

The Forgotten Series:
1974 WHA All-Stars vs the Soviet National Team:
Franchise Recognition, Ageing Icons and Foreign Diplomacy

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Introduction

If, in larger terms, our indigenous culture has always been suspect, most of it not for export, our ball clubs traditionally minor league, and even our prime minister a what's-his-name, we were at least armed with one certitude, and it was that when it came to playing the magnificent game of ice hockey we were, indeed, a people unsurpassed. At least until the nefarious Russians moseyed into town in 1972 (Richler, 2002, p. 245-246).

This musing, written by Canadian literary icon Mordecai Richler, was first published in 1984 as part of a reflection on the dynastic unraveling of le Club de Hockey Canadiens. In his critique of the relative indifference of post-Imperial Canadian identity, Richler identifies the claims of hockey supremacy that have historically anchored dominant understandings of “our” national sporting mythology. Cultural divisions have rendered hegemonic notions of any sort of unified Canadian identity problematic or, as Eva Mackey (1999, p. 9) has remarked, “terribly unsuccessful.” Moreover, as Richler notes, Canadian claims to hockey ascendancy came unhinged following the 1972 Summit Series that pitted Canadian National Hockey League players against the Soviet Union:

If Team Canada finally won the series, Paul Henderson scoring one of hockey’s most dramatic goals at 19:26 of the third period in the last game in Moscow, the

moral victory clearly belonged to Russia. After the series, nothing was ever the same again in Canada. Beer didn't taste as good. The Rockies seemed smaller, the northern lights dimmer. Our last-minute win came more in the nature of a relief than a triumph...and the Stanley Cup itself, once our Holy Grail, seemed suddenly a chalice of questionable distinction. So, alas, it remains. For the Russians continue to be the dominant force in real hockey, international hockey, with the Czechs and Swedes not far behind (Richler, 2002, 247-248).

Many Canadians would disagree with Richler's assessment, opting instead to herald with scant reflection, the very "un-Canadian" orgy of nationalism that erupted following Henderson's last minute heroics as proof of Canadian hockey superiority. Indeed, the 1972 Summit Series is routinely romanticized by hockey fans, pundits and contemporary advertising campaigns as the defining moment in Canadian sporting history: a story we tell ourselves about ourselves, specifically the heroics and bravery of Canadian hockey players.¹

The 1972 Summit Series took place in the throes of the Cold War and was promoted by the Canadian government as part of Prime Minister Trudeau's broader foreign policy strategy that included improved bilateral relations with Moscow (Cf. Thordarson, 1972; Black, 1998; Ford, 1989; Granatstein and Bothwell, 1990). However, the hockey series was not without controversy: brutal violence and unsportsmanlike conduct plagued the games and did little to improve the perception abroad of Canadian hockey players as thugs and goons.² Macintosh and Hawes (1994) surmised, that while the 1972 Summit Series revealed the potential of sport to generate national interest and its usefulness as a diplomatic tool, the deployment of tactical violence and win-at-all costs mentality typifies the challenges associated with the expectation that a sporting contest will foster international goodwill between nations. In fact, the behaviour displayed by players and management in Moscow in 1972 initially had a negative impact during negotiations for the second series in 1974 (Confidential Memorandum, 1973).

The significance of the 1972 Summit Series was promoted as the opportunity for Canada to reclaim its place as the premier hockey nation after its amateur and semi-professional teams consistently began to lose matches against state amateur Eastern European and Soviet national teams. The National Hockey League (NHL) sabotaged the "just wait 'til you meet our best" mantra almost at once. NHL owners vetoed the inclusion of any Canadian player from representing Canada on the 1972 team (read Bobby Hull) who had defected to the rival World Hockey Association (WHA).³

The NHL acrimony is understandable. Earlier that year the WHA had successfully challenged the monopoly-monopsony position of the NHL (Cf. Jones in Gruneau and Albinson, 1976). The upstart league stimulated an unprecedented increase in players' salaries and a liberated player labour market. This WHA challenge altered, at least temporarily, the restrictive structural vassalage of North American professional hockey. But lucrative salaries, particularly for defecting NHL players, was not the only WHA challenge to NHL supremacy. The neophyte WHA franchises also aggressively recruited Swedish and Finnish players, defecting eastern Europeans, and 18-year old Canadian juniors, all of whom played a fast-paced offensive style of hockey.⁴

The emergence of the WHA, and the NHL's exclusive selection of its players for the 1972 Summit Series, brings us to the focus of this article. In 1974, another Summit Series took place between the Soviet Union and Team Canada, a national team consisting solely of WHA players. The late-Jim Coleman, long recognized as Canada's senior statesman of sports writers, described the team as our "picturesque Golden Oldies" (Coleman, 1987, 122; Cf. also Coleman, 1974). He writes:

Gordie Howe was 46 when he had this first opportunity to perform in Moscow. Bobby Hull, who had been excluded from the 1972 series, was 35. Ralph Backstrom was 37, Frank Mahovlich was 36, Pat Stapleton was 34 and J.C. Tremblay was 35.

Also played in the midst of the Cold War, for the Canadian federal government, the 1974 Series represented another attempt at “hockey diplomacy” aimed at fostering improved diplomatic relations between Canada and the USSR. We contend that there are at least four subplots that play out in the hockey series. For the WHA owners, the series was a thinly disguised attempt to situate their respective franchises as legitimate rivals to those of the established NHL. For the ageing Canadian WHA players at least, there was the opportunity previously denied them, of matching their talents against the best of the Soviet hockey system.⁵ The Canadian government, with the creation of the arms-length Hockey Canada and the latter's mandate to organize national teams for international competition, was motivated to support another series with the Soviets.⁶ The second series could hardly be ignored on the basis of official Canadian/Soviet exchange agreements and also since the WHA had five Canadian-based teams at the time. For the Soviet Union, sports had long been called upon to serve as a vehicle to promote bilateral international relations, and the 1974 series was but another example of this on-going foreign policy mandate (Cf. Light, 1988).

Despite the historical and social significant disparity between the 1972 and 1974 Summit Series (Dryden, 1973; Dryden & McGregor, 2006; Macfarlane, 1973; MacSkimming, 1996; Earle, 1995; Scherer, Duquette & Mason, 2007; Wilson, 2004), it is our contention that the 1974 Summit Series accelerated the globalization of the game. While the examination of this is beyond the objectives of this article, the WHA global reach resulted in paramount concerns for all of contemporary professional and amateur hockey. The ubiquitous media message that North America is the preferred destination for the elite hockey professional has consequences for the

future of viable competitive leagues in Europe, including Russia (Cf. Duhatschek, 2012; King, 2007). For their part, Canadian juniors now must compete with highly skilled European players as well as American college players to realize the dream of a professional NHL career. The migration of European teenage players to North America has considerable impact for the developmental age-group competition in Europe and Russia (cf. Allain, 2004). All of these factors, we would argue, saw first light of day with the birth of the WHA; and like its 1972 cousin, the 1974 Summit Series ended in violence, politicking, and accusations of unsportsmanlike conduct that did little to improve sporting relations between Canada and the USSR (Cf. <http://whalerslegends.blogspot.ca/> Rick Ley; External Affairs Memo, 1970; Lefaive and Fisher, 1972; *Futbol/Khokkei*, 1974).

Unlike the last minute heroics two years earlier, the 1974 Summit Series was dominated by the Soviet national team, which won four and tied three games in the eight-game series. Team Canada managed a lone 4-1 win on September 19th in Toronto (Young, 1976, 249). Given the outcome, and the eventual dismantling of the WHA in 1979, the 1974 Summit Series remains largely forgotten in Canadian sporting mythology. While elder Canadian fans vividly recall Paul Henderson's game winning goal in the final 1972 Summit Series game, few probably remember that the same Paul Henderson played again in 1974.

It is not surprising therefore, that the 1974 Summit Series is unexplored as a site of cultural analysis.⁷ Exceptions include brief accounts by Scott Young (1976), Jim Coleman (1987) and two longer popular descriptions (Beddoes and Roberts, 1974; Frayne, 1974). This current research is an attempt to address this marginalization and has three interrelated themes. First, we provide a cursory outline of the emergence of the WHA, the objective of which is to support our contention that franchise legitimacy was the WHA grounds for the series. Second,

we locate the series as a concrete illustration of the Trudeau government's implied contention that sport could be a viable agency in Canadian foreign policy.⁸ The third theme, closely aligned to the second, is to trace the longstanding Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) insistence that sport is a critical conduit to solidify fraternal international relations (Cf. Riordan, 1974; Peppard and Riordan, 1993). The three objectives help locate the 1974 Summit Series in the broader political-economic and socio-cultural world that was the backdrop for the games.

The World Hockey Association and Franchise Legitimacy

The emergence of the WHA cannot be discussed without juxtaposing its birth in relation to the one-sided history of labour relations between the NHL players and management. It goes well beyond the focus of this article to deal in depth with the monopolistic position that the NHL enjoys (and historically has enjoyed) as regards North American professional hockey. Suffice to say, that 1971 was the watershed year in which NHL superiority was severely challenged.⁹

This was the year that two American promoters, Dennis Murphy and Gary Davidson, filed articles of incorporation for the WHA in the American state of Delaware. Davidson and Murphy had earlier founded the American Basketball Association (ABA) to rival the National Basketball Association (NBA). They clearly regarded the monopolistic-NHL as vulnerable in part because of the league's feudal salary structure, nominal Players' Association (NHLPA), and the NHL's reluctance to increase beyond the 1967 expansion that saw its league double in size from the original six franchise teams.

Murphy and Davidson saw room for even greater professional hockey exposure in both Canadian and American cities. There were municipal governments and sporting entrepreneurs constantly lobbying the NHL for inclusion into its selective club. But the two Americans also

hoped to tap, with unapologetic North American ethnocentrism, a largely ignored and fertile European hockey market. The duo was not content to follow the well-established NHL template of exclusive North American player recruitment and selection.¹⁰ In discussing their terms of incorporation to the media, Murphy and Davidson envisaged a WHA that would include a European division and access the expansive European hockey player market. Indeed, the very naming of the WHA anticipated an international agenda.¹¹ Gary Davidson recalled:

(W)e didn't want to take on the NHL in its Canadian strongholds...but there were other cities in Canada we felt could support teams. We also wanted teams elsewhere in the world where hockey was popular—the Scandinavian countries for example. A European division might be developed...We did expect to get a lot of foreign players...and if their players were not really amateurs, they are not paid the sort of money the NHL and WHA pays and presumably could be tempted to emigrate” (Willes, 1974, 150-151).

Murphy and Davidson were first and foremost entrepreneurial opportunists. They knew little about the game they were intent on promoting. However, their previous NBA intervention proved invaluable. They willingly sought out the expert advice of those with the prerequisite social, cultural, and economic capital essential to the future of the fledging league. The relationship with Bill Hunter demonstrates this Murphy/Davidson discernment.

Los Angeles sportswriter Walt Marlow, a Canadian who would eventually become the WHA's publicist, directed the pair to Bill Hunter. Hunter, who would serve as General Manager for the 1974 WHA Team Canada, was a bombastic personality, and had been actively involved in promoting junior hockey in Western Canada as owner of the Edmonton, Alberta *Oil Kings*. Hunter was “one of the great hucksters in hockey history” and the guy “who very nearly pulled off the impossible feat of landing an NHL franchise for Saskatoon” (Brunt, 2006, 105). Through his extensive hockey contacts, Hunter convinced Ben Hatskin, who owned the Winnipeg-based *Junior Jets*, and Bob Brownridge, a millionaire from Calgary to invest in the league (Beddoes,

Fischler & Gitler, 1973). Hatskin and Brownridge, both with "deep pockets" and a desire to be significant players in the sport franchise world, provided the capital to under-write much of the WHA operations.

On November 1, 1971 the WHA announced its neophyte franchises in Edmonton, Calgary, New York, Winnipeg, Chicago, St. Paul, Miami, Dayton, Los Angeles and San Francisco. WHA franchises would be granted to the New England area (eventually Boston) and Ottawa later that month. Not surprisingly, the NHL saw the WHA as more than a momentary irritation. For instance, there is little evidence to suggest that the NHL wanted to expand beyond the 1967 12-team league. The existence of a potential rival spurred on further expansion (Vancouver and Buffalo for the 1970-71 season; Atlanta, to counter the WHA's Miami; Long Island to secure the New York market for the 1972-73 season; Washington and Kansas City in 1974).¹² While these expansions brought NHL owners considerable capital, each franchise addition required an expansion draft and hastened the dilution of the reserve army of skilled players. In their candid assessment of the international hockey world, Lefaive and Fisher prove astute in their opinion of a proposed NHL European league.

The NHL is sponsoring a European pro league. While it seems a throw away of money its purposes are clear enough: to check WHA plans of a similar nature; to tie up the European source of player supply. Perhaps it is a tool for the defence in US anti-trust action (1972, 2).

The WHA owners may well have anticipated the NHL counter-expansion scenario. In October 1971 the WHA announced that it would operate without a reserve clause for all players under contract. This announcement disrupted, at least temporarily, the NHL's era of "indentured servitude" (Brunt, 2006, 251). Even though other sports had successfully challenged various versions of the clause, NHL players, their Association, or agents had never contested the reserve

clause. To successfully compete for the services of experienced NHL players, the WHA needed to break the NHL's monopsony position by challenging the clause.

The WHA went further. It began recruiting legal age of majority junior players that is, those who had reached their eighteenth birthday, Mark Napier being the first player signed in this category.¹³ The league also began the aggressive recruitment of European players. All three initiatives proved useful in attacking the NHL monopolistic position. Under 20-year old players like Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier, and Ken Linesman followed the Napier precedent and signed WHA contracts. The Winnipeg Jets' signing of Bobby Hull opened the floodgates of NHL players who, ignoring the reserve clause jumped to the new league. While the American cities welcomed their new hockey celebrities, it was the Canadian hockey fan that was most appreciative of the WHA existence. The league brought legitimacy to the nascent notion of Canadian cities as high performance sport communities, many of which had not seen major professional teams since the early part of the twentieth century (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006).¹⁴

The adage "television makes it all a new game" underscores the quest for lucrative media contracts to ensure that professional sports leagues operate from a position of financial strength (Cf. Whannel, 1992). Such was the case for the WHA. Television executives on both sides of the border expressed fiscal confidence in the future of the league (McFarlane, 1976). Network contracts with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and CBS in the United States were forthcoming. Subsequently, the budding league realized the revenue and visibility that in turn attracted corporate investment from Sears, Chevrolet, and the AVCO Financial Corporation. The latter became the title sponsor for the league's trophy, the AVCO Cup. WHA owners negotiated local television and radio contracts that provided additional sponsorship exposure and profit-generation (Willes, 2004). The WHA was not yet through with its drastic reordering of the game

and preempted the current marketing strategy in which the game is but one segment of an overall entertainment experience. It introduced red and blue pucks as a promotional strategy, colourful eye-catching uniforms, and ignored NHL regulations concerning the curvature of sticks to allow more spectacular and unpredictable shots on goal. While all of the WHA initiatives encouraged spectator enthusiasm, it could not fully escape the image of a barnstorming come-lately with consequent issues of credibility and stability. Tellingly, the four franchises that gained admission to the NHL playground in the 1979-80 season were by far the most stable of WHA teams: Edmonton Oilers, New England Whalers, Quebec Nordiques, and Winnipeg Jets. At the other end of the franchise continuum were those that failed to ever ice a team in the league's eight-year existence: Calgary Broncos, Dayton Arrows, Miami Screaming Eagles and San Francisco Sharks. Regardless, by the end of its second year of existence, the WHA had dramatically altered the North American landscape of professional hockey and seriously challenged NHL hegemony. In 1974, only two years after its players were prohibited from representing Team Canada, the WHA professionals were promised a Summit Series against the Soviet Union.

An excursus is important here. In the spring of 1970, Father David Bauer's noble experiment of developing a national Canadian team, solely of amateur players, most of whom agreed to delay their entrance into the NHL (including Ken Dryden, Brian Conacher, Brian Glennie, Fran Huck, Morris Mott), was formally disbanded (Cf. Government Policy Re Hockey Canada, n.d.). In the same year, Canada withdrew from international hockey until the country was allowed to enlist its "best" players, i.e., those who played professionally. Consequently, there was no question that when Hockey Canada secured the 1974 series against the Soviet Union, it would be professional players who would represent Canada.

Given the obvious need for both visibility and credibility, the series was aggressively pursued and required the full participation of the Canadian and Soviet governments. Before discussing the respective governmental intervention, it is necessary to support our contention that for the WHA, the series was a critical step towards credibility.

The 1974 Summit Series: Canadian National Identity or WHA Credibility?

...the Big One, the series to end them all (for the WHA, if things didn't go well), the series which would show the world that the WHA was indeed good enough to be in the same rink as the Russians and, by inference, in the same rink as the NHL (Beddoes & Roberts, 1974, 8).

Where were you in '74, when the likes of Ricky Ley (remember him, from the Leafs?), Don McLeod of Houston, Gordie, Mark and Marty Howe of TV commercial fame, and assorted other World Hockey Association mercenaries take to the ice in an attempt to retain our national honour? If we lose...well, it's not the NHL. We could have sent better. If we win...we're still the champs, the Great Ones, and our national game and our national pride and our national egos will have been gratified. The flag will remain high on Parliament Hill, old women and children will still be safe, and Hockey Night in Canada will be true to its word. IF we win (Beddoes & Roberts, 1974).

As the above imply, the WHA wore the mantle of the upstart, never really convincing the Canadian sports media that it was the bone fide equal of the NHL. This was most obvious in the build-up to the 1974 series of games against the Soviet national team. Early in 1973 speculation quickly emerged about the possibility of a second Summit Series.¹⁵ Like its predecessor, the organization of the 1974 Summit Series hinged on the availability of professional players to represent Canada.

In a striking contrast to the 1972 Summit Series however, on January 31, 1973 Douglas Fisher, the Director and President of the Board of Hockey Canada indicated that NHL, WHA, and Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) players would be eligible to vie for selection to Team Canada. That is, unlike two years earlier when WHA players were barred from

representing Canada against the Soviet Union, a truly representative hockey team was sought. In one sense, the inclusion of the WHA speaks to the credibility that the rival league had earned, and the desire to ice the best Canadian team against a powerful Soviet Union squad that had not only just lost to Team Canada in 1972, but had won the International Hockey World Championships in 1973 (from 1963 to 1975, the Soviet Union failed to win the World Championships only once). It is likely the case that Hockey Canada officials and politicians were anxious to avoid the public outcry which erupted with the exclusion of Bobby Hull and other WHA players from what was in effect, an NHL Team Canada (Cf MacSkimming, 1996; Scherer et al, 2007).

According to one report in March 1974, "Soviet contacts about a second Canada-Russia hockey series came in January both to the CAHA office and through the federal Department of External Affairs" (Carruthers, 1974, 35). The Lefaive files explicitly state that early in April 1973 Lou Lefaive and Gordon Jukes met with Andrei Starovoitov, General Secretary, Soviet Ice Hockey Federation. "[W]e asked him directly about their attitude on a second nation to nation series" (Confidential Memorandum, 1973, 1). What is known is that the final protocol of agreement was signed in 1974 and Federal Health Minister Marc Lalonde learned in January of that year, through External Affairs and with discussions with CAHA officials that the Soviets were interested in another series (Fisher to Campbell, 1974, 1). Both Canada and the Soviet Union agreed to issue simultaneous press announcements on April 26, 1974 (Soviet Series '74, 1974).

After Minister Marc Lalonde had been briefed on the upcoming series he spoke in the House of Commons, and in a subsequent interview afterwards, declared that the federal government had taken the stand that "members of a new Team Canada should come from all

hockey leagues” (cited in Carruthers, 1974, 35). The government position was obvious political posturing. Lalonde qualified his remarks, stating that the federal government would not use “legislation to force the two rival professional hockey leagues to allow their players to participate in a second team Canada” (cited in Carruthers, 1974, 35). Lalonde's back-pedaling is proof of the difficult situation that Hockey Canada continually faced in dealing with professional hockey officials. Hockey Canada was/and is an arms-length organization of the Canadian government. As such, while politically correct to assert that all Canadian hockey, amateur and professional, could be represented on Team '74, in reality no amateur player would be invited and the acrimonious relations between the NHL and WHA would also come into play. Hockey Canada was a helpless spectator in the feud of the latter two in particular.

That the NHL would refuse to participate was *fait accompli*. To agree to release its players for the series would, defacto, recognize its WHA rival as a legitimate competitor. This, the NHL refused to acknowledge even though it was common knowledge in hockey circles that the two leagues had had serious discussions concerning league mergers (Cruise & Griffiths, 1991). These were temporarily abandoned until August 1974 when the two leagues resolved outstanding lawsuits and the United States Department of Justice handed down a landmark decision that prohibited the NHL from enforcing the reserve clause. With this outcome the NHL begrudgingly agreed to pay \$1.7 million in restraint-of-trade damages to its rival, and signed on to play 15 inter-league exhibition games.¹⁶ In the context of these acrimonious legal and economic battles, the participation of the NHL and its National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) in any joint Summit Series was simply not on. The March 21, 1974 correspondence between Douglas Fisher, Hockey Canada and Clarence Campbell, NHL President is equivocal on the NHL's refusal to participate (Cf. Campbell to Fisher, 1974). It

goes without saying, the inclusion of the CAHA as a potential source of player recruitment was a blatant political sop on the part of the government. After the disbanding of Father Bauer's national team, there were few amateur players, if any, who matched the skill level or experience of the professionals.

The refusal of the NHL to commit to the series worked in favour of the WHA publicity machine. The Canadian hockey public, frustrated by the NHL decision to disallow WHA professionals from playing in 1972, had their indignation fanned by WHA publicity leading up to the 1974 series. On June 25, 1974, on a promotional trip to Toronto to promote the series and “drum up more positive support for the series from the Toronto press” (White, 1974, 48), Winnipeg Jets owner Ben Hatskin and Bobby Hull publicly chastised the NHL and NHLPA President Alan Eagleson for denying players the opportunity to participate. According to Hull, Bobby Orr, Phil Esposito, and Bernie Parent had expressed an interest in playing against the Soviet Union:

I feel if certain individuals want to stand up and represent Canada, I don't see how they could be forced from not participating. This is Team Canada, remember. I would like any Canadian who qualifies on the team. It's the NHL establishment and Alan Eagleson who head the players that's the cause of this. I don't know any team, which told its players before we asked them that they wouldn't be allowed to play. It almost looks like they were waiting for us to ask them so they could say no publicly (As quoted in White, 1974, 48).

Hatskin voiced similar nationalistic sentiments to decry the NHL's decision not to participate in the Summit Series: “We want the best team for Canada so we still hope to get NHLers. This should be above either the WHA or the NHL” (White, 1974, 48). Like Marc Lalonde's House of Commons comments, Haskin and Hull were complicit in posturing for the media. Both knew there was little likelihood of NHL participation. Haskin in particular, as a key WHA administrator, had to be involved in the merger talks with the NHL. Bobby Hull was the

mainstay in the controversy over WHA participation in the 1972 series; and both knew that the national sports media had basically panned the upcoming series. Even here, Ben Hatskin took the offensive. He maligned the media coverage that increasingly grew skeptical about the likelihood of success of an all-WHA team against the powerful Soviets. “It’s the tone of the stories in the NHL cities that disturbs us. We definitely have the players in our league but we would like the others because we want to beat the Russians 8-0” (White, 1974, 48).

A cursory sampling of media comments leading up to the series implicitly answers the rhetorical question posed by the above sub-heading. The Canadian media situated itself on the side of a Soviet victory, often lacing its observations with deriding comments of WHA buffoonery (For exceptions cf. Coleman, 1974a; Coleman, 1974b). For example, the July 31, 1974 press conference to announce the 25 professionals selected to attend the WHA pre-series camp was dominated by Bill Hunter’s colourful and bombastic player descriptions. Consider the sardonic comments subsequently written by hockey scribes Dick Beddoes and John Roberts (1974).

Mr. Hunter generally managed Team 74 and helped coach it, and counted the gate receipts, and played head trumpet in the cheerleading, and advised Lennie Brezhnev on international affairs. Mr. Hunter’s advice on international affairs is to have one and, when in doubt, punt. He apprenticed to be the Alan Eagleson of Team 74 by more or less running hockey teams in Medicine Hat, Regina, Saskatoon, Blairmore, Yorkton, Flat Tire, Edmonton and other lovely prairie boondocks.

Clearly, the Soviet team had considerable experience and unquestionable talent: 17 of the players on the 1974 Soviet Squad had played in the 1972 Summit Series. Only three members of Team Canada 1974 had played two years earlier. In contrast to the reverence and the seriousness of the 1972 Summit Series, the day after the July 31 press conference *The Globe and Mail* noted: “Get out the forks, boys. We’ve been hit by the fallout from a colossal manure spreader” (Cited in

Beddoes & Roberts, 1974, 6). While most media pundits had arrogantly predicted an easy victory for Team Canada in 1972, similar expectations were absent in 1974. John Robertson, the *Montreal Star* reporter who, as one of the lone voices of dissent two years earlier, had predicted that the Soviet Union would beat the Canadians six games to two, now forecast: “Team 74 to lose every game by a converted touchdown” (Robertson, cited in Beddoes & Roberts, 1974, 7). The Canadian media simply did not embrace fully the WHA, or its select Team Canada.¹⁷ The league was always faced with an up-hill battle to dispel the image as second-rate compared to the NHL and the media was wont to reinforce continually this inferior status.

Suntanned, some bearded, the young men charged with the task of reaffirming Canada’s hockey supremacy over the Soviet Union were introduced yesterday and, with a welter of accolades from selection committee chairman Bill Hunter still dripping off them, began the odyssey. Team Canada 74’s mission is vastly different from that of its predecessor two years ago....It’s a different game this time, particularly for the three players who will enter their second summit series with the Soviets. The 25 regulars culled exclusively from the upstart World Hockey Association have no illusions. They know most people expect them to be wiped out by the Russians (Kernaghan, 1974, C1).

Frank Mahovlich observed: “We’re underdogs and I see nothing wrong with that. In fact, I’m glad. Spirit plays a large part in a series like this. I’ve been on Stanley Cup champions that shouldn’t have won it but did on spirit” (Kernaghan, 1974b, C1).

As is true with any sport that captures the national psyche, opinions varied. Father David Bauer, the former Canadian national team coach (1964-1969) optimistically suggested that there was “no reason why this club can’t win five of the eight games” but cautioned “if certain things happen”:

They’ve got to look to veterans like Gordie Howe and Bobby Hull for leadership. That, too, was what Esposito did for us in ’72. With superhuman work, he simply picked the team up by its bootstraps and made it win. Well, there’s no question about it: Hull and Howe are the same type of athlete. They can do it. They’ve got to. Otherwise, we’re in a lot of trouble (Proudfoot, 1974, C1).

Toronto Star columnist Jim Proudfoot categorically rebutted Father Bauer's optimism: "Father Bauer is too gentle a soul to state the blunt truth: Man for man, Team Canada isn't as nearly as strong as the '72 club" (1974, C1).

Others noted, albeit cautiously, that unlike two years ago, Team Canada knew what to expect from a powerful Soviet team. The selection of Billy Harris as coach was welcomed in part because of his international experience. (Harris had previously coached the Swedish national team, which during his head coach tenure had a record of two ties and a loss in three games against the Soviet Union). As the heroic carry-over, Paul Henderson noted that he and the two others who had played in 1972 would instruct the WHA players to approach the series differently than they had in 1972. "Now we know how good the Russians are. We got uptight last time. It was the highest I've ever been and I hope I never get that high again" (Kernhagen, 1974, C1).

The importance of the series for league legitimacy had a trickle-down effect on other outstanding WHA issues. Among the most contentious was the lack of financial compensation for European players signed by WHA teams. Consequently, in August 1974, just weeks before the start of the Summit, agreement was reached between the WHA and European hockey organizations. Specifically the WHA, in conjunction with the CAHA, agreed to pay \$20,000 to a European federation when one of its players signed with a WHA club. The WHA also agreed to pay an additional \$10,000 after a player completed one season of league play, and another \$10,000 after a second year.

The importance of this agreement cannot be over-estimated. Gordon Jukes, Executive Director of the CAHA noted its significance. "Approval of the series was based on the WHA working a deal like this with the European federations. The Finns agreed to the deal first and the

Swedes followed suit. The Russians were happy as long as the other two were” (Goodman, 1974, 24). Compensation was not retroactive to those European players already playing in the WHA.¹⁸

Canadian Foreign Policy as Catalyst for Hockey Series

The USSR's domination of international hockey since 1956 was an important criterion for the Soviets desire to meet again the top Canadian professional players. Equally important was the retirement of Avery Brundage as President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). His immediate successor (Lord Killanin), while supporting amateurism, was far less evangelistic about it than Brundage (Cf. Killanin to Ahearne, 1974). After 1972 Soviet hockey authorities knew that under the new IOC leadership, exhibition games against Canadian professionals would not brand its national team players as professional. The tempered tone emanating from the IOC under Killanin was a far cry from that of Avery Brundage (Cf. Brundage/Karl Schranz debacle at the 1972 Winter Olympics).

We would argue that as important as these "in-house" determinations were, equally important was the foreign policy direction of Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau. Suffice to say that the Prime Minister was intent on re-thinking Canadian involvement in NATO and NORAD, the legitimacy of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil and abroad, the formal recognition of the People's Republic of China while retaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and, as a northern hemisphere neighbour of the Soviet Union, increased trade and cultural contacts with the eastern bloc superpower. Layered on all of the above was the recognition that Canada must retain "good relations" with the United States.¹⁹ Obviously the 1972 and 1974 hockey series

qualify as cultural contacts, and unlike many foreign policy initiatives, do lead to public awareness and involvement. Thordarson writes:

Most studies of public opinion agree that up to 90 per cent of the general public is usually uninterested in foreign policy; uninformed and without initiative, it lacks structured opinions, and its most intense feelings usually lie dormant, to be aroused only when some issue appeals more to its emotions than to its intellect (Thordarson, 1972, 37).

It is clear from government documents that the 1972 and 1974 hockey series involving the Canadian and Soviet hockey teams captured the attention of the Canadian public such that the level of grassroots emotional appeal came as a surprise to government officials. The political fallout for the arms-length Hockey Canada was almost-instantaneous legitimacy and arguably led it to situate itself as the heir-apparent of international hockey, replacing the CAHA in this role (Cf. Lalonde to Jukes, 1974). Further, Hockey Canada took on the role of governmental watchdog and mentor for the demeanor and etiquette profile to be demonstrated by Canada's sweat-suited hockey ambassadors. Prior to the 1974 series, M. Regimbul, Chairman of the Hockey Canada Development Committee would write:

Every time a Canadian team goes abroad it represents Canada in the eyes of other people. It becomes an ambassador of Canadian hockey. Too often in the past, teams have gone abroad without much awareness of the situations they were to encounter both on and off the ice (Regimbul, 1973, 13-14).

Similarly, Lefaive and Fisher would opine that the "adolescent d'esprit of the pro players" does not equate with "a good national projection in the world" (Lefaive and Fisher, 1972, 2). The Canadian embassy in Moscow would submit a detailed *official* report to the federal government as a result of the 1974 series (General Report, 1974) as would Hockey Canada expressing the dilemma faced by a sanctioned government organization in its dealings with the private sector marketplace organizations (NHL and WHA). The relationship was at best one of "absolute

dependence on the benevolence" of the two professional hockey leagues. For example, the NHL would escape the scapegoat label given to Hockey Canada in not having Bobby Hull play in 1972 and to a lesser extent, the refusal of the NHL to release its players for the 1974 series (Lefaive and Fisher, 1972, 3).²⁰

A further important factor in the Hockey Canada deliberations with the Soviet Ice Hockey Federation was the preferred status position afforded Pierre Trudeau. In his detailed account of the Soviet press, government documents, and CPSU policy statements, Black (1998) notes that regardless of any perceived Cold War behaviour within Canada "[f]rom the moment that he came to office in April 1968, Pierre Elliot Trudeau would remain the darling of Soviet writing on Canadian federalism, English-French tensions, and Canadian-American relations" (263). This love affair with the Canadian prime minister dovetailed nicely with the importance of détente as developed under the Soviet leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (Cf. Academy of Sciences, 1978).

There was an important difference between the build-up to the 1974 Summit Series and its 1972 counterpart. Unlike the Cold War imagery and frenzy surrounding the organization of the series in 1972, in 1974 attempts were made to downplay any cultural and ideological importance emanating from the series. For example, prior to the first game in Quebec City on September 17, coach Billy Harris, who desperately wanted the games to be played in good sportsmanship, commented: "The only sane way to view the series is that it's supposed to be eight friendly games" (as cited in Beddoes & Roberts, 1974, 19). Coach Harris had earlier commented: "We will try to win all eight games against the Russians. But if we lose, it won't be the end of the world. My wife and children won't leave me just because we lose. There are

more important things in the world than hockey games” (as cited in Beddoes & Roberts, 1974, 16).

Perhaps with the first hand knowledge that in 1972, Soviet officials were less than pleased with "the behaviour exhibited by the Canadian team and its management . . . happening as it did in front of the very top people of the nation" (Confidential Memorandum, 1973, 1) in 1974, there was a conscious effort to avoid the violent image and thuggish reputation of Canadian hockey players.

What Billy Harris desired when he assembled Team Canada 74 at its Edmonton training base on September 1 was that he and his player-coach assistants Bobby Hull and Pat Stapleton would establish a new image for Canadian hockey teams abroad...."For the past two decades or so the maple leaf insignia of the nation's teams in international hockey competition had symbolized, to the supposedly more refined civilizations of Europe, a certain backwoods boisterism on ice. Terms like 'gangsters' were used in some of the European sports press. The Russians had even provided the word *nekulturny*. *Nekulturny*, translated loosely, means yahoo or boor" (Frayne, 1974, 8).

Prior to the first game in Quebec City, Federal Health and Welfare Minister Marc Lalonde extolled: "We're behind both teams. We're for peace and friendship" (as cited in Beddoes & Roberts, 1974, 17). In a similar vein, Lou Lefaiwe framed the upcoming Series in a discourse of friendship: "These kind of exchanges between great hockey teams should become a natural and normal part of the continuing development of hockey as a sport...and of the friendly relationships that should exist between the nations taking part" (Lefaiwe, 1974: official program).

While these sentiments underscore the relationship that Trudeau wished to see developed between Canada and the Soviet Union, they fail to address the complexity of Marxist-Leninist ideology as regards the inevitable future demise of capitalism in favour of a socialist mode of production. Trudeau's 1971 comments while on a state visit to the USSR are critical in this regard.

I do not wish to leave the impression that Canada and the Soviet Union have no differences. . . They relate to deep-seated concerns springing from historic, geographic, ideological, economic, social and military factors. Nevertheless, as governments, many of our objectives are similar. We seek for our peoples a world without war, a world in which governments are at the service of man---to raise the standard of living, to eliminate disease and want, to attempt to make life a happier experience (Cited in Thordarson, 1972, 68).

The Toronto Star columnist Jim Proudfoot, while occasionally resorting to Cold War rhetoric, did imply the importance that Soviet sport was to play in the historical quest for the future communist state.

The approach this year has been one of bonhomie and international good fellowship, as if the series were going to be some sort of East-West picnic. No opportunity has been missed to deplore the open belligerence displayed by Alan Eagleson, who took charge of the Canadian effort in 1972 and had a lot to do with its success. The thinking is incredibly naïve. It reveals a total failure to grasp what's at stake here for the Soviets. To them, a competition of this nature is something just short of war. They'll seize every advantage they can get on the ice and in the committee room and unless the Canadians are prepared to put up an argument at every juncture, they'll be overwhelmed—buried as Nikita Khrushchev used to say. (Proudfoot, 1974, D1)

Proudfoot's observations were correct in that the WHA administrators exhibited considerable naiveté as regards the organizational structure of Soviet hockey and its subordination to the CPSU leadership and Party *nomenklatura*.

Longstanding Canadian ambassador to the USSR, Robert Ford speaks to the contradictory and often-unexplainable decisions that Soviet negotiations with western nations

can take. In preparation for the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, the Olympic Organizing Committee officials were perplexed as to how to best feed the many visitors who would descend on Moscow for the Games. The solution was to introduce fast food and as Ford notes, "it was the Toronto-based executives of McDonalds who were invited to formalize a deal with the Soviets". After intense negotiations, "almost as difficult as the Helsinki treaty" a forty-page contract was realized. McDonalds was ecstatic with the contract, only to learn that the deal was vetoed by Party ideologues two days after it was signed. Tellingly Ford observes, "members of the Soviet Olympic Committee . . . were visibly shattered" (Ford, 1989, 319). It should also be noted that at least one Canadian hockey personality was equally frustrated with what was described as WHA incompetence in 1974. In his rebuttal letter to comments that Lou Lefaive provided to the Canadian press, Maple Leaf Gardens President Harold Ballard writes: "The organization behind the game here and elsewhere was certainly less than an event of this stature deserved" (Ballard to Lefaive, 1974, 1).

As admirable were the intentions of the Canadian government and coach Harris, like any international sports encounter, the actual behaviour and attitude of players and spectators are unpredictable. The 1974 series was no exception as comments from the weekly *Futbol/Khokkei* demonstrate. Included in the analysis of the series, are the inevitable Cold War comparisons between sports in socialist societies as opposed to those in market economies. Head Coach Boris Kulagin notes in an interview:

We (the USSR) have a single yardstick: do they (our national team) serve to bring success to our hockey in the world arena? Canadian pros have such stimuli as big bonuses, land grants, Jaguars and Cadillacs. Our people will repay their players with general affection and deepest appreciation. As compensation for their work our players will gain glory, respect, and appreciation that they, a score of young players, represent 250 million people. They carry with them immense trust and responsibility (No. 36, 8.IX.74, 9-10).

By October 6, 1974 the weekly concentrated on game analyses, while noting both positive and negative aspects of Canadian hockey. For the first time since the start of the series, *Futbol/Khokkei* featured on its front page, evidence of the Canada-Soviet competition. A head and shoulder shot of Bobby Hull graced the page, under the caption "Bobby Hull, the most productive and decent player among our Canadian guests"(1). Reporter Evgeni Rubin was equally impressed with the visiting Canadian spectators. "We can only envy the Canadians, such loyal fans. When our older players appear on the ice they're often accompanied by whistling and shouts of 'pension him off'. But the warm respect for Howe and Hull is very moving" (11).

In the same edition, an unnamed reporter analyzed the game six 5-2 Soviet win with a description of the very behaviour that Coach Harris wished to avoid. In the article titled *Our Game and Their Game (Igra svoya i igra chuzhaya)* the unprovoked Rick Ley incident is recorded:

The match left a bitter taste in the mouth. . . Outbreaks of foul play like rumbles of distant thunder occurred in the last match (i.e., game six). Traditional Canadian cruelty threatened to turn into illegal violence. All the same, the players managed, with the help of the referees, to calm down their emotions; and although the number of penalty minutes in the second period were excessive, the match ended without any obvious serious incident. Right after the game, before a stunned crowd, Ley knocked Kharlamov to the ice and started hitting him. We've never seen the like of this in our arenas. Nor have we seen the like from that of Ley's team mates. When our players tried to stop the enraged Ley, they were prevented by Canadian players. Bill Harris defended their behaviour in his post-game interview. Evidently such are the moral standards in Canadian professional hockey. If that's the case we just don't understand you. . . . What happened after the game has no relation to hockey in our understanding of the world (10-11).

For the Soviets, the 1974 Summit Series was a significant opportunity to assert their dominance over international hockey. (For a candid Canadian hockey player perspective of Soviet hockey see Slava Malamud's interview with Bobby Clarke, 2006.) And as already noted, its hockey players had important political and ideological tasks to perform. Indeed in the year

prior to the 1974 hockey series, it was noted that "the mounting impact of socialist sport on the world sports movement is one of the best and most comprehensible means of explaining to people throughout the world the advantages that socialism has over the capitalist system" (Stoliarov, 1973 as cited in Peppard and Riordan, 1993, 72).

Soviet Foreign Policy and Hockey Diplomacy

In Canada, the profit motive dominates professional hockey and everything is done to create an on-ice product that appeals to the consumer. This was not the case in the USSR where international superiority was more important than spectator appeal.²¹ This is a critical observation for it underscores the differences between Soviet and Canadian negotiators as regards the 1974 Summit series. Whereas the "hype" of the WHA and Canadian government pronouncements is noted above, Soviet press statements were more matter-of-fact and described in part, the overall Five-Year Plan schedule of international competitions.

Futbol/Khokkei published an interview with V.I. Sych, head of the Winter Sports, USSR Sports Committee on July 14, 1974 (Valentin Sych was assassinated in April 1998). In the question/answer format of the article *Chertezh sezona* (Outline of the season) Sych notes obvious negotiating differences between those of the Soviet authorities and the WHA officials. For example, the Soviet delegation assumes the interventionist authority of government, which would include responsibility for Canadian professional hockey. Sych comments: "We spoke specifically about the upcoming eight matches. Why this time, will our national team play against players of the World Hockey Association" (7)? As far as the Soviet officials were concerned, its national team was to play "Canadian professionals" but in strict adherence to the protocol and rulings of the International Ice Hockey Federation. Sych makes it perfectly clear

that the 1972 series had received the latter's permission, and although the Canadian team consisted only of NHL players, it played under the aegis of the CAHA. Even with the transfer of the IOC presidency from Brundage to Killanin, and a more liberal amateur status atmosphere, the USSR was concerned about the IOC reaction to its national team playing professional opponents on a regular basis. Sych again: "Negotiations for games between Soviet club teams and Canadian professional teams are underway. Many Canadians are in favour of games involving these teams during the pre-season. However, the main question is whether Canadian professionals can play in the world championships. Further, do amateur players retain the right to participate in the Olympic Games after playing Canadian professionals? That will be decided by the IOC" (7). He does observe that the negotiations with WHA officials were more flexible than those with the NHL. Implicitly, this observation supports our contention that for the WHA, the 1974 series was first and foremost, an opportunity to establish credibility with its North American competitor. ("The World Hockey Association were more flexible and, I think, they realize that North America ought not to miss out on matches with Soviet teams. There is enormous interest in the forthcoming matches" 7).

It is important to place this interview in the wider context of the *Futbol/Khokkei* publication. It was the weekly supplement to the Soviet national daily *Sovetskii sport* and had the mandate to deal exclusively with Soviet football (soccer) and hockey. As such its articles are a rough assessment of the importance of the 1974 series. The July issue (No. 28) was the first to present information on the upcoming series. The Sych interview on pages 6-7 is sandwiched between in-depth football stories on the remaining fourteen pages. Further, Sych's comments are preceded by discussions of the upcoming Superior League schedule, the World and European championships, and the *Sovetskii sport* and *Izvestii* newspaper tournaments. As already noted, it

is only in the number 40 issue of October 6th that the title page consists of a '74 Summit photograph of Bobby Hull.

The performance of the Soviet hockey players in 1972 and 1974 brought with it the claim that the USSR enjoyed unrivalled superiority in the sport. The success against the Canadian professionals convinced the Soviet Hockey Federation even more, that its path of development had been correct. It also affirmed that future innovations would be based upon the internal logic of a scientific technically rational approach (Cf. Cantelon, 2001; Cantelon, 1981). Simply put, under the Soviet regime, there was the attempt to totally rationalize the preparation of athletes to maximize international success. Nothing, if humanly possible was left to chance. Three examples will suffice to illustrate this preoccupation with rationality.

In the summer of 1972, prior to the first meeting of the Soviet national team and the NHL professionals, the Soviet coaching staff spent the entire summer specifically preparing their players for rough, aggressive hockey which the Canadians were expected to exhibit. The players were trained to accept and administer body checks anywhere on the ice and the coaches even went as far as to insist that the players learn the rudiments of boxing in case they were involved in fisticuffs with professional players (Cf. Tret'yak, 1977, 80). Five years earlier, coach Tarasov, in preparation for the World Championships in Vienna, arranged a series of friendly hockey and volleyball games between the national team players and domestic clubs. In each of the contests, Tarasov biased the officiating so that the national team would be continually at a disadvantage. Tarasov believed the officiating at the World Championships would not be consistent and that the Soviet players would have to overcome the psychological frustration of being penalized unfairly (Tarasov, 1969, p. 121). Specifically in 1974, when the Soviets prepared to meet Team Canada, it was learned that the WHA used pucks manufactured in Czechoslovakia. In

preparation for the series, the national team practiced with these pucks (*Sovetskii sport*, 6.9.74, 2).

As the earlier Ford example noted, there was considerable complexity involved in any negotiation with the Soviet Union. Often overlooked by western negotiators is the fact that Soviet coaches, team managers and hockey officials can, and often were overruled in decisions personally made in good faith. What always had to be remembered is that it was the *nomenklatura* that ultimately decided what would or would not be ratified.²² Alan Eagleson, spoke at the Empire Club of Canada, after the CAHA withdrew from international hockey competition in 1970 (Eagleson, n.d.). In developing his argument that Canada should be allowed to play its professional players, Eagleson cites extensively, Soviet coach Anatoli Tarasov as being personally in favour of open competition. He goes on to imply that Tarasov later reneged on his opinion. The truth of the matter is far more complex. Anatoli Tarasov would not make the final decision, regardless of his opinion or status as *the father of Soviet hockey*. In fact, Tarasov, and his long-time assistant coach Arcadii Chernishev had to petition the Hockey Federation to be relieved of their national team duties in the spring of 1972 (Tret'yak, 1977, 73).

Highly skilled players were dropped from the national team or not allowed to travel abroad because of star-sickness, individual self-seeking or improper off-ice behaviour. The Rick Ley incident described previously would have resulted in immediate suspension, national team dismissal, and perhaps demotion to a third division team, with Ley never having the chance to play in future international competitions.

It was never only a coaching prerogative to criticize individual performance. Both Tarasov (1969) and Tret'yak (1977) make it perfectly clear that the players had an integral part in

decision-making, criticism of teammates, and self-criticism. In many ways, this protocol discouraged the "adolescent d'esprit" that Lefaive and Fisher saw in the Canadian professional player. Further, as the Kulagin interview suggests (24), the Soviet player was to exhibit the behaviour that was in keeping with the ideal type of socialist man or woman expected in the future communist society. The collective decision-making between player and coach and expected on- and off-ice behaviour should not be ignored.

The responsibility for promoting player activism was given to the members of the Young Communist League organization (*Komsomol*), the *Komsorg* who were elected by the membership of the national team. The task of activism was the role that the *Komsomol* had played in the development of Soviet physical culture. The organization always had as its mandate, the duty of ensuring that Soviet athletes were educated in the spirit of communist morality, the selection of team leaders, and in the case of ice hockey, the promotion of on-ice and off-ice activities (Bunchuk, 1972, 113). In fact, much of the theoretical and educational work as part of the 1974 annual organizational plan leading up to the Summit series, would have been the sole responsibility of the *Komsomol*. While the level of personal commitment and dedication to the *Komsomol* varied, it was highly unlikely that any national team player would not belong to the organization. Vladislav Tret'yak, who was elected to the Central Committee of the *Komsomol* organization in 1974, points out that "in our club (i.e., *TsSKA*), as in most other Soviet hockey clubs, almost every player is a member of the *Komsomol* or of the Communist Party" (1977, 49).

The *Komsorg* chairman of the 1974 Soviet national team was Vladimir Petrov. He was assisted in his work by Tret'yak, Vladimir Shadrin, and Aleksandr Yakushev (*Sovetskii sport*, 21.4.74, 1). Prior to the Canadian series, Petrov arranged for the team to meet with the Soviet journalists in the Blue Room of the newspaper *Komsomolskaya pravda* where interviews and the

good wishes of the hockey fans were observed. During the actual Summit series, Petrov's duties increased. He was responsible for organizing and chairing the regular *Komsomol* meetings in which the task at hand (success against the WHA professionals) was discussed and to which each player was expected to pledge his commitment. Tret'yak asserts: "we talk bluntly, man-to-man. There is no room for sentiment" (1977, 22). The CPSU declaration of the superiority of Soviet sport was to be continually demonstrated.

The importance of utilizing athlete representation to further international detente and the predicted superiority of Soviet hockey were implicit in the *Futbol/Khokkei* articles published during the eight game series against Team Canada. In the report of game one from Quebec City, the unnamed reporter notes that the Canadian hockey fan has an excellent collective memory, since the players from 1972 were recognized immediately. Each in turn was met "with generous applause; and when the names Vladimir Tret'yak, Aleksandr Yakushev and Valeri Kharlamov were announced, a tremendous ovation rang around the rink" (No. 38, 22.IX.74, 2). The frank self-criticism expected of coach and player alike is evident in the game two press report from Toronto, the site of Canada's lone victory. Coach Kulagin notes that Tret'yak "performed miracles" and played perhaps, the game of his life. Kulagin goes on to note, not mincing his words, that conversely, defencemen Gusev and Vasiliev had "nightmare" games (No. 38, 22.IX.74, 4-5).

Among the *Komsorg'* routine responsibilities were to remind players of the history of the Soviet state, the sacrifice that its citizens made in the Second World War, and the past successes, especially of the hockey teams, which had been earned by Soviet athletes, and finally, the importance of continuing the winning tradition which had come to characterize Soviet hockey. With the culmination of the series and the dominance of the Soviet team guaranteed,

Futbol/Khokkei duplicated a letter that had been sent to Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. Brezhnev, it should be noted, was a dedicated hockey fan, and lifelong supporter of Central Sports Club of the Army (TsSKA). Canadian ambassador Robert A.D. Ford recalls seeing the General Secretary and a majority of Politburo members at almost every game of the 1972 series (Ford, 1989, 129). Consequently, it is not surprising that in 1974, the Soviet national team would write a public letter of appreciation to Brezhnev. It read:

To the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee,
Comrade Leonid Ilich Brezhnev.

Dear Leonid Ilich,

We are profoundly grateful to you for your congratulations on the occasion of our successful matches with the Canadian national team. We appreciate that your congratulations refer to all Soviet hockey players, coaches and all who work in sport, and are yet another confirmation of your personal, everyday concern for encouraging physical culture and sport in our country.

In the intense games against the Canadian professionals, we were aided by the support of the Soviet people, and your personal support Leonid Ilich, which we felt constantly.

Dear Leonid Ilich, please accept our fervent gratitude for the kind attention that will always help us honourably to carry the sporting banner of our Motherland.

By order of the Soviet Hockey Team:
Senior coach B. Kulagin
Captain B. Mikhailov (No. 41, 13.X.74, 2).

The October 13th issue of *Futbol/Khokkei* also included an editorial by reporter Evgeni Rubin, which tended to reinforce the Marxist-Leninist belief that with the communist state comes a superior high performance system and with it, a true socialist man and woman. Rubin implies that the series result impresses the Canadian spectator as the personification of the way hockey can and should be played. The on-ice and off-ice behaviour of national team players was constantly under the "socialist microscope" and players were expected to demonstrate the

lifestyle of the new socialist citizen, and in so doing, draw attention to those features of contemporary Soviet life that were of particular concern to the political authorities. It is no surprise that Soviet players were not supposed to drink or smoke, given the widespread problems the nation faced concerning these habits. Nor is it unrealistic to suggest that the media coverage that was given to the discipline of the Soviet players was meant to serve as an ideological template for the ordinary Soviet citizen. "Look", the ideology seemed to say, "see the outstanding Yakushev. His father works in a steel plant. He grew up in a one-room apartment with his two brothers. Today he has his coaching degree and is considered one of the top players in the world. All Soviet citizens should emulate Yakushev's dedication and discipline" (Cf. *Fizkul'tura i sport*, No 2, 1977, 41; *The Globe and Mail*, 29.12.77, 33; *Futbol/Khokkei*, No. 8, VII.79, 1-2; No. 20, I.80, 8-9).

Rubin speculates that the Canadian public accepts as normal, the incessant disputing of official decisions by its hockey players. He goes on to suggest that Soviet players like Yakushev and Tret'yak enjoy popularity in Canada, not only because of their hockey skills, but also because of their personal decency and discipline. "Their genuine sportsmanship is sharply contrasted with that of the nasty mannered WHA players and fans" (Rubin, 1974, 3).²³ As model Soviet citizens, the players' demeanor, Rubin opines, must come as a welcome respite to the Canadian hockey fan, and therefore results in respect for the "Soviet way" and the demand for similar behaviour from Canadian players. Rubin ends with the moral axiom, "a good thing that our players stuck to their principles and played their own game. Being true to yourself and your principles is what enabled us to prevail" (p3).

What would be of greatest interest to the WHA administration was the Soviet assessment of the 1974 Team Canada performance as compared to Team '72. In his analysis of game eight,

(USSR 3 - Canada 2), Rubin summarizes the comments from the Soviet coaching staff and players. "It is certainly true that the NHL teams are stronger than those of the WHA. However, it would only apply to the three or four leading NHL teams". He notes that Team Canada '74 had a handful of highly talented players (Bobby Hull continually impressed) along with "a dozen good players" but their superiority in relation to the Soviet players, was "in experience only".²⁴ Rubin concludes:

We now know that at the national team level our hockey is capable of beating the Canadians. We should think that time will tell that at the club level, we will also be favoured" (at the time, the Soviet Hockey Federation was negotiating directly with NHL clubs for the 1976 tour of North America). The recent matches give us cause to be optimistic" (Rubin, 1974, 5).

Concluding Comments

We have argued that the 1974 Summit series has been given short-shift in comparison to the precedent-setting 1972 series. While the latter remains a critical historical moment of international hockey, given it was the first time that the Soviet Union's national team met Canada's professional players, there is much to take from the games played two years later. The contemporary hockey came to fruition through the development of the WHA and its deliberate attempts to attract superior European players to its franchises. The signing of legal age Canadian juniors in defiance of the CAHA/NHL draft agreements also helped in the transformation of the player pool available to North American professional hockey. The game played by the WHA teams because of the Europeans and younger Canadian players arguably, more rapidly incorporated "the European style" into North America than was wont to occur in a NHL-dominated league.

The IOC interpretation of open competition and the erasure of the archaic "Brundage amateurism" definition underscores the Soviet Union solicitation of the CAHA with the express purpose of meeting professional players on the ice surface. The WHA/NHL acrimony no doubt explains why the WHA officials were more flexible in the negotiations with the Soviets than their predecessors had been. Simply put, the WHA needed the series to further its objective of franchise credibility. With the two series played, the autocratic rule of Bunny Ahearne, as the tsar of the IIHF, came to an abrupt end, and with Ahearne's departure, came open international competition.

For Hockey Canada, with one Soviet series already under its belt, 1974 was an important event in which to consolidate its position as the organization responsible for international hockey in Canada. The Hockey Canada maneuverings also formalized the respective "turf" that would thereafter define the auspices of Hockey Canada in relation to the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association. Summit '74 also highlighted the tensions that exist between the private sector and government. The Hockey Canada government appointees continually expressed frustration with the "hat in hand" analogy that reflected negotiations and organizational meetings with both the NHL and WHA. For the latter, it appears that Hockey Canada was an inevitable irritant.

Finally, the 1974 series aided in the deterioration of the mystique of playing the Soviets. No longer was the USSR the Iron Curtain unknown, but simply an outstanding hockey power that, if Canada played "its game", would result in games of exceptional spectator appeal.

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ENDNOTES

¹ This is not to suggest that those individuals closely connected to Team Canada 1972 share this non-reflective adoration to the series outcome. For example, Hockey Canada board members Lou Lefaive and Doug Fisher note that the 1972 result indicates that "the NHL has suffered a blow to prestige in this series, largely in a critical judgement of its product; and its product is not likely to improve in the short run because of expansion and the WHA's effects" (Lefaive and Fisher, 1972, 3).

² Canadian embassy staff provides the federal government with detailed accounts of the on- and off-ice behaviour of Canadian teams that are competing in foreign countries. For example, embassy staff in Helsinki, Finland note that Göran Stubb, Coach and General Manager of HIFK (Helsinki hockey club) is a "fair and reasonable individual even at times when his teams were being physically mauled by such admirable specimens of Canadian sportsmanship as the Drumheller Miners, Drummondville Eagles and Victoriaville Tigers" (External Affairs, 1970, 1).

³ The NHL refusal to include Bobby Hull had wide spread ramifications, with outrage expressed by hockey fans, sports reporters and parliamentary figures. The fallout was equally vexatious. Lefaive and Fisher write: "Hockey Canada has emerged from series as general scapegoat of sports press and public---largely through Hull case. . ." (Lefaive and Fisher, 1972, 3).

⁴ Toronto Marlboro junior Mark Napier was signed to a professional WHA contract for the 1975/76 season. Napier was 18, two years younger than the agreed CAHA/NHL stipulation at which junior players could turn professional. The Napier signing ultimately led to the signing of other under-age players including Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier and Ken Linseman, who would realize outstanding NHL careers. The WHA recruited European players, Sweden's Anders Hedberg and Ulf Nilsson, Finland's Pekka Rautakallio and Juhani Tamminen, all of whom had been largely overlooked by the NHL. The two Swedes joined Bobby Hull in Winnipeg to form one of professional hockey's most formidable forward lines. The Czechs Vaclav Nedomansky and Richard Farda also played in the WHA after their defection from the Czech republic.

⁵ See for example, Vladislav Tretiak's description of Gordie Howe, year's later upon the return of the sweater Tretiak wore in the 1974 series (Stubbs, 2012). While we believe the Canadian players' perspective on the series is an important sub-plot, it is addressed only in passing in this article. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Soviet sports officials were visibly impressed with the skill level of Canada's senior-age players, particularly Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull and Ralph Backstrom. Soviet sports reporters commented on the adulation of the Canadian players by the Canadian spectators (Cf. Rubin, 1974, *Futbol-Khokkei*, 9).

⁶ Later this observation will be expanded upon. Here it should be noted that there was considerable lobbying and political posturing on the part of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) and Hockey Canada as to which organization would be responsible for what as far as Canadian hockey was concerned. Hockey Canada was aggressively situating itself as the heir-apparent for all international hockey competition.

⁷ In December 2006 seven of the eight games of the 1974 Summit Series were released on a four DVD set entitled "*Team Canada 1974: The Lost Series*".

⁸ In this regard we have relied heavily on the archives of Lou Lefaive. At the time of the 1974 Series, as the Director of Sport Canada, Lefaive was the primary spokesperson for the federal government. The L.E. Lefaive files are housed in Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. We acknowledge the assistance of Elizabeth Mongrain, Normand Laplante, and Gilles Bertrand for identifying and providing access to this

valuable source of material. On Trudeau's foreign policy position generally, Cf. Black, 1998; Ford, 1989; Granatstein and Bothwell, 1990; Thordarson, 1972.

⁹ For those interested in an in-depth analysis of North American labour relations, especially as regards professional hockey, the following are important references: Whitson and Gruneau, 2006; Gruneau and Whitson, 1993; Cruise and Griffiths, 1991; Brunt, 2006; Willis, 2004. The 1976 article, by J.C.H. Jones, *The economics of the NHL revisited: a postscript on structural change, behavior and government policy* was one of the first serious analyses of labour relations in professional hockey.

¹⁰ The autocratic feudal-like administration of the NHL (pre-WHA) cannot be over-estimated. For example, one of the authors is acquainted with a highly competent computer programmer who in the mid-70's, suggested to the NHL that the league consider computer-generated league scheduling. He was granted an audience with NHL executives, because he had played the game (i.e., was a former NHL player). The league had little interest in adopting a progressive, more efficient procedure of scheduling, so the meeting was futile at best.

¹¹ According to Davidson (Willes, 1974), the wife of lawyer Don Regan coined the title World Hockey Association. The latter was selected over the International Hockey League.

¹² With the NHL expansion, several WHA franchises moved. For example, the Calgary Broncos moved to Cleveland, the Miami Screaming Eagles moved to Philadelphia, and the San Francisco Sea Hawks moved to Quebec, while the Dayton Aeros moved to Houston.

¹³ The Lefaive files, previously cited, prove fascinating reading on this particular issue: Volume 18 File 10 300-6-7 - Kryczka to Davidson, 1972; Juckes to Davidson, 1973; Hockey Canada clippings including telegrams from several provincial hockey executives applauding the Marc Lalonde position that urges professional clubs to desist from signing players under the age of 20 to professional contracts.

¹⁴ The importance that Canadian cities place on being considered “high performance sports communities” is critical. As already noted by Blunt, Bill Hunter had the audacity to approach the NHL in 1982, with the proposal to move the financially struggling St. Louis Blues to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. While most hockey pundits saw the idea as typical Hunter-posturing, the latter was able to provide concrete evidence that 18,000 Saskatchewan citizens had promised to buy season tickets if the Blues moved to the city. Further, the municipal government was committed to the construction of an 18,000-seat arena. So serious was the bid, the NHL Board of Governors had to publicly block the move of the Blues and in doing so, as was to occur later on with the Phoenix Coyotes, take over the financial commitments of the St. Louis franchise.

¹⁵ According to Bill Hunter, the 1974 Summit Series emerged after he, Gordon Juckes from the CAHA and Lou Lefaivre from Hockey Canada flew to the Soviet Union for three meetings to negotiate the formalities of developing another eight-game hockey series with Russian chief negotiator Alexander Grescoe. Interestingly, in his autobiography, Hunter claims that he and Ben Hatksin developed the initial idea for a Summit Series between WHA Canadian professionals and the Soviet Union in 1971 to be the “ultimate kickoff for the WHA” (Hunter, 2000, 215) and to prove that the league could compete at the highest level of hockey. According to Hunter, Alan Eagleson “got wind” of the idea and manufactured the famous 1972 Summit Series. This scenario, as far as we can ascertain, is classic Hunter “buffoonery”. The Soviet Union was fastidious in its acceptance and adherence to the protocol established by the IIHF and IOC. The Soviet Hockey Federation would categorically ignore professional hockey administrators unless the IIHF first approved of negotiations with the latter. The Lefaive files note that as late as April

1973, the Soviets had not agreed to a second series. Subsequent information suggests that Hunter and other WHA officials were incredibly naive as to the functioning of the Soviet *nomenklatura* (Cf. also, Ford, 1989). That Eagleson was not the initiator of the 1972 series is noted by Lefaive and Fisher: "On Internal Tensions - For example, post Prague in April Mr. Eagleson *who was not privy to the crystallizing of arrangements for the September series* (our emphasis) managed to wrestle most of the responsibility for it to himself by beating Hockey Canada leaders to the press" (Lefaive and Fisher. 1972, 3).

¹⁶ When teams from both leagues played exhibition matches from 1974 to 1978, the WHA teams won 33, lost 27 and tied seven.

¹⁷ In the run up to the Series, even the WHA organizational machine recognized this fact. In a letter to Jim Pattison, an important financial figure for the WHA, Pattison was informed that first and foremost, "the objective is credibility" for the league (Esling to Pattison, n.d., 1).

¹⁸ The agreement deal, in many ways, represented an explicit acknowledgement of attractiveness of the skill of European players for WHA franchises, and the importance of the European labour market that the WHA was seeking to exploit.

¹⁹ This summary relies heavily on Thordarson, 1972; Black, 1998; Ford, 1989; Granatstein and Bothwell, 1990.

²⁰ Future research will consider the grassroots interest in foreign affairs via the 1972 and '74 series and the public awareness of the less than ideal relationship between private sector professional sport and governmental Hockey Canada. Rhetorically, is there a link between this awareness and the widespread opposition to John Manley's later liberal government recommendation to subsidize Canadian-based NHL franchises with taxpayer dollars?

²¹ As examples of the lack of concern for spectator appeal in Soviet ice hockey, consider the following. In 1973-74 while conducting his doctoral research in the USSR, Cantelon was struck by the taken-for-granted assumption of Soviet hockey fans that Central Red Army (*TsSKA*) would win the Superior League championship. Indeed from 1960 until 1980, TsSKA finished first 16 out of a possible 20 times. On the rare occasion that Red Army did not win the Superior League title, as occurred in 1974 when *Kryl'ya Sovetov* won, hockey fans believed it to be an omen of bad times for the national team.

Seating capacity was relatively unimportant as long as the ice surface was adequate. The Luzhniki Palace of Sport in Moscow was the largest Soviet arena and accommodated 14 thousand persons. In 1974 this was the minimum required in order to apply for a NHL franchise in North America. Tickets for games were sold in a haphazard manner in streetside kiosks with no guarantee of every kiosk receiving a selection of tickets to sell.

Since international competitions were of utmost importance, the league schedule was modified to accommodate the international hockey calendar. National team members were absent from their clubs for many league games, while the Superior and First League competitions came to a virtual standstill from the middle of December until the second week of January. (Gary Bettman would be wise to remember this fact given his reticence to suspend NHL play during the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games). During this time, many Soviet teams travelled abroad, playing in international matches and tournaments. Over the 1974 Christmas holiday period *Kryl'ya Sovetov* and *TsSKA* toured eastern Canada and the United States. The Second National Team toured Canada, the National Junior Team competed in the Junior World Tournament in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Moscow *Dinamo* and Chelyabinsk *Khimik* were in Sweden for the Star and Aherne Tournaments, respectively. This interrupted scheduling produced the anomalous situation in which Second League clubs played more domestic games than either the Superior or First League teams.

²² The most comprehensive English-language treatment of the *nomenklatura* is Voslensky, 1984. The author defines the *nomenklatura* as follows: "The *nomenklatura* is the 'group of intellectuals' whose 'profession is leadership' and who 'by reason of that fact finds itself in certain respects in a special position in regard to those who are entrusted with doing the work.' Stalin established this 'new aristocracy' and taught it to govern. The governing class in the U.S.S.R., the controllers, the new class, is the *nomenklatura* (70).

²³ This contention demonstrates the confusion and often, outright deception of press reports from either side of the Cold War ideological battlefield. In the Canadian-based games, there is no byline for the reporter who writes about the contests. Only in the USSR, do we learn that the *Futbol/Khokkei* reporter is Evgeni Rubin. As is the case with many so-called "experts" of Soviet-Canadian affairs (Cf. Ford, 1989; Black, 1998), it is unlikely that Rubin actually visited Canada. Further, he would have been ignorant as to the degree of game sophistication that Canadians who travelled to the USSR, would have had. One of the evergreen points of contention between Canada and the USSR was the quality of officiating in the latter country. The fact that Anatoli Tarasov intentionally coached players to accept unfairness in games is evidence of this. The simple truth is that Canadian officials assigned to international contests were the best of their fraternity, were superior in their control and interpretation of the game, and were less likely to bias the outcome. Similarly, the Canadian fan was far more knowledgeable of "proper" officiating behaviour than Rubin understands (Compare for example the many NHL examples of the spectator pressure players experience playing in Canadian cities as opposed to that of playing in the United States which results in increased pressure of playing on a Canadian-based team because of the critical discerning eye of the Canadian fan). (Cf. Riesman and Denney, 1951). Further, "nasty" in one person's eyes, is verbal demonstration of "a bad call" in another's.

²⁴ Rubin implies the existence of the anecdotal evidence that the Soviet Hockey Federation was re-assessing its age-defined retirement policy for international players. Among those Canadians who impressed, were Hull and his 46-year old teammate, Gordie Howe. Ralph Backstrom, at age 37 was arguably the most consistent and dominant Canadian player over the eight games.