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Winston Churchill's "Iron-Curtain" Speech I

Lead: On March 5, 1946 at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill delivered one of the most important speeches in post-World War II history. It signaled the beginning of the Cold War.

Intro.: "A Moment in Time" with Dan Roberts.

Content: The alliance of necessity between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union began to show signs of decay with the defeat of Germany in April, 1945. The traditional American isolationism and

reluctance to be drawn into permanent foreign entangling alliances was, in the absence of an immediate perceived enemy threat, rearing its head.

Americans were tired of war and many were not as fearful of growing Soviet power as were their British cousins. This tended to counter the pressure of those advisors surrounding the new and inexperienced President Truman who would have the United States take vigorous leadership in international affairs. Some close to the President actually advocated closer Soviet/American ties. All of this meant the British felt themselves increasingly out in the cold and under pressure from the Soviets in many places such Iran, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean.

No one felt this British isolation more acutely than wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill, voted out of office by a war-weary electorate in the Spring of 1945. Two of the central themes of Churchill's career were opposition to Communism and the need to harness the support of the United States to the goals of British Foreign Policy. He had set his anti-Communism aside for a time in the mid-thirties because of the greater threat posed by the Nazis but, with their defeat, his older fears returned. To see the United States drifting into a less belligerent stance toward Stalin, particularly in the face of the more aggressive adventures the Soviet dictator was hatching in southern

Europe, was most distressing. He wanted to do something about it. In August, 1945 the President of Westminster College, a small Presbyterian school in Fulton, Missouri, issued an invitation to Churchill to speak to the students during his American vacation in the Spring of the following year. With President Truman's blessing he accepted. Next: Churchill rings down the Iron Curtain.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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