Sir Winston Churchill: “An Iron Curtain Has Descended Across the Continent” (March 1946):

The term “Cold War” describes the era of uneasy relations between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union after World War II. Each was competing for influence in Europe through propaganda and troop placement. In the first excerpt, the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin offered a glimpse of the ideological combat that was to be waged in the future. A month later, Winston Churchill, who had largely directed the British war effort, warned the West of the deceptive Soviet Union in his famous “Iron Curtain” speech.

Questions:
1. What policy was Churchill advocating in his “Iron Curtain” speech?
2. Was he pessimistic or optimistic about the possibility of war?

I now come to the . . . danger which threatens the cottage home and ordinary people, namely tyranny. We cannot be blind to the fact that the liberties enjoyed by individual citizens throughout the United States and British Empire are not valid in a considerable number of countries, some of which are very powerful. In

these states control is forced upon the common people by various kinds of all-embracing police governments, to a degree which is overwhelming and contrary to every principle of democracy. The power of the state is exercised without restraint, either by dictators or by compact oligarchies operating through a

social system successfully withstood the trial in the flames of war and proved its perfect viability. It is well known that the foreign press more than once asserted that the Soviet social system is a “risky experiment” doomed to failure, that the Soviet system is a “house of cards,” without any roots in life, imposed upon the people by the organs of the “Cheka” [secret police], that a slight push from outside would be enough to blow this “house of cards” to smithereens.

Now we can say that the war swept away all these assertions of the foreign press as groundless. The war has shown that the Soviet social system is a truly popular system which has grown from the people and enjoys its powerful support, that the Soviet social system is a perfectly viable and stable form of organization of society.

More than that, the point is now not whether the Soviet social system is viable or not, since after the objective lessons of the war no single skeptic now ventures to come out with doubts concerning the viability of the Soviet social system. The point now is that the Soviet social system has proved more viable and stable than a non-Soviet social system, that the Soviet social system is a better form of organization of society than any non-Soviet social system.