

The development of the Cold War: satellite states

Learning objectives

In this chapter you will learn about:

- why Stalin established Cominform and Comecon
- how the 'spheres of influence' became 'two camps'.

What is a satellite state?

A satellite state is a country that is officially independent, but is in reality controlled by another country. Between 1947 and 1949, the USSR extended its influence over Eastern Europe, turning countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland into satellite states.

Why did Stalin set up satellite states?

Stalin described the Marshall Plan as 'dollar imperialism': he believed that the Americans were trying to buy influence over Europe, as any country that accepted Marshall Aid would effectively become an American ally. To prevent this, Stalin extended his control over Eastern Europe, creating a series of satellite states.

Cominform: The Communist Information Bureau (1947)

In order to extend his control, Stalin established Cominform in 1947. Cominform was an international organisation that represented Communist Parties across Europe and brought them under the direction of the USSR.

The first Cominform Conference rejected the Marshall Plan. Consequently, Eastern European governments refused to accept Marshall Aid and Communist Parties in Western Europe were encouraged to organise strikes and demonstrations against the American plan. In France, for example, 2 million workers, sympathetic to the communists, went on strike in the winter of 1947, demanding that the French government reject Marshall Aid.

Cominform was also used to ensure the loyalty of Eastern European governments. It did this by investigating government ministers and employees, and removing those who were not loyal to Stalin. This process was often violent. In Hungary, for example, 5% of the population was in prison by 1953. In this way, Cominform **consolidated** the power of the USSR through Eastern Europe by stamping out opposition and ensuring the loyalty of Eastern European governments.



ResultsPlus

Watch out!

Do not confuse Cominform with Comecon. Remember Comecon is economic, and Cominform is political.