

[This letter is fictional but authentically represents the ideas of the historical character.]

Background information: You were the Secretary of Commerce under President Truman until he fired you on September 20, 1946, after you gave a speech on September 12th critical of the United States interfering in Eastern Europe or developing hostile relations with the Russians. Even though this speech was cleared by the President you were fired after the Secretary of State threatened to resign if the president didn't fire you. Now the editor of a liberal news magazine, you speak frequently of friendly relations with the Soviets and are an outspoken critic of Truman's containment policies

Mr. President,

As our nation faces this crisis in Berlin, I write this letter to the man who, two years ago, approved my speech regarding the development of hostile relations with the Russians and U. S. interference in Eastern Europe. This moment in history is too important to allow what followed that speech to prevent us from communicating. As I did two years ago, today I want to talk about peace. Never have the common people of all lands so longed for peace or feared war so much!

During the past three years, the significance of peace has been increased incredibly by the atom bomb, guided missiles, and airplanes. Make no mistake about it - another war would hurt the United States many times as much as the last war. He who trusts in the atom bomb will sooner or later perish by the atom bomb - or something worse. I say this as one who consistently fought for military readiness throughout the Thirties as the Nazi threat grew in Europe. I am not suggesting that we now adopt a pacifist approach and become unwilling to resist evil! But we must realize that modern inventions have now made peace the most exciting thing in the world! The price of peace - for us and for every nation in the world - is the price of giving up prejudice, hatred, fear and ignorance.

To achieve lasting peace, we must appreciate how the Russian character was formed - by invasions of Tartars, Mongols, Poles, Swedes, French, Germans; by the intervention of the British, French and Americans in Russian affairs from 1919 to 1921 (supporting the White Russian Army against Lenin). Add to this the Russian perspective on the snail-like pace of the Allies to open a second front against the Germans during the last war. It was perhaps the most costly three-and-a-half years in Russian history!

If we will slow our mad rush to contain the Soviets long enough to consider the impact of these events upon the Russian mind-set, we can realize that we are dealing with a force which cannot be handled successfully by a "Get tough with Russia" policy. "Getting tough" never bought anything real and lasting - whether for schoolyard bullies or businessmen or world powers. The tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get! If we confront them over Berlin, it can and will escalate beyond human control and bring about the world-wide disaster that your containment policy claims to prevent.

For the sake of all the peoples of the world, we must not let our Russian policy be guided or influenced by those inside or outside the United States who want war with Russia! Allow them to treat Eastern Europe as their sphere of influence just as we have been, in reality, treating Western Europe as ours. They are understandably seeking to protect their own interests! We have no more business in the political affairs of Eastern Europe than Russia has in the political affairs of Latin America, Western Europe, and the United States. Our ill-advised policy of containing the Soviets must be set aside in the interest of peace!

Sincerely,

Henry Wallace

Guiding Questions:

What is Wallace's main objective in writing this letter?

Why is he so concerned with getting the President to listen to him?

How does he explain the "Russian character" (mindset or worldview)?

What does he believe the consequences of a standoff with the Soviets will be?

What course of action does he recommend to the President?

What reasons does he give to support this position?