‘Vodka and Caviar Among Friends’ - Lord David Burghley and the Soviet Union’s Entry into the International Association of Athletic Federations

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A critical figure in facilitating the entry of the Soviet Union into the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) that has been not been sufficiently examined is Lord David Cecil, the 6th Marquess of Exeter (hereafter referred to as David Burghley). Based on previously unexamined archival material from the IAAF Archive in Monaco, we argue that as the leader of the largest sports federation within the Olympic Movement, Burghley was in a position to exert influence on the Soviet Union’s entry into the organization in the immediate post-war period. We display that during and after a visit to Moscow in July of 1947, Burghley formed friendships with leading Soviet athletics officials, including Alexander Novikov, the head of the All-Union Committee of Physical Culture and Sport in the Soviet Union. This trip formed Burghley’s attitude towards the Soviets decisively and played an important role in ushering the Soviets into the organization.

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On Saturday, February 1, 1947, British Olympic Association (BOA) secretary Colonel Evan Hunter forwarded a cable to the president of the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF), Lord David Cecil, the 6th Marquess of Exeter (hereafter referred to as David Burghley). The cable came from behind the borders of the Soviet Union and Hunter thought it urgent enough to immediately send to Burghley. Not that Hunter had little to do as he complained to Burghley that ‘The Girl Billy and I were sharing – I refer to a typist – ha[d] left and [they had] no one in B.O.A. office – a B nuisance.’¹ Within the cable were the Soviet Union’s demands to join the IAAF, including making Russian an official language. Hunter teased Burghley, ‘[t]hey have set a
nice little trap for you!! I can see you struggling with Russian at a congress.'

Some eighteen months later, at the IAAF Congress in August of 1948, the Soviet Union officially joined the IAAF, suggesting that Burghley either navigated the ‘traps’ or willingly walked into them.

The following paper analyses the Soviet Union’s entry into the IAAF, the largest and most powerful of the international sport federations. The participation of the Soviet Union in international sport was not a certainty following the Second World War because by the end of the war, no team representing the former Russian empire had competed at an Olympic Games since 1912. Following the demise of the Romanov family, Soviet leaders created a separate sport movement called Red Sport International which took control of physical culture in the country and tried to position itself as a competitor to the Olympics. Evidence suggests that David Burghley was the most critical figure in facilitating the Soviet entry into the IAAF.

We acknowledge that previous scholars have pointed out Burghley’s ‘conciliatory attitude’ towards the Soviet Union and its entry into the Olympic Movement. In her detailed study on the Soviet sport bureaucracy, American historian Jenifer Parks argues that Burghley advocated for the Soviets’ entry into the Olympic Movement. Parks also briefly mentions that the IAAF President went to Moscow in 1947 to attend a physical culture parade. Similarly, sport scholars Matt Llewellyn and John Gleaves mention that Burghley endorsed the Soviet application into the IAAF. Allen Gutmann also outlines briefly the Soviet demands to join the IAAF and the federation’s successful integration of the Soviet athletics federation. Thus, whilst Burghley’s overall role in the admittance of the Soviets to the Olympic Movement is known, there has not been a detailed account of his relationships with Soviet sport officials and how he handled objections to the Soviet’s entry into the IAAF. However, it is important to explore those relationships in depth as one of Burghley’s legacies was Soviet involvement in the IAAF. Soviet
officials occupied influential roles in the IAAF during the Cold War period and therewith significantly shaped the federation’s politics.

Similarly, scholarship focused on the Soviet Union and the Olympic Games frequently analyses the Cold War and the nation’s rivalry with the United States. Points of friction, from the boycotts in 1980 and 1984 to the different doping systems between the two nations, often form the focus of analysis. Unlike prior examinations on the re-entry of Germany to the Olympics, discussions of the Soviet entry into the Olympic Games following World War Two generally form smaller sections of larger analyses surrounding the Cold War. While historian John Bale chronicles the increasing contacts between British and Soviet track and field athletes in the Cold War, the following study expands the existing narrative on Cold War Soviet-British sporting relations by further examining the contributions of David Burghley. Previous studies focus on attitudes towards Soviet participation within the leadership of the IAAF and International Olympic Committee (IOC), particularly that of the two IOC president’s Sigfrid Edström (1946-1952) and Avery Brundage (1952-1972).

By analysing archival material from the IAAF archive in Monaco, including Burghley’s personal letters with his contacts in the Soviet Union, the IOC archive in Lausanne and the British Olympic Association (BOA) in London, the following essay demonstrates the role that Burghley played between his two contemporaries - Brundage and Edström - and Soviet sport leaders. By tracing the discussions between Burghley, Edström, and Brundage, understanding Burghley’s rise to prominence as the president of the IAAF and analysing a trip taken by Burghley’s to Moscow in July of 1947 that led to the eventual inclusion of the Soviet Union in the IAAF in 1948, the critical importance of Burghley to this process becomes clear. Whilst other authors mentioned Burghley’s visit to Moscow, the resulting close friendships he developed have not been known
previously. It is doubtful that the Soviet Union would have competed at the Olympic Games, starting with their participation in 1952, had they not been admitted to the IAAF as all NOCs require membership in several international federations in order to become eligible for IOC affiliation.

**Enter ‘Lord High Hurdler’**

Understanding Burghley’s background is crucial to appreciating his role in the international sport system of his era. Born into a family with noble lineage tracing to the era of Queen Elizabeth I, Burghley had an ‘outgoing personality and keen sense of humour.’ His sense of humour certainly shines through in his correspondence. Upon the death of his father, he became the 6th Marquess of Exeter and he wrote an acquaintance at the time, ‘rather like a pet dog who answers to ‘You b ---’ I shall also answer to either Burghley or Exeter!’ Historian Kevin Jefferys provides the best profile of Burghley, noting that given his aristocratic lineage, he was also remarkably informal, with one contemporary journalist commenting in amazement that Burghley’s teammates merely called him ‘Dave.’ To his compatriots, it was his humility that was the most striking for a man who, as a sportswriter of the era wrote, ‘[could] look at 35 Rembrandts . . . and take a warm-up jog through 40,000 acres without leaving his own domain.’ Clearly some combination of his personality and wit endeared Burghley to his contemporaries.

His charm did not work on everyone, however. King George VI had an intense dislike of Burghley that made the King reluctant to open the 1948 Olympic Games, of which Burghley was the Head of the Organizing Committee. The reason was personal. Burghley had pinched Prince Henry -- the King’s brother -- girlfriend Lady Mary Montagu Douglass Scott and married her in 1929. Burghley could thank his athletic background as in 1926, the same year newspapers in the
United States reported an engagement between Mary and Prince Henry was nigh, he met his future bride at an athletics meet in Cambridge. As described by the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Burghley ‘hurdled’ Prince Henry en route to winning the ‘love race.’ Despite this episode, Burghley was close to the royal family, particularly the Duke of Windsor (formerly King Edward VIII). His new bride was the goddaughter of Queen Mary and only the King falling ill prevented the King and Queen from attending the wedding. Burghley regularly surrounded himself with other noblemen and was certainly used to royal treatment.

An Olympic athlete in the hurdles in three consecutive Olympic Games (1924, 1928 and 1932), and described by Jefferys as someone who ‘embodied the enduring strength of amateur values in British sport,’ Burghley was a serving Member of Parliament (MP) for the Conservative Party when he competed in Los Angeles in 1932. His sporting success extended beyond the Olympic Games as one *Time* profile of Burghley cited a record of 235 victories out of 378 races. Having left British politics in 1938, and following the conclusion of his athletic career, Burghley enjoyed a meteoric rise to the upper echelons of sport administration. By virtue of his education at Eton and Cambridge, along with his family background, Burghley firmly fit the aristocratic profile found within the leadership of the IOC. Admitted as an IOC member while an MP at 32 years old in 1933, he became president of the IAAF in 1946. As the leader of the largest sports federation within the Olympic Movement, Burghley was in a position to exert influence on the Soviet Union’s acceptance as a member to the IAAF. Perhaps more importantly, according to future IOC president Lord Michael Morris Killanin, Burghley had the respect of the Eastern Bloc. By Killanin’s account, ‘[Burghley] would have all the support of the Eastern European countries, they liked him and treated him with respect because he was an athlete.’
After a brief overview of the Soviet sporting establishment between 1912 and 1945, the following essay concentrates on the period between Burghley’s ascendancy to IAAF president to official acceptance of the Soviet Union to the IAAF in 1948, which aided the eventual re-entry of the Soviet Union to the Olympic Games. Some scholars credit IOC presidents Sigfrid Edström and Avery Brundage for allowing their beliefs in the universalism of sport to trump their private disdain for communism in order to ensure that the Soviet Union competed at the Olympics while others give more credit to bureaucrats within the Soviet Union. While all of those factors were undeniably important in this process, David Burghley, nicknamed by one newspaper the ‘Lord High Hurdler,’ played an equally crucial role.

Soviet Athletics 1896-1945

Representing Russia at the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 was an athlete named ‘N. Ritter’. Set to compete in the wrestling and shooting competitions, he did not officially compete in either. According to Ritter, the schedule was such that ‘the competitions were held in different places at one and the same time and it was impossible to be on time.’ It is not clear what precluded Ritter from competing in merely one, and not both, events. Regardless, by the London Games of 1908, Russia had its first Olympic gold medallist in figure skater Nikolai Panin.27

Russian took further part in international sport after sport journalist and administrator Georges Duperron, an IOC member from 1913 to 1915, founded a Russian Athletics Federation in 1911. Thereafter, the first Russian representative at an IAAF Congress was Theodor Hennig in 1912. An avid writer, Duperron wrote over 30 books related to sport including one titled Track & Field and Ball Games. Duperron responded enthusiastically to the Swedish invitation for the establishment of an international athletics governing body and voiced Russian support for the
initiative. Those efforts are not surprising as Russia regarded the 1912 Olympic Games as an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the international sport movement and sent over two hundred athletes to compete in Stockholm. Russian competitors were not particularly successful at the Games, winning only a combined five medals. However, the Russian flag was also raised for the successes of Finnish athletes as Russia ruled over the Grand Duchy of Finland at the time. Thus, even though the teams marched in separately to the Olympic Opening Ceremony, the Russian tricolour waved over significant ‘Finnish’ victories like that of Hannes Kolehmainen, the first of the ‘Flying Finns’. That said, the Russian federation never became an official IAAF member, leaving further letters by the IAAF unanswered.

The first World War put a hold on the majority of international sporting exchanges, including athletics. Following the cancellation of the 1916 Berlin Olympic Games, only the efforts of a few leading individuals such as Pierre de Coubertin (for the IOC) and Edström (for the IAAF) kept the global sport movements alive. After the Russian revolution in 1917, and distracted by the Russian Civil War between the Red and White army’s, no team representing Russia competed in Antwerp at the 1920 Games. Following the Red Army’s victory, Soviet Russian leaders refrained from seeking participation in the Olympic Movement amidst a general international withdrawal by the Soviets. It was not that sport disappeared within the Soviet Union but rather, as explained by one scholar, Soviet General Secretary of the Communist Party Joseph Stalin advocated for ‘only sport among[st] the communists.’ In place of the Olympics, the Soviets founded their own rival sport movement, called the International Associate of Red Sports and Gymnastics Organisations, or Red Sport International, which was closely tied to the communist movement. Perceived as a highly political group, neither IOC nor IAAF leaders sought to include the Soviets at this time.
The Soviets used sport exchanges, including those in athletics, in an attempt to gain influence in Europe at the start of the 1930’s. This sudden volte-face from the Soviets stemmed from a confluence of factors, including the low standard of competition from communist competitors. By 1933 there was a push within the Soviet Union to ‘catch up and overtake bourgeois records’ by adopting Western sporting practices. This viewpoint represented a decided policy shift within the Soviet regime, as examined by historian Barbara Keys, that now viewed Western sport as a ‘useful way to reach large numbers of foreign workers, [to] impress foreign governments with Soviet strength, and [to] bolster [the regime’s] strength at home.’ Part of this policy included reestablishing contacts with sporting organizations that were severed following the revolution.

One of those sporting federations the Soviets contacted was the IAAF and from 1934-1937, the IAAF voted to allow meets with the Soviet Union. Edström even went as far as to make exceptions to IAAF rules by tolerating that Russian athletes competed against athletes from IAAF members in the hope that Russia would become an official IAAF member. Yet the Russians had no intentions to join the IAAF officially, anxious that membership would restrict Russian involvement with the workers’ sport movement, and Edström consequently forbid the exchanges. ‘With its fairly discreet links with bourgeois sport and its concern over overtly withdrawing from worker sport,’ writes André Gounot, ‘the USSR’s international sports policy of 1934-9 was one of indecision.’

Such indecision hardly mattered as yet another shift in domestic Soviet politics saw Stalin launch a campaign that became known as the ‘Great Terror.’ The rationale behind these mass purges is still a topic for debate but what is certain is that Stalin targeted anyone with international contacts, particularly athletes. In his seminal work on the topic, historian Robert Conquest writes, ‘sport was thoroughly purged’ while historian Jim Riordan notes, ‘five sports ministers and
countless sports officials and players had been executed." The aims of sport within the Soviet Union fundamentally altered at this time from proving the superiority of the Communist system to preparing for victory on future battlefields. As scholar Jenifer Parks highlights, ‘Soviet leaders placed all sports organizations, institutes, and societies under the military, requiring all physical education in schools to focus on military preparedness.’

‘Crazy to have the Russians participate’

Following the end of the Second World War and with the onset of the Cold War, the international sporting arena increasingly became the stage for ideological (sporting) contests. The Soviets held the viewpoint that their domestic sports – particularly in widely practiced sports in Russia such as football, weightlifting and athletics – was now advanced enough to beat, or at least compete with, its ideological rivals in the West. However, there was a caveat. The Soviets were not willing to compete without ‘reasonable expectation of victory’ and by the time of the London Games of 1948 Soviet leadership believed ‘Soviet standards were still insufficiently high for the USSR to do well.’ Nikolai Romanov, who chaired the Soviet Sports Committee and was one of Burghleys’ contacts in the Soviet Union, was temporarily demoted from his post following a ‘mixed performance’ by Soviet skaters in an international event. It is important to remember this context as sport leaders in the West considered the most expedient avenue to approach the Soviets.

Sigfrid Edström and Avery Brundage publicly espoused that the Soviet Union was welcome to re-join the international sport movement following the war. Both men held ironclad anti-communist views. While they continued to strive for universal participation in athletics and needed the Soviets on board to achieve this goal, they both continued to argue that the Olympic Movement was apolitical – quite in contrast to the 1930s when Edström allowed competitions with
Russia. In the final years of the war, Brundage and Edström exchanged various letters on the handling of the ‘Soviet question’. In September 1944 Brundage reported on speculation in American newspapers on a potential entry of the Soviet Union into international sport and reiterated his willingness to accept the Soviets if they adhered to the amateur rules and regulations. Similarly, Edström is quoted in the *New York Herald Tribune* in November 1944 that ‘the I.A.A.F. would welcome the Russians with open arms whenever they decided they wanted in and made an application.’ The newspaper interviewed Edström during a trip to the United States, where he met with Brundage, and there is little doubt that his statement was coordinated with the American. However, Edström’s opinion did not stop him from predicting in a letter to Brundage that the primary question for the IOC come their Executive Board meeting in September 1946 would be what to do about the Soviets.

Both Edström and Brundage’s stance towards welcoming the Soviets back with open arms wavered. While publicly Edström expressed a willingness to quickly accept the Soviets, privately he sincerely doubted the ability of the Soviets to adhere to IAAF and IOC regulations. He wrote to Brundage in 1945: ‘A coming National Olympic Committee in Sovjet-Russia [sic] will be a state organization. Personally, I do not wish to accept them. Let them run their own show if they like to do so.’ For his part, Brundage remained ambivalent about Soviet participation. In his typically brusque manner he argued the Olympic Movement had, ‘gotten along very well without the Russians for 35 years since 1912.’

While Edström and Brundage were prepared to listen to a Soviet application but remained content to wait for a Soviet response to their invitations, Burghley was the driving force of a more active policy. The historical sources highlight that he was very much in favour of including the Soviet Union into the IAAF, making it a primary objective of his early presidency. He successfully
convinced the IAAF Council to adopt this strategy in the immediate post-war years. At the first Council meeting after the war in Stockholm in August 1945, the participants decided to officially invite the Soviet Union to become an IAAF member. Moreover, Burghley pushed for an invitation of Soviet athletes to cross-country events in Paris in February 1946 as well as the 1946 European Athletics Championships in Oslo. This significant exception to invite a non-member to an IAAF-organized athletics event remains unrepeated in the organization’s history and shows Burghley’s eagerness to expand the Olympic sports movement to the East. For Burghley, in contrast to Edström and Brundage, state involvement in Russian athletics did not seem to be a major concern.

The Soviets never responded to the IAAF’s official invitation to the European Championships, leaving the federation’s leadership guessing about their intentions, but a Soviet delegation eventually turned up in Oslo in 1946. Therewith, they were able to participate in an IAAF event without officially adhering to the existing amateur rules. In fact, by that time the Soviets had already installed a performance-based financial reward system for its athletes as well as state-sponsored training facilities that allowed systematic training and preparation. If there was any evidence needed for Soviet competitiveness on the sporting field – largely an outcome of the professional structures in place – the performances of the athletes proved it. The Soviet Union finished second in the medal table, mainly through its success in the women’s competitions where they won twelve of twenty-seven medals on offer. Two Soviet representatives also participated in the IAAF Council meeting, but the discussions did not exceed an exchange of niceties. Edström – still leading the IAAF – reiterated that the Soviet inclusion in the Championship was an exception and full membership was required, whilst the Soviets reassured the Council the national authorities would consider that membership.
The day following the end of the European Championships, the IAAF elected Burghley as the organization’s new leader. It is in some respects a stretch to say that Burghley was ‘elected’ as, according to official minutes of the meeting, Edström proposed Burghley to replace him and ‘[t]he proposal was accepted by the Congress amidst general applause.’ Edström selected Burghley to succeed him as early as November of 1945. After hosting Burghley in Stockholm, Edström informed Brundage of his decision. In a letter written in December of 1945, Brundage congratulated Burghley on his decision to ‘take over’ and expressed his confidence that ‘the [IAAF would] maintain its position as one of the most important international amateur athletic organizations under [Burghley’s] able direction.’

Edström, in his continued capacity as IOC president, sent numerous letters to Russian sport officials inviting the Soviet Union to become an IAAF member following their participation at the 1946 European Championships. The litany of unanswered correspondence drove Edström to send an acquaintance with a letter in English and Russian solely to ensure that he knew Nikolai Romanov even received the invitation. With his sixth letter of invitation, written on November 25th, 1946, Edström informed Romanov he would no longer write until Romanov replied. By December of 1946, Edström appears to be at his wits end with how to best handle the Soviet question amidst a popular clamour to let the Soviets compete. ‘[W]hat shall we do?,’ he wrote Brundage, ‘Our young athletes all over Europe are crazy to have the Russians participate.’ Yet another hurdle was that Brundage and Edström agreed that due to the role of Stalin’s Soviet Union as an ally against the Axis powers in the war as well as its initial commitment to become a member of the United Nations, there was politically nothing in the way of accepting the Soviets fully into the international sport community – if the amateur rules were respected.
The situation at the end of 1946 was in some ways no clearer than it had been a year prior. An abrupt arrival by the Soviets at the European Championships did not provide any hints as to what could potentially come next from the East. Moreover, with Burghley now heading the organization, it is readily apparent that someone with an active desire to welcome the Soviets into the international sporting arena was now in charge. What was yet to be seen was whether the Soviets would deign to reply to the official invitations and how this process would play out amongst international sport leaders.

‘A street with no turning’

The Soviets first responded to the IAAF’s invitation in January 1947, which prompted Evan Hunter’s cable to Burghley, and voiced their desire to join the federation. However, they named three conditions: Russian as one of the IAAF’s official languages; an immediate appointment of a Council member from the Soviet federation and the exclusion of the Spanish athletics federation of the Franco regime. The inviting attitude of the IAAF played into the hands of the Soviets as they attempted to join only under their own terms. As president, Burghley exchanged various letters with IAAF Council members in an attempt to find a solution. He argued with Brundage that he was ‘in a street with no turning’ because the IAAF had invited the Soviets in the first place. He also promised the Soviets to propose the adoption of Russian as an official language and the inclusion of a Soviet Council member. It appears that the Brit was very much in favour of adhering to the Soviet demands.

Others, like the French IAAF Council member Paul Méricamp and Brundage, were more sceptical, mainly as they continued to distrust the Soviet’s assurances to adhere to the amateur regulations. Brundage appeared to be particularly annoyed about potential special treatment for
the USSR. However, in March 1947, Burghley tried to make clear to Brundage that he saw no other way than to accept the Soviet Union as a member if they signed up for the IAAF rules: ‘Apart from telling them we have no great confidence in them, in which case the reply would be ‘well, why did you invite us to join’!, I feel that we have no other alternative than to accept.’

Brundage, however, viewed the situation with a much more fatalistic outlook. He expressed his thoughts on accepting the Soviets in a letter to Edström in March 1947, writing, ‘this situation is loaded with dynamite. We must be very careful or the whole structure of amateur sport and the Olympic Games which we have laboured so many years to create will be wrecked and ruined.’

Brundage’s concerns lay not with accepting a communist country, but rather that state-sponsorship could lead to a destruction of the amateurism ideal.

A key point in exchanges amongst the IAAF Council members was the eligibility of Soviet athletes who had received payments in the past as IAAF regulations imposed a lifetime ban for such rule breaches. Again it was Burghley who came up with a compromise that would allow both parties to save face. He suggested an amnesty date for Soviet athletes after which any violations of the amateur code would be sanctioned, any athlete who had received payments before were not to be punished. This idea was greatly welcomed by the IAAF Council members and even Brundage agreed, but still argued that limits should be set.

Nevertheless, the Soviets reiterated their demands in May 1947, and the IAAF Council, following Burghley’s advice, recommended provisional membership for the Soviet federation. This decision outlines how the IAAF attempted to get around the Soviet demands. The IAAF Council denied the request to include Russian as an official language but agreed to correspond with the Soviets in Russian. The demands to exclude Franco Spain and appoint a Soviet IAAF
Council member were postponed as, Burghley argued, such requests could only be made after the Soviets were a member. Finally, July 1st was set as the amnesty date for amateur rule breaches.74

The Soviets did not participate at the 1947 IAAF Congress.75 And upon not hearing back from them, Burghley’s attempts reached a new level in July 1947 when he travelled as a guest of the All Union Committee of Physical Culture and Sports to Moscow to study the situation personally. There, he witnessed a gigantic physical culture parade and had private discussions with Soviet sport officials on their IAAF membership. Burghley informed Edström that he ‘made it quite clear to them that [he] was negotiating only on behalf of the I.A.A.F. and not the I.O.C.’.76

Burghley gave Alexander B. Novikov and Nikolai Romanov, both members of the All Union Committee of Physical Culture and Sports of the USSR, a detailed report about the IAAF Council decision and received assurances from both men that the USSR would comply with the IAAF’s rules. He proudly wrote to Edström that his visit had ‘served a most useful purpose’ even though one could never be sure of anything ‘in that country’.77 Burghley was particularly proud to create a ‘personal contact’ with the leading Soviet sport officials, also establishing an unofficial way to contact them. In a letter to Romanov he wrote:

I enjoyed our dinner party very much indeed, too, but above all I was so happy to have an opportunity of making your personal acquaintance. So often in this work things go wrong, because the writers of letters do not know each other personally and read things which are not intended by the other party. Now, as far as athletics are concerned between your country and the I.A.A.F. this cannot occur, because we know each other.78
Without question, Burghley’s visit to Moscow in July 1947 created an alliance between the IAAF President and Soviet sport officials that would become instrumental in the formation of IAAF politics in the following decades.

Burghley’s closest acquaintance he made during his trip was Alexander B. Novikov. Born in Karelia, a republic of the Soviet Union bordering on modern-day Finland, Novikov led the All-Union Committee of Physical Culture and Sport at the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. at the time of Burghley’s visit. A founder of the International Society for the Sociology of Sport, one obituary described Novikov as ‘one of the most outstanding contemporary scientists in the field of physical culture.’

Burghley promptly wrote Novikov on his return home, recounting how his plane’s brakes failed and the aircraft ended up in a canal. Of more insight, Burghley expressed his gratitude for Novikov’s hospitality and friendship. He wrote, ‘It was, I think, an indication of how well we got on that however ferocious the arguments got, they made no difference to our friendship!!’

Outside of a friendly acquaintance, Burghley viewed Novikov as a source within the Soviet Union and he requested Novikov to view him in the same manner. He expressed his delight at having ‘someone now that [he could] write to unofficially and who [could] do the same to [him] should any point which might cause difficulty in sport administration arise.’

There would be no shortage of difficulties in the ensuing years.

All of the work Burghley did in fomenting goodwill during his visit nearly came undone only weeks after his visit. He wrote two separate letters, one intended for Nikolai Romanov and a set of notes of his Soviet visit intended for Sigfrid Edström. Somehow, the note for Romanov found its way into an envelope mailed to Brundage while Burghley’s notes for Edström went to Romanov. After realizing the error, Burghley turned to humour to try and rectify the situation. He wrote Romanov, ‘I can assure you that your surprise will have been nothing compared with that
of the Vice President of the International Olympic Committee when he received a letter filled with thanks for the very happy visit he had given me in Moscow!"82 Privately to Edström, Burghley expressed relief, pointing out that the Soviets were already aware of his stance on amateurism issues. Burghley did, however, admit the Soviets may ‘not be particularly enthusiastic’ about his claim they did not like to lose face or Romanov when Burghley described Novikov as ‘the power behind the throne!’83

In a further attempt to limit any damage the misplaced letter may have caused, Burghley reached out directly to Novikov, writing him the same day as Romanov and Edström. His explanation to Novikov provides a key insight into how Burghley viewed his relationship with the Soviets. He informed Novikov that he ‘offered [his] services’ to Edström if the Swede opted to undertake unofficial discussions with the Soviets in order to facilitate the nation’s entry into the IOC. This provided the reason for the ‘loss of face’ comment in the misplaced letter. It was not an insult, Burghley assured Novikov, but rather a statement of fact that when issues between two powerful parties become public knowledge, ‘it is very difficult for either side to give way without loss of face.’84 By his account to Novikov, Burghley informed Edström that he had a new source within the Soviet Union he could reach out to when needed. He reassured Novikov that he did not identify the Soviet by name. Rather, he had told Edström that any information passed through his new friend in the Soviet Union ‘would be sure to reach the highest authorities [in the Soviet Union] unofficially.’85

Edström’s frustration with the Soviets grew in October of 1947 as rumours swirled that the Soviets may create their own version of the Olympic Games. His annoyance was not grounded in opposition to a competitor to the Olympics but rather the belief that sport and politics should remain separate. ‘[T]he present political difficulties would even be transmitted into the sporting
field!,’ he complained to Burghley. While it does not appear that Edström believed the Soviets would follow through on this idea, the silence from the East made Edström suspicious. The Soviets’ lack of initiative to officially notify him or Burghley that they formed an Olympic Committee ‘seem[ed] queer’ to Edström.\textsuperscript{86} Burghley reassured the Swede that he had not heard anything regarding the IAAF either and that he had ‘taken the precaution of writing a contact of [Burghley’s in the Soviet Union]’ to emphasize that the IOC would meet in January and to submit an application before that date.\textsuperscript{87} Based on his letters, that contact was Novikov.

Thus, whilst remaining sceptical about state influence in Soviet sport, Burghley appeared to take the personal assurances by his contacts at face value, not questioning the intentions and buying into the Soviets’ assurances. Much of this was a result of the friendships he built during his visit.\textsuperscript{88} He reiterated these sentiments in a letter to Novikov:

\begin{quote}
(...) now that I have met you all and think that I can count you among my friends, I feel that I can play a very useful part in private discussions where we can say what we like to each other in private, without any feeling or loss of face!!!\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Without question, Burghley’s visit to Moscow in July 1947 led him to believe that he could take the Soviets at their word.

For their part, the Soviets played the role of host during Burghley’s visit by, quite literally, wining and dining him. Brundage wrote Burghley upon his return, ‘I suppose you do not want to see any more Sturgeon or Vodka for six months at least,’\textsuperscript{90} Burghley responded emphatically, ‘I hope by next summer I shall have recovered!’\textsuperscript{91} By his account he consumed caviar at every meal, breakfast included. Of more consternation was the seemingly endless supply of vodka. From his
recollection, ‘vodka was pressed on [him] with every [meal] too except breakfast, and even on two occasions for that meal as well.’

92 The IAAF President had not expected the welcoming attitude he received through the Soviet sport officials and the social events staged for him left long-lasting impressions. In January 1948, he ends a letter to Novikov in which he expresses his hopes for a Soviet visit to the 1948 Olympics with, ‘I feel it would do us both a lot of good to have some ‘singing’ and with the English equivalent of Caviare and Vodka’. 93 The evolving friendships blinded Burghley, who accepted at face value the assurances that the Soviets would abide by the amateur rules. 94 He consigned suspicions by other IAAF Council members that the Soviets’ had state-sponsored sport structures in place to the realms of fantasy – or at the very least to the realms of the past.

By November of 1947, and following the issue of a special resolution by the Soviet government to reverse its policy to award monetary prizes to successful athletes, Burghley vehemently backed the Soviets. Burghley’s defence of the Soviets is best exemplified by events in November of 1947 when IOC member Colonel Pieter Wilhelmus Scharroo sent Edström a report from an acquaintance living in Moscow that revealed that the Soviets were indeed still paying their athletes. Like Edström, Scharroo was a staunch anti-communist. 95 Edström forwarded the report to Burghley as evidence that ‘[t]he Russian sport is not an amateur sport, it is a state affair’ and pondering ‘[w]here could we ever find a Russian who could be worthy to be a member of the I.O.C.?’ Burghley attempted to convince the IOC President that his source was mistaken. After all, the Soviets had assured Burghley that it was not the case anymore. 96 In 1950 when Burghley received a detailed newspaper article recounting Soviet payment towards athletes, he forwarded the article to the Soviets. ‘[W]e would appreciate if you would kindly confirm the incorrectness of the report,’ he wrote, yet again showing a willingness to accept the Soviets at face value. 97
By 1950, Soviet sport had joined almost all major international federations and began to compete intensively with their ideological rivals in the West as well as aligned-states in the East. Yet official acceptance as an IOC member had yet to come. As detailed by scholar Jenifer Parks, the Soviet Sports Committee sent a request to the Central Committee within the Soviet Union to form an Olympic Committee. In a touch of irony that would have undoubtedly delighted Edström, they received no response for months. With less than a month until the IOC convened Vienna, Burghley’s friend Nikolai Romanov stepped in and ‘reminded the Committee . . . that if the Soviet Union had not formed an NOC [before Vienna] Soviet athletes could not compete in the Helsinki Games the following year.’ An official request to join the IOC followed less than a week later and athletes from the Soviet Union competed for the first time since 1912 at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki.

While the key moment between Burghley’s election as IAAF president to the acceptance of the Soviet Union into the IAAF was his trip to visit the Soviet Union, he clearly sided with the East prior to his visit. When Edström and Brundage had their doubts over what could potentially happen if the Soviets joined the international sports movement, Burghley was the one dissuading their pessimism. Following his visit to Moscow and establishment of a connection with Soviet sport officials, Burghley was the one responsible for leading the rapprochement from the West with sport in the East.

**Conclusion**

To summarize, the early inclusion of the Soviet Union into the IAAF was a result of Soviet interest in athletics and a general willingness to accept the Eastern world into international sport by the late 1940s. However, whereas the most powerful and influential leaders Edström and Brundage
were inconsistent in their attitudes towards the Soviets, the new IAAF President Burghley was the real driving force for their inclusion. It is evident that Burghley’s visit to Moscow strongly influenced his attitude towards the Soviets. He had been sympathetic towards them prior to July 1947, but he clearly created strong personal ties with Soviet sport officials after his trip. Burghley was strongly influenced by the Soviet hospitality and the assurances he had been given whilst visiting Moscow. His work had an impact as the Soviets were active members in the IAAF in the years following their inclusion. They lobbied to accept communist allies like the German Democratic Republic, the People’s Republic of China, and North Korea into the IAAF.99 Further, Soviet representative Leonid Khomenkov, who would rise to the position of IAAF First Vice-President, attempted to institute major institutional reforms within the organization by altering the federation’s voting system by suggesting a one country, one vote system that would gain support for the Soviets from decolonized nations.100 Zoya Romanova, elected chairwoman of the IAAF’s Women’s Commission in 1956, led the charge for increasing the number of events for women on the Olympic program.101

Along the same lines, Burghley supported the inclusion of the Soviet Union into the IOC in 1951 and promoted the election of Konstantin Andrianov as IOC member, praising his dedication to sport.102 This sympathetic attitude towards the Soviets and indeed all Eastern European countries, would provide him with significant support from that part of the athletic world during his presidency.103 The Soviets and their Eastern bloc allies supported Burghley in elections and important decisions, whilst they had in Burghley a prominent – and powerful – supporter in international sport’s highest leadership circles.

Burghley’s friendly relations with the Soviets later led to accusations from within the international sport community that Burghley was a Communist. IAAF Secretary-Treasurer Donald
Pain wrote to Miguel de Capriles, the President of the International Fencing Federation, in 1961 following ‘an enquiry into the political affiliation of [Burghley].’\textsuperscript{104} John V. Grombach, the secretary of the Fencing Federation, initiated the investigation. Described by one scholar as an ‘inveterate spook’, Grombach was convinced Burghley was, in the words of sport historian Toby Rider, ‘a communist sympathiser that supported the wishes of the USSR in the IOC.’\textsuperscript{105} In Grombach’s eyes, Burghley’s primary crime was supporting the push to have the Republic of China change its name to Taiwan or Formosa. Burghley clearly knew of the accusations. He wrote Brundage, ‘I expect Gen. Grombach will now be on my tail again!!,’ in September of 1962 when discussing changing the Republic of China’s affiliation to the I.A.A.F. to Taiwan.\textsuperscript{106} Nothing ever came from these accusations yet it is illustrative of how at least one contemporary viewed Burghley’s relationship with the Soviets.

The close relationship between the Soviet Union and the head of the IAAF became a theme following Burghley’s presidency. Burghley believed that inclusion rather than exclusion was the right strategy for the IAAF, disregarding whether members would strictly adhere to IAAF rules:

The underlying question is, however, a very much deeper one. It is one of a tendency which is sweeping around the world, namely, that whether we like it or not there are many countries which have a form of State Dictatorship, to all intents and purposes, which of course, is anathema to those who live in countries where free systems of governments exist. We are therefore faced with the problem as to whether we should try to ostracize the sporting youth of these countries (for it is they and not the officials and committees who count in the long run), or whether
we should endeavour to get the young men into our fold to try and concert them to our way at looking at sport.107

Calculated or not, the alliance between Burghley and Eastern nations was a match from which both sides profited. The IAAF President was prepared to close his eyes towards state involvement.

1 Letter from Evan Hunter to David Burghley, February 1, 1947, IAAFA.

2 Ibid.


11 Archives consulted for this paper include the International Association of Athletic Federations Archive in Monaco (hereafter IAAFA), the International Olympic Committee Archive in Lausanne, Switzerland (hereafter IOCL), the *Riksarkivet* in Stockholm (hereafter RIK), the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin (hereafter BUN) and the Avery Brundage Collection at the University of Illinois (hereafter ABC).

12 Jefferys, *Chariots of Fire*, 450.

13 Letter from David Burghley to Otto Mayer, August 10, 1956, IOCL.

14 Ibid, 450.


17 ‘Prince Henry Believed to Be Engaged to Lady Mary Scott,’ *The Boston Globe*, February 20, 1926.


20 Barker, Lennartz, and Wassong, “British IOC Members,” 139.

21 “Life Calls on Bermuda’s Governor.”

22 Jefferys, *Chariots of Fire*, 448.

23 Ibid. 455. Jefferys writes, ‘Killanin believed Exeter would have been a good choice [for IOC president] of the Olympic movement; in addition his role on the IOC executive gave him wide contacts and crucially – at a time of Cold War tensions between the superpowers – the East Europeans respected him.’


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Letter from Georges Dupperon to Svenska Idrottsförbundet, April 16, 1911, RIK.
30 John D. Windhausen, ‘National Identity and the Emergence of the Sports Movement in Late Imperial Russia,’ *History of European Ideas* 16, no. 4–6 (1993): 871–76; Sunik, ‘Russia in the Olympic Movement’


32 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to T. Hennig, January 7, 1912, RIK.

33 Redihan, *The Olympics and the Cold War*, 50.

34 Ibid.


37 Rob Beamish, *Steroids: A New Look at Performance-Enhancing Drugs* (Denver, Colorado: Praeger Publishers, 2011) argues that the push started in late 1933 and was not officially started until 1934. Jenifer Parks in *Red Sport, Red Tape* argues the Soviets implemented a ‘mandate’ in 1933. As noted by Erin Elizabeth Redihan in *The Olympics and the Cold War* this also ‘gave Moscow opportunities to demonstrate the supremacy of communist sport over the capitalist model a decade before Washington began to consider the Soviets their chief competition in all things,’ 53.

38 Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 164.

39 Keys, ‘Soviet Sport.’

40 Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the IAAF in Los Angeles, August 27, 1934, IAAF.


45 Riordan *Sport in Soviet Society*, 367.


48 Letter from Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström, September 12, 1944, ABC.

49 Al Lancy, ‘Views of Sport’, *The Tribune*, November 10, 1944, ABC.

50 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, December 7, 1945, ABC.
51 Ibid.

52 Letter from Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström, January 21, 1947, IAAF.

53 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, November 2, 1945, ABC. See also, Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, December 4, 1946, ABC.

54 Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the IAAF in Stockholm, September 6-8, 1945, IAAF.

55 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, November 2, 1945. Edström writes that Burghley thought it ‘advisable’ to invite the Soviet Union to Paris.

56 Guttmann, *The Olympics*, 87.


58 Memo from Sigfrid Edström to the Athletic Representatives of Soviet Russia, August 2nd, 1946, IAAF.

59 Minutes of the Fifteenth Congress of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, August 21-26, 1946, IAAF.

60 Letter from Avery Brundage to David Burghley, December 3, 1945, ABC.

61 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Nikolai Romanov, November 25, 1946, ABC.

62 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, October 31, 1946, ABC.

63 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Nikolai Romanov, November 25-30, 1936, ABC.

64 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, December 4, 1946, ABC.

65 Letter from Nikolai Romanov to IAAF Chairman, January 29, 1947, IAAF.

66 Letter from David Burghley to Avery Brundage, March 20, 1947, IAAF.

67 Letter from David Burghley to Nikolai Romanov, February 18, 1947, IAAF.

68 Letter from Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström, March 4, 1947, IAAF.

69 Letter from Burghley to Brundage, March 20, IAAF.

70 Letter from Brundage to Edström, March 4, 1947, IAAF.

71 Letter from Burghley to Brundage, March 20, IAAF.

72 Brundage was specifically against ‘out and out professionals [and] individuals who [had] received large subsidies.’ Quote found in letter from Avery Brundage to David Burghley, April 7, 1947, IAAF.

73 Letter from Morozov to Burghley, May 24, 1947, IAAF.

74 Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the IAAF in Oslo, August 20, 1946, IAAF.

75 Minutes of a Special Congress of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, June 9, 1947, IAAF.

76 Letter from David Burghley to Sigfrid Edström, July 31, 1947, ABC.
77 Ibid.

78 Letter from David Burghley to Nikolai Romanov, July 30, 1947, IAAFA.


80 Letter from David Burghley to Alexander Novikov, July 31st, 1947, IAAFA.

81 Burghley to Novikov, July 31, 1947.

82 Letter from David Burghley to Nikolai Romanov, August 7, 1947, IAAFA.

83 Letter from David Burghley to Sigfrid Edström, August 8, 1947, IAAFA.

84 Letter from Burghley to Novikov, August 8, 1947, IAAFA.

85 Letter from Burghley to Novikov, August 8, 1947.

86 Letter from Sigfrid Edström to David Burghley, October 28, 1947, IAAFA.

87 Ibid.

88 Letter from David Burghley to Alexander Novikov, August 8, 1947, IAAFA.

89 Ibid.

90 Letter from Avery Brundage to David Burghley, August 5, 1947, ABC.

91 Letter from David Burghley to Avery Brundage, August 26, 1947, ABC.

92 Ibid.

93 Letter from David Burghley to Alexander Novikov, January 6, 1948, IAAFA.

94 Jefferys, Chariots of Fire.


97 Letter from David Burghley to The Chairman All Union Section of Light Athletics, August 26, 1950, IAAF.

98 Parks, Red Sport, Red Tape, 17-18.

99 For example, see Minutes of the Twentieth Congress of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, Melbourne, Australia, November 22 – December 4, 1956, IAAF, 4. The Soviets, Romania, and Czechoslovakia supported the People’s Republic of China in trying to prevent Taiwan from joining the IAAF. For Soviet support of North Korea see, Minutes of the Twenty-First Congress of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, Stockholm, Sweden, August 19-25, 1958, 6.

100 Jörg Krieger ‘‘The Sole Anti-Democratic Federation in the Entire Olympic Movement’’: Early International Association of Athletics Federations Development Initiatives Between Commercialization and Democratization,

101 Minutes of the Twenty-Second Congress of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, Rome, Italy, August 30 - September 9, 1960, 29.

102 Andrianov had no knowledge of either of the two official languages in the Olympic Movement, English and French. Therefore, an exception was made for him and he could bring an interpreter to the IOC meetings. IOC Session 1951; p. 9; Also see Parks, *Red Sport, Red Tape*, 13-14 and Guttman, *The Olympics*, 89.


104 Letter from D.T. Pain to M.M.A. de Capriles, April 10, 1961, IAAFA.


106 Letter from David Burghley to Avery Brundage, September 24, 1962, IAAFA.