

Background:

When the US was attacked in December, 1941 the Soviet Union and the Allied powers formed an alliance of convenience against the Fascist powers. While the United States supplied both the British and the Soviet militaries, Stalin remained highly suspicious and believed that the British and the Americans had conspired to ensure the Soviets sustained the worst of the fighting against Nazi Germany. The Soviets believed that the Western Allies had deliberately delayed opening a second anti-German front in order to step in at the last moment and shape the peace settlement. Thus, Soviet opinions of the West left a lot of tension and hostility between the Allied powers.

The name "Cold War" comes from the English writer George Orwell, after the dropping of the first atomic bombs in 1945. It described a world where the two major powers—each possessing nuclear weapons and thereby threatened with mutually assured destruction—never met in direct military combat. Instead, in their struggle for global power and influence, they engaged in ongoing psychological warfare and in regular indirect confrontations in other regions of the world. Cycles of relative calm would be followed by high tension, which could have led to world war.

1. Why do the Soviets distrust the US and its Allies?

2. Instead of fighting directly with each other, how are the two Superpowers going to combat each other?

Document A: The Iron Curtain Speech (Modified)

It is my duty, however, to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

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.

In a great number of countries, far from the Russian frontiers and throughout the world, Communist fifth columns are established and work in complete unity and absolute obedience to the directions they receive from the Communist center.

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.

Source: Excerpt from the "Iron Curtain Speech" delivered by Winston Churchill, March 1946 in Fulton, Missouri.

Guiding Questions**Iron Curtain Speech**

1. *Sourcing:* Who was Winston Churchill? Why would Americans trust what he has to say about the Soviet Union?
2. *Close reading:* What does Churchill claim that the Soviet Union wanted?

Record your first hypothesis: Who was primarily responsible for the Cold War - the United States or the Soviet Union? *Why?*