

December 22, 1958

Dear Ivan:

I've been thinking about you. I've been wondering how you were. Guess it must be mighty cold over there. It's been downright chilly here, in fact. Hope you've got a nice, warm place for the wife and kids.

We're feeling pretty warm inside right now. It's Christmastime. You see, Ivan, a lot of us have the belief that God himself came to earth in the person of a man and taught that all of us should love each other. That may sound a little silly to you, maybe a bit overly sentimental. Anyway, that's what we celebrate at Christmas.

Let me be painfully frank about this thing, Ivan, and admit that I haven't been feeling very kindly toward you lately. Guess you haven't felt exactly good about me, either. Truthfully, I suppose we've both been a little bit afraid. For one thing, we believe in entirely different economic systems. Now, I'm convinced that our system of capitalism or free enterprise is the best. But if you don't like it, Ivan, I certainly don't want to force it on you. That comes under the heading of your own business.

Why can't we just look at this thing straight and agree that we have a healthy competition going on between us to prove which system can do a better job for its people...and that neither one of us is going to change just to suit the other?

If we could agree on that, then maybe we could agree to a moratorium on trying to force the rest of the world to copy either one of us. Oh, I don't mean we wouldn't keep on telling people how great we think our system is, nor expect you to stop saying how well you like yours if you really do. But there just isn't any sense in trying to cram it down their throats. With armies, I mean. Starting wars and getting a lot of people killed. Why can't we just let them look at both of us, and listen to both of us, and then make up their own minds?

You know, this military business can get out of hand. That's why we're both a little nervous, isn't it? And here's the reason, the big thing we have in common...I've got kids, Ivan. And so have you. My kids mean more to me than anything else in all the world. Surely you feel the same way about yours. Now there just isn't an ounce of sense in our horsing around and acting like plain fools and arranging things so that our kids will have to be killing each other someday. My kids are thinking about Christmas, Ivan. Little starry-eyed things, they're not mad at you or at anybody.

You know what, Ivan? We folks over here are spending right at \$45 billion this year on armaments. That's because we're scared of what you'd do if we didn't. I don't know quite what your folks are spending on this sort of thing, and I don't expect you



do, either, but I figure it's just about the same as we're spending.

Tell you what I'd do, Ivan. I'd make a binding contract with you. We'll cut down ours if you'll cut down yours. Now, of course, it would all have to be open and aboveboard, right on the top of the table, or no go. But I'm willing, if you are. We could start out easy.

Let's do it this way. We'll cut 10 percent from our military expenditures this year if you'll do the same thing. Right out on the top of the table, now. We'll take four and a half billion dollars out of our military spending this year if you'll do the same thing, match it dollar for dollar. We'll both put our money into the same fund. That'll make nine billion dollars for the first year.

If the deal holds, we'll double it next year. We'll both cut our current military budget by another 10 percent, and each of us will put up nine billion next year. That'll make a total of twenty-seven billion dollars in the fund.

Want to help mankind, Ivan? Well, here's your chance. Here's your chance to help mankind and get rid of your fears at the same time. You like five year plans, so I'll make you a five year plan. Let's keep this up at the second year's rate for three additional years, and we'll have put a total of 81 billion dollars into this fund between us at the end of five years. Neither one of us will have missed it, because it will have come out of what we'd otherwise have been putting into weapons which would just have made both of us more nervous.

We could make an 81 billion dollar gift to humanity, Ivan.

Do you know how much 81 billion dollars is? Well, it would build and equip a brand new two million dollar hospital for every city of 10,000 or more in the world. Our medical experts say that with four and a half billion they could absolutely eradicate malaria, typhoid, smallpox, yellow fever, and leprosy from the face of the earth. It would build 120,000 high schools or 250,000 elementary schools. It would build and stock 250,000 first class libraries and it would provide 20 million four-year college scholarships. It would build 20 million modern homes to replace the world's infested slums. It would build almost a million miles of modern roads...enough to circle the earth several times. Take any combination of these benefits you like -- it still adds up to a whole lot more sense than spending this money on the implements that kill and destroy rather than those that build and ennoble and improve.

Then, after five years we could slack off. We could reduce our contributions to the Christmas fund and give some tax relief to the folks who have been carrying the burden for so many years...yours as well as ours. Think of it, Ivan. Imagine what the effect would be in Russia if just 20 percent of all the money now being spent on military hardware were being plowed back into



the economy and spent on the merchandise of peace! Think what it would mean in terms of automobiles and homes and household appliances!

It's a wonderful dream, isn't it, Ivan? It could be a reality if we would only play fair and square with each other and do away with needless secrecy. Of course, you'd have to know that we weren't cheating. You'd be entitled to know it, just as we'd be entitled to proof of your compliance. We could use the United Nations organization to inspect and police our operation to ensure good faith on both our parts. We'd have to open up our borders and let one another come and look...but what would there be to fear if we both were playing straight?

You know, Ivan, we could give the world the greatest Christmas present since the first Christmas, 1,959 years ago. We could really bring tidings of great joy and, for the first time in two millennia the greatly troubled people of this old world of ours could obey the angels' injunction: "Fear not!"

That would be the best part, that everybody could gradually stop being afraid. If we ever got together on this we could make all the old hatreds and fears and misgivings vanish like hot breath on a looking glass.

Think it over, Ivan. We've both been trying the other way long enough. Think it over carefully. And, meanwhile, have yourself a Merry Christmas.

Sincerely,



Jim Wright

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Whimsy? Perhaps. Perhaps there is no way effectively to get such a message through to Ivan, insulated as he is by curtains of iron. Maybe such a plan, offered by our President, could form the basis for a major breakthrough in the diplomatic stalemate. If such a sincere and honest message could be broadcast to Ivan through the Voice of America, it might do some good. At worst, it could certainly do no harm.

\* reprinted from "The Wright Slant on Washington," a Jim Wright newsletter mailed weekly to constituents of the 12th Congressional District.