

Unit 11: Module: Task 05: Separation

Step 01: Read and Highlight

In February 1946, a US diplomat in Moscow, George F Kennan, sent a telegram to the US State Department on the nature of Soviet conduct and foreign policy. His views on the motives behind Soviet foreign policy were to have a lasting influence on US perceptions of the USSR.

The telegram stated that the USSR was 'fanatically and implacably' hostile to the West and significantly that it was:

'Impervious to the logic of reason Moscow [is] highly sensitive to the logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw – and usually does – when strong resistance is encountered at any point.'

Kennan argued that:

- The USSR's view of the world was a traditional one of insecurity
- The Soviets wanted to advance Muscovite Stalinist ideology (not simply 'Marxism')
- The Soviet regime was cruel and repressive and justified this by perceiving nothing but evil in the outside world.
- The USSR was fanatically hostile to the West – but it was not 'suicidal'.

Kennan's 'logic of force' argument helped to harden attitudes in the US and was to play a key role in the development of the US policy of containment (see Unit 5 for more information on this)

Later the same year, NV Novikov, the Soviet ambassador to the US, also sent a telegram. Addressed to Stalin, it set out concerns about US actions.

Novikov argued that:

- The US was imperialist and thus a threat to the USSR.
- The US was striving for world supremacy.
- Broad plans for expansion have been developed and are being implemented
- US used diplomacy and the establishment of a system of naval and air bases and the creation of ever newer types of weapons to pursue its expansionist aims

Both the Kennan and the Novikov telegrams indicate the suspicion that was emerging in both the US and the USSR regarding each other's actions.

Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech

On 5 March 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, with President Harry S Truman sitting just behind him on the speakers' platform.

This speech is now seen as one of the defining moments in the origins of the Cold War. Churchill's speech warned of a new danger – the Soviet Union – which had placed an 'iron curtain' across central and eastern Europe

Optional Read: The Speech:

The United States stands at this time at the pinnacle of world power. It is a solemn moment for the American democracy. With primacy in power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future. As you look around you, you must feel not only the sense of duty done but also feel anxiety lest you fall below the level of achievement. Opportunity is here now, clear and shining, for both our countries. To reject it or ignore it or fritter it away will bring upon us all the long reproaches of the after-time. It is necessary that constancy of mind, persistency of purpose and the grand simplicity of decision shall guide and rule the conduct of the English-speaking peoples in peace as they did in war. We must and I believe we shall prove ourselves equal to this severe requirement.

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future or what are the limits if any to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies. I have a strong admiration and regards for the valiant Russian people and for my wartime comrade, Marshal Stalin. There is sympathy and goodwill in Britain- and I doubt not here also- towards the peoples of all the Russias and a resolve to preserve through many differences and rebuffs in establishing lasting friendships. We understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression. We welcome Russia to her rightful place among the leading nations of the world. Above all we welcome constant, frequent and growing contacts between the Russian people and our own people on both sides of the Atlantic. It is my duty however, for I am sure you would wish me to state the facts as I see them to you, 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. Athens

alone, with its immortal glories, is free to decide its future at an election under British, American and French observation. The Russian-dominated Polish Government has been encouraged to make enormous and wrongful inroads upon Germany, and mass expulsions of millions of Germans on a scale grievous and undreamed-of are now taking place. The Communist parties, which were very small in all these Eastern States of Europe, have been raised to pre-eminence and power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control. Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case, and so far, except in Czechoslovakia, there is no true democracy. Turkey and Persia are both profoundly alarmed and disturbed at the claims which are being made upon them and at the pressure being exerted by the Moscow Government. An attempt is being made by the Russians in Berlin to build up a quasi-Communist party in their zone of occupied Germany by showing special favors to groups of left-wing German leaders. At the end of the fighting last June, the American and British Armies withdrew westwards, in accordance with an earlier agreement, to a depth at some points of 150 miles on a front of nearly 400 miles to allow the Russians to occupy this vast expanse of territory which the Western Democracies had conquered. If now the Soviet Government tries, by separate action, to build up a pro-Communist Germany in their areas this will cause new serious difficulties in the British and American zones, and will give the defeated Germans the power of putting themselves up to auction between the Soviets and the Western Democracies. Whatever conclusions may be drawn from these facts- and facts they are- this is certainly not the Liberated Europe we fought to build up. Nor is this one which contains the essentials of permanent peace.

From what I have seen of our Russian friends and Allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness. For that reason the old doctrine of a balance of power is unsound. We cannot afford, if we can help it, to work on narrow margins, offering temptations to a trial of strength. If the Western Democracies stand together in strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations charter, their influence for furthering these principles will be immense and no one is likely to molest them. If however they become divided or falter in their duty and if these all-important years are allowed to slip away then indeed catastrophe may overwhelm us all.

Step 02: Sourcerwork: Check the sources and answer the questions below.

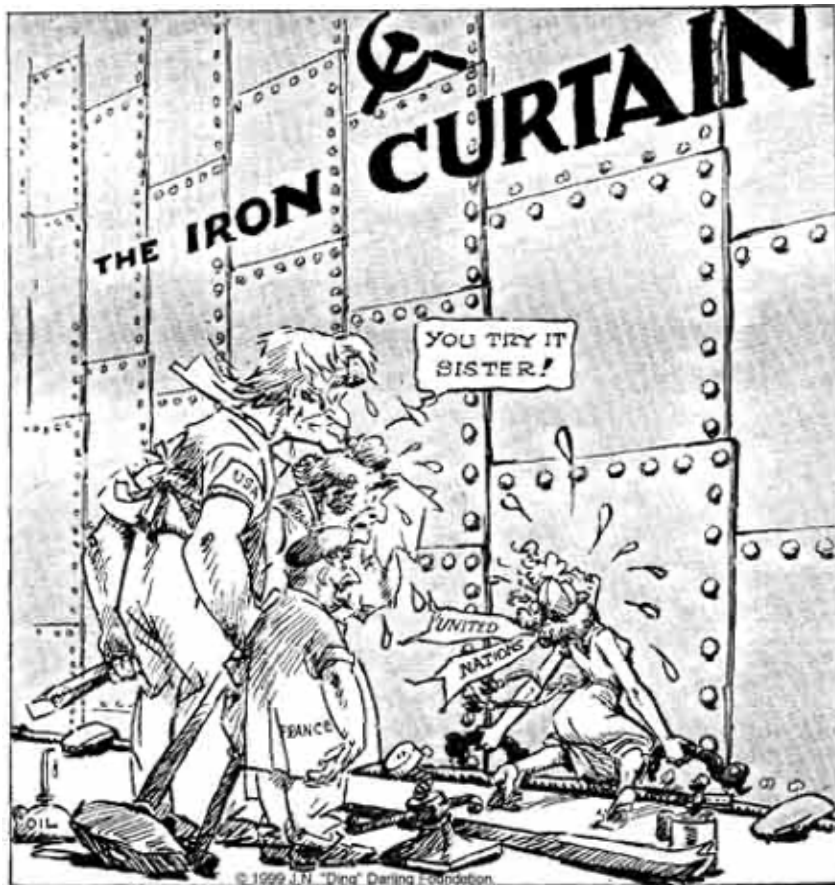
Source A



A cartoon published in the Soviet Union in 1946.

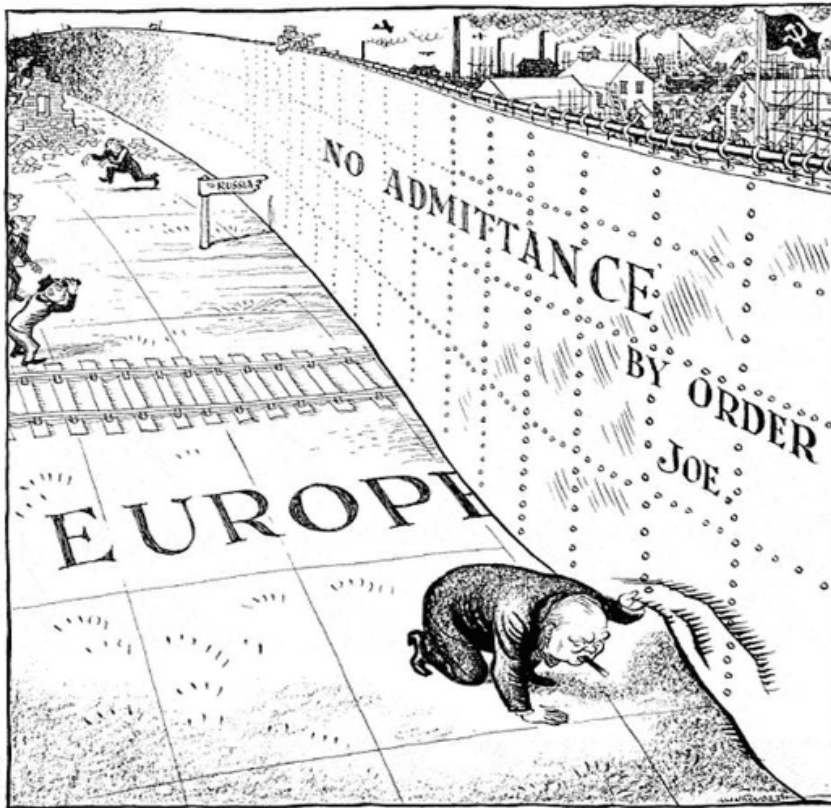
(The words on the flags held by Churchill read, 'An Iron Curtain is over Europe' and 'Anglo-Saxons must rule the World'. The figures behind Churchill are Hitler and Goebbels.)

Source B



A cartoon published in the west. The words on the ribbons of the women read: United Nations

Source C



A cartoon published in the west.The crouching man is Winston Churchill.

Source D

Excerpt from an interview Stalin gave to Pravda, 16 March 1946. Pravda was the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party.

Mr Churchill now stands as a firebrand of war. And he is not alone. He has friends not only in Britain but also in the United States. He reminds me of Hitler. Hitler began to set war loose by announcing his racial theory, declaring that only German speakers represent a full valuable nation. Mr Churchill begins to set war loose by maintaining that only nations speaking the English language are fully valuable nations and should rule over the remaining nations of the world.

As a result of the German invasion, the Soviet Union has lost about 7 million people. The Soviet Union cannot forget the sacrifices. What can be surprising in the fact that the Soviet Union, to protect its security, tries to ensure that the countries in Eastern Europe have governments loyal to the Soviet Union? How can one describe these peaceful aspirations as 'expansionist tendencies'?

1. What do Sources A, B and C suggest about the East-West relations in 1946?

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2. What, according to Source D, was the Soviet response to Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech?

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