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## The Soviet Union and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the Early Cold War Era\*

(Author's Accepted Manuscript)

One of the more curious outcomes of the post-Stalin era was the Soviet decision in 1955 to enter the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The Bolshevik tradition was fiercely anti-parliamentary, seeing representative democracy as no more than a fig leaf for domination by the bourgeoisie. The socialist alternative was the grass-roots popular democracy of the soviets, whose directly elected deputies were held to be more genuinely representative of society than the lawyers and businessmen who typically made up Western parliaments. The Soviets took very seriously their claims to be democratic: the first full-suffrage elections to the Supreme Soviet were held to great fanfare in 1937, and the nationwide voting continued at regular intervals in the post-Stalin era. In an entirely characteristic statement, Khrushchev proclaimed in 1962 that elections to the Supreme Soviet were more meaningful than their counterparts in capitalist countries 'because our people elect their finest representatives to the organs of power'. This was in stark contrast to the West, where 'representatives of monopoly capital constitute the overwhelming majority in Congress and in Parliament'.<sup>1</sup>

In 1955, however, the Soviet Union applied to join the parliamentary club of the IPU as part of its campaign to re-engage the outside world after Stalin's death. After the Soviets let their intentions be known, few obstacles were placed in their way, and a Soviet delegation attended the annual conference in Helsinki in August 1955. What exactly did the USSR hope to achieve, and why was it admitted so easily, given that the Supreme Soviet did not

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correspond to everyone's notion of a 'parliament'? What effects did IPU membership have on the Soviet conduct of international relations, especially its bilateral relations with the main capitalist powers? Finally, did this new parliamentary orientation of the USSR have any implications for its domestic politics?

The interparliamentary dimension of Soviet history has so far attracted rather little scholarly attention. An early article by Peter Juviler offers a judicious assessment of the motives for and implications of the Soviet entry into the IPU, though the scope of the treatment is limited by the sources available at the time and the near-contemporary perspective.<sup>2</sup> Very recently, Ivan Sablin's study of the image and practice of parliamentarism in the twentieth-century Russian imperial space has rightly drawn attention to the significance of IPU membership for Soviet foreign relations in the post-Stalin era; Sablin also points to a slow 'normalization' of the Supreme Soviet *qua* parliament from the mid-1950s onwards, a process that had at least something to do with the USSR's participation in international parliamentary exchanges and forums.<sup>3</sup> The fullest existing study of the early phase of the USSR's IPU membership is a fine article by Émilie Robin-Hivert, who draws on files from the holdings of the Soviet inter-parliamentary group at the State Archive of the Russian Federation and offers a valuable profile of the membership of this group, as well as analysis of its activities and objectives in the early phase of its existence.<sup>4</sup>

This article will add to Robin-Hivert's work by taking a longer chronological perspective and focusing on Anglo-Soviet relations rather than the Franco-Soviet relationship that provides her main set of examples. It draws on a different, and somewhat broader, source base: material from the UK National Archives, files from the Soviet Central Committee and the

archive of the Inter-Parliamentary Union itself in addition to the records of the Soviet parliamentary group held at the Russian State Archive. It also complements Sablin's valuable long-range account of institutions and discourse by looking more closely at Soviet interactions with the IPU and with parliamentary counterparts in the 'bourgeois' world. The story of Soviet involvement in the IPU has the potential to enrich our understanding of Cold War public diplomacy: interparliamentary congresses and delegations were more 'political' than the cultural exchanges and exhibitions of the post-Stalin era, but at the same time offered – ostensibly, at least – a more flexible political instrument than Soviet engagement with high-stakes international organizations like the United Nations. This international sphere of activity also raised an intriguing domestic question: was it possible for Supreme Soviet deputies to subscribe to a parliamentary international organization without beginning to 'parliamentarize' their own institution?

### **Russia and the IPU, 1889-1955**

Established in 1889, the IPU was originally a club of Western liberal states dedicated to the intertwined causes of international arbitration and peace. Its founders hoped that regular gatherings of like-minded parliamentarians might provide a valuable supplement to formal diplomatic relations. A pioneering institution for the late nineteenth century, the IPU was nothing less than an attempt to foster an 'international civil society'.<sup>5</sup>

Even in its earliest days, the IPU faced a tension between the values it wished to promote and its need to be broad enough to carry real weight in international affairs. Quite simply, there were a number of large and important states in the world that did not remotely meet

the criteria for admission to a 'parliamentary' union. For the IPU leadership of the 1890s, the most regrettable omission was the Russian Empire: it was hard to see how the IPU could perform its mission to advance the cause of international peace without having as a member one of the five great European powers, yet it was equally hard to see how the tsarist autocracy might qualify as 'parliamentary'. On the eve of its 7<sup>th</sup> conference in Budapest in 1896, the IPU found a solution to the conundrum by relaxing its statutes: members of consultative senates and councils in non-constitutional states might also be admitted, if given authorization by their states and if permission were sought in advance. This leeway was offered very specifically to Russia: in that Eurocentric age, no one was greatly troubled by the absence of China, Persia or the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup>

It turned out, however, that Nicholas II was not interested in joining the club. Russian officialdom brushed aside the IPU's overtures in the 1890s and 1900s, claiming with justification that Russia did not possess institutions of the requisite type.<sup>7</sup> Russia's involvement in the IPU would have to wait until the 1905 revolution, which produced an imperial parliament, the State Duma, many of whose leading figures were liberal lawyers and professors cut from the same cloth as their Western European counterparts. The Duma's first chairman, Sergei Muromtsev, was a legal scholar well versed in Western constitutional history and current practice. A Russian delegation was duly invited to attend the IPU conference in London in the summer of 1906.

In the event, its members were not able to participate as full-fledged delegates, since the parliament to which they belonged was dissolved just before the start of the conference: after little more than two months of ill-tempered debates, the Duma was shut down in July

1906. This did not prevent the Russian delegates in London receiving a welcome that was little short of ecstatic. Prime Minister Henry Campbell Bannerman's opening address ended with the resounding phrase 'The Duma is dead: long live the Duma!' When a regressive new electoral law produced a more conservative Third Duma in 1907, Russian participation in the IPU continued on a more stable footing, even if the number of Russian attendees at conferences in the 1910s was very modest and these men had a more limited remit than their colleagues in Western liberal states, as foreign policy lay beyond the Duma's sphere of competence.<sup>8</sup>

After World War I, Russia was lost to the inter-parliamentary fold with the coming to power of the Bolsheviks. Nonetheless, the IPU continued in the interwar period to extend beyond its liberal democratic core. In the late 1920s, fascists could be found alongside socialists at IPU gatherings.<sup>9</sup> By the 1930s, the strains of political polarization took their toll: the IPU lost much of its prominence and purpose. But even in this unpromising international environment, the IPU leadership in the 1930s was willing to put out feelers to Stalin's Soviet Union. On 29 May 1935, the head of the Belgian inter-parliamentary group wrote to IPU Secretary General Léopold Boissier to confirm that there was no obstacle in principle to a Soviet parliamentary group constituting itself under the auspices of the Supreme Soviet and being recognized as a member of the Union; on this basis it could be invited to the 31<sup>st</sup> IPU conference in Brussels in July 1936. In the absence of such a formally constituted group, however, there was no one to whom a conference invitation could be addressed.<sup>10</sup> A few days later Boissier followed up with a letter to the IPU President, Count Henri Carton de Wiart, in which he reported a promising conversation with Marcel Rosenberg, Soviet Under-Secretary-General at the League of Nations: Rosenberg had made a number of snide

criticisms of the IPU but indicated that he personally was open to the USSR participating in the organization and would be willing to pass on a letter addressed to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets. Boissier wasted no time in drafting such a letter.<sup>11</sup> If it was ever received in Moscow, it seems to have made no impact: this was not a moment that the Stalinist regime was open to approaches from the parliamentary West.

The overtures continued after World War II and acquired a British flavour. In early 1945 a British parliamentary delegation visited the USSR, and in the spring of 1946 the opinion formed in the Labour government that it was time to return the favour.<sup>12</sup> Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was initially reluctant but in due course won over by the arguments of his colleagues. On 31 May a meeting convened by the Speaker's Secretary agreed that a Soviet delegation of ten should be invited for a month (after first checking unofficially through the embassy in Moscow that such an invitation would be accepted). The visit would start and end with formal events held by the Speaker and the Lord Chancellor, and the Soviet party would be given 'ample facilities ... to study the proceedings of both Houses from the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery'. Given that the Soviets were unlikely to be familiar with British parliamentary procedure, they would be provided with a translation of an abridged version of a Hansard booklet on the subject. They were also to have a high-level minder in the form of 'at least one fairly senior official with a good knowledge of the machinery of Government in this country who would be able to answer any questions that the Members of the Delegation might wish to ask'. Political sensibilities would be managed by ensuring that interpreters were 'neither White Russians nor Communists'. Nonetheless, when discussions moved on to practical arrangements a few months later, it was considered important to recruit 'interpreters with personality' (presumably, those who would stand up

to any ideological onslaught from the Soviet visitors).<sup>13</sup> As the Soviet visit drew near, the question of gifts required careful consideration: in February 1947 the Ministry of Works queried with the Foreign Office the decision to produce for the Soviet visitors a stone memento of the old Chamber that perished in the Blitz, complete with the arms of the Palace of Westminster: 'we are in some doubt here whether this reminder of the old British House of Commons is a really suitable gift for the Russians who are supposed to care nothing for Parliamentary institutions.' The Foreign Office responded that Soviet sensitivities were likely to be more acute in other areas: 'The Supreme Soviet, which made gifts to our Delegation in February 1945, will certainly expect some gift to be made to its own Delegation, and something had to be chosen which could not be held to imply in any way that the Russians have a lower standard of living and could do with practical gifts.'<sup>14</sup>

The course of the visit did not run entirely smooth. The Soviet delegation irked their hosts by a last-minute postponement, and the closing press conference on 9 April struck a Foreign Office observer as 'most ungracious', containing '[n]ot a word of thanks and a sharp attack on "not a few influential individuals and groups that are under the political influence of reactionary circles irreconcilably hostile to the Soviet Union and other peace loving countries"'. Nonetheless, allowances needed to be made for the strains of the late Stalin era: the interpreters reported that Vasilii Kuznetsov, the head of the delegation, was 'extremely worried' in advance of the press conference and generally that his responsibilities had 'weighed heavily' on him.<sup>15</sup> Close observers seemed to feel that there was a useful interpersonal residue from the visit: the literary grandees Konstantin Simonov and Aleksandr Fadeev had their airs, but the academic members of the delegation were much more forthcoming. Kuznetsov had 'an admirable sense of humour, and a likeable



smile' and was 'perfectly ready to accept advice from our people accompanying the Delegation as to what he could and should not do'. The Soviet visitors conversed warmly with members of the Russian Section at the BBC and were deeply impressed by their visit to Winston Churchill at his home. If they displayed occasional annoyance, this was mainly because the programme was too hectic; by the end of the visit the minders and interpreters were reported to be 'at the end of our tether'.<sup>16</sup>

This was by no means the only evidence in the late Stalin era that political contacts were possible even in an incipient Cold War. The IPU remained not just open to Soviet membership but positively solicitous. In June 1946, having learned from the newspapers of the British invitation to the Supreme Soviet, Léopold Boissier wrote to Charles Powell, Secretary of the British Inter-Parliamentary Group, to suggest that the British use the occasion to encourage the Soviet side to set up their own inter-parliamentary group within the Supreme Soviet; he mentioned that the Council of the IPU had already the previous September decided to request that the Supreme Soviet join the organization and was now pursuing the idea through the mediation of the Bulgarian Group.<sup>17</sup> Six months later, having heard that the Supreme Soviet had accepted the British invitation, Boissier wrote to Powell again to reinforce the point: he wished to leave 'no stone unturned' in the effort to get the Soviets to join the IPU.<sup>18</sup> At its meeting in St Moritz in late August 1946, the Executive Committee reiterated that the IPU Council had been in favour of the affiliation of the USSR at its first postwar meeting in Geneva the previous year. On this occasion, Boissier sounded a note of caution: the admission of the Supreme Soviet would raise awkward questions, as it was 'the emanation of a totalitarian system'. But Carton de Wiart observed more pragmatically that the inclusion of fascist parliaments in the IPU had created a kind of

precedent, and that it was better to let events take their course; if the Soviet Union made an approach, it could be admitted as long as it accepted the statutes like any other member.<sup>19</sup> Pragmatism evidently won the day: in December 1946, in a letter to Senator Alben W. Barkley, President of the U.S. Interparliamentary group, Boissier listed an extraordinary number of back-channels to the Soviets: the Finnish Group had made unofficial contacts; IPU President Carton de Wiart had approached the Russian ambassador in Brussels; Boissier himself had written to the new Soviet ambassador in Bern; the President of the Egyptian Group had bent the ear of Andrei Gromyko at the United Nations Assembly in New York; and the head of the Czechoslovak Group had made representations during a five-week visit to the USSR.<sup>20</sup>

The period after World War II was a period of painful stocktaking for the IPU as for other international organizations: all the efforts in the interwar period to foster cross-border understanding and collaboration had failed to stop the rise of extremism and militarism. Now, moreover, the IPU faced a fast-changing decolonising world, as well as the emergence of new political regimes, such as the people's democracies of Eastern Europe, that were hardly in tune with the spirit of liberal parliamentarism. The IPU's response to these challenges was to redouble its commitment to 'universalism'. From the mid-1950s through to the early 1970s, it consistently loosened its admissions criteria, describing itself as a union of 'representative' rather than 'democratic' bodies. The effect was to make very clear that one-party and authoritarian parliaments qualified for IPU membership.<sup>21</sup>

The main advocate for the 'universal' mission of the IPU in the immediate postwar period was its British president William Wedgwood Benn, Viscount Stansgate. After a high-profile

and varied career in British politics, Stansgate was elected head of the IPU in 1947. He wasted no time in courting potential new members, meeting as many influential political figures as he could manage from most regions of the world. One distinct focus of his energies was Eastern Europe, where the newly established 'people's democracies' offered a more promising set of interlocutors than the socialist hegemon of the USSR. Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia had been IPU members between the wars, and although they were compelled to leave in the Stalinist freeze of the late 1940s, their diplomats were reasonably communicative and accessible. The same could not be said of the taciturn Soviet ambassador to London, Georgii Zarubin. At a party held at the Pakistani Legation in July 1949, Stansgate attempted to charm Zarubin by recalling his previous visits to Russia but elicited little response.<sup>22</sup> His wife, seated next to Zarubin at a lunch in February 1950, fared little better.<sup>23</sup> The military attaché Samarin was more engaging but also evasive on the subject of IPU membership.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, even if the Soviets did not give Stansgate much to work with, he set about converting influential British observers to the cause. As early as July 1947, he mentioned the idea of Soviet admission to Lord Rusholme of the World Cooperative Alliance, who had good relations with the 'Russians' in his own organization.<sup>25</sup> The Communist takeover in Prague in early 1948 was a setback to the interparliamentary cause, but Stansgate met agreement from Robin Hankey, Head of the Northern Department at the Foreign Office, that contacts with Eastern Europe should be maintained with a view to expanding the IPU 'wherever possible'.<sup>26</sup> As he later reported Hankey saying, it was worth using any means to 'punch holes in the Iron Curtain'.<sup>27</sup>

Stansgate's advocacy for the IPU was much needed, since sceptics were not in short supply in the British establishment. Foreign Secretary Bevin was a well-known opponent of Soviet Communism: his suspicion of Soviet motives dated back to his days as a trade unionist in the 1920s and was only strengthened by his experience of negotiating with Molotov and Stalin in Moscow in 1947.<sup>28</sup> In March 1948, Sir Orme Sargent, head of the Foreign Office, asked a question that Stansgate was already well used to fielding: 'How do you define a Parliament?' The question seemed all the more pertinent in the wake of the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia a few days earlier.<sup>29</sup> In a conversation in Paris later that month, the historian Alan Taylor recounted from first-hand experience the tedium of Eastern European parliamentarism: 'He spoke of bored M.P.s walking in the lobbies whilst their colleagues read their set orations'.<sup>30</sup> The following year, Ernest Davies, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Hector McNeil, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, expressed the blunt view that the IPU was no more than 'a talking assembly which achieved nothing', and that Stansgate should keep in mind that the Union's main purpose was 'to spread the practice of parliamentary democracy'. Stansgate's reply went to the heart of the matter:

I pointed out that there was really a conflict of intention; were we to aim primarily to being a universal society, or primarily to being a collection of representatives of an approved form of parliament. If the latter, what were we going to do with those members who practised what was called 'new democracy', and what must we do if the U.S.S.R. decided to be represented.<sup>31</sup>

The USSR continued to keep its distance from the IPU, but Stansgate maintained his energetic efforts to engage the Eastern European states. He toured Belgrade, Sofia and

Budapest in quick succession in the summer of 1948 and kept talking to his contacts in the region. Among them was Vladimir Simić, President of the Yugoslav Federal Council, who told Stansgate in December 1949 that Eastern European states retained their appetite for contact with the IPU and would be ready to re-engage when the Soviets lifted their prohibition.<sup>32</sup> Stansgate's strategy bore fruit with the readmission from 1954 onwards of the people's democracies of Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup> Telegrams of protest from Bulgarian, Polish and Hungarian emigres changed nothing.<sup>34</sup>

The late Stalinist approach to parliamentary politics was in fact not as unremittingly negative as its public script suggested. To be sure, at the founding meeting of the Cominform in September 1947, Hungarian and Yugoslav delegates fired accusations of 'parliamentary cretinism' and 'opportunism' at their Italian counterparts for setting too much store by the electoral process.<sup>35</sup> Stalin himself was quite prepared to apply bullying, chicanery and sheer violence in engineering the desired political outcomes in Eastern Europe. But it is a fact worthy of note that he was willing to let the Italian Communists make their own decisions about how to proceed: he recognized that national political cultures required different strategies, and that the path to 'people's democracy' should wherever possible lie in the ballot box and representatives who drew legitimacy from 'democratic' election as well as from political activism. As Stalin counselled the Bulgarian leader Georgi Dimitrov in September 1946, the transition to Communist rule did not any more require a dictatorship of the proletariat as in Russia in 1917: 'Earlier, the Marxists had to isolate the working class within a separate workers' party. At that time, they were in the opposition. Now you participate in governing the country. You must unite the working class and the other working strata on the basis of a *minimal program*, and later there will be time for the

*maximal program*'. Even more strikingly, Stalin is reported to have said to Harold Laski a few weeks earlier, 'We consider the Soviet way to be a better one, but if you think that the parliamentary way is more suitable for England, we will not object to that'.<sup>36</sup>

In an extended article in the IPU bulletin early in the post-Stalin era, Paul Bastid, the deputy chair of the French Parliamentary Group, expounded on the importance of fostering civilized coexistence of different systems: 'The best course would be not to insist too much on past divisions, not to ask from governments or from peoples a *mea culpa* which they will never be ready to admit, but to turn boldly towards the future with the intention of finding out the concrete possibilities of agreement.' Bastid was clear-sighted on the Soviet political mindset: 'The Soviets have an instinctive resistance to majority decisions, and they mistrust no less the arbitration of supposedly impartial third parties. It would be illusory to hope to convert them to a system which might imply any kind of abandonment of sovereignty on their part.' Western democracies would need to take heed, just as the Soviets would need to desist from political interference in those democracies if they wished for peaceful coexistence.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Soviet Union enters the interparliamentary era**

When the wind changed in Moscow, things moved fast. At the 1954 IPU conference in Vienna, Bulgaria and Hungary resumed their membership of the organization after the hiatus of the late Stalin era.<sup>38</sup> On 23 February 1955, at a party for the Day of the Red Army, the new Soviet ambassador Iakov Malik engaged Stansgate in lengthy conversation, while his second-in-command Belokhvoshtikov expressed 'considerable interest' in the IPU and

drew Stansgate's attention to a recent resolution in favour of parliamentary visits passed by the Supreme Soviet.<sup>39</sup> At a dinner in June, to Stansgate's surprise, Malik treated the matter as a *fait accompli*: Moscow had given its approval, and a Soviet delegation would be heading to the IPU conference in Helsinki.<sup>40</sup> The style of Soviet diplomacy had changed dramatically: at a party at the Chinese Embassy later in June, Malik was 'absolutely gushing in his welcome'.<sup>41</sup>

In fact, the Supreme Soviet had issued a grandstanding appeal to the world's parliaments in February 1955 and constituted its own parliamentary group of Supreme Soviet members in June; before long the Soviet parliamentary group could claim an impressive 1300 members (almost the entire memberships of both houses).<sup>42</sup> Stansgate did not anticipate any difficulties with the admission of the Soviet Union at the IPU conference in Helsinki, which indeed passed off without controversy.<sup>43</sup> It helped that Franco's Spain joined the Union at the same time, thus providing an impression of political balance. IPU Secretary General André de Blonay had already canvassed opinion among members of the Executive Committee, who raised no significant objections. As the Swiss representative observed, it was hard to refuse the USSR when the IPU had already admitted Eastern European states whose political systems were calqued on the Soviet.<sup>44</sup> As in 1954 with the Eastern European states, telegrams from outraged emigres had no effect.<sup>45</sup> At a meeting of the committee of the Soviet Parliamentary Group on 1 November 1955, members of the Soviet delegation in Helsinki reported a number of successes in their conversations on the margins of the conference: they had served as sympathetic listeners to Arab delegates who complained of denial of their right to national self-assertion, they made contact with the French senator Léo Hamon and other supportive French delegates, and generally they did what they could

to highlight to attendees the importance of admitting the People's Republic of China to the IPU.<sup>46</sup>

Once admitted, the USSR immediately took an interest in the workings of the Union, achieving an early success by having one of its delegates elected to the Executive Committee.<sup>47</sup> The head of the secretariat of the Soviet parliamentary group travelled to Geneva in January 1956 on a fact-finding mission and was well looked after by de Blonay and his colleagues.<sup>48</sup> Later in 1956, de Blonay himself visited Moscow. He was taken on a tour of the usual cultural gems (the Tretyakov Gallery, the Bolshoi Theatre, the Hermitage, Tolstoy's estate of Yasnaya Polyana) and paid his respects at Stalingrad. His conclusion was not entirely in tune with Soviet ideology but probably gratifying to his hosts nonetheless: 'The old Russia lives on in the new political framework of the Soviet Union.'<sup>49</sup> In September 1959 Moscow was even able to host a meeting of the IPU Executive Committee, which offered another opportunity to court prominent members through a standard programme of sightseeing and fact-finding meetings.<sup>50</sup> The visit was not without its sources of tension: permission for a trip to Tashkent was withdrawn, which caused some bad feeling, while the Israeli representative David Hacohen was offended by the failure of the newspaper *Vechernii Leningrad* to mention his presence when the delegation visited the Soviet second city. Conversely, Hacohen was given the opportunity to visit the Belorussian Republic and his home town of Gomel' – but was not told that all the local synagogues had recently been shut down.<sup>51</sup>

These were only minor upsets, however. The IPU certainly appeared less problematic as a venue for Soviet diplomacy than the UN, which was seen in Moscow in the early 1950s as



‘an appendix to NATO and an auxiliary to the US State Department’.<sup>52</sup> Especially under Stansgate, the IPU was not under American sway, and the fact that its resolutions were non-binding reduced the risks of the communist bloc being outmanoeuvred in debate.<sup>53</sup> Here, by all appearances, was a promising platform for Soviet positions in Cold War. The Soviet parliamentary group strategized diligently before each IPU conference about how best to push their government’s foreign policy priorities – the peace movement, the German and Middle Eastern questions, the sins of Western colonialism.<sup>54</sup> The IPU also offered an opportunity to court the non-aligned states and to lobby for communist allies in Asia.

The cause of greatest priority to the Soviets was the admission to the IPU of new communist states, above all the People’s Republic of China. The issue came to a head at the New Delhi meeting of the Executive Council in November 1955, to which the USSR for the first time sent a representative, the Lithuanian Justas Paleckis, deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Having flown out early to court Indian parliamentarians and South East Asian delegates to the following year’s Bangkok conference, Paleckis had a preliminary conversation with de Blonay about the burning Chinese question but was left in no doubt about the extent of American opposition: de Blonay and others felt that the admission of the PRC would trigger the withdrawal of the United States and a schism in the IPU.<sup>55</sup> Paleckis did not desist, stating at the meeting of the Executive Committee that ‘the facts were very clear. China had 600 million people. Its Parliament was one of the largest in the world and the Group formed within it had filled all the necessary conditions.’ Any further delay would be ‘tantamount to discrimination, while on the other hand the admission of China would increase the authority of the Union.’ This view was shared by the Ceylonese representative R. G. Senanayake, who cited the importance for Asian nations of feeling that

their region was adequately represented in the IPU. When the Italian representative E. Carboni tried the time-honoured stalling tactic of proposing a sub-committee of jurists to 'prepare a report on the different types of Parliament', the Soviet representative was blunt in his reply:

Mr. Paletskis said that lawyers were dangerous people. They could make big problems out of small matters. A theoretical argument on the nature of democracy or Parliaments could go on interminably ... There was a risk that a juridical discussion would turn into an inquisition on Parliaments, which was undesirable.

The vote in the Executive Council was tied, and Stansgate cast his deciding vote in favour of the admission of the PRC. This was not the end of the matter, however: when the decision was referred to the IPU Council at its meeting in Dubrovnik, consideration of the matter was postponed in light of American opposition.<sup>56</sup>

The cause of the GDR was even less promising, since the competing claims of East and West Germany were a zero-sum game for the foreseeable future. At its meeting of August 1955, the IPU Council decided that the East German Group 'did not conform to the conditions required by the Statutes'; anticipating a rebuff, the East Germans had withdrawn their application in any case.<sup>57</sup> The Soviets complained repeatedly that the principle of 'universality' was not being observed by the IPU in practice, pointing to the failure to admit Communist China, Mongolia, the People's Republic of Vietnam, the People's Republic of Korea and the GDR.<sup>58</sup>

The IPU's difficulties were caused both by the intractable competing claims to sovereignty in divided nations but also by the persistent sense of some of its members that communist states did not truly belong in a 'parliamentary' union. Accordingly, Soviet delegates needed to brace themselves for some political turbulence at their first IPU gatherings. After a relatively tranquil debut at the Helsinki conference of 1955, they faced predictable hostility at the Bangkok Conference of 1956, which came shortly after the Soviet invasion of Hungary. When preparing for the conference, the chairman of the Soviet group O. V. Kuusinen stressed that delegates needed to be ready for 'flexible agitation' to make progress with their key issue of Chinese admission and should also be careful to avoid schism in the union, which would only play into American hands. Even so, the conference was evidently an uncomfortable experience, and reservations about the Soviet intervention were expressed not only in the plenary sessions by Cold War adversaries but also in informal conversations with delegates from Poland and Indonesia.<sup>59</sup>

At the London conference of September 1957, the Soviet delegation still heard some sceptical voices: a few delegates declared themselves perplexed how parliamentary democracy could function in the absence of an opposition. A declaration by a Dutch delegation that the Supreme Soviet was not truly a parliament received some publicity, even as far away as the *Times of India*.<sup>60</sup> But on the whole the Soviet delegation seemed to be finding its feet in the Union and took the opportunity to establish cordial contacts with various British politicians, especially Labour MPs who were very confident they would be forming the next government.<sup>61</sup> At the Rio conference of 1958, the Soviets once again made themselves active, lobbying (unsuccessfully) in the face of British and American opposition to put the Middle East on the conference agenda.<sup>62</sup> The 1959 IPU conference in Warsaw was

a landmark event: the first such occasion to be held in a socialist country. The Soviet delegation registered a pleasing reduction in political tension following the recent meeting between Khrushchev and Eisenhower and did the rounds of receptions and cocktail parties.<sup>63</sup> One familiar bone of contention was the work of an IPU sub-committee set up to study different types of parliament around the world: the materials prepared by this sub-committee contained some unfavourable remarks on the Supreme Soviet, focusing especially on the infrequency of its sessions and the absence of true deliberation. The Soviet representative responded testily, saying that the Soviets for their part could deliver an unfavourable verdict on 'classical' democracy.<sup>64</sup>

Alongside IPU conferences and other meetings, the Soviets kept up a busy schedule of hospitality for parliamentary visitors from abroad. In March 1957, the secretary of the Soviet parliamentary group informed de Blonay that the USSR had already received 18 parliamentary delegations since entering the IPU in 1955.<sup>65</sup> In 1956, USSR invited delegations from a wide spectrum of countries: India, Sweden, Syria, Yugoslavia, Japan, Belgium, France, Luxemburg, Austria, Albania, Poland, Iran.<sup>66</sup> Many of these visits were evidently an opportunity for parliamentarians from developing countries to lobby for Soviet aid.<sup>67</sup> They were also a way for the Soviets to cultivate relationships with politicians in strategically important parts of the world. In November 1957, for example, the Soviet parliamentary group hosted a suitably anti-American Lebanese parliamentarian and decided to meet his request for a high-quality hunting rifle at the cost of more than 10,000 rubles.<sup>68</sup>

Whether the Soviets were adept at interparliamentary diplomacy was another matter. In January 1956, the British were taken aback by the unceremonious 'mixture of carrot and

stick' in the Soviet reception of an Iranian parliamentary delegation to Moscow.<sup>69</sup> The office of the British High Commissioner in New Delhi was deeply unimpressed with the performance of a Supreme Soviet delegation to India in March 1958, and these views seem to have been shared by at least a portion of the Indian press and political class. As one British official noted, 'One M.P. told me that his fellow M.P.'s feel pretty superior about the Supreme Soviet as they do not consider it to be a parliament at all in the proper sense of the word and they are not impressed by the over-obvious propaganda in which the Russian visitors indulged.'<sup>70</sup>

### **The British connection**

For all the Soviet overtures to the non-aligned nations in the 1950s, bilateral relationships with the established parliamentary nations of the West were the most consistent focus of Soviet efforts in the early interparliamentary era. The primary political aim was to exploit internal divisions in liberal democratic countries and to make contact with sympathetic parties and interest groups. As Robin-Hivert notes, intellectuals and academics were accordingly overrepresented in Soviet delegations, which needed both to impress foreigners and, where possible, to speak their language.<sup>71</sup>

As the head of the Soviet-French Group noted after a visit to Paris in the spring of 1958, it was a mild disappointment to learn how little influence ordinary parliamentarians had on government policy, but these interparliamentary contacts were a good way of disseminating the 'truth' about the USSR, and individual parliamentarians might make a small difference through their work in various government committees.<sup>72</sup> When heading a delegation to the

USSR in January 1958, the Gaullist Jacques Debû-Bridel gave his hosts every reason to believe in the efficacy of this approach: the Franco-Soviet group would limit the 'formal character' of its activities and look to avoid 'theatrical effect', but each member would look to further 'our common cause' in whichever political grouping they belonged to.<sup>73</sup>

In the early phase of the Soviet IPU membership, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, it was Britain that figured most prominently in its bilateral relationships (with France coming a close second and Italy also in the running). As ambassador William Hayter later observed, 'we were probably, in my time in Moscow, the capitalist country to which most attention was paid after America'.<sup>74</sup> The early post-Stalin years saw an expansion of deepening of contacts in several areas: commercial, industrial, academic, scientific and cultural. Such was the evident value of these relations to both sides that the Suez and Hungarian crises of 1956 proved no more than a *contretemps*.<sup>75</sup> Despite some government reservations, Britain developed a new commitment to cultural diplomacy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, reckoning that it had more to gain from deploying its soft power than it had to fear from the Soviet equivalent.<sup>76</sup> British newsreels and feature films made a comeback on Soviet screens from 1955 onwards.<sup>77</sup> Conversely, the Soviets were able to send the Bolshoi ballet and the Red Army ensemble on tours to Britain in 1956.<sup>78</sup>

The early post-Stalin thaw in Anglo-Soviet relations also brought the high-profile visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to Britain in April 1956. In advance of the trip, the Central Committee apparatus reviewed the state of British opinion, finding that Khrushchev's anti-colonial rhetoric on his recent tour of India and Burma had not gone down well, and that some parts of the British 'reactionary' press were against the visit happening at all. Overall,

though, the Soviets viewed Britain, not without justification, as an imperial power in crisis that could not afford to forgo the prestige that Khrushchev's visit would bring. Carefully calibrated gifts to the royal family, Eden and Churchill would help smooth the way.<sup>79</sup>

In the wake of Khrushchev and Bulganin's visit came the first Supreme Soviet delegation of the inter-parliamentary era. Like the earlier visit of 1947, this occasion required careful preparation and managing of sensitivities on both sides. In early 1955, the Supreme Soviet made clumsy overtures by sending the House of Commons a film made of a British visit to the USSR the previous year; this was deemed by the Foreign Office 'technically competent, though not specially interesting'. A more aggressive move in the new public relations offensive was the publication on 9 February of the Supreme Soviet's 'appeal' to the world's parliaments. The Northern Department deemed the contents of the appeal 'objectionable', as well as finding 'offhand and discourteous' the manner in which it had been delivered to the British Embassy. A suitable way was found of burying the document in the Printed Paper Office at the House of Lords and the Library of the House of Commons.<sup>80</sup>

Whatever the British misgivings about Soviet intentions, the question of a return Soviet parliamentary visit hung in the air. In February 1955, the Prime Minister had to fend off parliamentary questions on the subject, citing a number of respectable reasons: the Supreme Soviet was not a true parliament, the Soviet Union was not a member of the IPU, and Britain had longer-standing obligations of hospitality to parliamentary delegations from other countries. The sense that the Soviet side might have unpalatable propaganda objectives was exacerbated by the request that a Soviet parliamentary delegation be allowed to address the House of Commons – a suggestion that flew in the face of

parliamentary tradition, according to which only members of the House were allowed to speak in the chamber. Nonetheless, the opinion seemed to be building that it was the right thing to do to extend an invitation, and that a Supreme Soviet visit might play out to British advantage: as one MP, William Warbey, put it in Prime Minister's questions on 10 March: 'Might it not be of very great advantage to delegates of other countries, including the Soviet Union, in being compelled to take part in the knock-about of British Parliamentary debate?'.<sup>81</sup> The Foreign Office continued to urge caution, suggesting that 'in order to avoid the visit being exploited for Communist propaganda it was important to defer the return invitation until the London and Paris Agreements had come into force'. But evidently momentum swung decisively behind the idea in summer 1955, not least because the USSR finally joined the IPU, which removed an important procedural objection.<sup>82</sup>

In July 1956, a Supreme Soviet delegation duly arrived in the UK for the first time in this new interparliamentary era. Although the head of the delegation, the *Izvestiia* editor Konstantin Gubin, published a couple of somewhat mean-spirited articles on the visit, first-hand observers reported that the Soviet participants had enjoyed themselves more than they would ever have let on publicly. The redoubtable Ekaterina Furtseva was charmed by the Queen at a garden party in Buckingham Palace, and on a trip to Cambridge there was a good-humoured and robust exchange of views between the Labour MP Ness Edwards and the economist Aleksei Rumiantsev. If anything, the translators observed, more space on the programme should have been left for non-political pursuits such as shopping. When it came to the political benefits of the trip, there were still ample grounds for scepticism. Ronald Hingley, one of a number of British scholars of Russian literature drafted in to help, reported that the Soviet visitors 'completely failed to understand, even on the most elementary level,



anything about the difference between our parliamentary system and theirs. Many M.P.s and others who met them talked nothing but soft soap, so that it was a pleasant relief to hear a rare exception, such as Major Tufton Beamish, slanging them about the Baltic states problem.<sup>83</sup> When it came to a proposed return visit of British parliamentarians to Moscow in 1960, the Foreign Office was conscious that the trip would be exploited for Soviet propaganda; unsuccessful attempts were made to rein in an Anglo-Soviet Parliamentary Group, which risked taking the Soviet inter-parliamentary agenda at face value.<sup>84</sup>

A visit to the Palace of Westminster evidently held kudos even for the unparliamentary Soviets: the 1956 delegation was not the last to seek (and be refused) the right to address Parliament. But beyond the symbolic dimension, Britain was an attractive object of interparliamentary diplomacy because it offered two highly promising interest groups for the Soviets to court: first, the Labour Party, especially its disaffected left wing; second, the mostly Conservative businessmen who were eager to develop trade contacts with the USSR.

The Soviet relationship with the Labour Party was given an early post-Stalin boost when Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan and various other members of the National Executive Committee were received in Moscow in August-September 1954. The access that these leading Labour politicians enjoyed to the Soviet leadership drew wide attention, but it did not necessarily make relations warmer or bring greater mutual understanding. William Hayter recalled a bad-tempered conversation between Attlee and Mikoian at the British Embassy, while Bevan found the endless toast-making tedious. As Hayter summed up: 'Each of the Soviet leaders carried his own private Iron Curtain around with him. Responses were predictable; conversations were like *Pravda* leading articles on one side and *The Times*

leading articles on the other'.<sup>85</sup> Contacts with the Labour leadership continued in the following decade, even if the Soviets had little affection for Hugh Gaitskell and the rightward drift of the party.<sup>86</sup> Gaitskell himself made cordial overtures to the Soviet delegates to the IPU conference in London in 1957, expressing a particular interest in developing contacts between economists outside the conference.<sup>87</sup> Two years later, in September 1959, Gaitskell headed a further Labour delegation to Moscow during which the two sides probed each other's policies and parliamentary models.<sup>88</sup>

The loose cannons on the Labour left were a more obvious constituency for the Soviets. In 1954, two months after the visit by members of the National Executive Committee, a further Labour delegation passed through Moscow: this one included Barbara Castle and nine other MPs on the Bevanite left wing of the party. Among them was Ellis Smith, longstanding MP for Stoke, who made his colleagues' 'blood run cold with long incoherent speeches about his previous visits to Russia and his working class roots'.<sup>89</sup> But in general naïve pro-Sovietism was in short supply even on the Labour left, or at least came with unwelcome baggage. One of the ostensibly most promising Soviet advocates in the West was Konni Zilliacus, son of a Finnish Bolshevik, who had worked in the interwar period as a Soviet specialist in the secretariat of the League of Nations. In the late 1940s he visited various Eastern European countries, including in 1947 the USSR, where he met Stalin and Molotov. For his closeness to Soviet positions he was expelled from the Labour Party in the late 1940s. In short, it would be hard to imagine a British leftist more likely to be a Soviet agent or propagandist. Yet Zilliacus was also a target of denunciation in the USSR after he took Tito's side in the latter's conflict with Stalin. In the mid-1950s he was re-admitted to the Labour Party and wrote a book hailing the post-Stalin new departure in Soviet politics. But, despite its general pro-

Soviet tenor, his account contained some awkward implied questions for the Soviet leadership: 'Freedom is an almost impossible thing to ration – you can either deny it altogether or you must concede it. Halfway houses are apt to prove temporary and precarious halting-places.'<sup>90</sup>

Zilliacus seems to have insisted on his own freedom of action and judgment despite his apparent proximity to the Soviet leadership. He was regularly invited to the USSR in the post-Stalin era, usually in the company of his wife Jan. She later recalled these visits as 'very informal, possibly geared to impress the couple' but commented that 'the Zilliacuses were not impressionable people'.<sup>91</sup> They certainly received extensive Soviet hospitality. Along with their daughter, they visited the USSR for almost a month in August and September 1958. Besides a range of high-profile meetings in Leningrad and Moscow (including a meeting with Khrushchev reported in the Soviet press), the programme included a full week's holiday in the Crimea and a medical consultation for Konni with eminent Soviet doctors.<sup>92</sup>

Zilliacus, his wife and daughter also visited as part of a delegation of Labour left-wingers in August-September 1961. This trip also included a generous holiday in Crimea for all participants, while Zilliacus and the head of the delegation Sir Leslie Plummer were granted an audience with Khrushchev at his Livadiia dacha. On this occasion, Zilliacus unfavourably impressed his Soviet hosts for his sense of entitlement, apparently expecting his every wish to be granted and treating waiters roughly in restaurants in Sochi, Moscow and Crimea; his minders were also taken aback by his daughter's 'amoral' carousing with the sons of Soviet officials. In general, however, the visit paid its expected dividends. The delegation was duly

impressed by Soviet achievements such as mass housing construction and the greater egalitarianism of Soviet life. The wife of Sir Leslie (maiden name: Lanskaia-Kozlova) appreciated the opportunity to visit her home village in Ukraine and to observe a people's court in Moscow. Three former miners in the Labour delegation professed themselves greatly impressed by the housing, welfare provision and work conditions in the industrial city of Stalino (now Donetsk), overlooking or making allowances for the less presentable aspects of Soviet life. They also gratifyingly took the Soviet position on the Berlin question and criticized Gaitskell's Labour as a bourgeois party.<sup>93</sup>

But free-spirited left-wingers might still prove to be awkward guests. When Tony Benn, son of the former IPU president Lord Stansgate, visited for a fortnight in August-September 1960, he was given a standard tourist itinerary: Moscow, Sochi, Leningrad, with a cultural programme that included *Swan Lake*, *La Traviata* and *Ivan Susanin*. He also took in the landmark housing project of the time in the South-West district of Moscow. In his diaries, Benn pronounced himself very satisfied with his guide and interpreter Nikolai Kuchinskii, who was 'very agreeable and ready to talk frankly'. Among the remarks Benn attributed to Kuchinskii was a denunciation of Stalin's collectivization and of the absence in Moscow of phone directories and street maps. Kuchinskii also made the playful suggestion that Benn would have got more done in the Tory Party.<sup>94</sup> For his part, Kuchinskii (employed as a researcher at the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations) submitted a report on the visit to the authorities, where he remarked on Benn's own 'vague and inconsistent' political programme and his failure to grasp 'socialist democracy'.<sup>95</sup>

When a full parliamentary delegation from Britain had visited earlier that summer, it was the rather unpolitical Conservative peer Lord Bessborough who proved the most congenial guest to the Soviet hosts. Bessborough expressed admiration for Soviet achievements in construction and the arts and was keen to make contacts. As director of the broadcaster ATV, he was especially interested in the possibility of exchanges of television programmes and cultural ensembles, suggesting that reciprocal Soviet and British exhibitions scheduled for summer 1961 might be televised. Other members of the party grated on their hosts at times. The former miner Willie Hamilton committed the faux pas of delivering a mini-lecture on world hunger at a welcome dinner in Tbilisi, while in Leningrad he complained of Soviet jamming of the BBC. Another Labour man, the Birmingham MP Victor Yates, was found to be prickly and too keen to make an impression. He pointedly asked a worker in Armenia whether his wages sufficed for his needs and button-holed two Soviet tourists in a Sochi restaurant to ask them how they felt about the Soviets shooting down American planes. Along with his fellow Birmingham MP, the Conservative Aubrey Jones, Yates suggested to his hosts that Soviet people understood the West rather less well than vice-versa.<sup>96</sup>

Bessborough was one of a number of emphatically non-socialist British visitors in this era whose interests were primarily commercial. Clement Davies, Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire, visited the USSR in summer 1959 and expressed a desire to meet trade representatives who might be interested in purchases of women's clothing, since his constituency had a significant textile industry.<sup>97</sup> When Cyril Osborne, the Conservative chair of the Anglo-Soviet Parliamentary Group, visited Moscow in Oct 1960 on the way back from the IPU conference in Tokyo, he asked to visit a clothing factory and asked detailed questions about its operations: this reflected his own business interests in this sphere.<sup>98</sup> Nor

was it only Tories who were interested in commerce. Ian Mikardo, located on the left of the Labour Party, was among the most committed advocates for East-West trade. Mikardo had Eastern European roots: his parents came from Galicia and near Łódź, arriving in Britain as part of the wave of Jewish immigration in the early twentieth century. Their son developed an interest in 'scientific management' and made a successful career as a consultant from the 1930s onwards. After the war he became convinced that there were untapped possibilities for trade with the Eastern bloc and made it his mission to act as an intermediary between British manufacturers and Eastern Europe. As early as September 1954 he was part of a delegation to Warsaw with Stansgate and various other prominent figures, while in May 1959 he and his wife visited the USSR.<sup>99</sup>

In the early 1960s the Soviet-British Parliamentary Group made very clear to their counterparts in London that they were keen to continue and indeed intensify the reciprocal visits.<sup>100</sup> Harold Wilson and colleagues visited Moscow in 1963 and were received by Khrushchev, and several other British MPs visited the USSR in 1963 alone.<sup>101</sup> Among them was a delegation headed by Cyril Osborne, already a seasoned visitor to the USSR, which once again took a pronounced interest in commercial matters. Characterized by his hosts as a 'refined capitalist' (*rafinirovannyi kapitalist*), Osborne had a tendency to ask awkward questions about freedom of conscience in the USSR and showed little comprehension of state planning, but this did not prevent him being generally well disposed to the USSR and interested in deal-making. On this visit he explored the possibility of selling his company's products (women's clothing) to Soviet import organizations, while his Conservative colleague Malcolm Stoddard-Scott, a North Yorkshire MP with farming interests, visited a *sovkhos* (state farm). Even the Labour MP Harvey Rhodes came with first-hand experience

of the textile industry and wanted to discuss new types of woollen fabric (though out of the earshot of Osborne in case he stole the idea).<sup>102</sup> The business orientation was only confirmed when Harold Wilson became Prime Minister the following year: Wilson had a long-standing and informed interest in trade relations with the USSR dating back to his time as a junior minister in the Board of Trade in 1947, when he had helped to negotiate an Anglo-Soviet trade treaty; in the 1950s he had represented the timber firm Montague Meyer Ltd. on a number of visits to the USSR and other Eastern European states.<sup>103</sup> The underlying reality was that Britain was among the most significant trading partners for the USSR until the late 1960s – to the extent that Washington worried that it might prove a weak link if the Soviets were to test Western geopolitical resolve.<sup>104</sup>

In fact, Paris was not so very different from London in this regard. The first French visits to the USSR in the interparliamentary era had been concerned largely with economic fact-finding, taking in industrial sites in Sverdlovsk, Kuibyshev, Baku, Rostov and elsewhere: they explored a wide range of sectors including machine-building, oil extraction and refineries, metallurgy and even confectionery.<sup>105</sup> To be sure, the conduct of visits to some extent reflected specific French preoccupations: in early 1960, a National Assembly delegation headed by the Gaullist Jacques Chaban-Delmas visited Tashkent and Samarkand and reportedly professed admiration for the Soviet intolerance of the ‘harmful traditions’ of Islam, finding here confirmation of the need for a hard line on Algeria.<sup>106</sup> As in the British case, the most committed parliamentary interlocutors of the Soviets were not necessarily on the left. In the French Senate, relations with the Soviet Parliamentary Group were led by André Armengaud, an Independent (and former Republican). Armengaud’s Senatorial visits to the USSR dated back to 1956, and economic matters were always to the fore. In

September 1966, he asked detailed questions of his hosts about Soviet industrial policy and lobbied for the Soviets to respect patent rights in trade deals involving technology transfer. Cold War geopolitics was of far less interest: Armengaud did his best to bat off provocative questions about Vietnam.<sup>107</sup>

Despite all the bilateral ties of mutual interest, the Soviet inter-parliamentary experiment suffered a number of setbacks in the late 1960s. Cold War tensions within the IPU came to a head in 1967, when the conference scheduled to take place in Moscow that year was cancelled due to the Soviet refusal to invite the South Korean Group; this was the culmination of a decade of Soviet complaints about the IPU's failure to observe its 'universalist' principles.<sup>108</sup> Strenuous behind-the-scenes efforts by the IPU leadership to find a solution – such as suggesting ways to grant visas to citizens of countries such as South Korea with whom the Soviet Union had no diplomatic relations – bore no fruit.<sup>109</sup> The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had a chilling effect on bilateral interparliamentary contacts. In March 1968 Armengaud was addressing the chair of the Soviet-French parliamentary group as 'cher ami' and offering his condolences on the death of Lurii Gagarin; in August 1968 he wrote to draw a parallel between recent events in Prague and the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, stating that Soviet actions made it impossible for Franco-Soviet interparliamentary relations to continue as they had done.<sup>110</sup>

But the Soviet interest in interparliamentary contacts easily survived Cold War controversies in the Middle East, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. The cancellation of the Moscow conference did not prevent the IPU President, André Chandernagor, accepting a Soviet invitation in 1971. Chandernagor duly pronounced himself impressed by both 'the



splendours of the past' and 'the great progress and efforts made in the fields of scientific research, education, culture and the economy in general'.<sup>111</sup> Anglo-Soviet relations experienced a downturn in 1971 with tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats but soon rebounded. Harold Wilson and James Callaghan were a pragmatic and trade-oriented duo with practical experience of Soviet Russia dating back to the 1940s; they visited Moscow in February 1975 and concluded a ten-year agreement on industrial, economic and scientific cooperation.<sup>112</sup> More surprisingly, the up-and-coming Margaret Thatcher visited Moscow in 1969 along with her Conservative colleague Paul Channon – an early sign of the Soviet determination to maintain the habit of Anglo-Soviet exchange visits in the wake of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.<sup>113</sup>

The main dampener on Anglo-Soviet relations was not Cold War politics but the simple fact that in the 1970s Britain was losing significance as a trade partner for the Soviet Union.<sup>114</sup> This was explained largely by the significant growth in Soviet-German trade in the era of Ostpolitik; the Bundestag duly emerged as a significant new focus for Soviet interparliamentary diplomacy. By contrast, a Soviet delegation to Britain in 1975 was felt to be underpowered and relatively low-profile, while the events of 1979-80 in Afghanistan and Poland cast a new chill on relations: by 1980 the Foreign Office was advising against further inter-parliamentary visits for the time being.<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, the British government paid close attention to Kremlin politics, and in December 1984 used the framework of a Supreme Soviet delegation to bring Mikhail Gorbachev over to London for his famous first meeting with Margaret Thatcher.<sup>116</sup> Here the parliamentary aspects of the visit came a distant second to the high politics, but Gorbachev like so many of his Russian predecessors attached

symbolic importance to his visit to the Palace of Westminster, setting great store by the opportunity to address British parliamentarians.<sup>117</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It is hard not to agree with the conclusion of a Foreign Office observer à propos the Supreme Soviet delegation to the UK of 1966: 'It would be idle to pretend that parliamentary exchanges of this nature are likely to change the course of Anglo/Soviet relations; it would equally be a mistake to underestimate their contribution to the general atmosphere in which such relations are conducted.'<sup>118</sup>

On the surface, the IPU was yet another a way of staking out Cold War positions: its annual conferences almost all contained predictably ill-tempered exchanges on flashpoints in Germany, the Middle East and elsewhere. But by the mid- 1960s there was no doubting the seriousness of the Soviet commitment to inter-parliamentary activity, nor that the IPU offered more than a propaganda soapbox. The USSR was hosting and sending abroad dozens of parliamentary delegations, cultivating a wide range of personal relationships with political figures from Durham to Delhi. A section of the Soviet political class was enjoying a breadth of access to and an intensity of interaction with foreigners that would have been inconceivable in the late Stalin era.<sup>119</sup> Events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 were a short-term setback, but many contacts would be renewed within a year or two – and West Germany, in the era of Ostpolitik, emerged as a promising new focus for interparliamentary activity.

Inter-parliamentary relations were also very often about oiling the wheels of economic engagement. The USSR in the 1950s and 1960s had a huge appetite for Western technology, for which it was willing to exchange advantageously priced raw materials. Western industrialists, especially in West Germany, might have been willing to do business with the Soviets, but they were kept in check until the late 1960s, first by the hawkish Konrad Adenauer and then by the United States. But British and French parliamentarians were very often businessmen or technocrats. Even if they had a tendency to fob the Soviets off with unwanted consumer goods produced in their constituencies, they were promising interlocutors for a country that was looking to expand its foreign trade at a rapid rate in the post-Stalin era.<sup>120</sup>

For all the Cold War grandstanding, it also seems plausible to argue that the inter-parliamentary era had some intellectual and cultural effects through the exchange of ideas and practices. Soviet participants in IPU conferences and delegations were willy-nilly being exposed to constitutional, sociological and political know-how from the liberal or social democratic world.<sup>121</sup> A straw in the wind was the fact that in the mid-1960s for the first time there was a Soviet employee on the staff of the IPU in Geneva: his role was as deputy director of a new Centre for Parliamentary Documentation, and in that capacity he wrote to the head of the Soviet Parliamentary Group in February 1966 to suggest a meeting of visiting parliamentarians and constitutional law specialists with Soviet scholars during the upcoming conference of the IPU in Moscow.<sup>122</sup> The conference, as we have seen, was cancelled; but the initiative was striking.

True enough, the 'universalism' of the IPU – its reluctance to ask awkward questions about what constituted the essence of parliamentary government - meant that Soviet visitors could if they chose remain impervious to the norms and practices of Western liberal parliamentarism. Anthony Eden's reflection on the visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin in 1956 rang very true:

When in discussion with Russians I had not found difficulty in putting an opposing point of view. They are on the whole good listeners, certainly better than other representatives of dictatorial powers I have had to deal with. On the other hand, there is little to be gained by trying to take debating points off them in terms of parliamentary argument. They do not understand the purpose of this kind of dialectic and they are apt to resent it.<sup>123</sup>

But it would be strange to expect anything else of an ageing Stalinist like Khrushchev on his travels. Back at home, however, Khrushchev was overseeing a major attempt to refresh the Soviet Union's political culture by returning to an imagined Leninism of single-party direct democracy. Accordingly, the Supreme Soviet was more prominent in Soviet public discourse from the early 1960s than it ever had been in the era of the 'cult of personality', and this prominence brought a renewed engagement with the question of what 'democracy' actually was, as well as a modest injection of constitutional reflexivity. A 1963 Soviet study of political systems in the West hewed to the conventional Marxist-Leninist line that 'bourgeois' parliaments were primarily a means of masking the interests of 'monopoly capital', but it reached this familiar verdict only after reviewing the practices and political theory of contemporary Western parliaments in much greater detail than would have been

possible in the Stalin era.<sup>124</sup> As for the USSR itself, the Supreme Soviet could now be referred to unironically as a ‘people’s parliament’, a significant departure from the militantly anti-parliamentary Bolshevik heritage.<sup>125</sup>

The word *parlament*, then, was becoming detoxified; and, even if its primary referent remained the representative assemblies of the ‘bourgeois’ West, this was a level of intellectual engagement with Western political culture that had never previously occurred in the Soviet Union. There was a very great difference between the generation of Soviet politicians who visited Britain in 1947 and 1956 and that of Mikhail Gorbachev. Here was a politician who relished his visit to Westminster in 1984 and made close acquaintance with Western parliamentary leaders such as Pierre Trudeau and Margaret Thatcher. Without this background it is hard to make complete sense of his decision in 1988-89 to subject the Communist Party to contested elections and commit himself to deliberative politics of a type fundamentally alien to the Marxist-Leninist tradition in which he was reared.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech à propos Supreme Soviet elections of March 1962, quoted in *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin* (hereafter *IPB*), Third Quarter 1962, 121.

<sup>2</sup> Peter H. Juviler, ‘Interparliamentary Contacts in Soviet Foreign Policy’, *American Slavic and East European Review*, 20 (1961): 25-39.

<sup>3</sup> Ivan Sablin, *Parliaments in the Late Russian Empire, Revolutionary Russia, and the Soviet Union* (London, 2024), 335, 346-53.

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<sup>4</sup> Émilia Robin-Hivert, 'L'entrée de l'URSS dans l'Union interparlementaire (1955-1958), *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, no. 1 (2006) : 61-86.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Albers, 'Between the crisis of democracy and world parliament: the development of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the 1920s', *Journal of Global History*, 7 (2012): 189-209, here 190.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Uhlig, *Die Interparlamentarische Union, 1889-1914: Friedenssicherungsbemühungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Stuttgart, 1988), 224-5.

<sup>7</sup> Uhlig, *Die Interparlamentarische Union*, 227-8.

<sup>8</sup> J. Efremoff, 'La Douma et l'Union interparlementaire', *L'Union interparlementaire de 1889 à 1939* (Lausanne, 1939), 333-50. For more on the British reception in 1906, see Barry Hollingsworth, 'The British Memorial to the Russian Duma, 1906', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 53 (1975): 539-57.

<sup>9</sup> Albers, 'Between the crisis of democracy and world parliament', 207-8.

<sup>10</sup> IPU archive, Box 73, Folder 73-4, 'Copies of incoming and outgoing communications, 1935'.

<sup>11</sup> IPU archive, Box 74, folder 74-1, 'Chronological collections. Copies of incoming and outgoing communications, 1935'.

<sup>12</sup> The British delegation of January-February 1945 was headed by the Scottish Unionist Walter Elliot and ranged quite widely, taking in Stalingrad, Baku and Tashkent as well as the usual sights in Moscow and Leningrad. It was also granted an audience with Stalin. See a Central Committee memo on the visit prepared in 1954 at Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (RGANI), f. 5, op. 28, d. 196, ll. 122-8.

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence and minutes leading up to the 1947 Soviet visit are located at TNA, FO 371/56879, esp. pp. 49-50 (meeting of 31 May 1946) and p. 113 (meeting of 25 October 1946).

<sup>14</sup> TNA, FO 371/66287, document ref. 2951/33/38.

<sup>15</sup> TNA, FO 371/66288, report by Thomas Brimelow, 11 April 1947, document ref. 4201/33/38.

<sup>16</sup> TNA, FO 181/1030: report by Robin Hankey (Foreign Office) to Sir Maurice Peterson (Ambassador in Moscow), 29 April 1947; report by Arthur Birse to Thomas Brimelow, 28 March 1947.

<sup>17</sup> IPU archive, Box 96, Folder 96-5, 'Copies of incoming and outgoing communication 1946'.

<sup>18</sup> IPU archive, Box 97, Folder 97-6, 'Copies of incoming and outgoing communication 1946'.

<sup>19</sup> IPU archive, Box 296, unnumbered.

<sup>20</sup> IPU archive, Box 97, Folder 97-6.

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- <sup>21</sup> Yefime Zarjevski, *The People Have the Floor: A History of the Inter-Parliamentary Union* (Aldershot, 1989), 104.
- <sup>22</sup> Diary entry of 27/07/49, IPU archive, Box 383, 2026/49.
- <sup>23</sup> Diary entry of 14/02/50, IPU archive, Box 383, 468/50.
- <sup>24</sup> Diary entry of 22/07/49, IPU archive, Box 383, 2026/49.
- <sup>25</sup> Diary entry of 15/07/47, IPU archive, Box 383, 1455/47.
- <sup>26</sup> Diary entry of 29/11/48, IPU archive, Box 383, 2979/48.
- <sup>27</sup> Diary entry of 27/09/49, IPU archive, Box 383, 2489/49.
- <sup>28</sup> Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951* (London, 1983), esp. chap. 9 on the 'Big Four' conference of March-April 1947 in Moscow.
- <sup>29</sup> Diary entry of 01/03/48, IPU archive, Box 383, 615/48.
- <sup>30</sup> Diary entry of 30/03/48, IPU archive, Box 383, 942/48.
- <sup>31</sup> Entry of 27/10/49, IPU archive, Box 383, 2798/49.
- <sup>32</sup> Entry of 30/12/49, IPU archive, Box 383, 158/50.
- <sup>33</sup> On the rapid post-Stalin revival of interparliamentary relations with Eastern Europe, see Émilie Robin-Hivert, 'Les contacts parlementaires avec l'Est (1947-1958): des relations tributaires de la guerre froide', in *Parlement[s]: Revue d'histoire politique*, no. 17 (2012) : 38-49. Robin-Hivert reports, for example, that at least 105 French deputies and senators made visits behind the iron curtain in the period 1953-58 (47).
- <sup>34</sup> These telegrams collected in IPU archive, Box 363.
- <sup>35</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe: The Postwar Struggle for Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Mass., 2019), 134.
- <sup>36</sup> Quotations from *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933-1949*, ed. Ivo Banac (New Haven, 2003), 413, 415. On Stalin's thinking on 'people's democracy', see Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe*, 14-17.
- <sup>37</sup> Paul Bastid, 'The Juridical and Moral Principles of Coexistence', *IPB*, First Quarter 1955, 2-10 (quotations on 4 and 7).
- <sup>38</sup> *IPB*, September-October 1954, 97.
- <sup>39</sup> Entry of 23/02/55, IPU archive, Box 383, unnumbered.
- <sup>40</sup> Entry of 17/06/55, IPU archive, Box 383, 1668/55.
- <sup>41</sup> Entry of 24/06/55, IPU archive, Box 383, 1853/55.

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- <sup>42</sup> *IPB*, Third Quarter 1956, 121-2 (report on activities of Soviet Parliamentary Group up to the end of 1955).
- <sup>43</sup> Entry of 12/08/55, IPU archive, Box 383, 2341/55.
- <sup>44</sup> Letter from A. de Senarclens to de Blonay, 27/05/55, IPU archive, Box 296, 1504/55.
- <sup>45</sup> Protests from Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Estonian representatives among others can be found in IPU archive, Box 364.
- <sup>46</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 9497, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 69-83, esp. 71-2.
- <sup>47</sup> The Soviet representative Mikhailov was elected as one of five new members of the Executive Committee at the Helsinki conference having received the fourth most votes (316) in a secret ballot. *IPB*, Fourth Quarter 1955, 143.
- <sup>48</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 148, ll. 32-43.
- <sup>49</sup> *IPB*, Third Quarter 1956, 93-6.
- <sup>50</sup> *IPB*, Third Quarter 1959, 119-22.
- <sup>51</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 57, ll. 106-14.
- <sup>52</sup> Ilya V. Gaiduk, *Divided Together: The United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations, 1945-1965* (Washington, DC, 2012), 195.
- <sup>53</sup> As noted in Juviler, 'Interparliamentary Contacts', 26.
- <sup>54</sup> For internal discussion in the Soviet Parliamentary Group before the IPU conference of 1956 in Bangkok, see GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 28.
- <sup>55</sup> Paleckis's internal report on the trip is at RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 99, ll. 56-72.
- <sup>56</sup> IPU archive, Box 296 (file on the admission of the PRC). This contains minutes of the meeting in New Delhi and subsequent correspondence involving the chair of the United States parliamentary group, Harold Cooley.
- <sup>57</sup> *IPB*, Fourth Quarter 1955, 155-6. The GDR continued to press for IPU membership throughout the late 1950s and 1960s but on Soviet advice held back from submitting a formal application. It was not admitted to the IPU until 1972. The story of the GDR's efforts to join the IPU can be reconstructed from the correspondence between the East German and Soviet parliamentary groups at Bundesarchiv-Lichterfelde, DA 1/12588-12594.
- <sup>58</sup> The argument is neatly summarized in K. Goubine, 'Peaceful Coexistence Between States and the Principle of Universality of the Inter-Parliamentary Union', *IPB*, Second Quarter 1962, 93-7.
- <sup>59</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 41, ll. 60, 159, 180, 182-3.
- <sup>60</sup> 'Soviet Delegate Protests', *Times of India*, 18 September 1957, 6.



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<sup>61</sup> See the internal Soviet reports on the London conference at GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 77, ll. 73, 75 (negative comments on the Soviet political system expressed by various delegates), 80-1, 89-90, 113-14 (contacts with British politicians).

<sup>62</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 50, d. 114, ll. 148-51.

<sup>63</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 294, ll. 107-28 (report by Paleckis, the head of the Soviet delegation, on Warsaw conference).

<sup>64</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 10, ll. 141-2. Such scuffles over the true meaning of democracy remained a feature of IPU committee life into the following decade: an example from the Rome Council meeting of April 1962 can be found at RGANI, f. 5, op. 50, d. 432, ll. 44-5.

<sup>65</sup> IPU archive, Box 296, folder for January-June 1957, 1171/57. A rather higher figure was provided to the Central Committee later that year: 80 foreign parliamentary delegations from July 1954 to June 1957. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 194, ll. 45-6.

<sup>66</sup> *IPB*, Second Quarter 1956, 67-8.

<sup>67</sup> Such was the case, for example, with delegations from Burma in 1957 (RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 194, l. 58) and Togo in 1962 (RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 398, ll. 59-60).

<sup>68</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 194, l. 109.

<sup>69</sup> TNA, FO 371/122792.

<sup>70</sup> J. A. Dobbs to J. A. G. Banks, Commonwealth Relations Office, 14 March 1958. TNA, DO 35/8839. For their part, the Soviets were capable of being self-critical: a report to *Pravda* editor Shepilov in February 1956 noted the failure to use the Indian press effectively and the lack of local language knowledge among embassy staff. See RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 161, ll. 53-63 (V. Maevskii to Shepilov, 28/02/56).

<sup>71</sup> Robin-Hivert, 'L'entrée de l'URSS dans l'Union interparlementaire', 66.

<sup>72</sup> I. A. Kairov, report on visit to Paris, 30 March – 5 April 1958. GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 26-30.

<sup>73</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 183, l. 85.

<sup>74</sup> William Hayter, *The Kremlin and the Embassy* (London, 1966), 133.

<sup>75</sup> Mark B. Smith, 'Peaceful Coexistence at All Costs: Cold War Exchanges between Britain and the Soviet Union in 1956', *Cold War History* 12 (2012): 537-58.

<sup>76</sup> Sarah Davies, 'From Iron Curtain to Velvet Curtain? Peter Brook's Hamlet and the Origins of British–Soviet Cultural Relations during the Cold War', *Contemporary European History* 27 (2018): 601-26.

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<sup>77</sup> Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018), 44.

<sup>78</sup> See reports to the Central Committee from the Ministry of Culture and the Soviet embassy in London, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 161, ll. 113-16, 118-21.

<sup>79</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 161, ll. 2-12, 76-80. The Prime Minister's later reflections on the visit were largely congruent with the Soviet assessment: Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London, 1960), 354-66.

<sup>80</sup> TNA, FO 371/116677, documents 1056/2, 1056/3, 1056/5.

<sup>81</sup> TNA, FO 371/116677, documents 1056/4, 1056/8, 1056/9.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, FO 371/116678, documents 1056/17, 1056/19.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, FO 371/122792 (reports by the translators I. P. Foote, R. H. Freeborn and R. F. Hingley).

<sup>84</sup> TNA, FO 371/151952.

<sup>85</sup> Hayter, *The Kremlin and the Embassy*, 39-40; Patrick Wright, *Passport to Peking: A Very British Mission to Mao's China* (Oxford, 2010), 132.

<sup>86</sup> The Central Committee dossier prepared in advance of Khrushchev's 1956 visit contained an extremely hostile profile of Gaitskell as belonging to 'the most reactionary circles of the Labour Party' and as a 'cold, sober, calculating, passionless politician'. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 173, ll. 85, 93.

<sup>87</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 77, l. 80.

<sup>88</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 53.

<sup>89</sup> Barbara Castle's diary, quoted in Wright, *Passport to Peking*, 157.

<sup>90</sup> K. Zilliacus, *A New Birth of Freedom? World Communism after Stalin* (London, 1957), 65. See also Darren G. Lilleker, *Against the Cold War: The History and Political Traditions of Pro-Sovietism in the British Labour Party 1945-1989* (London, 2004), chap. 3.

<sup>91</sup> Lilleker, *Against the Cold War*, 83 (summarizing an interview conducted by the author with Jan Zilliacus).

<sup>92</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 1, d. 188.

<sup>93</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 140, ll. 105-6 (Plummers in Ukraine), 111-12 (Zilliacus and daughter), 133-8 (former miners and Stalino).

<sup>94</sup> Tony Benn, *Years of Hope: Diaries, Papers and Letters 1940-1962*, ed. Ruth Winstone (London, 1994), 335, 337, 339.

<sup>95</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 93, ll. 24-5.

<sup>96</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 91, ll. 46-7, 50-4, 57, 62, 81-2, 85, 122-3, 126-7.

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<sup>97</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 49. Before his visit Davies also raised the thorny question of compensation for shareholders in pre-revolutionary companies such as the Lena Goldfields but was given short shrift.

<sup>98</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 97.

<sup>99</sup> For a record of the Soviet visit, see GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 45. For Mikardo's early life and other travels to Eastern Europe, see his memoir *Back-Bencher* (London, 1988).

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Yevgeny Afanasenko to Cyril Osborne following a recent meeting of the Soviet-British Group in December 1961, GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 146, ll. 9-10.

<sup>101</sup> Report by Soviet parliamentary group for 1963, IPU archive, Box 165, 976/64.

<sup>102</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 50, d. 524, ll. 114-33, esp. 124-5, 127-8.

<sup>103</sup> Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War: The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970* (2009), 6-7, 47-8.

<sup>104</sup> Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia* (Houndmills, 2000); Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War*, 32.

<sup>105</sup> See reports from 1956 in French Senate Archives, 25S 9-12.

<sup>106</sup> GARF, f. 9497, op. 2, d. 86, ll. 67-71.

<sup>107</sup> French Senate Archives, 139S 4.

<sup>108</sup> The Soviet position was laid out in I. V. Spiridonov, 'The Policy of the Ostrich', *IPB*, Fourth Quarter 1967, 160-3.

<sup>109</sup> James Douglas, Assistance Secretary General of the IPU, stated in a letter to British MP Douglas Dodds-Parker that 'no stone was left unturned'. IPU archive, Box 193, Folder 193-5, 2225/67.

<sup>110</sup> French Senate Archive, 139S 4.

<sup>111</sup> *IPB*, Third Quarter 1971, 86-7.

<sup>112</sup> Margot Light, 'Anglo-Soviet relations: political and diplomatic', in Alex Pravda and Peter J. S. Duncan (eds), *Soviet-British Relations since the 1970s* (Cambridge, 1990), 133-4.

<sup>113</sup> An embassy official who happened to be travelling out to Moscow with Thatcher noted that her hosts had expressed an interest in finding out who would be the next head of the British-Soviet Group after the death of Cyril Osborne, evidently with a view to securing further invitations to the UK. TNA, FCO 28/793, accessed at <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/110870>.

<sup>114</sup> Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia*, 275.

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<sup>115</sup> On the British government view of the 1975 delegation, see TNA, PREM 16/691. As B. J. P. Hall of the Eastern European and Soviet Department wrote to Moscow ambassador Sir Curtis Keeble in October 1980, ‘the non-governmental British visitors inclined to go to the Soviet Union in present circumstances are those who are also inclined to say what their Soviet hosts wish to hear’. TNA, FCO 28/4202.

<sup>116</sup> As the Soviet Department of the Foreign Office wrote to the Protocol Department in July 1984, ‘Because he holds no Government position, the only means of inviting Mr Gorbachev to the UK was to extend an invitation on a Parliamentary basis’. TNA, FCO 28/6469.

<sup>117</sup> Gorbachev was granted only a meeting with the Foreign Affairs Committee, and his request to film the occasion was refused (TNA, FCO 28/6475). Nonetheless, the report on the visit in *Pravda* left Soviet readers to imagine that he had addressed parliament as a whole (ambassador’s telegram on Soviet coverage of the visit, TNA, FCO 28/6478).

<sup>118</sup> TNA, FCO 28/335.

<sup>119</sup> A similar point is made by Robin-Hivert from her study of documents relating to the late 1950s: ‘L’entrée de l’URSS dans l’Union interparlementaire’, 78-9.

<sup>120</sup> For the story of West German-Soviet economic and political relations, see Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West German-Soviet Relations, 1955-1980* (Cambridge, 1980). On the broader story of the Soviet efforts to find itself a place in the US-dominated postwar world economy, see Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, 2014). On economic relations with Western Europe specifically, see 96-101.

<sup>121</sup> As argued in Robin-Hivert, ‘L’entrée de l’URSS dans l’Union interparlementaire’, 79.

<sup>122</sup> IPU archive, Box 165, 942/66 (letter from V. Shvetsov to Spidironov, 24/02/66).

<sup>123</sup> Eden, *Full Circle*, 356-7.

<sup>124</sup> B. S. Krylov, *Parlament burzhuznogo gosudarstva: Politicheskaia sushchnost' i formy parlamenta i parlamentarizma na sovremennom etape* (Moscow, 1963).

<sup>125</sup> V. I. Vasil’ev and F. I. Kalinychev, *Nash narodnyi parlament* (Moscow, 1966). In his long-range study of Russian/Soviet attitudes to parliamentarism, Ivan Sablin finds the word *parlament* figuring intermittently in Soviet political discourse from 1935 onwards, while references to the Supreme Soviet as a ‘people’s parliament’ or ‘socialist parliament’ became commonplace in the 1950s and 1960s. After 1970, usage of the word *parlament* fell away, but the parliamentary conceptual framework remained, not least due to Soviet

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participation in the IPU. Sablin, *Parliaments in the Late Russian Empire, Revolutionary Russia, and the Soviet Union*, 288, 353-7.