

## 1946: Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech.

- In March 1946, Churchill gave a famous speech before President Truman at Fulton, Missouri. By this time there were communist governments in Poland, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. He used the phrase "Iron Curtain" to describe the European border between the Democracies of the West and the Communist-controlled countries of the East.
- He accused the USSR of being an aggressive dictatorship and called for an alliance between Britain and the USA to keep it under control.

### Source A: Extract from Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech, March 1946

"The agreement which was made at Yalta, to which it was a party, was extremely favourable to Soviet Russia, but it was made at a time when no one could say that the German war might not extend all through the summer and autumn of 1945 and when the Japanese war was expected by the best judges to last for a further eighteen months from the end of the German war. I repulse the idea that a new war is inevitable - still more that it is imminent. It is because I am sure that our fortunes are still in our own hands and that we hold the power to save the future, that I feel the duty to speak out now that I have the occasion and the opportunity to do so. I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines. But what we have to consider here today while time remains, is the permanent prevention of war and the establishment of conditions of freedom and democracy as rapidly as possible in all countries. Our difficulties and dangers will not be removed by closing our eyes to them. They will not be removed by mere waiting to see what happens; nor will they be removed by a policy of appeasement.

...

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an *iron curtain* has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow... If the English-speaking Commonwealths be added to that of the United States with all that such cooperation in the air, on the sea, all over the globe and in science and in industry, and in moral force, there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure. On the contrary, there will be an overwhelming assurance of security. If we adhere faithfully to the Charter of the United Nations and walk forward in sedate and sober strength seeking no one's land or treasure, seeking to lay no arbitrary control upon the thoughts of men; if all British moral and material forces and convictions are joined with your own in fraternal association, the high-roads of the future will be clear, not only for us but for all, not only for our time, but for a century to come".

*What is Churchill concerned about, and what is his proposed solution?*

*Why was this speech created? What was its purpose? Who is the intended audience?*

Source B: Stalin's reply to Churchill's speech in Pravda

"Mr. Churchill has called for a war on the USSR... It should not be forgotten that the Germans invaded the USSR through Finland, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The Germans were able to invade because government hostile to the Soviet Union existed in these countries. As a result the Soviet Union had a loss of life several times greater than that of Britain and the United States put together... And so what is surprising about the fact that the Soviet Union, anxious for its future safety, is trying to see that governments loyal to the Soviet Union should exist in these countries? Mr. Churchill says that for his country Poland is a question of honour... but for the USSR it is a question of both honour and security."

*How does Stalin justify his actions in Eastern Europe?*

*How can these excerpts help us understand why the Cold War started?*

*Do you think the "Iron Curtain" Speech: a) created the Cold War, b) accelerated a drift toward the Cold War, or c) acknowledged that the Cold War had started? Justify your answer.*

*What about Churchill's speech keeps us from learning more about why the Cold War started?*