. Wm. H. Arnold, Col. Parker, LeBreton, Ballard; Others: from information staffs of State, War, and Navy. (Note: I do not have the full names of the War and Navy representatives, and may have them mixed up). Russell, Jernegan, Thompson, Arnold, and Dennison did practically all the talking.

The problem, stated by the Subcommittee in its report, was "1. To make possible the formulation of intelligent opinions by the American people on the problems created by the present situation in Greece through the furnishing of full and frank information by the Government. 2. To portray the world conflict between free and totalitarian or imposed forms of government; 3. To bring about an understanding by the American people of the world strategic situation." The specific tasks of the Subcommittee were to draw together background information from the three Departments relating to all aspects — political, economic, and military — of the program of aid to Greece and Turkey, define the program of aid contemplated, set out informational objectives, draft the themes to be used in the public approach, consider what the lines of Soviet propaganda would be and how to counter them, and prepare specific informational programs for getting the story over to the press, radio, magazines, and group leaders throughout the country.

Russell summarized Acheson's analysis of the situation as given to Congressional leaders the previous day and to the staff meeting that morning. Each of the principals present reflected to a degree the views expressed in the staff meetings ~~xxxxxx~~ and paper work of the previous week, plus the personal

ideas of each as to the nature and proportions of the problem and how to present it publicly. But in a very curious way the breadth and tone of the President's Message was achieved and crystallized in this meeting of the SWNCC Subcommittee, in the weekend labors of Russell, Thompson, Jernegan, and Villard, and in the final report which they drew up on Sunday (March 2), had mimeographed on Monday (March 3) and gave to Acheson on March 4. This document, especially the general portions dealing with the facts not only of the specific situation but the wider situation, became the central document used in drafting the President's Message, and is therefore of special importance.

Who said what at this Feb. 28 meeting of the Subcommittee need not be related here, but most of the themes that found their way into the Message were expressed in this meeting. A working party was then appointed to pull together the discussion of the meeting (Col. Parker, LeBreton, Ballard, Thompson, Fichenor, and Friedman) and write the report. They were instructed to meet the following day (Saturday March 1) and carry on their work. (Actually, Thompson took charge of the drafting of the most important parts of the Report, aided by Russell, Villard, Jernegan, and Jones. Notes: If this is not true, would someone correct me?)

March 1

Working Party of the SWNCC Subcommittee met in Francis Russell's office, with Thompson, Villard, Jernegan, and Jones present most of the day.

March 2 (Sunday)

Russell, Thompson, Villard, and Jernegan revised and refined the work of the previous day and produced the final Report -- "Public Information Program on Aid to Greece". It was mimeographed on March 3 and handed to Acheson on Mar. 4.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, March 2, Jones, anticipating the assignment of responsibility for drafting the two Presidential speeches, spent the day at home (it snowed Saturday night and melted on Sunday) trying in five pages of triple-spaced draft, to establish a tone, a breadth, a pitch for the President's Message. His was only the beginning of a Message, which he handed to Loy Henderson the next morning (March 3). The same Sunday, Loy Henderson and Gordon Merriam wrote full length drafts of a Message.

March 3 (Monday)

Loy Henderson sent the fractional Jones draft along with his own and Merriam's to Acheson. In the late afternoon Loy called Jones to say that he was to be assigned the job and to stand by for a call from Acheson. At 7 p.m. Acheson called Jones to his office and gave him his assignment, telling him to keep in close touch with Henderson.

March 4 (Tuesday)

Acheson called a drafting Conference in his office. Present were Jones, Russell, Thompson, Hickerson, Havlik, John Howard, Ernest Gross, John Gange, and others. Acheson said he liked the tone and introduction written by Jones. Then he took up the SWNCC Report and went through it paragraph by paragraph and indicated what might be used in the President's Message. In each case there was discussion, and ideas were thrown in and agreed upon or rejected. Acheson then referred to specific items in the Henderson and Merriam drafts that might be useful. Jones took notes and got a general idea of what was wanted.

He worked late that night turning out the first working draft, dated March 4, which was considered in the second drafting conference in Mr. Acheson's office on March 5.

March 5, 1947 (Wednesday)

Afternoon. Second drafting conference in Mr. Acheson's office. Some of those present the previous day were there, but fewer. Acheson said the Jones draft dated March 4 was a good one to take for further editing, and it seemed to meet with general approval. Acheson then proceeded to lead the group in a line by line consideration of the draft, and a considerable number of revisions, deletions, and additions were suggested. Jones made changes on his copy and took notes on additions and substitutions suggested; afterwards, he returned to his office and worked that evening on a revised draft.

March 6

Morning. Jones went to see Acheson to suggest that the idea of a Presidential radio "fireside chat" be abandoned. The Message was shaping up in a pretty forceful way, and Jones suggested that it would be more impressive if the President went to Congress to deliver it in person. Also, he suggested that the way things were going there wasn't going to be time to write a radio speech for delivery the same day as the Message. Acheson readily agreed, and said he would recommend it to the President, which he did. The President accepted the suggestion. While with Acheson Jones brought up another matter that did not seem to get settled and which affected the drafting of the Message rather profoundly. The draft message at that point described Greece's plight in detail, emphasized at length the "wider situation", had three quarters of a page on Turkey, and yet requested Congress to authorize \$250 millions for Greece and \$250 millions "to be used in Turkey or in any other such country as may find itself in need of help in maintaining that economic stability necessary to the survival of its independence and free institutions". Jones had discovered that official decisions on this last part were exceedingly infirm, and could not get anyone even to edit that part; but the general philosophy and policy of the draft were so wide and sweeping that they led up to a request for an open authorization. Mr. Acheson leaned back, thought a while, looked over at the White House, and said slowly: "If F.D.R. were alive I think I know what he's do. He would make a statement of global policy, but confine his request for money right now to Greece and Turkey". Thus, Jones revised his draft accordingly (the changes appearing on his draft dated March 6) and specific authorization was asked only with respect to Greece and Turkey.

Afternoon. Third drafting conference in Mr. Acheson's office-- with only a few of the staff present -- to go over Jones' revised draft dated March 6. There were relatively few changes and corrections, these appearing on the third complete draft, dated March 7, which was sent to Mr. Acheson's office in numerous copies the following day. (Jones cleared it with Henderson and Hickerson).

March 7 (Friday)

The March 7 draft was cabled to Secretary Marshall in Paris on his way to Moscow. Marshall replied the next day approving, except for three minor deletions in wording which he suggested. Acheson also sent the March 7 draft to Clark Clifford in the White House.

March 8 (Saturday)

Acheson asked Jones and Hummelaine to go over to the White House to discuss, at Clifford's request) the draft message. Clifford had a few specific

suggestions to make, by way of addition, but his main criticism was directed at the order of presentation. The March 7 draft opened with Greece, went on to the "wider situation" and came back to Greece. Clifford suggested that it begin with Greece and consider Greece completely, go on to the "wider situation" and Turkey, and then proceed to specific proposals and provocation as in our draft. Jones readily agreed this would be better, returned to the Department and in an hour and a half, with the aid of scissors and a stapler, turned the thing around, and it was a marked improvement. He also added two of the points Clifford had suggested, had the whole retyped, and returned it to Clifford that (Saturday) afternoon. Clifford considered this draft at length on Sunday, March 9.

March 10 (Monday)

Late afternoon. Clifford brought over and discussed with Acheson, Jones, and Hummel the first White House revised draft, dated March 10. There were a few stylistic changes, which were readily agreed upon. There were also three or four extraneous ideas added. These were considered for various reasons objectionable and distracting, for very clear reasons, and Clifford promptly acquiesced in their deletion, his readiness to do so suggesting that the changes had been suggested by neither him nor the President but by others on the White House staff.

Clifford returned to the White House and a conference was held with the President, Admiral Leahy, and others on the White House staff. At this meeting the President and advisers agreed to the draft virtually as it was, making only a few minor changes in wording.

March 11

The White House sent over the final draft dated March 11, as approved by the President the previous afternoon, and it became the official Message.

March 12 (Wednesday)

At 12 noon the President appeared before a Joint Session of the Senate and House in the House chamber and delivered the Message.

Original Draft