



Soccer as an Instrument of Nation-Building I: Germany, Western Europe, Central- and (South-)Eastern Europe. Schwabenakademie Irsee, 12.02.2016—14.02.2016.

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Soccer as an Instrument of Nation-Building I: Germany, Western Europe, Central- and (South-)Eastern Europe

MARKWART HERZOG (Irsee) opened the workshop by thanking the DFB's *Kulturstiftung* (the cultural foundation of the German Football Federation) for their generous sponsorship on behalf of the organisers and outlined the reasons for setting up the conference. The hypothesis that the so-called "miracle of Bern", i.e. winning the soccer championship in 1954, was comparable to an act of "state building" for the Federal Republic of Germany, has played a major role. Nowadays, historiography rejects this assumption, considering it an exaggerated political overloading of a sports event. DOMINIK SCHALLER (Heidelberg/Zurich) listed additional factors that had caused soccer to be considered a useful platform for the creation of national identities. Some examples discussed in this context concerned the disintegration of multi-ethnic empires (the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire), the situation in post-colonial Asia and Africa, or the striving for independence in the wake of the breakup of states formerly belonging to the Eastern Bloc.

The first panel of the conference explored the issue of national identity in the context of a Germany divided into two states. RENÉ WIESE (Potsdam) discussed how football was used by the young GDR (East Germany), presenting his analysis of newly discovered source material. In particular during the years of 1951/52 GDR sports politics relied on football encounters of the two Germanies to subvert Adenauer's policy of "integration westwards" by means of "westward sporting expansion". This strategy came to nothing for reasons of lack of flexibility dis-

played by the East German officials. After the ratification of the Paris Treaties of 1955, the GDR instead preferred a policy of isolation, as explained by CHRISTIAN BECKER (Münster). Encounters between the two Germanies were ended at all levels, very much to the annoyance of the population. Coach Georg Buschner coined the phrase "the unloved national team", which was fully integrated into the propaganda apparatus. On the football ground, however, the expected successes were few and far between, and therefore, football failed to fulfil the intended function of building the national identity of the GDR. In the years 1961 to 1974, sporting encounters between the two Germanies almost came to a standstill. After the "Basic Treaty" of 1972 had been ratified, the GDR strongly focused on a new national concept: as discussed by JOHANNES SCHÄTZ (Dresden); the emphasis was now on a socialist nation able to surpass capitalism. Much of the population did not understand or share this kind of segregationist politics. There were even consequences seen in the media reports on the surprising victory of the GDR over the Federal Republic during the 1974 world championship. In the GDR the match was not presented as the result of an allegedly superior socialism but rather discussed in the form of strictly sports related journalism. West German football clubs as well as the national team of the FRG attracted wide interest. The victory in the 1990 world championship was celebrated as a pan-German success after the re-unification of the two German states. The football nation of Germany was constituted, according to SVEN ISMER (Marburg), during the

2006 'summer fairy tale' in the guise of a cheerful and welcoming society-wide party. Nonetheless, the reporting of the tournament allegedly stylised the German national team in a negative way through disparaging comparisons with other teams. This thesis caused much controversial debate in the plenary session.

The second panel investigated neighbouring states as well as border areas of Germany. In this context, WERNER SUPPANZ (Graz) discussed the case of an Austria which had been riven by internal strife and civil war during the 1930s. In particular, the matches of the highly successful national team made it possible, at the time, to forget political differences. After 1945, the Wonder Team became the founding symbol of the Second Republic. The victory over the FRG during the 1978 world championship both fulfilled and brought to an end the development of a pan-Austrian identity; it is also regarded as the Second Republic's 'political foundation myth'. Still, after 1945 skiing became increasingly important for the constitution of an Austrian sports identity, eventually overtaking football.

In another Alpine republic, i.e. Switzerland, football managed to overcome the differences of a four-nation-state, at least for some time. PHILIPPE VONNARD and GRÉGORIE QUIN (Lausanne) analysed the journey of a national team that, at least at the beginning, was allowed to include foreign players as well towards a team which only players with a Swiss passport would be permitted to join. Nation-building was encouraged by the establishment of a national league in the year 1915, similar to what would happen in Austria as late as in 1937/38 and, thus, very briefly before the *Anschluss*, Austria's annexation to the Greater German Empire.

BERND REICHELT (Riedlingen) addressed the issue of how the strong national emphasis on football might have been underpinned by economic interests and by infrastructural necessity. His paper described the situation in the département of the Moselle (up to 1919 the German Lorraine region). Even after World War I, the region included Francophone as well as German-speaking areas. From 1919, the legacy of German football was well integrated in the Lorraine Football League through the Moselle football clubs. Frequently, a representative of the Moselle reached the pan-Lorraine championship. For commercial reasons, matches against French professional teams were extremely important to the German clubs. In general, club officials sought to behave with politically neutral pragmatism. While they were still part of the German imperial territories, they justified their ap-

plication for public grants with declarations of allegiance to the German imperial dynasty; after 1919, they rapidly switched their loyalty in favour of French republicanism. In the border area between France and Germany, football officials adapted to the results of each shift of borders so they might gain the best available benefits for their sport. Sport took advantage of the political situation rather than vice versa.

As a historian of contemporary Eastern Europe, MANFRED ZELLER (Bremen) investigated the estranged fans of the football clubs in Ukraine, who become united whenever facing a common enemy, such as the police, or at least temporarily change from right-wing racists into protectors of the Euromaidan. The example of post-fascist Italy illustrated in NICOLA SBETTI's (Bologna) paper how football may be able to overcome borders drawn within a single state by political enmity. In post-Mussolini Italy, for instance, the print media of all political factions agreed on excluding political issues from topics related to the national team. Such neutrality prepared the way for the *Azzurri* to become a symbol of national unity.

Two icons of international sport, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, were the focus of presentations by JULIAN RIECK (Berlin) and VALENTYNA KOTENKO (Kiev) respectively. Both teams have included an international squad of players for decades. And yet, each of them represents contrasting political loyalties: the royal family and the Spanish nation vs. a separatist Catalan ideology. By concentrating on one single player, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, ANDERS RAVN SÅRENSEN (Copenhagen) was able to show how the video clip of the (then Swedish, now Chinese) car manufacturer VOLVO managed to create a 'new Swedishness'. The clip very skilfully connects the history of the company with the rough beauty of the Swedish landscape and with the migrant Ibrahimovic's origins in the Balkans. Apparently, in today's Swedish pop-culture, he stands for 'inclusive otherness'.

SVEN GÅLDENPFENNIG (Vohburg) presented himself as the self-declared jester of the conference. With great emphasis and for the best of reasons, he underlined the importance of *Eigensinn* (self-will) in sport. *Eigensinn* means some kind of separation from the claims of the state which is not identical to pure *Resistenz* (resistance, immunity), since *Eigensinn* implies not only detachment from, but also cooperation with the state. The hermeneutic strength of the *Eigensinn* paradigm predominantly manifests itself in the 'sport only' attitude which proved to be superior to a thoroughly politicised

model of sport. See Sven GÅ¼ldenpfennig, *Sport, Kritik und Eigensinn. Der Sport der Gesellschaft*, Sankt Augustin 2000; Sven GÅ¼ldenpfennig, *Vom Missbrauch des Sports. Eine unendliche Geschichte erfolgreichen Scheiterns*, Hildesheim 2014. Such *Eigensinn* seemed to have completely disappeared from view, caused by the conferenceâs striving for knowledge. Therefore, GÅ¼ldenpfennig pleaded for a change of perspective with a special focus on the performative, competitive drama on the pitch, which ends with the final whistle. In order to defend a cultural asset such as sport against any form of usurpation foreign to sport or against sport, it is essential to make a politics *for* sport rather than politics *by means of* sport. The speaker further radicalised his position by declaring that the entire organisational principle of international championships, founded as it were on national teams, ought to be questioned. In this way, and only in this way, would sport be able to regain its immanent dignity, rather than being overwhelmed with tasks that it had no chance of fulfilling.

SERTAÅ SONAN and CONSTANTINOS ADAMIDES (Nicosia) used the example of Cyprus to describe how football was at times able to achieve political successes that surpassed events on the pitch. Ethnically motivated political frictions and military conflicts on the island state also unsettle sports issues. The Turkish football clubs had striven for independence from the Cypriot federation and thereby became internationally isolated. As a consequence of the principle âone country, one federationâ, FIFA may only recognize one national federation. Prompted by Kofi Annanâs suggestion, FIFA and UEFA had prepared a âprovisional agreementâ. It proposes that the Turkish-Cypriot football federation attaches itself as an associate member to the Greek-dominated Cypriot federation, which in return recognizes this form of membership. Nonetheless, Turkey, in contrast to Greece, rejected this plan. Greek fans were not particularly enthusiastic either. However, there is hope that eventually in this case football may function as the vanguard of politics.

STEFAN ZWICKER (Bonn) discussed the situation in Bohemia/Czechoslovakia before 1938/39. He styled football as an intra-ethnic conflictual community torn between rivalry and friendship. According to Zwicker, important indicators of the community-building potential of sporting rivalry may be seen on the one hand in the mass sports organisation SOKOL, which was constituted as an inter-faith and inter-party association. On the other hand, he referred to the multi-ethnic composition of the Czechoslovakian national team that had lost the 1934

world championship against Italy in the final due to the fraudulent decision of the fascist referee. Even though sport was organised in national federations of different people and religions, the championships were influenced by commercial interests and, therefore, held as cross-border events by the different clubs. Nation-building within a crumbling conglomerate of diverse states was the topic of the presentation on the case of Yugoslavia by DARIO BRENTIN and TAMARA PAVASOVIÄ TROÅ T (Graz). They tested the theory, championed unanimously in the literature of sports sciences, that a number of football matches had provided the necessary spark for the destruction of Yugoslavia and the foundation of Croatia. The speakers managed though, not least based on an intensive study of the source material, to deconstruct the âgames that have changed Yugoslaviaâ as a political football myth. These matches played a very minor role in the disintegration of the multi-ethnic state. With hindsight, they had been turned into a national heroic myth that could not withstand any precise historical test.

The conference offered numerous examples of the strength of football federations in leading teams with players of diverse nationality, ethnic background, languages, religious and party affiliations and ideologies towards a peaceful form of contest. In a best-case scenario, political and national conflicts virulent outside the pitch are disregarded during the event in the stadium. Beyond this, football can achieve at least two things: it can function as a cultural clip in multi-ethnic states (Turkey), in those ripped apart by party-political strife (Italy), in the culturally and linguistically riven (Switzerland, Italy) or those marked by religious tensions (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Yugoslavia), even though this may be possible only temporarily and symbolically. In exceptional cases, it may also exert its influence, even outside the sporting contest, in the direction of political reconciliation (Cyprus). Obviously, it lacks the power to set this kind of process in motion on its own. *Deutschlandfunk* produced a radio programme with the conference speakers, presented by Moritz KÄ¼pper and broadcast on 14 February 2016. The podcast may be downloaded from the following link:

The discussion will be continued at the conference *Soccer as an Instrument of Nation-building II: (South-)East-Europe and Overseas Countries*, 17 to 19 February 2017. The place of the event will be announced shortly. The results of both conferences will be published in English by the conference organisers, Markwart Herzog and Dominik Schaller.

Conference Overview:

Markwart Herzog (Irsee)/Dominik Schaller (Heidelberg/Zurich): BegrÄ¼nung/EinfÄ¼hrung

I. Germany

RenÄ© Wiese (Berlin): Der Traum von der Einheit â deutsch-deutscher Fussball in den 1950er Jahren zwischen politischer Rhetorik, Abbruch und RÄ¼ckzug

Christian Becker (MÄ¼nster): Von der Auswahl- zur Nationalmannschaft? Die IdentitÄ¼spolitik der frÄ¼hen DDR am Beispiel des FuÄballs

Johannes SchÄ¼tz (Dresden): Das nationale Nicht-Ereignis? Das FuÄballÄ¼nderspiel zwischen der BRD und der DDR am 22. Juni 1974

Sven Ismer (Berlin): âWirâ und âdie Anderenâ. Der âneue Patriotismusâ in der FuÄballberichterstattung

II. Western Europe

Werner Suppanz (Graz): FuÄball und Ä¼sterreichische Nation. IdentitÄ¼spolitik zwischen âLondoner Wunderspielâ und âCordobaâ

Philippe Vonnard (Lausanne)/GrÄ©gory Quin (Lausanne): The Making of the âNationalâ Team, 1890â1914. Analysis on the Swiss Nation-Building before World War I

Bernd Reichelt (Riedlingen): Die âGrande Nationâ und der lothringische FuÄball nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Die ehemals deutschen FuÄballvereine in Lothringen im Spannungsfeld von nationaler Inszenierung und sportlichem Eigensinn, 1918â1939

Nicola Sbetti (Bologna): The âAzzurriâ as a uni-

fying symbol in a politically divided post-fascist Italy, 1945â1950

Markwart Herzog (Irsee): FÄ¼hrung durch Kloster Irsee und die Euthanasie-GedenkstÄ¼tten

Julian Rieck (Berlin): Real Madrid zwischen âFranco-Clubâ und âBotschafter Spaniensâ

Valentyna Kotenko (Kiev): Cream Meringues vs. a âdivine t-shirtâ. Catalan Identity in the Spanish Sports Discourse

Anders Ravn SÄ¼rensen (Copenhagen): Zlatan IbrahimoviÄ and Volvo. Pushing the boundaries of Swedishness

Sven GÄ¼ldenpfennig (Vohburg): Der politisch neutrale Eigensinn des FuÄballsports â eine Standortbestimmung

Constantinos Adamides (Nicosia)/Sertac Sonan (Nicosia): Soccer as an Instrument of Nation-Building in a Reunified Cyprus?

III. Central and (South-)Eastern Europe

Stefan Zwicker (Bonn): Zwischen interethnischer RivalitÄ¼t und âfreundschaftlichen VerhÄ¼ltnissenâ â der FuÄball in den bÄ¼hmischen LÄ¼ndern/der Tschechoslowakei bis 1938/39

Manfred Zeller (Bremen): FuÄballmaidan. Die ukrainische Nation in sozialen Netzwerken recht-sradikaler Fussballfans, 2013/14

Dario Brentin (Graz)/Tamara PavasoviÄ TroÄjt (Graz): Football, Nation and Identity. Nation-Building and Nation-Branding through Football in Post-Yugoslav Countries

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

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