

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



NOTE:

The President's letter to Mrs.
Roosevelt was drafted by the Department of
State.



With her letter Mrs. Roosevelt sent a copy of a telegram which she received from Mr. Aubrey Williams, Montgomery, Alabama, dated April 15, 1947, in which Mr. Williams discussed the Greek situation. He was disturbed and wrote that "our nation's leadership is confused. The natural leaders of the people are divided and appear to be in a frenzy of fear and disillusionment because of the inexplicable course of Russia and the Communists." He said the time called for a "simple, clear program which decent, peace-loving Americans can accept" and for a program to which the President and his advisers can accede. He went into some detail as to the program which he said he thought the late President Roosevelt would have announced for meeting the Greek situation and he said this program could be undertaken by American leadership acting under sponsorship of the United Nations. He said that the material in his message was to be the basis of an article to be printed in the "Southern Farmer" two weeks later.

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Apartment 15-A
29 Washington Square, West
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April 17, 1947



Dear Mr. President:

I have carried on a lengthy correspondence with Secretary Acheson and I have seen a State Department representative sent by Secretary Acheson, to explain the Greek-Turkish situation to me.

I went to see Averill Harriman the other day to try to get some enlightenment from him. I know that his appointment was very favorably received. Harry Hopkins thought highly of him but that was largely because he knew he could count on Averill to carry out directions. He is rich and generous and well meaning. I have known him since he was a little boy. I like him very much personally but I came away from talking to him, feeling that there was not sufficient realization of the domestic situation we are facing and its tie up with the foreign situation.

Our domestic and foreign policies are so closely tied together and the various moves made of late are so politically oriented, I feel some very clear sighted thinking is needed.

Between the Pepper Bill and the Vandenberg Amendment to the Administration Bill, I hoped that you might find some middle course. For that reason I am enclosing a copy of a wire which has come to me that expresses anxiety and makes some suggestions similar to those which have been made by other people. I am not sending it because it came from Aubrey Williams, but because it is comprehensive enough to be a good sample of a considerable amount of thinking which seems to be going on throughout the country.

I do not believe that the Democratic party can win by going the Republican party one better in conservatism on the home front. Nor do I believe that taking over Mr. Churchill's policies in the Near East, in the name of democracy, is the way to really create a barrier to communism or promote democracy.

I do not think your advisers have looked far enough ahead. Admiral Leahy as always, will think of this country as moving on its own power.

Both in Commerce and in Agriculture, we have not been far sighted enough to see that:

1. The safe guarding of food supplies for the world, even though it might mean keeping a little more than we need on hand was a wise policy.
2. The getting of business men to work in Europe and Russia is the only way we can really hope to rehabilitate Europe and establish democracy.

Mr. Acheson is rather more sympathetic to the British point of view than I would be and what with Mr. Lewis Douglas, who will certainly be sympathetic to Mr. Churchill's point of view, I am afraid we are apt to lose sight of the fact that if we do not wish to fight Russia, we must be both honest and firm with her. She must understand us, but she must also trust us.

Please give my kind regards to Mrs. Truman and to Margaret. I hope the latter is feeling encouraged about her work. So many people have spoken to me favorably after hearing her on the radio.

Very cordially yours,
/s/ Eleanor Roosevelt

May 7, 1947



Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

It was thoughtful of you to write me, as you did in your letter of April 17, telling me of your concern over recent world developments and giving me guidance. The Greek-Turkish matter which you mentioned has, I think, caused me more worry and soul-searching than any matter in these past two years. I felt the grave responsibility of the decision and the drawbacks to any course of action suggested. But it has also brought me, when the decision was made and as the issues have developed here and abroad, a growing feeling of certainty in the rightness of our step.

Your own concern and the concern of the sender of the wire you enclosed seem to be mainly, first, that we should not try to stop Communism by throwing our economic weight in at points which are of strategic importance but deficient in democracy, and, second, that we must outsell Communism by offering something better, that is, a constructive and affirmative program which will be recognized as such by the entire world and which can be effected without resort to the totalitarian methods of the Communist police state.

On the first half of this I would argue that if the Greek-Turkish land bridge between the continents is one point at which our democratic forces can stop the advance of Communism that has flowed steadily through the Baltic countries, Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, to some extent Hungary, then this is the place to do it, regardless of whether or not the terrain is good.

The necessity at this point for formulating and carrying out a detailed operation to improve the situation is urged by Mr. Williams in his wire to you. While the details may differ considerably from those outlined by him, I am determined that the instructions to our mission will be worthy of the "support of all democratic nations", and will give no basis for the fear that it may be solely a "futile attempt to stop communism without offering anything better than the strengthening of autocracy and dictatorship."



A great deal of study is being carried on in anticipation of the successful passage of the legislation. The FAO Report and the Report of the Porter Mission will be considered and used along with the exceptional knowledge of our two Ambassadors.

In answer to the second part of your concern, I would not disagree that we must have a democratic, constructive and affirmative program of wide scope. But I would argue with deep conviction that we have led in evolving, have helped to build, and have made clear to all who will understand, the most comprehensive machinery for a constructive world peace based on free institutions and ways of life that has ever been proposed and adopted by a body of nations. And I would urge that in evaluating the step we are about to take, we should keep clearly in mind all the efforts this country has engaged in sincerely to make possible a peace economically, ideologically and politically sound.

I know that I do not need to catalogue for you the international organizations to which I refer. Besides this machinery for peace, we have tried to eliminate the sources of war and, by our proposal for a four-power pact for the disarmament of Germany, we have tried to remove from Europe what may be the greatest basic cause of friction: the fear of German aggression or of the use of German territory for purposes of aggression.

To what seems to me nearly the limit, we have made concessions to Russia that she might trust and not fear us. These include: Agreement at Tehran to support Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia; Agreement at Yalta to give the Kurile Islands and southern Sakhalin to Russia, to recognize the independence of Outer Mongolia and Soviet interests in Dairen, Port Arthur, and the Chinese Eastern Railway; also at Yalta, agreement on the Curzon line as the western border of the Soviet Union, and to the admission of Byelorussia and the Ukraine to the United Nations; at Potsdam, agreement to the annexation by Russia of the northern portion of east Prussia, to the recognition of Soviet claims for preferential reparations from western Germany, to the necessity for modification of the provisions of the Montreaux Convention. In the peace treaty negotiations we have made concessions, particularly in regard to reparations from Italy and in our efforts to meet the Yugoslav and Soviet points of view on boundaries and administration of Venezia Giulia and Trieste.

In addition, we have contributed to the defense of Russia during the war in lend-lease eleven and a quarter billion dollars and provided them with military and technological information. Since the war we have contributed to Russian relief through UNRRA two hundred and fifty million dollars and sold them on thirty-year credit goods totaling another one quarter billion dollars.



We have also protested, so far in vain, against what seemed to us violation of democratic procedures pledged at the Yalta Conference, in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

To relieve suffering and to take the first steps toward material rehabilitation we have appropriated nearly four and one-quarter billion dollars and have asked for three hundred and fifty million dollars more in post-UNRRA relief.

Let us think, therefore, of Greek and Turkish aid against the background of these positive measures.

The results of our efforts thus far disappoint and dishearten many in this and other countries. I think we must place the blame not only on the obstructive tactics of elements opposed to our ideas of a democratic peace, but, also, to a certain extent, on our own reticence in stating the democratic purposes we have in mind.

So it seems to me, as it did to 67 senators who voted for the Bill that we must take our stand at this strategic point in a determined effort not to let the advance of Communism continue to overtake countries who choose to maintain a free way of life, who have requested our aid, and who do not wish to submit to subjugation by an armed minority or by outside pressure.

I have emphasized what seems to me to be the inescapable fact that this country has gone to great lengths to develop and carry out a constructive policy in world affairs. I have not discussed specifically the point you make that our domestic policy has a great influence on the manner in which we carry out our foreign policy. I am in complete agreement with you that what happens within this country is perhaps the most decisive factor in the future of world peace and economic well-being. We simply must not fall into political division, economic recession, or social stagnation; there must be social progress at home. I shall continue to point out to the country what seem to me the measures most suited to accomplish this progress. I shall continue to take every action within my own power to see that the United States has a progressive domestic policy that will deserve the confidence of the world and will serve as a sound foundation for our international policy. I shall at all times be grateful for any suggestions and criticisms which you may care to send me.

Nor does it seem to me that we can overlook the fact that as much as the world needs a progressive America, the American way of life cannot survive unless other peoples who want to adopt that pattern of life throughout the world can do so without fear and in the hope of success. If this is to be possible we cannot allow the forces of disintegration to go unchecked.

I certainly appreciate your kind personal message to Mrs. Truman which I was glad to convey to her, and your expressions regarding Margaret's singing are especially gratifying. She too will be greatly pleased.

Very sincerely yours,

(Sgd) HARRY S. TRUMAN



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"It was necessary to check the facts before I could answer. It took some time - hence the delay. I regret that it took so long.

H.S.T."