

victories. Political opponents were harassed or simply **made to disappear**. Between September 1947 and February 1948 all non-Communists were purged from the governments in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

Once the political system was controlled, a **Sovietisation of other aspects of life like economy, culture, land distribution and media could proceed**. Formally these satellites retained their full independence but they were controlled by the USSR. There were two major exceptions in Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

There are many examples from Eastern Europe showing this. In Poland, the Peasant Party refused to join the Democratic Front which was requested by the Communists. The party was subjected to harassment and terror and elections in 1947 were manipulated. The communist controlled 'electoral bloc' got more than 90% support in the elections. In Hungary, the leader of the Smallholders party Béla Kovács, and other representatives from his party, were arrested by Soviet troops in 1947. In Romania the Communists and their allies got 372 out of 414 seats in the elections in 1946. The results had been falsified. In Bulgaria, the Fatherland Front secured 90% of the votes at elections in 1945 and used terror and coercion against the political opposition.

Yugoslavia had been liberated from Nazi control by Yugoslav partisans under the leadership of Josip Broz **Tito**—and not by the Russian Red Army. After the war Stalin tried to impose his plans for economic development in Yugoslavia, i.e., to concentrate on heavy industry. Tito resisted this policy and took his own initiatives to form a custom union with Bulgaria and Hungary. Stalin could not allow this form of 'national communism' and withdrew his economic and military advisers from Yugoslavia. In June 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from Cominform, the international communist organisation, accused of 'bourgeois nationalism'. The Eastern Bloc now announced an economic blockade and broke off diplomatic relations. **Yugoslavia was now expelled from the Eastern Bloc**, but Tito and his regime had considerable national support. It was also important that they didn't share a border with the USSR. The US offered considerable financial assistance. The outcome of this crisis led to the creation of a **non-aligned, non-Stalinist, communist state**. But it also led to a major purge of 'national communists' in Russian satellite states. The Yugoslav example should not be copied.

Czechoslovakia had been liberated from Nazi occupation by the Red Army. But there was much stronger support for communism in Czechoslovakia compared to other satellites due to 'the ghost of Munich'. The betrayal by the Western democracies in 1938 had not been forgotten. Communists secured 38% support in free elections in 1946 and joined a coalition with non-communist parties. In 1947, the country suffered from an economic crisis and the Communist Party feared that this would affect its chances at the elections in 1948. After disputes within the government regarding nationalisation of industries and land reform, non-communist ministers resigned. The Prime Minister formed a new National Front government with only Communists and reliable supporters. When elections eventually took place, the Communists won 237 of 300 seats in parliament and soon **all other parties were dissolved**. The only country in the Eastern Bloc with a genuine multi-party system had now been transformed to a communist single-party state.

In the West and in the US, this confirmed the view of the 'hardliners'. The **coup in Czechoslovakia** helped the US government to pass the Marshall Plan through Congress.

Cold War Crisis 1: The Berlin Blockade 1948–1949

On 23 June 1948, the Russians cut off all land links to West Berlin. The city was a capitalist island or enclave surrounded by the Russian controlled Eastern zone. 2.5 million West Berliners were now cut off from coal, food and other supplies. **It was the first Cold War crisis in Europe during the Cold War.**

A. What were the underlying reasons for this conflict?

1. The two superpowers had **conflicting aims concerning Germany**.
 - a) Stalin and the Soviet Union feared a **Germany recovery**. In order to promote Soviet security, Germany had to remain weak. The Soviet buffer system in Eastern Europe would then be more effective.

✓ Author's Tip

The development in Eastern Europe is of major importance if you want to support the 'orthodox view'. It was claimed that Stalin violated the Declaration of Liberated Europe. You must be able to give some examples showing this, when explaining the 'orthodox school'.