

6. The Soviet Union in sovietologism

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I intended to offer a brief archaeology of the use of three concepts that importantly conditioned the emergence of *sovietologist discourse*. I chose the concepts of culture, the State, and personality because, during my readings, I found that they informed many texts. As the reader may recall from chapter two, specialist statements about the Soviet Union commonly and explicitly mentioned patterns of culture, the authoritarian and totalitarian nature of Russian societal and political life, and certain Russian national personality traits. In this chapter, I assume that the concepts of culture, the State and personality operated as the markers delimiting the frontiers within which statements about the Soviet Union's subjectivity made sense, and describe what *sovietologism* had to say about the USSR.

The interplay between these concepts did not produce a monolithic idea of the Soviet Union. Rather, they operated as markers delimiting the frontiers of *sovietologist discourse*. Sometimes they were applied coherently, and other times contradictorily. Such fluid treatment of the Soviet Union's subjectivity shows that there was no agreement among sovietologists about the contours of the object they were dealing with. Some scholars found the sources of Soviet behavior in the psychology of its leadership, while others found these sources in the nature of the Soviet regime, the structure of Soviet society, the Communist party, and so on. However, because these different approaches operated inside one discursive formation, there were certain themes that conspicuously pervaded the majority of scholarship about the

Soviet Union. I focus on three of them: its expansionist drive, its inferiority to the West, and its contradictory nature. Intuitively, it seems safe to hold that, without these “markers,” these appearances would not have been possible. Their existence shows how the discursive formation that constructed the Soviet Union as a subject created a “space of rarity” that constrained what could be said about its subjectivity.

The relation between this “space of rarity” and the discursive formations of culture, the State and personality will be addressed in the next chapter. In this chapter I intend to describe these appearances. Section 6.2 briefly presents the archaeological territory in which they emerge. Section 6.3 deals specifically with expansionist characterizations of the Soviet Union. Section 6.4 presents Soviet subjectivity’s apparent inferiority to the West. Section 6.5 offers an account of the contradictory nature of the USSR from the western perspective. The final section restates the chapter’s goals and introduces the next.

6.2.

The sovietologist’s archaeological territory

The knowledge that has created the possibility for sovietology’s scientific orientation can be traced back to past encounters between the West and Russia. Neumann (1999) divides this history into five moments. Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the three issues that marked Western representations of Russia were Christianity, civility, and regime type. Russia’s status as Christian was uncertain. Although Russians professed the orthodox faith, their lack of command of the sacred texts, as well as their proximity to the Muslim world (marriages between Russian and muslims nobles were common) disturbed Europeans. When it came to civility, Russians were depicted as barbarians, whether because of their leaders’ attitudes, who were said to delight themselves with harsh punishments of their adversaries, or because of its population’s supposed corporeal and linguistic inadequacies. On this topic, repugnant table habits, sexual promiscuity, and frequent usage of bad words, even among children, terrified western Europeans and consumed much space in their travel diaries. Finally,

the emperors used to despotically control the bodies of their subjects; tyrannical government was a demarcating line between modern European political thought and Russia.

Western representations of Russia changed in the eighteenth century when Peter the Great was enthroned. From a European perspective, the new emperor strived to overcome Russia's barbarous condition by civilizing his subjects. During the period, European commentators began to represent Russia as a State that hoped to catch up with the west. As a result of Peter's efforts, Russia was recognized as member of the European community, and many even suggested that the country could be a good partner in an alliance against Turkey. The construction of Saint Petersburg and its well-known designation as "the window to the West" also illustrates this new stage in Russia's representation. Paradoxically, Russia grew in importance in northern Europe and replaced Protestants as the main threat to the Sacred-Empire. This historical change helped to maintain the ambiguity about its barbaric character. As one commentator noted at the time: "Russia is to Europe what nature is to culture" (Moller apud Neumann, 1999, p. 81).

In the nineteenth century, Russia's representation acquired a new form, which was perhaps the most ambiguous and contradictory of all. Russia was accepted in Europe due to the new emphasis that European states conferred on the balance of power, but it was also seen as a menace — an expansionist empire, inhabited by barbarian Cossacks, located on the borderlines of the continent. During the period, the image of Russia as the "barbarian at the doors of Europe" was cited in many attempts to change current institutions to deny Russia's Europeaness. This was the case, for instance, when the USA was incorporated into European balance of power estimates; it was an attempt to demonstrate that the institution was forged by alliances that included non-Europeans. The fear of identification of Russia and Europe was reinforced when worries raised in discussions of Russian identity about the nature of the country's political regime started to mingle with strategic concerns (Neumann, 1999).

In the interwar period, many contrasting representations of Russia emerged. Right after the Russian Revolution, Europe celebrated the victory of

progressive forces over the reactionary regime ruled by the Czar. This representation was fed by communist propaganda depicting Russia as a country of the future. On the other extreme, the Nazis represented Russia as the protector of Slavs who, in Nazi terms, did not belong to humanity. Another representation celebrated the State ruled economy, and favorably compared its efficiency to capitalism (this later changed, and market economy was treated as superior to planned economy). The overall spirit of this period emphasized the ambiguous nature of Russia, which curiously weakened her representation as a threat. "With the radical exception of Nazi discourse, Russia was seen as part of Europe, but a somewhat errant part" (Neumann, 1999, p. 101).

World War II was a turning point in this regard. The Soviet Union was initially represented as a real military threat. But this representation depended on how she was perceived politically: as a good alternative to capitalism, as communists used to have it, or as a totalitarian alternative, contrary to liberalism, as many liberals did. "The dominant version was of an Asiatic/barbarian political power that had availed itself of the opportunity offered by the Second World War to intrude into Europe by military means" (Neumann, 1999, p. 102). The communist interventions in countries belonging to the USSR's sphere of influence contributed to the dominance of this second representation during this period. The military threat reinforced the political one, and the communist regime began to seem anathema to western identity. Its opposition to the West resulted in treatment of her as inferior, and many representations from the past periods reemerged. "Although the military threat emanating from the Soviet Union was deemed to be massive, the morale of their soldiers was often held to mirror an alleged Russian Volksgeist ("national character") of sloth, drunkenness, and laziness" (Neumann, 1999, pp. 103-104).

Neumann's (1999) work is the most complete excavation of the archeological territory from which the sovietologist discourse emerged. In the next sections I present three themes that conspicuously pervaded the majority of renderings about the contours of the Soviet Union in the 1950's: its expansionist drive, its inferiority to the West and its contradictory nature.

6.3.

The USSR as an expansionist subject

The Soviet Union's expansionist nature is a pervasive feature in sovietological texts. Some descriptions focus on Russia's territorial conquests as a continuation of imperial policies, and hence emphasize a kind of inherent, traditional tendency to expand; others focus on the ideological expansionism of Pan-Slavism and communism; still others are concerned mainly with the USSR's expansionist drive for the sake of protecting her territory against foreign aggressors, and so on. Although varied, the main goal of these descriptions is to warn the West about the dangerous character of the Soviet Union.

Roucek's (1951) description of the Soviet expansionism mixes geopolitical, ideological, and nationalistic concerns. He contended that, "during the nineteenth century, Pan-Slavism was employed as dynamite against the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires, and is now re-employed as a nationalistic and ethnic appeal to the "Slavic kinship" among the communist and non-communist elements of the Slavic peoples" (Roucek, 1951, p. 153). The Soviet Union also looks toward Teheran, because "(...) in a constant search for greater industrial resources, (the USSR) had for several decades cast covetous eyes on the oil locked in the soil of northern Iran," and also because "(...) the USSR wanted an outlet to the Indian Ocean through Iran's territory and a gateway for communism both toward India to the East and the Arab States to the west of Iran" (Roucek, 1951, p. 155). Turkey and Afghanistan are also targets of soviet expansionism. The first due to a revival of "the ancient drive toward the 'warm waters' (...) renewed in 1945, when the U.S.S.R. requested the revision of the existing treaty of friendship and neutrality"; the second because "(...) just like Iran, (Afghanistan) is also in the path of a traditional Russian pressure toward the sea and on the historic invasion route to India" (Roucek, 1951, p. 156). Moreover, Roucek (1951, p. 156) claimed, "in 1950, the Kremlin started formulating a plan to gain control over northern and western China and eventually establish a land bridge between the Soviet Union's Central Asian republics and the maritime

provinces.” This plan started with the Korean War and was somehow to be expected, for “on reaching, probably, its limit of expansion in Europe, the extension of Soviet influence will continue in Asia” (Roucek, 1951, p. 157).

East (1951) also described the USSR expansionism as a mixture of geopolitical, ideological, and traditional drives. He assured his readers that, considering Russia’s traditional territorial ambitions, “(...) which now appear to be subsumed in Soviet foreign policy, and also of the international character of Soviet Socialism (misnamed Communism), the great length and wide distribution of the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. provide a tempting choice of theaters for diverse action.” But the strategies that he envisaged the Soviet Union using to expand were broader in scope. The diverse actions he mentioned include “(...) propaganda, ideological infiltration, sabotage, the fomenting of “civil” war (a phrase which has taken on new shades of meaning) and direct warfare undisguised; all designed to advance a common end” (East, 1951, pp. 591-592). As in Roucek (1951), “the Soviet denunciation in 1945 of the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Non-Aggression (made in 1925) signalized the resumption of the old Tsarist policy” in trying to “(...) secure joint control and defense of the Straits”; in addition, he wrote, “Iran is regarded by the U.S.S.R. as a barrier in its path to the sea and as a possible enemy base” (East, 1951, p. 603 *my italics*).

All historical evidence of Russian expansionism buttressed the notion that for each Russian action, some reaction was to be expected. Mosely (1956, p. 192) explained this logic by stressing that “the pressures against Greece and Turkey, the attempt to starve West Berlin into submission, the Communist attack on South Korea — (all of these events) forced the threatened countries of the free world into countermeasures and new defense arrangements;” and pushed the United States to be “(...) the chief bastion and promoter of resistance to further Soviet expansion.” The idea of countermeasures was exactly the target of Tucker’s (1959, p. 4) criticism of containment policies: “the West, instead of dealing with Russia in terms of a world policy, persists in the attempt to deal with the world in terms of a Russian policy, this being in essence the policy of containing Russia all over the world.” His criticism makes clear that the containment was not based

purely on historical experiences. In a process precipitated by the atmosphere of the Cold War, past experiences were hastily transformed into future expectations, “to deal with the world in terms of a Russian policy,” and Russian expansionism became a sound presupposition that needed to be considered before analyzing the facts of Soviet behavior.

Partly, this analytic prejudice was due to the way some western scholars read the impact of communist ideology on the USSR. For example, Emerson & Claude (1952, p. 2) stated at the very beginning of their paper that they assumed that “the Soviet Union and Communists throughout the world are dedicated fundamentally to the proposition that Communism must and will have a global sweep, transforming the capitalist and pre-capitalist world in its own image.” In the same vein, Browder (1953, p. 25) stressed that “since the foundation of the Comintern in 1919, Communist parties in every country of the world had systematically planned and labored to bring about the desired revolution in their national bailiwicks.” In turn, Goodman (1953, p. 238) asserted that “upon the limited and unstable pan-Slavic doctrine pursued only fitfully by the Tsars, a dynamic and ruthless class doctrine has been superimposed which has as its objective the reshaping of the entire world in the Bolshevik image”; accordingly, “the result of this extremely explosive mixture is a new, doctrinal, and highly immature Russian nationalism, consciously aiming at the transformation of the Soviet State into a Bolshevik World State.”

The interplay of historical evidence, a priori theoretical judgment, and policy concerns invited a highly suspicious attitude toward the Soviet Union. Hence the apparent sobriety of the tenuous speculation that “the economic and cultural potentialities of such non-Russian Soviet Republics as the Ukraine lend themselves to the Kremlin leaders as useful means to their avowed peaceful conquest of the non-communist world” (Olnyk, 1961, p. 33). Or Barghoorn's (1954, p. 283) affirmation that Soviet's strategy consisted of manipulating “not only national symbols but all systems of identity, all group sentiments” in operations that involve “the communist elite and its Party apparatus, the Soviet-controlled state and social institutions, the populations controlled by the Kremlin and finally the remainder of the world, which

Moscow wishes to incorporate within its orbit by political and other means.” Following a similarly fearful path, Kenney (1956, p. 596) accepted that “in ways astutely adapted to the values, conditions, and expectations of different countries or social groupings within or across national boundaries, Moscow has answered the oft-repeated ‘cold war’ challenge of the United States to prove its good intentions with good deeds.” Mosely (1956, p. 193) believed that in each diplomatic visit abroad “(...) the Soviet spokesmen emphasized, crudely but not ineffectively, those interests and emotions which may draw other peoples to support specific Soviet policies and, above all, those prejudices and fears which may turn them against the United States.” These measures sought, he believed, to separate “the United States from its allies, and thus to bring about the retraction of American power to North America” (Mosely, 1956, p. 195). His analysis was echoed by Labedz (1956, p. 485), who believed the USSR had developed an “international strategy crystallized into a pattern aiming at the isolation of America by the exploitation of neutralism and extension of Soviet influence in the undeveloped countries.”

It is ironic how those quotations, taken together, draw a picture of the Soviet Union’s expansionism that amounted to a sort of reverse containment policy directed against the United States. Obviously, this was the result of the Soviet Union’s untrustworthy nature and generated harsh criticism of any attempt at “peaceful coexistence” proposed by Khrushchev. For example, sovietologists referred to “peaceful coexistence” as the “Communist peace offensive” (Browder, 1953, p. 250); the “olive-branch approach” or the “smiling offensive” (Kenney, 1956, p. 594 e 596); the “peace-loving” posture (Mosely, 1956, p. 196); and so on. Behind these derisive labels, there was a strong sense of fear of the ominous threat posed by the USSR, and a tendency to interpret all Soviet actions through the lens of the USSR’s expansionist strategy. That accords with Kenney’s (1956, p. 597) assertion that “the reformulation of the classical Marxist-Leninist credo of revolutionary violence follows the same pattern of trying to meet the West on its own ground of political values, on psychological and diplomatic rather than on military grounds.” A long passage that is worth quoting entirely sums up this perspective:

"The "new" foreign policy also seeks to strengthen the USSR's ties with the neutralist countries, especially those in Asia. War is not "fatalistically inevitable" and violence need not invariably be associated with the "transition" process because the world is now very different than in the days of Stalin's isolationist doctrines of "capitalist encirclement" and "socialism in one country." Today there is a "zone of peace" composed not only of the "socialist camp" (Soviet bloc) but also of other "peace-loving" states which "have proclaimed non-participation in blocs as a principle of their foreign policy." Here is a direct diplomatic gesture toward the neutralist states, which are specifically listed in the final resolution of the Twentieth Congress: India, Burma, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Indonesia, Finland, Austria, and Sweden. Except for the World War II interlude, never before has Soviet propaganda admitted "capitalist" states to the "forces upholding peace." In this framework Moscow commenced an unprecedented economic counteroffensive directed primarily at the neutralists. The Soviet economic campaign, in the form of barter trade, loans with low rates of interest rather than direct grants, and technical assistance, serves many purposes simultaneously. It "proves" Moscow's solicitude for the needy, "exposes" the cynicism of American aid tied to military alliances, shows that the USSR is now prosperous enough to afford generosity, and forces the United States to re-evaluate its own economic diplomacy (Kenney, 1956, p. 601).

The author's use of scare-quotes to indicate the Soviets' doubtful assumptions blatantly exposes his skepticism toward the USSR's policy of "pacific coexistence." But there is another feature that deserves interest. His rendering conferred a new economic dimension to the Soviet Union's expansionism. Ramazani (1958) subsequently applied this frame in his interpretation of Soviet economic agreements with Afghanistan. Indeed, he contended that "(...) the opportunism, insidiousness and remarkable flexibility which constitute some of the most dominant characteristics of the Soviet economic policy in underdeveloped countries can find, perhaps, no more striking illustration than the example of Afghanistan" and warned the West that "the complete economic and political domination of that country by the Soviet Union, if established, may well jeopardize the position of the West in the area between the Mediterranean and South China Seas" (Ramazani, 1958, p. 144). Following the logic exposed above, the author concluded that, through economic policies, "(...) the Soviet Government, constantly alert to any favorable opportunity, has skillfully exploited Afghanistan's economic

predicament in an attempt to draw her closer to itself and away from the West (Ramazani, 1958, p. 150).

Tucker (1959) thought the economic expansionism of the Soviet Union to be well-grounded on the Soviet working theory of how communism should spread all over the world. According to him, “whereas Marx (...) visualized the world revolution as a simultaneous act of the rebellious proletarian classes of the most advanced capitalist countries (...), the Soviet working theory sees it as a long-drawn-out historical process beginning in Russia and having its center of gravity in the East” (Tucker, 1959, p. 5). The “Eastern orientation” of Soviet communism is in fact, he claimed, what theoretically underpins “Khrushchev’s doctrine of long-range economic competition between the Soviet bloc and the West.” According to Tucker (1959, p. 15), “this doctrine has evolved in the post-Stalinist period along with the practical Soviet program of aid-and-trade, under which large sums have been granted to non-Communist countries in the form of credits for arms and economic development.” The political purpose of this economic expansionism was to attract noncommunist countries to the Soviet bloc, reducing their economic dependence upon the West and, consequently, western political influence on them. It also encouraged “(...) them to adopt Soviet patterns of economic organization and society” (Tucker, 1959, p. 15).

Due to the impossibility of trusting the Soviet Union, the best option seemed to be to attribute all Soviet actions to her expansionist drive. This linkage between suspicion and expansionism can be well illustrated in an uncommon way: the Soviet expansionist drive to conquer space. When the Soviets launched the first missile that hit the moon, one article that appeared in the Science Newsletter raised suspicions about the credibility of Soviet’s guarantees that the rocket had been sterilized. According to the article, American scientists were “(...) worried about possible contamination of the moon by viruses and bacteria from the earth. If the Russians did not sterilize effectively the inside of their moon rocket before firing it, mankind may never know whether the moon, prior to the Russian hit, had viruses upon it as dormant molecules” (Russia Hits Moon, 1959, p. 180). It is possible to conclude that the Soviet Union’s expansionism was feared because it could

spread communist ideology, could result in economic, military, and political control over noncommunist countries, as well as spread viruses and dormant molecules to the moon!

6.4.

The USSR as an inferior subject

The second pervasive way the USSR was depicted was through ascertainties of its inferiority to the West. This inferiority was allegedly both material, relating to her natural resources and her economic conditions, and immaterial, relating to values associated with morality, maturity, aesthetics, etc. Sometimes, this inferiority was stated explicitly, and at other times, in more sublime ways. Nonetheless again, although inspired by different causes, its main discursive function was to de-characterize her as a subject deserving of the same respect as other western powers.

The tendency to generally underrate what was related to Russia was felt in different areas. In literature, for instance, when Poggioli (1951, p. 255) discussed the categories attributable to Pushkin's works, he noted that "several recent critics, especially the Formalists, have denied him the same label (of romantic) on the basis of his 'classicism.'" He then proceeded to indicate that, "at least in one case, this has been done by using the epithet "classical" not only as a standard of judgment but also as a historical concept, defining the aesthetic values of an age previously considered as devoid of any lasting aesthetic merit, that is, Russian eighteenth-century classicism." The author reinforced this reading of Boris Eikhenbaum, though he rejected Eikhenbaum's opinion and held the existence of a Pushkinian tradition in Russian literature. According to him, "what remained alive was not the romantic but the eighteenth-century strain of Pushkin's art. And this was not merely the result of what one might call Russia's 'cultural lag,' (...) it is exactly this conservative side of Pushkin's genius that has been all too often confused with his supposed 'realism' (Poggioli, 1951, p. 255). Hence, Pushkin's tradition survived due to his unique genius, despite the general aesthetic demerits characteristic of eighteenth century Russia's "cultural lag."

Harsch (1952) exemplifies some of the more sublime ways that the Soviet Union's subjectivity was discursively maintained in a condition of inferiority. Emphasizing how Russia became an important "factor" in international politics during the nineteenth century and contending that she should be treated as "the major" factor in international life after World War II, the author assured his readers that "it is no longer possible to think of the civilized world (using civilization in perhaps an uncivilized way) as ending at the frontier of Russia, because Russia, whatever we may think of her culture, her politics, or her society, is a major power in the world" (Harsch, 1952, p. 38 *my italics*). His uncivilized way of treating civilization was clearly addressed toward the USSR. But what really strikes the reader's attention is that the remark was made in a paper that prized Japan's and Germany's potential to protect the west against this uncivilized subject, even though these two powers had fought the last major war against those values usually associated with the civilized west. "I have no doubt that the potential military power of Germany and Japan, if backed by the industrial might of American and Britain, could actually contain the frontiers of Russia"; they can "separate Russia from the western civilization which we know and which we must attempt to safeguard and defend" (Harsch, 1952, pp. 38-39).

According to Baykov (1954, p. 137), when one compares Russia with the West, it is easy to realize that "(...) from the middle of the eighteenth century to the second quarter of the twentieth century (...) Russia's industrial development was much slower, while the growth of her population was much more rapid than in the West." For this reason, the "standard of life" of the Russian population is lower. According to him, the main cause of this inferiority is the paucity of Russian natural resources, as well as deficiencies in transportation, although scholars have historically focused on variables ranging from "(...) the institutional framework, to political institutions, social structure and social-philosophical views of society, to religious institutions, to relations with other States, and so on" to explain Russia's economic backwardness (Baykov, 1954, p. 139). "Had the Krivoi Rog iron-ore basin and the Donets coal basin been located in the Moscow region, and the Volga flowed from the Moscow region to the Black Sea instead of the Caspian, the

history of Russia's economy, and her political and cultural history, would have been very different from what they in fact were" (Baykov, 1954, p. 143 *my italics*). These are the reasons why, according to the author, "(...) the living standards of the masses of the population, as regards dwellings and amenities in the towns and per capita consumption of industrial goods, are still much behind that of the leading industrial countries" (Baykov, 1954, p. 148).

Writing about the process of diplomatic recognition of the USSR by President Roosevelt, Browder (1953, p. 26) asserted that the task was difficult because "(...) the Communists' blatant disregard for even the ground rules of gentlemanly understanding between Russia and other countries had led to diplomatic breaks." In a description that portrays the Soviet Union as an immature subject, highly influenced by the captivating personality of the American president, the author reconstructs the manner in which the obstacles imposed by the USSR were overcome:

"In his most affable and winning manner, the President drew the threads of the negotiation together, expressed the sincere interest of the United States in a just settlement, and, to break the ice, injected a measure of humor into his remarks. By the end of the discussion Litvinov (Russian ambassador in the U.S) had noticeably thawed. Roosevelt suggested that he and the Commissar meet again in the evening alone and continue their conversation in private, where they could, if need be, insult each other with impunity. Litvinov laughed heartily. The Roosevelt touch had succeeded, and the prospects for continued and profitable negotiations were greatly enhanced" (Browder, 1953, p. 28).

The agreements were signed, and both countries established diplomatic relations in terms proposed by the American president. Within a couple of years, however, differences in interpretation of the terms of the agreements — which were directly related to the activities of the Comintern inside the United States — caused the severing of diplomatic ties. According to the author, "(...) from the vantage point of time and historical perspective, it would seem clear that, in making the agreements at Washington, the United States Government neglected to face the lessons of other negotiations with the Soviet Union" (Browder, 1953, p. 38). He contended that blame for the

bad outcome of this diplomatic negotiation “should be directed not at the act of recognition, but rather at the naiveté with which it was concluded, a naiveté that bred false confidence in Communist promises” (Browder, 1953, p. 39). By the end of his paper, the author had affirmed the Soviet moral inferiority twice: as being susceptible to coaxing to sign the agreements, and as falsely promising to abide by their terms.

Soviet architecture and engineering were also believed to be inferior to the West, according to economists’ reports. According to Johnson (1956) “urban housing in Russia (...) is characterized by its poor quality and the small amount of space available per person” (Johnson, 1956, p. 186). The author described buildings that were less than five years old but appeared to be more than fifty. “Partly this is a matter of architecture, but the general exterior appearance leaves the same impression. Buildings under construction exhibit careless workmanship even to the untrained observer. (...) The general degree of interior finishing was about the same as in the United States about sixty years ago” (Johnson, 1956, p. 186). Offering further evidence to verify his impressions, he quoted another economist, who wrote, “it seems not unfair to say that one has to look at the worst slum areas of American cities to find housing conditions comparable to those typical in the USSR” (Schwartz *apud* Johnson, 1956, p. 187).

Johnson's (1956) contribution is packed with references to the USSR's inferiority. About the dressing style of the Russians, he asserted that “the Russian population seemed adequately, if tastelessly, clothed” (Johnson, 1956, p. 190). About the conditions of work in factories, he wrote that “the lighting seemed to be terribly inadequate and may well have been so bad as to lead to very high accident rates” and that “there was an almost complete absence of any kind of safety equipment or safety clothing” (Johnson, 1956, pp. 191-192). About Soviet agriculture, the author warned the reader that “(...) it seems appropriate to try to give some perspective on Russian agriculture as a whole through comparisons of Russian agriculture now with that of forty years ago in the United States” (Johnson, 1956, p. 193). Overall, “the quality of livestock, especially cattle, is low (...). Milk output per cow is only about 40-45 per cent of the United States average. But output per cow is

probably held down by an inadequate feed supply as much as by the poor quality of the animals" (Johnson, 1956, p. 197). The most astonishing comparison is between American and Russian women: "It may also be noted that about half the farm labor force is female (...). However, Russian women seem to be considerably less fragile than their American counterparts, and the effectiveness of their labor time is probably not too far below that of men (Johnson, 1956, p. 199). To this economist, it appeared that architecture, clothing, cows, and girls (in terms of their daintiness) were better in America than in the USSR!

Moreover, popular science magazines also portrayed the Soviet Union as inferior. After the Soviets well succeeded in putting Sputnik into orbit, the Science Newsletter published an article entitled "Russia Far behind U. S." (1960). According to the article,

"Soviet science is far behind that of the United States, despite Russian achievements in space. This is the opinion of the Princeton professor of chemistry, Dr. John Turkevich, who was recently science attaché at the American Embassy in Moscow. In an oral report to the National Science Foundation he said that both Russian politicians and scientists recognize U. S. scientific superiority. The United States has "the most powerful and aggressive group of scientists and science programs, and the best-equipped laboratories in the world." Despite their Sputniks, Dr. Turkevich was notably unimpressed with Soviet science generally and charged that neither their equipment in science nor talent matched ours. "For every good man they have, we have ten," the Princeton chemist said" (1960, p. 244).

6.5. The USSR as a contradictory subject

Besides expansionism and inferiority, contradiction is the third feature that appears in almost all descriptions of the Soviet Union's subjectivity. In fact, contradictions abound to such an extent in sovietologist discourse that it is almost impossible not to find them in its descriptions of the Soviet Union. One gets the impression that the main goal of sovietologists was to discover the Soviet Union's contradictory nature, so that this unveiling could serve as evidence about communism's inevitable infelicitous end.

Examples of such discursive manifestations are comprehensive. Some of them only intended to denounce the falsity of communist ideology, while others wanted to show the inherent contradictions that would bring the Soviet Union to its collapse. Overall, they shared the same purpose: to discredit the Soviet Union subject through scientific discourse.

Emerson and Claude (1952, pp. 20-21) suggested that “the persistence and vigor with which Soviet voices have been raised in the field of human rights must be peculiarly suspect because of the low level of such rights within the USSR.” According to them, “(...) the Soviet Union has found wide support for its contention that any covenant on human rights must not be limited in the scope of its territorial application by the complexities of federalism or colonial status (Emerson & Claude, 1952, p. 21). However, the propagandistic nature of such appeals and their incoherence was said to be illustrated in the ways the USSR sought to advance the issue in the international agenda. According to Emerson and Claude (1952, p. 21), “(...) Moscow combines the demand for a broad definition and full territorial applicability of human rights with adamant insistence that there be no attempt at international implementation or enforcement.”

The supposedly internationalist character of communism and the USSR’s defense of national sovereignty are seen as another source of contradiction. Goodman (1953, p. 231) pointed out that “while savagely attacking advocates of world government, the Soviets claim to defend the national sovereignty and independence of nations,” and asks if these “seemingly contradictory ideas mean that the Bolsheviks have abandoned their goal of a world state.” His answer is that, “the Bolsheviks felt that their own plan for a world government was threatened by the appearance of what they considered a rival and irreconcilable plan for the establishment of a world state” (Goodman, 1953, p. 233). The threat was what the communists denounced as cosmopolitanism, i.e., the imperialist aim of the United States and its allies to control the world. To avoid it, Goodman (1953, p. 235) held that “the Bolsheviks have formulated a definition of national sovereignty which acts as a double-edged sword.” It means that “one edge is turned against the Marshall Plan, the Schuman Plan, European and World Federation

— proposals coming from the West, which (...) are designed to eradicate the national sovereignty and independence of the peoples of the world.” “The other edge,” in contrast, “is designed to clear the way for the nations of the world to become part of the U.S.S.R., in which case their national sovereignty will be ‘fully’ protected and fully realized” (Goodman, 1953, p. 236).

The problem of nationalities inside the Soviet Union was seen as another source of contradiction. Barghoorn (1954, p. 288) raised suspicion about the Bolsheviks’ insistence on the right of self-determination and secession: “in view of the fact that Lenin tended to regard the vanguard proletariat as a single, international and united class, his enthusiasm for self-determination seems paradoxical.” The author explained that in Lenin’s writings, the problem of nationalities was supposed to depend on a mutual agreement between the Russian and the non-Russian nations within the USSR. “If the Great Russian proletariat makes it clear that it has no desire to oppress the non-Russians, the proletariat of the non-Russian people will not wish to be separated from Russia”; hence, the apparent contradiction inside the Soviet Union would be eliminated, because the “recognition of the right of self-determination was in the interest of the united class struggle of the proletarians of all nations, which Lenin regarded as the main content of the revolutionary struggle” (Barghoorn, 1954, p. 288). Interpreting this as the communist emphasis on the “right” and not on the self-determination principle proper, the author concluded that, in practice, “(...) the “right of nations to self-determination” became the right of the Soviet Russian army to “liberate” any nation that Moscow saw fit to ‘assist’ (Barghoorn, 1954, p. 296). His conclusion was that Soviet claims about nationalities “(...) are deceptive and serve to mask imperialist and centralist policies” and that “Soviet Russian nationalism is as synthetic and false as the other aspects of Kremlin nationality policy” (Barghoorn, 1954, p. 302).

In fact, the tensions among the different nationalities inside the USSR were recurrently seen as a possible cause of the Soviet Union’s collapse. As it did not occur, the inability of these internal tensions to disrupt Soviet stability was attributed to the Soviet shrewdness in profiting from it. Commenting on the concession of more authority to the Soviet republics

through the decentralization of foreign affairs after Stalin's death, Aspaturian (1959) referred to the opportunities offered by the emergence of the non-aligned movement, and the Soviet Union's strategy of presenting herself as a trusted partner who respected the rights of nations within its own territory. In this sense, "decentralization of foreign affairs can weaken or strengthen the Soviet position in international affairs, depending upon the cohesion and stability of political power in the center; thus Soviet leaders have always been cognizant of the ambivalent and double-edged character of institutional and juridical forms" (Aspaturian, 1959, p. 385).

One of the most promising contradictions, and the one that would likely bring the Soviet Union to an end, was the country's internal class conflict. According to sovietologists, despite the official discourse of a classless society, the USSR was highly stratified. The literature identified the ruling elite (members of the communist party), the intelligentsia, the proletarians, and the peasants as the four main social layers of Soviet society. Anticipations of conflict between these groups were rooted in three western convictions: a) the elites feared the masses; b) the economic system was incapable of satisfying all classes; c) members of the elite intrinsically divided by power disputes. In a vicious circle, fear of the masses drove efforts to provide economic satisfaction to the populace, and the impossibility of reaching this goal aggravated disputes inside the party elite about the best strategy to cope with this impossibility and the threat posed by the masses.

Kuchеров (1956) held that the Soviet society was affected by a class struggle that was similar to the one experienced by proletariats in the capitalist world. According to him, in the USSR, "the place of the former bourgeois employer has been taken by the state which treats its workers in no way better than did the "exploiters", that is, capitalists — in some instances even worse" (Kuchеров, 1956, p. 193). The author accused the Soviets of promulgating the myth of a "workers' state." Contrary to its propaganda, "the workers in the USSR in reality form the great army of the same Lumpenproletariat which inspired Marx to formulate his doctrine" (Kuchеров, 1956, p. 194), because in Soviet society, "classes as defined by Lenin still exist and the last of the features of socialism as he defined them

has not been realized in the USSR" (Kuchеров, 1956, p. 197). According to his account, "former millionaires and the entire bourgeoisie have been thoroughly liquidated by the Bolsheviks. But Soviet millionaires and a new bourgeoisie have taken their place" (Kuchеров, 1956, p. 198). This differentiation makes explicit that the classless society is another communist myth. "Not only do full-fledged classes exist in the Soviet Union, but the class struggle, too, is continuing" (Kuchеров, 1956, p. 199).

The class conflict was supposed to feed the Soviet elite's fear of the masses. However, some authors also pointed to ideological aspects that allegedly sustained that suspicion. According to Wolfe (1958, p. 170), "the idea of the rule of the elite, the idea of a vanguard party, the idea of the repulsiveness of all other classes, and the untrustworthiness of the working class, the idea that the working class also required a dictator or overseer to compel it to its mission — these "ideas" about organization form the very core of Leninism as a special ideology." Analyzing the Soviet society after Stalin's death, he concluded that "far from "eroding" or growing "weak" and merely "decorative," it is just precisely these structural ideas that have grown and expanded, become implemented and systematized" (Wolfe, 1958, p. 170). Another commentator reached the same conclusion a few years earlier, stating that "the Soviet leadership's anticipation of panic in the population following Stalin's death in March 1953 seems to have passed. Measures designed, apparently, to cope with the expected danger of mass unrest have been modified" (Hazard, 1956, p. 11).

The logic opposing the elite against the masses unfolded after Stalin's death. Then, the Soviet elite took measures to increase production of consumer goods, as a way to abate the expected revolt of the masses. But sovietologists saw the structural limitations of the planned economy as a factor constraining the potential efficacy of such policies. Commenting on these measures, Towster (1954, p. 483) affirmed that "there is (...) little doubt that consumer satisfaction and pacification of the populace have become important preoccupations of the Soviet leaders (...). Were the new program to be substantially realized, it might contribute considerably to the pacification of the workers' and peasants' strata." However, the author

reminded his readers that, “paradoxical as it may seem, the problem of keeping the intelligentsia permanently satisfied would prove more complex, because it is in this stratum above all that demands and tastes grow with rising standards, and that moods for greater political liberties are first generated.” The reason for this apparent paradox is found in the Soviet economy’s inability to cope with the challenges of a stratified society. More pessimistically, Labedz (1956, p. 484) speculated that “the option on consumption-dynamics rather than production-dynamics clashes not only with the purposes of the Communist elite, but also with the aspirations of the army and other categories whose vested interests would be affected, if the present state and social structure were to be radically altered.”

As a result, attempts to diminish the antagonism between the elite and the other layers of soviet society were thought to intensify intra-elite disputes for power. This was the case, according to Kolarz (1955, p. 438), because in the USSR, “(...) everything depends on the verdict, not to say whims, of a small clique of people, or rather on the outcome of the struggle between several cliques, a struggle in which the people itself is a powerless onlooker.” Referring explicitly to the immediate post-Stalin disjuncture, marked by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party’s denunciations of the “myth of personality” and atrocities committed during the Stalinist period, Labedz (1956, p. 480) contended that “the ‘collective’ character of the oligarchy at the top is a function of Hobbes’ insecurity dilemma rather than of a reforming zeal of ‘Stalin’s nearest counsellors.’ His explicit dethronement emphasizes their ambivalent position and personal vulnerability.” He then reassured his readers that “if, nevertheless, the decision was taken to tell some of the truth about Stalinism, while dissociating themselves from responsibility, it was probably as a result of the struggle within the Presidium.”

Contradictions were also found in the juridical structure of Soviet society, in which practices in almost all areas of legislation did not conform to the norm. Regarding agricultural changes introduced by the sixth five year plan, Kiralfy (1957, p. 4) pointed out that the Minister of Agriculture, “(...) has already warned that it may be necessary to draft a fuller model charter once

more, since farm managements have not shown much grasp of the limits of their new-found freedom and have been guilty of serious abuses.” In a description that supported the importance of other contradictions already mentioned, the author mentioned the kinds of practices that were condemned: “too much produce is being sold by contract, allotments are being too drastically reduced, chiefs are being paid too much salary and grandiose pensions schemes have been drafted, on the industrial model, which are quite inappropriate to the conditions of collective land use (Kiralffy, 1957, p. 4). In the industrial branch of the Soviet economy, he reported, “(...) a recent article written by the director of a factory and his legal adviser points out some gaps in the scheme of delegation under this law. There are many irksome restrictions which destroy much of the freedom meant to be given, and treasury officials are blamed for their grudging attitude (Kiralffy, 1957, p. 9). Moreover, “although directors have received permission and in fact been ordered to prepare draft plans they have not been provided with the means of doing so. Many enterprises have no staff qualified for the purpose; central planning bodies are up to their eyes in work already (Kiralffy, 1957, p. 10). There were also contradictions within the judicial system itself. The author contended that the Soviet justice operates with a “double standard of justice:” “there was the ordinary judicial system of regular courts, supposed by law to be independent even of party influence, though now admitted not to have been free, and the system of Ministry of the Interior tribunals” (Kiralffy, 1957, p. 14).

Another type of contradiction was thought to be ideological. According to Kolarz (1955, p. 445), Soviet communism found “itself in a state of moral crisis which may turn out to be ultimately more important than the confusion provoked by political rivalries or the chaos on the agrarian front.” This crisis was due to the State’s failure to create a “new man” and a “new communist morality.” Consequently, “the philosophical materialism of Communism has become the petty materialism of drab everyday Soviet life. It is as crude and selfish as anything existing outside the Soviet world. The regime itself has pandered to human weakness rather than combated it” (Kolarz, 1955, p. 445). The results were anathema to pre-revolutionary expectations.

“Drunkenness, hooliganism, and a superficial playboy attitude to life have taken hold of large sections of Soviet youth. These evils do not so much reflect a morally rotten attitude of the young Russians as their feelings of frustration” (Kolarz, 1955, p. 445). In the same vein, Labedz (1956, p. 475) decried that “inside the Soviet Union the ideological enunciations have become, by and large, a dead ritual. A social hierarchy based on formalized status served for the purposes of industrialization but its establishment also bred ideological indifference.” As a result, “the ‘new Soviet man’ became more and more preoccupied with his own individual position. Status and material incentives have long ousted almost every other motivating force. The Soviet elite paid lip-service to the obligatory ideological formulae without bothering about them” (Labedz, 1956, p. 475).

According to Towster (1954, p. 497), “the ills of the body politic which emerged to the surface on Stalin's passing have merely pointed up more clearly the persisting dilemmas confronting the regime.” The insolubility of these contradictions “(...) adds to such patent weaknesses of the social order as widespread dispiritedness and cynicism; passivity or careerism in the Party; smugness, corruption and favoritism among officialdom; and such economic shortcomings as slackness in agriculture, poor quality of production, low labor productivity, and a dismal standard of living” (Towster, 1954, p. 498). He then advised that “from the standpoint of popular morale and performance, the last is the worst of the weaknesses from which many of the others derive. And the Soviet leaders may have put the finger on the pulse now in showing greater concern over the standard of living” (Towster, 1954, p. 498). Taking all other contradictions into account, that would nonetheless be an impossible task.

6.6. Final Remarks

The aim of this chapter was to illustrate the statements that recurrently appeared during the 1950s in sovietologist discourse to describe the Soviet Union's subjectivity. I proceeded through an archeological analysis

by identifying statements from a broad range of disciplines, regardless of whether they performed a central or secondary role in the text. Although I did not enunciate it earlier, the first hint about the recurrence of expansionism, inferiority and contradiction came to me when I realized that these themes appeared both in the the sovietological contributions mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation and in Neumann's (1999) portrayal of the history of western representations about Russia. The reading of these texts really confirmed that these were the most repeated depictions of USSR subjectivity during this period. That is why I chose to describe these "positivities," the statements that constitute the "space of rarity" that forms the content of sovietologist discourse, in detail.

The persistence of these statements showed me how to find the content of sovietologist discourse, but it did not indicate the "rules of their emergence," i.e, the principle that organizes the distribution of statements in a discursive formation. The "rules of emergence" can be thought of as a non-discursive force operating to maintain the recurrence of some statements in a specific domain of enunciation. However, it seems quite plausible to think that even if the same statements reappear in different historical periods, they belong to different domains of enunciation; and thus that the functions they perform in each discursive formation are also different. In fact, without acknowledging the rules of emergence, it is not possible to know the functions of the statements.

Take for instance the recurrence of contradiction in sovietologist discourse. In the past, this feature was associated much more with the traditional debate regarding the slavophiles and the westernizers in Russia, and all the consequent tensions associated with it (orthodox versus catholics and protestants, barbarian versus civilized, autocracy versus democracy, etc), in a way that one could say that a contradiction between a progressive telos and backward tendencies operated in Russia at the discursive level. Hence, the contradictory statements served to allow an element of change in Russia's subjectivity. In the 1950's, however, the main function of contradiction was to privilege a view of the impending collapse of the USSR's subjectivity. As I tried to demonstrate, there were many ways in which this

function was manifest: through claims about the inefficiency of the country's economy; through descriptions of conflict within its political elite; through the generalization of conflict between the political elite and masses, and so on. All of these figurations presupposed a naturally static Soviet subjectivity, in the sense that, instead of causing transformations in her subjectivity, the contradictions would lead to the USSR's destruction. This unchanging nature of the USSR can also be noted in depictions of its expansionism and inferiority. The sovietologists' readings of pacific coexistence as a way to promote Soviet expansionism and of the Soviet's space program as not as advanced as it was propagated, among other examples, made this point clear.

In the next chapter I offer one account of the reasons for representations of an unchanging Soviet Union nature. This argument will be based on the relation between the discursive formations of culture, the State and personality, and the emergence of sovietologist discourse. To construct it, I will deploy the notion of Cold War *epistème*.