

1946: The Iron Curtain &



A U.S. CARGO PLANE flies over West Berlin during the 1948 Berlin Airlift, which helped save the city.



SOVIET TANKS roll down the streets of Budapest, the capital of Hungary, to quell the 1956 anti-Communist uprising.



After World War II, the United States and its Allies began a 40-year struggle to contain the spread of Soviet Communism

BY SAM ROBERTS

The words “iron curtain” were buried deep within a speech that Winston Churchill, the British wartime Prime Minister, gave in Missouri in 1946. They weren’t quoted until the fourth paragraph of the front-page story in the next day’s *New York Times*.

But those two words signaled the start of a new and dangerous era for the United States and the world—the Cold War—which would define international relations and American politics

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for the second half of the 20th century.

World War II had torn apart the map of Europe. Even before their victory over Germany, the Allies—led by the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union—had met to chart out what postwar Europe would look like. The boundaries were later adjusted by the position of each country’s troops on the ground when the war in Europe ended in May 1945.

By then, the Soviets had overrun Poland, and advanced into Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and eastern Germany, including eastern Berlin. And they were intent, it became clear, on installing Communist regimes wherever they held sway.

Churchill, the son of an American-born mother and a British father, gave his now-famous speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Mo., on March 5, 1946, after an introduction by President Harry S. Truman. (Missouri was Truman’s home state.)

‘THE SOVIET SPHERE’

Churchill called for a “special relationship” between the American and British people to help preserve the peace that the Allies had just won, and which the fledgling United Nations had been formed to preserve. Then, he turned to the threat now posed to that peace by the Soviets, a former ally in the fight against Germany.

the Cold War



SOVIET TROOPS invade Czechoslovakia in 1968 to halt democratic reforms there.



DISMANTLED MISSILES are loaded onto Soviet ships in Cuba after the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.



AMERICAN SOLDIERS comfort a woman in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War, 1966.

“An iron curtain has descended across the Continent,” Churchill declared. “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 many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.”

Churchill’s speech amounted to an acknowledgment that the shaky and short-lived alliance with the Soviets to defeat Germany and Japan was over, and that the Soviets were intent on pursuing their historical dreams of empire by installing autocratic Communist regimes answerable to Moscow

wherever they could. “This is certainly not the liberated Europe we fought to build up,” Churchill warned. “Nor is it one which contains the essentials of permanent peace.”

A NEW KIND OF WAR

Churchill’s solution was straightforward: Only from a position of strength and unanimity and through the United Nations could the U.S., Britain, and the rest of the free world act as a counterbalance to Soviet ambitions.

With the embers of World War II still warm, the West became engaged in what Bernard Baruch, a financier

and adviser to Presidents Truman and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, would in 1947 call a “cold war.” (George Orwell had also used the phrase in a 1945 essay.) It would chill the world for more than 40 years.

The Cold War was not a full-scale clash of American and Soviet armies along a single front, but a war waged through surrogates around the globe.

CHURCHILL was wary of Soviet intentions.

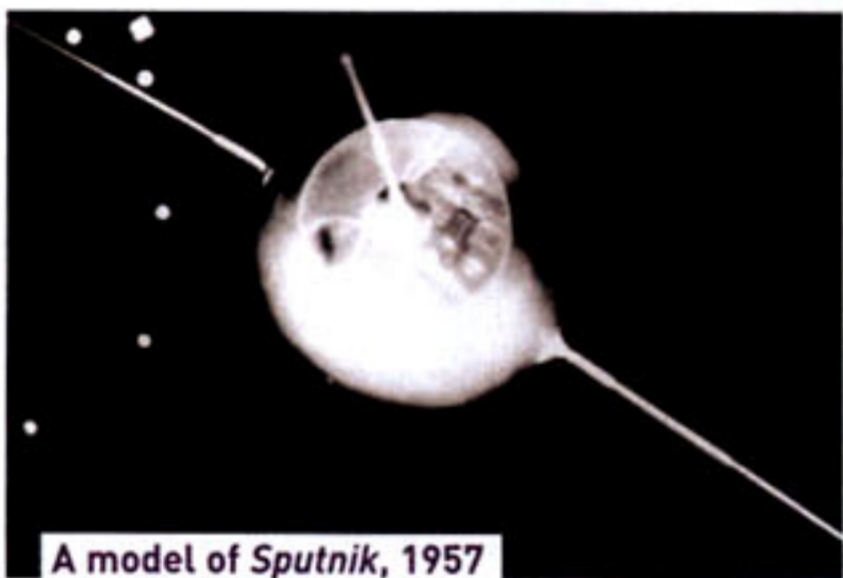


Winston Churchill in 1941

Mr. Churchill painted a dark picture of post-war Europe, on which “an iron curtain has descended across the Continent” from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic. [The New York Times, Page One, 3/6/46]



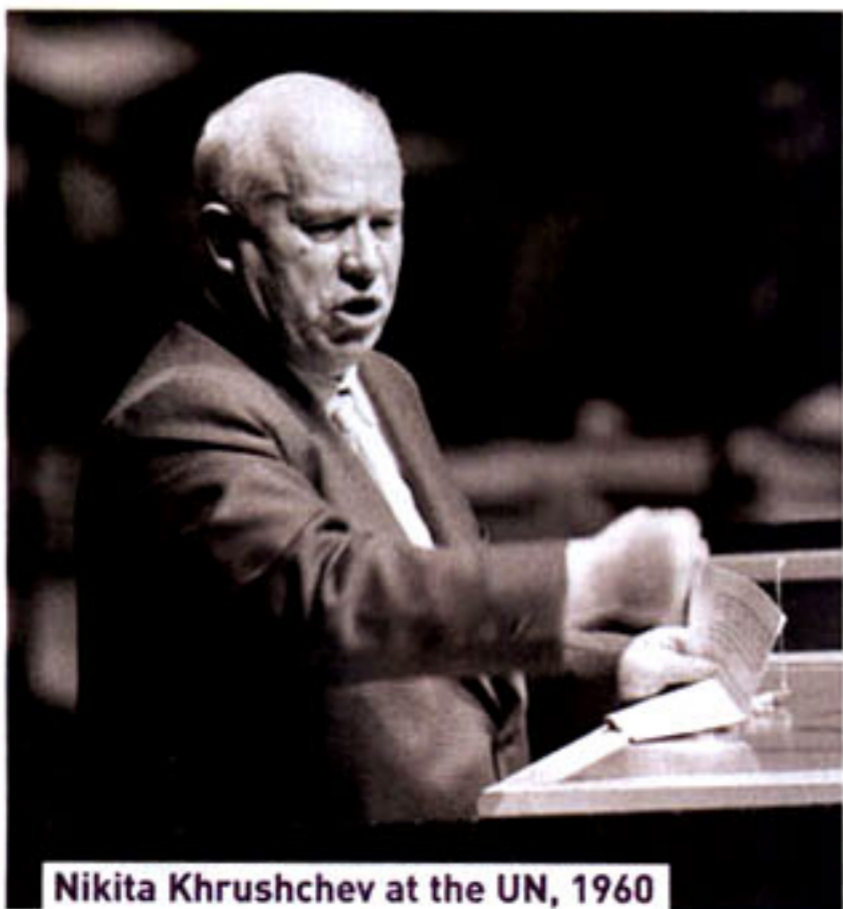
Looking over the Berlin Wall, 1961



A model of Sputnik, 1957



A Communist rally in China, 1951



Nikita Khrushchev at the UN, 1960



Periodically, it would erupt into conflicts—in Korea and Vietnam, for example—that to soldiers doing the fighting was as horrific as any hot war.

A TEST OF WILLS

The Cold War was a decades-long test of wills, a war of propaganda and diplomacy, as well as of military might. Some key events:

- **1948-49:** After the Soviets blockade West Berlin, a yearlong Allied airlift of food and supplies rescues the besieged city.
- **1956:** An anti-Communist revolution in Hungary is brutally suppressed by the Soviets as the U.S. stands on the sidelines, deciding not to intervene.
- **1956:** Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev thunders to Western diplomats just weeks after the crackdown on Hungary: “We will bury you.” (He later said he meant the Soviets would bury the West economically, not militarily.)

- **1961:** The Soviets build the Berlin Wall, which transforms the Iron Curtain from a metaphor into an impenetrable concrete barrier that divides Berlin and prevents Germans in the Communist East from fleeing to the West.

- **1962:** The Cuban Missile Crisis brings the world to the brink of war over the Soviets’ installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba, just 90 miles off the coast of Florida. (The Soviets back down and remove the missiles after President John F. Kennedy sets up a naval blockade of Cuba.)

Behind the scenes, the U.S. and the Soviets constantly pressed their advantage anywhere they could in what amounted to a global game of chess. Truman’s Marshall Plan rebuilt the economies of war-ravaged Western Europe to make them less susceptible to Communist appeals against capitalism. In 1947, the “Truman Doctrine” promised economic and military aid to



PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN speaking in West Berlin, June 12, 1987: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”



MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, the last Soviet leader, in 1991.



THE BERLIN WALL falls in 1989, following mass protests in East Germany.

countries threatened by Communism. That year, the U.S. gave aid to Greece and Turkey, both of which, Truman feared, were vulnerable.

The U.S. practiced “brinkmanship”—flexing its military muscles, as Churchill counseled—in response to each Soviet threat, and “containment” to keep the curtain from enveloping even more countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

THE ARMS RACE

The two superpowers competed in a costly arms race to develop offensive nuclear weapons that gave them the capability for “mutually assured destruction,” and then tried to protect themselves against those weapons with warning systems and defenses that made the world no less jittery.

Technology, too, became a weapon for military advantage and national pride, from the Soviet launching of a satellite called *Sputnik* in 1957 to the

American moon landing in 1969—a direct response to the Soviets’ early lead in space exploration.

But Presidents Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson met periodically with Soviet leaders and by the 1970s President Richard M. Nixon worked to achieve *détente*—a lessening of tensions through negotiations and agreements to increase trade and cultural exchanges and to reduce both nations’ stockpiles of nuclear arms.

The economic toll exacted by the arms race—coupled with the rigidity of the Soviet brand of Communism, which crushed the Soviet economy—contributed to the eventual downfall of the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1985, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev began practicing *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reform) to make the system more democratic and efficient.

After thaws in Czechoslovakia and Poland in the late 1980s, the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. (Two years earlier, in

Berlin, President Ronald Reagan had challenged Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.”) In 1990, the two Germanys were reunited and in 1991, the Soviet Union formally dissolved. Several former Communist bloc countries were later admitted to the European Union.

AMERICAN SUPREMACY

The Cold War was over. The Iron Curtain was lifted. Gorbachev even proposed that the former border between East and West be transformed into a nature preserve.

Sixty years later, with America once again the sole superpower, as it was right after World War II, Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech still resonates.

“The United States stands at this time at the pinnacle of world power,” he said in 1946. “It is a solemn moment for the American democracy. For with primacy in power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future.”

AFRICA'S CHILD BRIDES



BACKGROUND

"Africa's Child Brides" focuses on Malawi. But the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) says child marriages are also widespread in South Asia. And recent reports from Iraq say they are on the rise there. Cultural traditions that relegate girls and women to subservient roles make the practice hard to stop.

CRITICAL THINKING

- This article offers students the opportunity to learn about the power of culture.
- The writer notes that outlawing child marriages will be hard because many marriages take place under custom, not civil law. What does this say about the power of culture in Malawi?
- Note also, on page 25, that Mwaka's father, after he took her back, said: "I didn't know I was abusing her."
- Discuss why a father might not see this practice as abuse. Is it because of the culture in which *he* was raised?

DEBATE

- Which of the following statements would students support?
- The U.N. and Western nations should threaten countries like Malawi with economic sanctions unless they act to stop the child-bride custom.
- The developed world cannot go everywhere to solve social and economic problems like the child-bride custom.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- Which do you think would be a better way to stop the child-bride custom—tough laws punishing parents or some type of economic inducement to reduce parents' financial incentives to marry off their daughters at such young ages?

WRITING PROMPTS

- Have students write a letter for a group like UNICEF in which they appeal to Americans to donate to a fund designed to free child brides.
- Students can design and write a poster to be displayed in Malawi villages that explains why child-bride marriages must stop.

FAST FACT

→ UNICEF says pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 worldwide.

WEB WATCH

www.unicef.org/newsline/01pr21.htm UNICEF study on child marriages around the world. Includes a link to a more detailed report.

1946: IRON CURTAIN & COLD WAR



BACKGROUND

The 40-year Cold War put the world on a dangerous course. In the U.S., the fear of nuclear war had adults and children alike scrambling for cover during air-raid drills. It also led to witch hunts for suspected Communists and the spending of billions of dollars in the arms and space race with the Soviets.

CRITICAL THINKING 1

- From the Western perspective, the Soviet Union's denial of democratic rights in Eastern Europe was a betrayal of the goals of the World War II allies.
- After they read the article, ask students whether they believe the decades-long cost (in terms of money, lives, etc.) to contain Communism was the correct course for the U.S.

WRITING PROMPT

- Have students write their own "Iron Curtain" speech. But have them pretend their audience is not Americans and others in the West, but people behind the Iron Curtain.
- In a 100-word "speech" to be broadcast to the countries of Eastern Europe, they explain why democracy is better than Communism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Suggest one or more reasons why the Soviet-American confrontation after World War II did not evolve into a real war.
- (One reason: Everyone knew the horror of nuclear weapons; both sides feared to use them.)
- Why do you think the Allies protected Berlin from the Soviets?
- Why do you think President Nixon's trading strategy and cultural exchanges helped warm relations with the Soviets?

CRITICAL THINKING 2

- Churchill said because the U.S. was the most powerful country, it had an "awe-inspiring accountability to the future."
- What accountability do you think the U.S. has to the future?

FAST FACT

→ The Soviet Union voluntarily ended its occupation of eastern Austria 10 years after the end of the war, in 1955.

WEB WATCH

www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1946stalin.html This Fordham University site provides Joseph Stalin's brief reply to the Iron Curtain speech. Stalin said Soviet security required Eastern European loyalty to Moscow.

1946: The 'Iron Curtain' > Pages 24-27

1. The map of post-World War II Europe reveals that all of the following countries were behind the Iron Curtain except

- a Czechoslovakia.
- b Denmark.
- c Bulgaria.
- d Hungary.

2. Winston Churchill's speech claimed that the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe resulted from the Soviets'

- a fear of the return of Nazism.
- b concern that Eastern European nations might form an alliance against them.
- c need to have good trading relations with Eastern Europe.
- d historic dreams of building an empire.

3. Briefly explain why the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West was known as the "Cold" War." _____

4. One of the most dangerous episodes during the Cold War was the threat of a nuclear confrontation between the U.S. and Soviet Union after the Soviets installed missiles in

- a Mexico.
- b South Africa.
- c Cuba.
- d Venezuela.

5. The U.S. policy of preventing the spread of Communism in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas was known as

- a containment.
- b unification.
- c rearmament.
- d entrenchment.

6. Briefly explain the economic factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. _____



IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. After Sputnik, the U.S. encouraged science study by awarding student loans and stepping up space research, leading to the 1969 Moon landing. Why do you think American leaders believed it was so important to get to the Moon before the Soviets?

2. A Cold War holdover is the ban on trade with Cuba. Yet the U.S. does trade with China. Why might the U.S. trade with Communist China but ban trade with Communist Cuba?

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GAME SHOW

Use with articles identified.

The statements are answers to questions (modeled after the TV show *Jeopardy!*). Students must answer in the form of questions.

Divide the class into teams.

Read the statements.

Call on the first team with a hand raised.

Correct answer = 10 points

Wrong answer = -10 points

(And another team may respond for the same chance to gain or lose 10 points.)

STATEMENTS TO READ**IS THE GOVERNMENT LISTENING?**

1. **Top-secret intelligence agency**
2. **President Bush authorized domestic spying without warrants after this day's events .**
3. **Fourth Amendment protects against these.**
4. **President linked to Alien and Sedition Acts.**
5. **President who tried to seize steel mills.**

CORRECT RESPONSE

- What is the National Security Agency (or NSA)?
- What is 9/11 (or Sept. 11, 2001).
- What are unreasonable searches and seizures?
- Who was John Adams?
- Who was Harry S. Truman?

THE IRON CURTAIN

6. **German city blockaded by Soviet Union after World War II.**
7. **He delivered the "Iron Curtain" speech.**
8. **"Tear down this wall," he said.**
9. **What *Sputnik* was.**
10. **Cold War-era "hot wars" involving U.S.**

- What is Berlin?
- Who was Winston Churchill?
- Who was U.S. President Ronald Reagan?
- What was a Soviet satellite?
- What were the Korean and Vietnam wars?

ANSWER KEY**QUIZ 1 > PAGE TE 5**

1. [d] Ohio.
2. [c] violates the Fair Labor Standards Act.
3. In spite of Oregon's high minimum wage, its job growth is twice that of the rest of the country. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
4. [c] have not earned a high school diploma.
5. [b] inflation has eroded the purchasing power of those who earn the minimum wage.

QUIZ 2 > PAGE TE 5

1. [c] Richard M. Nixon.
2. [a] obtain a warrant from a court.
3. [c] listens to a large number of calls for a restricted period of time.
4. [a] Calvin Coolidge.
5. [d] a congressional resolution authorizing the President to use "all necessary and appropriate force" to fight terrorists.

QUIZ 3 > PAGE TE 6

1. [b] Denmark.
2. [d] historic dreams of building an empire.
3. The Soviet Union and the West never engaged in direct military confrontation. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*
4. [c] Cuba.
5. [a] containment.
6. The cost of the arms race with the West was too much for the Soviet economy to bear. *(Similar wording is acceptable.)*

GRAPH EXERCISE > PAGE TE 4

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. [a] \$6.25 | 3. [d] \$375 | 5. \$5,238 |
| 2. \$14.00 | 4. \$4.25 | 6. \$728 |

CORRECTION:
 Due to a production error, the Jan. 30 Teacher's Edition omitted the last sentences of Background for Lessons 1 and 2. Background 1 should have read: More than 2,000 people who committed crimes as teens are in prison with no hope of parole. Background 2 should have read: This article looks at the role of female GIs in Iraq.

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