The Iron Curtain
By Sharon Fabian

During World War II, The United States and the Soviet Union were allies. They fought together against Germany. Did they remain allies for a long time after the war?

Not at all. In fact, the war was barely over when the situation began to change. When the United States and the Soviet Union met with the other countries in the peace conferences at the end of the war, the US and the USSR were already beginning to disagree. (USSR stands for Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the official name for the Soviet Union)

The United States was already a world power and wanted to remain strong. The Soviet Union was rapidly becoming a major world power too, and it wanted to continue expanding its control. At the peace conference, the two countries competed for control of other European countries. The Soviet Union, which was a Communist country, wanted more European countries to become Communist. The United States wanted European countries to remain independent.

By the end of the war, the number of Communist countries was already growing. The Soviet Union had helped to free many eastern European countries from Germany and Japan during the war. These countries included Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and North Korea. After the war, these countries soon became "satellites" of the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia, Albania, and North Vietnam also became Communist countries. In Asia, China was becoming Communist too.

Germany was divided into four occupation zones after the war. Occupation zones are parts of the country that are controlled by another country. In Germany, one zone was controlled by Great Britain, one by the United States, one by France, and one by the Soviet Union. Soon, East Germany, the zone controlled by the Soviet Union, became a Communist country.

Europe was being divided right down the middle. Eastern Europe was becoming all Communist, controlled by the Soviet Union. Western Europe was remaining independent and allied with the United States.

The United States and Western European countries began to fear the rapid spread of Communism.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, spelled it out in a speech he gave in the United States at Westminster College in Missouri. This is how he described the situation in Europe: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent."

For a minute, just try to picture a curtain made of iron. It wouldn't be made of a light fabric that moves with every breeze. An iron curtain would be so heavy and so solid that it would be impossible to move.

Churchill’s speech pictured the Communist block of countries as a solid force. He described it as a threat to the rest of Europe and to the United States. After listening to his speech, many people agreed with him.

The Soviet Union saw Churchill's speech in a different light. Joseph Stalin, the leader of the USSR, accused Churchill of trying to stir up a conflict. After Churchill's famous speech, the dividing line between eastern and western Europe became known as the Iron Curtain. As the disagreements between the Communist countries and the independent countries grew, the Iron Curtain became the dividing line in the conflict that was called the Cold War.
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Questions

1. The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union is known as the ______.
   A. European War
   B. Cold War
   C. Third World War
   D. Iron Curtain

2. The dividing line between the Communist countries of Eastern Europe and the independent countries of Western Europe is called the ______.
   A. Iron Curtain
   B. Mason-Dixon Line
   C. Berlin Wall
   D. front line

3. The Cold War began ______.
   A. at the end of World War I
   B. in the 1970's
   C. at the end of World War II
   D. when Churchill made a famous speech

4. The communist country that controlled many of the other communist countries was ______.
   A. The Soviet Union
   B. Bulgaria
   C. Germany
   D. Yugoslavia

5. The country of ______ was divided into four parts after World War II.
   A. The Soviet Union
   B. Great Britain
   C. North Vietnam
   D. Germany

6. The famous "Iron Curtain" speech was made by ______.
   A. the leader of the peace conference
   B. the President of the United States
   C. the Prime Minister of Great Britain
   D. the leader of the Communist Party

7. Churchill's speech made many people ______ Communism.
   A. respect
   B. ignore
   C. love
   D. fear
8. Which happened first?
   A. World War II begins
   B. Americans fear Communism
   C. Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech
   D. Germany is divided into four zones

Explain in your own words how the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union started.

and the independent countries in Europe. Think of another creative way to describe this line between two very different groups of countries.