Salami tactics: the Soviet take-over of Eastern Europe

New Words

**sinister**: frightening, in an evil way.

**totalitarian**: where the government has total power over the people.

**imperialistic**: wanting to build an empire. Communists used it as an abuse-word to describe the western powers.

During 1946–47, Stalin made sure that Communist governments came to power in all the countries of eastern Europe (the countries which the Soviet Union had conquered in 1945).

The Communist description of this process was ‘slicing salami’ – gradually getting rid of all opposition, bit-by-bit (see Source A). In this way, Russia gained control of:

a. **Albania** (1945) – the Communists took power after the war without opposition
b. **Bulgaria** (1945) – a left-wing coalition gained power in 1945; the Communists then executed the leaders of all the other parties.
c. **Poland** (1947) – a coalition government took power in 1945, but the Communists forced the non-Communist leaders into exile.
d. **Hungary** (1947) – see Source A.
e. **Romania** (1945–1947) – a left-wing coalition was elected in 1945; the Communists gradually took over control.
f. **Czechoslovakia** (1945–48) – a left-wing coalition was elected in 1945. In 1948, the Communists banned all other parties and killed their leaders.
g. **East Germany** (1949) – the Russian turned their zone of Germany into the German Democratic Republic in 1949.

Tasks

1. Read Source A, and make diagram showing all the factors that helped Communists take power in the countries of Eastern Europe.
2. Explain how the case of Hungary on Source A illustrates ‘salami tactics’.

Source A

Hungary was invaded by the Russians, and in 1945 the allies agreed that Russian troops should stay there. Stalin allowed elections, and the non-communists won a big majority. However, some communists were elected, led by a pro-Russian called Rakosi.

Rakosi now started demanding that groups which opposed him should be banned. If not, he hinted, the Russians would take over the country. Then he got control of the police, and started to arrest his opponents. He set up a sinister and brutal secret police unit, the AVH. Soon Rakosi had complete control over Hungary.

Rakosi’s work was typical of what was happening all over eastern Europe.

The historian Jon Nichol, writing in 1990

Source B

Russia saw it as protecting herself from future attack. The West saw it as empire-building.
Churchill’s Fulton Speech

On 5 March 1946, Winston Churchill gave a speech at Fulton in America. He said ‘a shadow’ had fallen on eastern Europe, which was now cut off from the free world by ‘an iron curtain’. Behind that line, he said, the people of eastern Europe were ‘subject to Soviet influence . . . totalitarian control [and] police governments’.

Source C
Mr Churchill has called for a war on the USSR.
Stalin, writing in the Russian newspaper Pravda on 13 March 1946.

Source D
. . . the Cold War set in. Churchill had given his famous speech in Fulton urging the imperialistic forces of the world to fight the Soviet Union. Our relations with England, France and the USA were ruined.
Nikita Khrushchev, writing in 1971. In 1946 he was a member of the Soviet government.

Source E
A British cartoon of 1946. In fact, the ‘iron curtain’ was a 2,000-kilometre line of barbed wire, look-out posts and road blocks.

Tasks
1. Read Sources C and D. Explain why Churchill’s speech was a turning point in the history of the Cold War.
2. Did Churchill cause the Cold War?

Essay!
[Use this essay frame to write the following essay. ]

Why had the Superpowers become suspicious of each other by March 1946, when Churchill made his important speech at Fulton?

They became suspicious of each other because they had different beliefs. The USA . . . . . . . The USSR . . . . . . . This caused suspicion because . . . . . . .

History made the USA and the USSR suspicious of each other. The Soviet Union . . . . . . . The USA . . . . . . . This caused suspicion because . . . . . . .

Both the USA and the USSR had very different aims. The USA . . . . . . . The USSR, however, . . . . . . . This caused suspicion because . . . . . . .

Finally, because neither side trusted each other, events made them hate each other more.
- The Yalta Conference (Feb 1945) caused problems because . . . . . . .
- The Potsdam Conference (Jul 1945) . . . . . . .
- Also, salami tactics (1945–48) caused suspicion because . . . . . . .