

The Soviet Outlook on World Affairs in the Early Cold War

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Abstract: One of the most important causes of the Cold War was the misunderstanding which occurred among the Soviet Union and the United States concerning to the new world order, following World War II. This study investigates some aspects of the Soviet perception of world affairs in the early Cold War, trying to identify some of the main elements of the Soviet perception. Ideology played an important part in this enmity, as Marxism-Leninism advocated the irreconcilable hostility of the capitalist world regarding the first Socialist country. Also, the American refusal to accept a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe amplified the ideological susceptibility.

The alignment of the socialist states in the international relations and the theory that supported it were a direct response to the evolutions in the international arena. The deterioration of the Soviet-American relations after 1947 triggered a strong reaction from Stalin, towards an increase in its control over the Soviet sphere of influence, as it resulted from the post-war agreements. The integration of these Eastern and Central European states in a common system of economic and diplomatic relations represented the best way for Stalin to assure his control over these countries. The implementation of the Stalinist social-political and economical model and the rupture in the relations these countries held with the West were methods of bringing them closer to the Soviet Union, by creating converging political interests among them.

Stalin's foreign policy during the period 1945-1947, and even beyond 1947, is very hesitant, oscillating between an aggressive continuation of the expansion through world revolution or retrenchment and preservation of the initial positions. The initial thesis in Western historiography, founded by George Kennan, blames the conflict upon Stalin and his strong measures in Eastern Europe. The revisionist thesis, which becomes known in the '60s and '70s, argues that the main fault belongs to the Truman administration and its aggressive approach on the Soviet issue (W. Loth, 1997:12-14). The main problem that had not been answered yet is whether the "popular front" strategy during the years 1945-1947 was the only goal of Stalin's policy, as the revisionists argue, or was it just a preliminary step towards an overall sovietization of Eastern Europe, as the traditionalist school argues (T. Dunmore, 1984:106). Even though the matter is not settled yet, only the element of the doubt is important. This uncertainty regarding Stalin's intentions reveals another important element: the pressure employed by the local Communists, in their quest for more power.

New evidences show that the Communist groups in the Central and Eastern European countries insisted for continuing the changes headed for a more rapid Communization then the Kremlin was willing to implement at a certain time. The Romanian Communists for example

were pressuring Moscow all the time about gaining more power, complaining about the anti-Soviet policy lead by the coalition governments of 1945-1947 (S. Beria, 2001:196). Another example is the Hungarian Communist Rákósi, who often expressed concerns at the Kremlin about his country's fate after 1947, accusing bourgeois plots and fascist forces that were planning to bring the Americans in Hungary after the peace (V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, 1996:99). Some historians consider that such attitudes did represent at least one of the causes for the abandonment of the "popular front" policy in Eastern Europe (T. Dunmore, 1984:109).

We will consider as alignment in foreign policy all the diplomatic practices of the "peoples' democracies" during the early years of the Cold War (1947-1956) in which all political actions in foreign affairs were merely supporting reflexes of the Soviet initiatives. Also, by theory of alignment, we shall define all the political and ideological explanations given by both the Soviet Union and the Communist elites in these countries, to the coordination between the "peoples' democracies" and the U.S.S.R. in matters of foreign policy.

The Communist elites in these countries were dependent on the Soviet support due to a hostile environment, both domestic and international (S. Tănase 1998:37). This situation insured the control Stalin needed over them, so that these countries would carry out the functions required by the Soviet policy-makers. The main function was defensive and strategic, by creating a real "cordon sanitaire" in an opposite version from the traditional one, between the U.S.S.R. and the Western world, perceived by the Kremlin as aggressive (W. Loth 1997:99).

According to Molotov, Stalin considered that the First World War paved the way for Socialism, the Second World War extended Socialism to other countries, establishing a system and consequently a third World War was going to erase Imperialism forever (F. Chuev, 1993:63). The best evidence for this conviction is Stalin's stubborn and determined policy towards the former Western allies. Stalin's diplomacy did not accept any compromise with the West, nor did it avoid any confrontation, just as if it wasn't expecting constructive results of any kind.

The alignment in foreign affairs was both a consequence and an expression of this situation. The beginning of the Cold War, generally considered to be in 1947, generated a very difficult and perilous situation not only for the Soviet Union, but for the Eastern satellites as well. Most of these regimes had no international legitimacy due to the controversial way in which they obtained political power and stood no chance of winning a war or any kind of military intervention from the West. Therefore, the need for a political and military umbrella from the Soviet Union was an objective necessity. The aggressive character of the American and the Western policies towards these countries could only generate a reaction of solidarity among them (P. Nistor, 2006: 132). Also, their strict obedience to Stalin, whom they owed power to, generated a total subordination to Moscow in matters of foreign relations.

A strong motivation of the compliant attitude towards Soviet demands was this lack of legitimacy and domestic support which threatened the very existence of the regime in its early years. For example, after signing the Romanian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship in 1948, Gheorghiu-Dej made a relevant statement when returning from Moscow. He explained that the Treaty is, among other things, a "heavy strike given to all those illusions, nurtured by reactionary circles from inside and outside of the country that the past regime might come back" (Scânteia, 1948:no.1044). So the regime expected from that Treaty an increase in its domestic authority and international prestige.

The international situation of these countries was extremely difficult, since the former German allies were left with no economical relations whatsoever. Most of their external trade, as it was the case with Romania, had been bound for Germany and after the war there wasn't

any possibility to establish new relations with other countries, especially in the West, because of the conflicted international relations.

After the signing of the Armistice in September 1944, Romania was able to develop economical exchanges only with the Soviet Union and became addicted to Soviet supplies of raw materials for the industry. In the first economical Agreement with the U.S.S.R., Romania strongly demanded materials like steel and cotton, in the absence of which the economy could not work (L. Beta, 1997:106). No other country was willing to do that, but Moscow offered to provide it without hesitation, due to political interests.

At the beginning of the '50s, the basic premises of the Soviet approach on international relations were the aggressive expansion of the American capital that was using threats to war in order to accomplish its interests and rearming of Germany, as a basis for a future American-lead attack on the U.S.S.R. In the realist interpretation of international relations, these premises might be interpreted as resulting from the security necessities of the Soviet state, having nothing to do with the ideological framework.

As had been proven recently, ideology did play a rather important part in defining these threats according to the Marxist-Leninist ideology. There is a separation between the objectives of the Soviet state, that are generated by its Marxist-Leninist thinking, and the means used to pursue these objectives, which are non-ideological. (N. Gould-Davis 1999:96). Ideology played a relevant role in asserting such a view, by providing the theoretical instruments to the policy-makers: the antagonism between capitalism and socialism, imperialism as a last phase of capitalism.

This way, the ideology directed the long-term political thinking towards an ultimate confrontation, towards a preparation of that confrontation. In this scheme of thought, all compromises were temporary, meant to help the consolidation of the socialist world for the confrontation, as enounced by Lenin when it came to making one step back in the course of the revolution, in order to gain more power for a final assault. So the final goal of the Soviet policy, especially during Stalin, was to be ready for the confrontation, whenever it may occur.

This is why the main priorities of the Soviet policy in regards to foreign affairs were the unity of the international Communist movement and the reinforcement of the Socialist camp (W. Hayter 1970:1). The effects in the diplomatic field were a continuous struggle to fortify the unity and homogeneity of the Socialist camp and the constant undermining of the Western projects in foreign affairs.

As Molotov confessed a few decades later, during the Stalinist years, the Soviet Union was really preparing for war. Molotov's attitude in the '80s, looking back at his years as Foreign Minister, is very relevant to the political state of spirit which dominated the period after 1947. Molotov condemned Brezhnev's policy, as well as Khrushchev's, for insisting on peaceful coexistence. He found that to be wrong, arguing that the Soviet Union must always be ready for war. Stressing the need for peace makes the Soviet Union weak (F. Chuev, 1993:67).

The world according to Zhdanov

The starting point of the theoretical framework of Socialist alignment was represented by the first meeting of the Cominform, in September 1947 in Poland. Due to the evolution of the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., mainly Stalin's decision to boycott the Marshall plan, Moscow decided to strengthen its control over the Central and Eastern European sphere of interest. The decision was motivated specially by the conviction that this area was indeed threatened by the American expansion (V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, 1996:125).

It was one component of the containment theory, as described by Kennan, to try to contain the Soviet moves in Eastern Europe by supporting, within the possible limits, governments

that were striving to distance themselves from Moscow, to try to encourage “heretic” movements among the Eastern European Communists (J.L. Gaddis, 1982:46). The Czechoslovak initial decision to accept the Marshall plan was a matter of great concern for the U.S.S.R., in this regard. The 1947 Conference in Poland was a countermove to the Truman refusal to recognize the agreements Stalin had with Roosevelt.

On that occasion, Zhdanov, on behalf of the Soviet Union, drew the political line in foreign affairs for all the Communist parties that participated at the meeting. Zhdanov enunciated the major directions in foreign policy from a conflicted and confrontational point of view, which left no space for debates or compromises.

As Stalin’s first collaborator at the time, Zhdanov, explained the Soviet interpretation on the evolution of the international affairs, by pinpointing the main threat to Socialism, that being the new orientation in the American policy pursuing world domination by economical and political means. The Americans, stressed Zhdanov, took advantage on the weakening of its foremost competitors in economic domination: Germany, Japan, France and Britain and is therefore emerging as the focal center of capitalism and imperialism. Its quest for domination is the most important menace to world Socialism and thus must be countered by strong and cohesive action and commitment to Socialism by all “democratic” states (A. Zhdanov, 1947:12).

The interpretation said that the United States took notice of the fact that the Soviet Union and its allies are the main obstacles in their pursuit for domination, which is why removing Socialism in these countries is the primary aim in the American foreign policy. To insure the achievement of that aim, the United States is planning to rearm Germany in order to use it as the base for a future aggression against Socialism. This situation lead to a cleavage in world affairs, between what Zhdanov called at the time the “Socialist camp” and the “Imperialist camp” (A. Zhdanov, 1947:37-38).

This dichotomist vision was going to be the main pillar in Soviet foreign policy making for the entire duration of the Cold War, shaping the U.S.S.R.’s relations with both its Eastern European satellites and the Western world. The countries in the Soviet sphere of influence imposed a very accelerated rhythm of transformations towards building Socialism in the Stalinist manner, producing what was later to be known as the “peoples’ democracies” (Z. Brzezinski, 1967:74). At the same time, the tightening of the control meant removing the diversity in Socialist construction and complete subordination. This is why different centers of power or initiative in the “Socialist camp” became from now on unacceptable and consequently Tito’s Yugoslavia had to be outcast (A. Ulam 1952:71).

The bipolar division in world organization had severe consequences upon the relations of the Soviet Union with its satellites. This paper does not intend to describe the nature of a “peoples’ democracy”, as it is known from previous researches nor to do a timeline of the evolutions, but to show the way the world affairs were seen from inside the Communist world. The vision on world affairs was the product of the structural organization in the “Socialist camp” and of its functionality.

The “camp” (Socialist camp) in foreign affairs was a form of organizing interests and actions, and also a source of diplomatic conduct on the world arena. It is a structural organization, in which the states are replaced, in foreign policy making, by a supra-national center of power whose key objective is preserving its own integrity and propagating its type of political regime. There is a relation of center-periphery between Moscow and its allies, where there were only two levels of hierarchy: the Kremlin leaders chasing ideological aims by non-ideological practices, and the satellites, subordinated to that chase and at the same time, instruments of it (D. Cătănuș, 2002:213).

The concept itself is the result of the bipolar cleavage in the world, because the most important element of cohesion was the threat. There is a threat of Western or Imperialist

aggression which mobilizes energies and actions and increases the intensity of inner connections. Also, these connections are strongly amplified by the complete subordination between the Communist elites in the satellite countries, on one hand, and Stalin with the Soviet elites, on the other hand.

This bipolar organization in world affairs made necessary a great unity and solidarity, discipline not only within the party, but also in the relations different parties had with each other. The formula for this unity was double: formal and informal, usually the last was prevailing. The informal mechanism of control and decision consisted of direct consultations between Stalin and the Eastern European Communists. They were also under a constant supervision from the Soviet ambassadors in the respective countries and other structures of N.K.V.D. which penetrated different local institutions (Z. Brzezinski, 1967:116-117). The formal mechanisms were the meetings organized once in a while either at party or at state level. These multi-lateral meetings were rare, though, because Stalin found it much easier to manipulate people in bilateral meetings, when the opponent was alone with Stalin. Such psychological methods were quite common with Stalin and proved effective (R. Medvedev, 1991:189).

The Soviet bloc had a concentric structure, in which Moscow acted as a nucleus. The Soviet Union mediated the relations among the “peoples’ democracies” and the direct relations among these countries were only bilateral, without any form of multilateral cooperation (L. Ghibianski, 1995: 254). This system was intended to secure the Soviet control over its allies.

Because the feeling of the threat is so important in the survival and perpetuation of the structure, there can be observed a partition between the real danger, as seen by the policy makers, and the imaginary danger, endorsed by the propaganda. This last one was meant not only to mobilize energies, but also to help create a climate of insecurity and fear necessary for the domestic consolidation of the regime (H. Arendt, 1994:617-618). The Communist regimes organized a very intensive domestic propaganda against the “Imperialist intrigues” blamed of inciting to war, in order to create a continuous feeling of a danger, meant to justify the mobilization and complete control over the society (L. Țirău, 1993). The “vigilance against Imperialism” was the main theme of local propaganda in all Communist countries. Such a public position was in strong connection with the limitations of civil liberties and the abuse of human rights. The perpetual feeling of threat justified the extreme repressive measures of all Communist regimes (R. Levering, 1988: 55). The method was applied by Stalin in the late ‘30s, during the Great Purges and was transferred to the Central and East European regimes.

According to Zhdanov’s short but explicit analysis, the cardinal purpose of the Imperialist camp was to strengthen imperialism, to hatch a new war, to combat Socialism and democracy and to support reactionary and anti-democratic pro-fascist regimes and movements everywhere. On the other hand, the Socialist camp pursued resistance to the threat of new wars and Imperialist expansion, the growth of democracy and extirpation of all vestiges of fascism (A. Zhdanov, 1947:16-17). These definitions were actually directions both for propaganda and for foreign-policy makers; the first meeting of the Cominform established a series of rules in the interpretation of international affairs that were to be assumed by the local Communists.

In relation to the Soviet policy, the task assumed by the “peoples’ democracies” was not only to emulate the Soviet initiatives but also to anticipate them (A. Ulam, 1952:56). The climate of danger demanded discipline inside the party, as well as in the relations among different parties, under Soviet leadership. The theories publicized by the official press and propaganda stressed the idea that the Communists must be united in their fight against the Imperialists, because any misunderstanding or discrepancy would only bring benefit to the “enemy” (Z. Brzezinski, 1967:80-81).

The expelling of Tito was a sufficient proof for anybody that differences of ideas will not be tolerated. Even more, the obligation to consult the Soviet Union upon any initiative in foreign affairs was included in the bilateral treaties signed by all the “peoples’ democracies” with the U.S.S.R., which was planned to offer a juridical base for eradicating any independent action. Therefore, foreign policy in all these countries became only a reflex, a reaction to the Soviet positions (D. Cătănuș, 2002:213).

Defending the conquests of the proletariat

The party press and all organs of propaganda constructed a frightening image of the menace represented by the “Imperialist intrigues” meant to bring war. The party depicted itself as the avant-garde of the proletarians, leading them towards progress through Socialism, in a supportive and determined social framework, where everybody worked hard and made sacrifices for the common cause. The Imperialists were the primary enemies, because they were seeking to obliterate the revolutionary achievements of the proletarians, in order to gain back the previous positions they held through which they would continue to exploit the working people (A. Pauker, 1951:22).

The threat is regarded as a social and economical one, aiming to mobilize the society towards the construction of socialism. The defense was not seen as military, because that would arouse a nationalistic behavior. As the party explained, the defense against the Imperialists could only be done by two methods: improving and accelerating the revolutionary conquests of the workers in the field of the Socialist construction and also by an unreserved friendship with the Soviet Union (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948:6-7).

A new definition of patriotism emerges from this approach: patriotism is emptied of its national and ethnic content, being replaced with a social meaning. The proletarians have common interests all around the world and because of that there can be made no division on nationalistic criteria. The Communists are the real patriots, because they fight for the good of the “people” (meaning the proletariat), and not for the good of the nation which was nothing but a bourgeois concept meant to divide the proletarians all over the world and help the exploiters (Gh. Apostol, 1951:20-21).

The Marxist concept is used here primarily not for the purpose of uniting the proletarians world-wide in their fight against Imperialism, but in order to create an artificial structure of ideology in which patriotism can receive new values, closed to the regime’s interests. This version of patriotism – socially motivated – although is a unifying concept in the Marxist view, it is used here for a defensive purpose, in order to generate a political solidarity around the party. The mechanism is still one of delineation, as in nationalism and this is the main fault of the theory, which provides its anti-Marxist orientation.

The ultimate function of such theories results from the foreign environment, where the regime had no international legitimacy and – given the large chances for a future confrontation – had to be able to rely upon the population. It is a solidarity-building process that aims at endowing the party with domestic and international legitimacy.

A continuous struggle must be carried out, according to party propaganda, on the way to securing the “revolutionary conquests” of the people. In order to prevent the Imperialists from undermining these conquests, all enemies inside the system must be removed. It was a feature of all totalitarian regimes to blame inside plots, real or imaginary, so that repression would be much easier. The enemy was most of the times somewhere inside, infiltrated, trying to bring down the revolutionary progress. It had to be identified and uncovered to the people.

The inside enemy was usually of bourgeois origin or fascist and it acted by corrupting people with weak ideological beliefs. These elements embody the footholds of the Imperialists and are looking to destroy the peoples’ democratic regime, as the propaganda

explains. This is why the best method of outmaneuvering the Imperialist plots is to uncover the enemy and bring him to the peoples' justice (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, 1951:8-9). The spy-fever in the Communist countries is well-known and is an illustration of this interpretation.

The theory does have a strong element of truth, because given the weak support enjoyed by these regimes, the best way to attack the party was to exploit the social frustrations inside, just as the radio stations in the West did, like "Voice of America" or "Free Europe". Nevertheless, this is an expression of the realities on the international scene.

The break with Tito offered a new theoretical excuse for a "witch hunt", since titoist elements and spies had allegedly infiltrated the Communist parties, planning along with fascist circles a return of the former bourgeois regime. For that purpose, the titoist spies were using the same chauvinistic and reactionary elements to undermine the party from within, in an attempt to rip these countries apart from the Socialist camp (A. Duma, 1951:13).

The construction of Socialism in all "peoples' democracies" could only follow one pattern: the Soviet one, otherwise it would represent a "deviation" from Marxism-Leninism towards nationalism and that serves the "class enemy". According to the argument, the Soviet Union had experimented for the first time a Socialist revolution and was the first to assume the difficult task of constructing Socialism. Therefore, the Soviet experience is unvaluable. It contributes to the treasure of Marxism-Leninism through its immense practical experience. Consequently, all Communist parties must follow without hesitation the exact political pattern as the Soviet Union, in order to reach the same goal. This process is called "bolshevisation" of the Communist parties (E. Burdjalov, 1948: 8). The ideological justification serves well in offering a disguise for Moscow's hegemony, on one hand, and for preventing any disobedience among the new Communist elites in Eastern Europe, on the other hand.

As can be observed, the alleged reason of the subordination and alignment as well as their ideological background had a deep defensive connotation, the guarding of "revolutionary conquests" of the working people. In this ideological framework, any resistance or opposition was seen as serving the enemy's interests. It is the Jacobin perspective of War Communism which is implanted in the entire sphere of Soviet influence in order to dissimulate the hegemony.

In condemning the little-bourgeois elements and trying to build a proletarian solidarity, the parties in the "peoples' democracies" were emulating the Soviet model of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, which started at the end of 1948, after the removal of Zhdanov. The Stalinist-lead critique of cosmopolitanism identified any positive reception of any Western idea or reality as betrayal and anti-patriotism. Large articles in "Pravda" and "Literaturnaya Gazeta" voiced virulent critiques against such positions, mainly in the literary field, and had strong echoes in the press of the "peoples' democracies" (W. Hahn, 1982:119-120). The negative attitude towards anything Western, although taken to the absurd limit in Stalinist fashion, was nothing but a symptom of the enmity between the two sides of the political world.

The German threat

Germany was one of the most important sources of hostility between Moscow and its former Western allies and gave rise to some of the most intense episodes of animosity in the international relations in the first decade after World War II. The failure to reach an agreement between 1945 and 1947 and the decisive policy conducted by the United States in the Western zone of occupation determined negative reactions from the Soviet Union.

Germany emerged as a problem in a larger context, concerning the American involvement in Europe in the post-war years. As a source of technology and also as a possible aggressor, Germany was the main pillar of Stalin's policy towards Europe. His special interest in

occupying Germany or receiving a part of it in the Soviet sphere of interest was not expressed prior to 1945. It only became relevant when the Truman administration proved beyond doubt that the United States will not allow the Soviet Union to handle the post-war arrangements in Europe without American participation and that Europe, specially its Western part, did represent a subject of great interest to Washington.

The Kremlin saw a possible menace in a future long-term cooperation between Europe and the United States. The question was if Europe will work together with Moscow for a peaceful political arrangement in the style of the nineteenth century “concert of powers”, or will it work with the Americans for that, which would inevitably bring a loss of importance on the part of the U.S.S.R. (S. Beria, 2001:195). When the Marshall plan was announced, Moscow considered that it was an indirect answer.

Even during the war, the Soviet Union anticipated that Europe will be confronted with a deficient production and insufficient capital, while the United States will have an excess. This situation contained the inner threat of an American domination in Europe, which would compromise a peaceful cooperation between Moscow and Western Europe (W. Loth, 1997:40). The Marshall plan confirmed that assumption.

The unification of the Western zones of occupation and the Marshall plan for reconstructing including Germany were seen as the ultimate danger from the U.S.A. For the Soviets, this chain of events was the primary cause in the decision to tighten the homogeneity of the Eastern European security belt; the second decision at the time was also to prevent the formation of a European-American block: the Italian and French Communists were invited as well, to the first Cominform meeting (F. Constantiniu 1998:113).

Germany was the very core of this rivalry. Placed in the center of Europe, at the contact between the Soviet sphere and the American influence, it was going to be a base for a future aggression, in the Soviet mind. One of the most developed industrial areas in Europe and a technological citadel for Nazi Germany – the Rhine land – was also positioned in the Western zone. The American positions in Germany were very dangerous because the area was so close to the Soviet Union and Moscow could never feel secure with enemy forces stationed near by, especially since Germany had been the source of two attacks on Russia, in less than a half of century. After the war, Stalin considered himself entitled to certain security arrangements regarding Germany, recognized to him during the war years, but “forgotten” by the allies later on (V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, 1996:98).

The most important aim of the Soviet policy in Europe was therefore to prevent the reinforcement of the American positions there. Germany, as Zhdanov warned in 1947, was the strongest hope the Imperialists held for striking into the “democratic” countries, by taking advantage of its geographical position and technological advance. In the Soviet interpretation of the situation, the Truman administration did not trust Britain and France because of the strong advance of the Labourists and Communists. Germany, in this respect, was a trustful partner (A. Zhdanov, 1947:37-38). This interpretation finds a support in the ideological framework as well, if we consider the fact that both Imperialism and Fascism are seen by the Marxist-Leninist ideology as final phases of the same economical order, which is capitalism.

Stalin was also afraid that the perpetuation of the German division would arouse nationalistic ideas among the Germans. Just as one century earlier, Bismarck used the militarist solution to unify the country against the will of the Great Powers, the division might give rise to a similar policy sometime in the future. This is why he hesitated in implementing rapid Socialization in Eastern Germany; he preferred a united and neutral Germany to a Socialist, but divided one (V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, 1996:50).

To counter the peril, Moscow used the “peoples’ democracies” in order to build a front of anti-rearming in Germany. It is relevant that all treaties of friendship and mutual cooperation signed between the Soviet Union and the “peoples’ democracies”, as well as the similar

treaties signed among these countries on bilateral bases, included a special article on this issue. The article, in a standard formulation in all treaties, stated that the two parties will act together in countering a potential attack from Germany or any of its allies (Scânteia, 1948: no.1023).

The article and the entire political approach it involved was meant to perpetuate the fear of a German aggression, which was traditional in some Central European countries and therefore to justify the mobilization. Both Poland and Czechoslovakia lost territories in the past due to German aggressions and won territories after the war, due to German defeat. Therefore, both countries were very suspicious of a German resurrection. Moscow cunningly exploited such historical traumas in order to bring Germany's neighbors to obedience (H. Seton-Watson, 1961: 360). Beyond that, there was a larger geopolitical vision pursuing the destruction of what had become known as "Mitteleuropa", a political and strategic space, with cultural and geographical features, that obstructed Moscow's way towards the West. "Mitteleuropa" was a long-established area of German influence.

By ripping apart the Central European countries from Germany and excluding Germany from Central Europe, the Soviet Union was removing a great obstacle between Moscow and the West. "Mitteleuropa" was an obstacle for the Soviet policy because it could have been an alternative center of power, a geopolitical space at its very borders that escaped its political control in the past and was a direct source of aggression.

The opposition between Germany on one hand and Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary on the other hand broke "Mitteleuropa" into two different parts. Western Germany was going to be attached to the Western European geopolitical space and the other Central European countries were going to be attached to the Eastern European geopolitical space. Stalin was extremely resentful to spaces of traditional political convergence, which is why he also rejected Dimitrov's plan for a Federation of the Balkans (M. Djilas 1991:). The dismantling of these traditional political spaces served to a better manipulation of the entire area. He replaced the Balkans and Mitteleuropa as traditional geopolitical spaces with a Communist universalism which leveled any political affinities of the past. The main goal was to prevent the formation of possible poles of resistance against his absolute domination in the area.

The satellites assumed this policy with enthusiasm, not only because of the Soviet pressure but also because the goal was common in this respect: any Western attack against the Soviet Union would inevitably have involved an attack upon these countries. The security of the Soviet hegemon was strictly connected with the satellites' security. In Romania, Gheorghiu-Dej forewarned in 1948 that the American policy towards Germany is nothing but the preparation of a future attack.

The United States, informed Dej, is building economical and financial ties all around Europe only with the purpose of manipulating these states in belligerent actions against the "democratic" countries. Their refuse to allow a peaceful unification of Germany is the best evidence that the United States has other plans for Germany, directed against the Socialist countries (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948:7).

To achieve its goal of preventing the German integration in Western economical and political institutions and the development of a strong West-German state, the Soviet Union also used the pacifist movement which emerged right after the war. The pacifist movement was more of an instrument in promoting Soviet foreign interests. In the case of Germany, the Soviet interest converged with the ambitions of the international pacifist movement regarding the fight against rearming of any kind. Moscow interpreted this as fighting against German rearming and the satellites embraced this orientation and became very active in the pacifist organization (M. Shulman, 1963:80-81).

By promoting pacifism, the Soviet Union intended to help prevent or delay a possible war as long as it wasn't fully recovered after the previous one. It was also a mean to influence the

policies of Western European parties, faced with great pressure from the public opinion against increasing military expenditures. The strongest bulwark of pacifism and implicitly of Soviet propaganda for pacifism was France, where the rearming of Germany touched sensitive national issues. The foreign propaganda of all “peoples’ democracies” easily embrace the pacifist discourse and these countries become very active in the international organization. One Congress was even held in Prague.

The framework of Socialist solidarity

The “peoples’ democracies” held privileged relations among themselves, as well as with the Soviet Union. As mentioned before, right after 1947, all the states under Soviet influence signed a series of treaties with the Soviet Union and with all their neighbors, mentioning almost the same standard obligations: to help each other in case of an aggression from Germany or its allies, to consult each other in matters of foreign policy and to work together for the mutual benefits of constructing socialism (Scântea, 1948:no.1023).

Although unity and cohesion were the focal point of the defense against any Imperialist aggression, as the Soviet optic described the situation, it is a paradox that unity was obtained through isolation. All the “peoples’ democracies” were tied together by treaties of friendship intended to maintain the cohesion, all these treaties were only bilateral. A country could only sign a treaty of friendship only with one neighbor at a time. At state level, the intensity of the political relations dramatically decreased after 1947-1948, being dimly replaced with connections at party level. The unity was preserved through Soviet mediation, in order to prevent a coalition among these countries and to tighten the control Stalin had over them.

The Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe seems to be oscillating with great ability – at least during Stalin’ time – between encouraging cooperation and isolation at the same time. Close relations between the local Communists in the satellites were not desirable from Stalin’s point of view, but the cooperation was necessary, on the other hand.

The “peoples’ democracies” had to develop a micro-universe of their own in politics, economy and culture, as a surrogate for the international community from which they were more or less excluded, due to international anxiety. This micro-universe had to be able to supply all the economical and commercial needs of its members, without – or with as little as possible – Western assistance.

The system desired by Moscow was composed of very strong and active economical and cultural bonds at state level, but with very slight political connections on state and party levels, as to avert an antagonistic coalition. The political relations between the satellites were always interceded by Moscow (Z. Brzezinski, 1967:117). The apprehension against the formation of alternative centers of power grew stronger after the divergence with Tito.

The dissociation between state and regime was the key to building a tight system of relations, because the relations between the “peoples’ democracies” were the basic structure of the “Socialist camp”, and this structure was controlled through the Communist parties. In the Stalinist views, the state was merely an instrument of power in the hands of the Communists which was to be used for the goal of remodeling the society during the construction of Socialism and also to defend the conquests of the proletarians, when danger emerged from the outside (I. Stalin, 1951:45).

The Soviet Union needed raw materials and industrial products for the post-war reconstruction and all the Central and Eastern European states were in the same position (S. Beria, 2001:231). Given the aggravation of the international conflict after 1947, the main problem faced by the reconstruction was the absence of capital. The great Western finances became inaccessible for the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, especially after discarding the Marshall plan. The alternative was to increase mutual relations inside the Socialist community in order

to compensate each other's needs, in a closed circuit based on political reason (J.F. Soulet, 1998:26).

As Georgi Dimitrov conveyed in January 1948 on the occasion of the Romanian-Bulgarian Treaty of Friendship, the role of that Treaty as well as the role of all other similar treaties signed between "peoples' democracies", is the mutual help that all Socialist countries must give to each other in order to support the development of economy and the progress of society. Dimitrov recalled that this part of Europe had been slave to Western capitals in all its modern age and only by helping each other, the nations in this area will be able to progress and develop economically so that they would break free from the chains of Imperialist suppress, under the flag of Socialism (Scânteia, 1948: no.1025).

Gheorghiu-Dej also stressed, on every occasion, the great significance of the help given by the Soviet Union and the "peoples' democracies" in building Socialism and overcoming the economical backwardness of the past. In all fields of economical development, the Soviet Union granted an important technological and financial support, as an example of Socialist internationalism (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, 1954:18-19).

The propaganda persevered in presenting the relations with the Soviet Union as an example of the new type of foreign relations established by the regime, in which help is granted on "brotherly" reasons, to assist the development of a "democratic" country, with no selfish motivations. It was an attempt to obtain legitimacy and public support for a privileged relationship that enjoyed no popularity at all and to justify the close partnership as being rightful.

Some political scientists argued that this terrible fever of industrialization which accentuated the dependence on Moscow for technology and expertise was motivated not only by the emulation of the Stalinist industrial model but also by an implicit need to overcome underdevelopment, traditional in most parts of Eastern Europe. From this perspective, Stalinism itself can be defined as a strategy of overcoming underdevelopment (S. Brucan, 1992:9). This would also explain how industrialization became as popular as to offer the regime some support.

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