

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

**Background information:** A widely read essayist and journalist, you published a series of articles called *The Cold War* in 1947. The publication spoke out against the policy of containment held by President Truman and Mr. "X" (Kennan) and made popular the term "Cold War".

Mr. President,

You are well aware that I believe our present containment policy to be neither wise nor effective. My criticism does not spring from any belief that the Soviet pressure to expand can be "charmed or talked out of existence." The crisis we face in Berlin is an excellent example of this. My criticism of containment in general, and view on how to handle the Berlin crisis specifically, revolves around our need to regain the initiative in regard to Soviet expansion. For too long we have scattered our efforts around the globe, reacting time and again to real or perceived Soviet attempts to expand their communist influence. This has been justified with the claim that in ten or fifteen years Soviet power will, as a result of long frustration, break up or mellow. This is shortsighted foolishness and is destroying the character of American democracy as we are forced to support questionable groups through questionable means all over the world.

The real issue should be Europe, as the impending crisis in Berlin is demonstrating. British, French, American, and Soviet forces are still in place in Germany. These lines were decided at Yalta. As long as the Red Army remains in place, the threat of Soviet expansion will continue to be the nightmare of Western Europe and the U.S. Rather than watering down our efforts through our world-wide containment policy, let us focus our efforts on the situation at hand: Berlin. If, and only if, we can bring about the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Germany to the new frontier of the Soviet Union and simultaneously, of course, the withdrawal of the British and American armies from continental Europe can a balance of power be established which can then be maintained. For after the withdrawal, a Soviet attempt to return would be an invasion, an open, unmistakable act of military aggression. The power of the United States to strike critical areas of Russia by air will prevent this from happening.

Our current policy is leading us to neglect and drive away our natural allies in Western Europe. We are driving them away by asking them to serve as our puppets in exchange for our support. Most of all we alienating them with the threat of war! If at any containment point the Russians or Americans become so deeply engaged that no retreat or compromise is possible,

and Berlin seems ripe for just such a standoff, Western Europe will be the battlefield! We owe too great a debt to too many patriots within these countries to allow this to happen.

My plea, Mr. President, is to do what you did so well during the war: regain the initiative by acting rather than reacting, keeping the big picture clearly in view. For too long we have allowed the Soviets to dictate when and where we respond. Berlin is the latest, and most fearsome, example of this. Let us allow the world to see the Soviets clearly by turning the table and forcing their hand this time. As their army has closed the passages into Berlin, let us turn all our diplomatic energy to opening passages for ALL occupying armies to return to their own nations. Rather than rushing to a dangerous standoff over Berlin, one in a long line of reactions to Soviet power, let us renew our efforts to end this Cold War before it heats up and burns out of control, consuming first Europe, then the world.

Sincerely,

Walter Lippman

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How does Lippman feel about the "containment policy"?
2. Why is he so critical of this policy?
3. What does he believe is the only way to settle the Berlin crisis (and the overall conflict between the U.S. and the Soviets)?
4. Why does he see confrontations with the Soviets in Europe to be so negative?
5. Why does the Berlin crisis particularly disturb Lippman?
6. What course of action does he recommend to the President?
7. What reasons does he give to support this position?