

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

"A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. 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...all are subject...to a very high...measure of control from Moscow...I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power...Our difficulties and dangers will not be removed...by a policy of appeasement."

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

"Mr Churchill has called for a war on the USSR...It should not be forgotten that the Germans invaded the USSR through Finland, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The Germans were able to invade because governments 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?"

Task 1

- a. Why do you think that Churchill used the specific phrase "iron curtain" to describe the division of Europe?
- b. In what ways are Sources A&B similar, and in what ways are they different?

Source C: A British Cartoon on Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech



c. What is the message of this cartoon?
(Remember CID!)

Context

At the time this source was produced,...

Interpretation

I think the message of the cartoonist is that...

Detail

The cartoonist creates this impression in a number of ways...

Task 2: Consequences of the Iron Curtain Speech

Consider these three statements:

- a. "The Iron Curtain Speech created the Cold War"
- b. "The Iron Curtain Speech accelerated the drift towards a Cold War"
- c. "The Iron Curtain merely acknowledged that the Cold war had started"

Which of these three statements do you agree with most? Explain your answer.