Comparing Churchill and Stalin

Directions: *See below for excerpts from two leaders that defined the East and West at the end of WWII – British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union. Churchill’s Iron Curtain (“Sinews of Peace”) Speech was delivered at Westminster College in Missouri on March 5, 1946. Stalin’s response to Churchill was printed in the Soviet newspaper, Pravda, later that month.*

**Iron Curtain (“Sinews of Peace”) Speech**

*Winston Churchill, delivered at Westminster College, March 5, 1946*

1. Restate in your own words, “We cannot be blind to the fact…”

*“We cannot be blind to the fact that the liberties enjoyed by individual citizens throughout the British Empire are not valid in a considerable number of countries, some of which are very powerful. In these States control is enforced upon the common people by various kinds of all-embracing police governments”*

1. What liberties do you think Churchill is referring to in the first sentence?
2. According to Churchill, what do British citizens have that others do not?
3. Churchill refers to “…a considerable number of countries, some of which are very powerful. In these States…” what countries or states do you think Churchill is referring to? How do these countries maintain control?
4. In this excerpt, Churchill outlines what he believes to be the relationship between a government and its citizens. In your own worlds, explain Churchill’s argument:

*“…All this means that the people of any country have the right, and should have the power by constitutional action, by free unfettered elections, with secret ballot, to choose or change the character or form of government under which they dwell…”*

1. List four conditions that Churchill argues are necessary for justice:

*“That freedom of speech and thought should reign; that courts of justice, independent of the executive, unbiased by any party, should administer laws which have received the broad assent [approval] of large majorities or are consecrated [respected] by time and custom.”*

1. According to Churchill, how have things changed since the end of WWII?

*“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 [converting] tendencies [ways].”*

1. Churchill refers to an “iron curtain” that “has descended across the continent.” What do you think he means by this phrase? Where the curtain, and what is life like for people behind the curtain?

*“…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 many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.”*

**Response to Churchill**

*Joseph Stalin, interview in Pravda, March 14, 1946*

*“…In substance, Mr. Churchill now stand s in the position of a firebrand [instigator] of war. And Mr. Churchill is not alone here. He has friends not only in England but also in the United States of America.”*

1. Who does Stalin hold responsible for bringing the world closer to war?
2. Why, according to Stalin, does the Soviet Union deserve to have neighbors who are loyal?

*“…It may be that some quarters are trying to push into oblivion these sacrifices of the Soviet people which insured the liberation of Europe form the Hitlerite yoke. But the Soviet Union cannot forget them. One can ask therefore, what can be surprising in the fact that the Soviet Union, in a desire to ensure its security for the future, tries to achieve that these countries should have governments whose relations to the Soviet Union are loyal?”*

*“Mr. Churchill wandered around the truth when he speaks of the growth of the influence of the Communist parties in Eastern Europe….The growth of the influence of Communism cannot be considered accidental. It is a normal function. The influence of the Communists grew because during the hard years of the mastery of fascism in Europe, communists showed themselves to be reliable, daring and self-sacrificing fighters against fascist regimes for the liberty of peoples.”*

1. Using specific evidence from the two documents, summaries the major points of conflict between the two leaders. Why and how do Stalin and Churchill disagree? In your answer be sure to discuss their perceptions of each other (and their countries), as well as their opinions on the growth of communism in Eastern Europe following WWII.