

# The Iron Curtain by Winston Churchill

The dying embers of World War II still cast a shadow long over the postwar world when Winston Churchill arrived in the small Midwestern town of Fulton, Missouri in the spring of 1946. Westminster College seemed an unlikely place for the former British Prime Minister to deliver a speech of global importance. President Harry Truman penned a note at the bottom of the college's invitation: "This is a wonderful school in my home state. If you come, I will introduce you. Hope you can do it."

Churchill, who had won the war in Europe, only to lose in the British general election in July 1945, eagerly accepted the invitation to appear on the same platform with the President of the United States.

Churchill knew that while the world looked forward to putting the horrors of war behind, events at the beginning of 1946 portended an even darker future ahead. In the wake of the Allied victory, the Soviet Union had begun shaping Eastern Europe in their image, bringing the

governments of many nations into line with Moscow. On February 9, Premier Joseph Stalin gave a speech in which he declared that war between the East and West was inevitable. On February 22, the American Ambassador to Moscow, George F. Kennan, sent the famous "Long Telegram" warning of the Soviet Union's perpetual hostility towards the West.

Then, on March 5, 1946, at Westminster College in Fulton, Churchill's famous words "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent," ushered in the Cold War and framed the geo-political landscape for the next 50 years.

The former Prime Minister, with President Truman at his side, articulated the threat that the Soviet Union and communism posed to peace and stability in the post-war world. Invoking the spirit of the Atlantic Charter he called for a strengthening of Anglo-American ties and for the United Nations to become a peace-promoting world organization that would succeed where its predecessor the League of Nations had failed.

“The Sinews of Peace,” the title Churchill himself gave his address, endures today as one of the statesman’s most significant speeches. It not only made the term “iron curtain” a household phrase, but it coined the term “special relationship,” describing enduring alliance between the United States and Great Britain. It is a speech that offered a blueprint for the west to ultimately wage—and win—the Cold War.