The Start of the Cold War

Read the excerpts below and then answer the questions that follow. Do a little research in your textbook or online, as necessary, to familiarize yourself on the historical context surrounding each quote.

***There are now two great nations in the world, which starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans. . . . Each seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world.***

*–* Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835)

***THEY made it, of course; they drew the* iron curtain *across the middle of Europe, partly to stop us looking in, partly to stop their own poor wretches looking out enviously at the boundless goods and comforts on our side. Behind the iron curtain were the hapless peoples held captive by the grim-faced Russians and their stooges in office in the satellites; in front of it were ourselves, expressing sympathy for the captives but apologetically remaining very thoroughly armed, in however subdued a way.***

*–* Fred Inglis, *The Cruel Peace: Everyday Life and the Cold War* (1991)

1. What conditions, developments, or other factors may have led Alexis de Tocqueville to predict that the Russians (or Soviet Union) and the United States would one day become world powers?
2. Why might someone believe that the Soviet Union and United States “held the destinies of half the world” at the end of World War II?
3. What did the “iron curtain” represent to the West? Do you think the Soviets’ would have agreed or disagreed with this assessment? Why or why not?
4. Why might the Soviets want to “prevent their own poor wretches looking out enviously”? What were conditions like in the Soviet Union at the end of WWII? What were conditions like in the US? In Western Europe? In your opinion, which region was “doing better”? Explain your reasoning.
5. Why do you suppose the Western European nations and the United States were “expressing sympathy for the captives but apologetically remaining very thoroughly armed”? What does this mean from a foreign policy standpoint? What, if anything, should they have done? Explain your answer.