

The Zhdanov Doctrine and the Cominform

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On 22 September 1947, delegates from the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy and France gathered near Warsaw and created the Cominform, an information bureau located in Belgrade. It quickly became the Communist movement's agent for spreading its ideology through its newspaper *For a lasting peace, for a people's democracy*. Presented as a 'revival' of the Comintern, the Cominform actually served as an instrument for the USSR to keep close control over Western Communist parties. The aim was to close ranks around Moscow and to ensure that European Communists were in line with Soviet policies. Tito's Yugoslavia, accused of deviationism, would soon be excluded from the Cominform.

Andrei Zhdanov, the Soviet delegate, ideologist in the CPSU and Stalin's right-hand man, persuaded the participants in the constitutive meeting to approve the doctrine according to which the world was now divided into two irreconcilable camps: an 'imperialist and anti-democratic' camp led by the United States and an 'anti-imperialist and democratic' camp led by the USSR. This doctrine was the Soviet response to the Truman Doctrine. Zhdanov condemned imperialism and colonisation but advocated 'new democracy'. He emphasised the fact that the anti-imperialist bloc across the world relied on the democratic workers' movement, on Communist parties and on those involved in liberation movements in colonial countries. In 1947, the world therefore became bipolar, divided into two conflicting blocs.

Then in January 1949, in response to the Marshall Plan, the USSR created a programme of economic cooperation with the Soviet bloc countries known as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or Comecon).