There was also Marxist ideology behind it. Marx claimed that the Communist Revolution was inevitable - especially in highly industrialised and advanced Germany. The Soviets saw it as their mission to export the revolution to other countries - especially Germany.

The war as a triumph for Soviet communism

- The Soviet leaders felt that their country had made by far the most important contribution to the winning of the war. The British and the Americans had helped, but Stalin believed, with some justification, that the Soviet Union had cut the heart out of the German army. 10 million Germans, who represented 80 per cent of German losses, died on the Eastern Front. The Soviet leaders believed their country had largely won the war, so they had a right to shape the future of Europe.

- Stalin also saw the war as proof that communism worked: in the battle to the death between communist Russia and capitalist Germany, communism had triumphed. This gave a new sense of confidence and determination to the Soviet government.

Never again: The Level of the Soviet wartime sacrifice

- The Soviet Union suffered much more than the other allies during the war. This made a difference to attitudes after the war. About 15 million Soviet soldiers and civilians had been killed by the Germans. In addition, many people had died because of shortages of food and the other harsh conditions of wartime. As many as 25 million Soviet citizens may have died because of the war. Stalin was determined that this should never be allowed to happen again.

Soviet strategic thinking

- How could the Soviet Union ensure that the devastation of the Second World War was not repeated? In 1914 and 1941 Germany had attacked Russia through Poland. In 1945 Stalin thought that sooner or later there could be yet another attack through Poland. To stop this, he was determined to control Poland and other East European states. Before the Second World War these countries had been independent. Almost all of them had been governed by right-wing, anti-communist leaders. In Moscow it seemed quite likely that if the countries of Eastern Europe were again allowed to be independent, the states would again become anti-Soviet.

US imperialism

- The USA was by far the wealthiest country in the world in 1945. The Soviet government was convinced that American business leaders were planning to spread their power and increase their profits by buying up companies in other countries and selling American goods wherever they could. In this way the USA could build up a new kind of world empire. American troops would not need to conquer new lands: American capitalism would do it instead. As good communists it was the job of the Soviet leaders to try to stop American businesses from dominating the world. The setting up of a group of friendly communist countries was one way of doing this.
How did Stalin Takeover Eastern Europe?

During 1946–47, Stalin made sure that Communist governments came to power in all the countries of eastern Europe (the countries which Russia had conquered in 1945).

Stage 1: The take-over of Poland

- As we have seen, Stalin's first priority was control of Poland. At the end of June 1945 a few London Poles were included in the Polish government. However, it remained completely dominated by the communists of the Lublin group.
- The Western allies admitted defeat over Poland by 'recognizing' the largely communist government on 5 July 1945. This meant that Britain and the USA accepted that the communists were in charge in Warsaw. Communist power was strengthened even further in January 1947 when rigged elections were held in Poland. The leader of the London Poles, Mikolacyk, thought his life was in danger and fled the country.

Stage 2: The take-over of Romania and Bulgaria

- After Poland, Stalin's immediate priorities were the control of Romania and Bulgaria. As the Red Army swept into Bulgaria and Romania in late 1944 coalition governments dominated by communists were set up. In February 1945, within days of the Yalta agreement, a top Soviet politician, Andrei Vyshinsky, ordered the King of Romania to appoint a new prime minister chosen by Stalin. When the King said that this was not in line with the Yalta agreement, Vyshinsky slammed his fist on the table and shouted at the King. Stalin got his prime minister.
- By the middle of 1945 communists were in firm control in Romania. Elections took place in Bulgaria in November. These elections were rigged and the communist Fatherland Front won. In September 1946 the communist government in Bulgaria abolished the monarchy. The monarchy in Romania was abolished in 1947.

Stage 3: The take-over of Hungary and Czechoslovakia

- In contrast with Poland, Romania and Bulgaria Stalin did not at first have a clear view of what he wanted for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. He allowed free elections to take place in Hungary in November 1945. The non-communist Smallholders' Party was the most successful party. Fresh elections were held in August 1947. This time the elections were rigged and an exclusively communist government took power. In November all non-communist parties were banned.
- The final stage in the take-over came when communists seized power in Czechoslovakia in 1948. Before that the country was ruled by a coalition of communists and non-communists. This was the one country in Eastern Europe with a strong local communist party. There were fair elections in 1946 and the communists won 38 per cent of the vote.
- There was an economic crisis in the country from mid-1947. The harvest was bad and industry was in trouble.
- Elections were due for May 1948. The communists were afraid that they would do badly. The communists used armed force to seize power. Many non-communists were arrested and Masaryk j was murdered. Rigged elections were held shortly afterwards and the communists won a huge majority. The Soviet take-over was complete.