

Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe

What was Churchill talking about when he mentioned an "**Iron Curtain!**" in his speech at Fulton, Missouri in 1946?

This Revision Bite will help you understand how Eastern Europe fell to Communism and became allied to Stalinist Russia.

1. Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe
2. Soviet takeover of power

Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe



The Iron Curtain

Twenty million Russians died during the Second World War, so Stalin said he wanted a **buffer zone** of friendly states around Russia to make sure that Russia could never be invaded again.

Stalin was planning the takeover of Eastern Europe. During the war, Communists from the occupied countries of Eastern Europe escaped to Moscow and set up Communist governments in exile there. As the **Red Army** drove the Nazis back, it occupied large areas of Eastern Europe and Churchill in the so-called **percentages agreement** - agreed that Eastern Europe could be a Soviet "sphere of influence".

In the countries that the Red Army "**liberated**", communist-dominated governments took power. The Communists made sure that they controlled the army, set up a secret police force, and began to arrest their opponents. Non-Communists were gradually beaten, murdered, executed and terrified out of power. By 1949, **all** the governments of Eastern Europe, except Yugoslavia, were hard line Stalinist regimes.

In 1946, in a speech at Fulton in the USA, Churchill declared that an **Iron Curtain** had come down across Europe, and that Soviet power was growing and had to be stopped. Stalin called Churchill's speech a "declaration of war". In 1947, Stalin set up **Comintern** - an alliance of Communist countries designed to make sure they obeyed Soviet rule.

Soviet takeover of power

It will help if you are able to describe some details of the Soviet takeover of power:

Country	Date	Method
Albania	1945	The Communists immediately took power.
Bulgaria	1945	In the 1945 elections, a Communist-led coalition was elected, but the Communists executed the non-Communists.
East Germany	1945	East Germany was the Soviet zone of Germany. In 1949, they set up a Communist-controlled state called the German Democratic Republic.
Romania	1947	In the 1945 elections, a Communist-led coalition was elected to power. The Communists gradually took over and in 1947 they abolished the monarchy.
Poland	1947	Stalin had promised to set up a joint Communist/non-Communist government at Yalta, but then he invited 16 non-Communist leaders to Moscow and arrested them. Thousands of non-Communists were arrested, and the Communists won the 1947 election.
Hungary	1947	The non-communists won the 1945 elections with Zoltan Tildy as president. However, the Communists' leader, Rakosi, took control of the secret police (the AVO), and executed and arrested his opponents. Tildy was forced to resign and Cardinal Mindzenty, head of the Catholic Church, was imprisoned. By 1948, Rakosi had complete control of Hungary.
Czechoslovakia	1948	A coalition government was set up and led by the non-Communist Benes. However, the Communists' leader Gottwald made sure they controlled the radio, the army and the police. Gottwald became prime minister and set up a secret police force. Non-Communists were arrested. In 1948, Communist workers went on strike, the non-Communist minister Masaryk committed suicide and Gottwald took over the government.

