

Sport as an actor of big politics: Football and its social function

Biljana Prodović Milojković

Metropolitan University, Faculty of Applied Ecology - Futura, Belgrade, Serbia

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Abstract

The author finds the reason for writing the paper in the current holding of the World Football Championship in Qatar, as one of the biggest sporting events bigger and more significant than the Olympic Games themselves. Often this great global event is seen as the last place where the small can defeat the big, thereby losing the illusion that the rich and the big always win, and that “David can beat Goliath”. Taking the facts into account, football is still primarily a game of the poor, in which the largest number of footballers came from the margins which, according to the author, reflects its greatest social strength.

In his work, the author intends to describe and explain the world in which we live through the prism of not only previous championships. It is through the metaphor of football that the author deals with the issue of global order, with the fact that the main issues of this work are more cultural than economic. As the work is of a theoretical nature, the author's intention is to devote special attention to the consideration of physical culture and sport as a factor of socialization within this theoretical analysis, with a special emphasis on the sociology of football.

Keywords: sociology of sport · sociology of football · globalization of football · social and individual values · politics and culture war

✉ Correspondence:
Biljana Prodović Milojković
biljanaprodovic@gmail.com

Introduction

"Before the war, football was played by the poor and watched by the rich, while now the rich are playing and the poor are watching"

(Aleksandar Tirnanić - Tirke)

"Football, c'est full impro, quoi"

(Philippe Decouflé)

Referring to the study *Sport: Critical Sociology*, authored by Richard Giulianotti, in the signature of the domestic edition of *Clio*, the author reads the strength of sociological theory through all its classics - such as Marx, Durkheim, Weber, but also the sociologies of their successors - Adorno, Horkheimer, Parsons, Merton, Goffman, Ritzer, Pierre Bourdieu, and others. Although they did not deal with sports in their theories, in their sociologies one finds many concepts that are significant for the analysis of sports itself (Giulianotti, 2008). It is in this part, among other things, that a synthetic definition of sport is given, as well as a number of creative and significant contributions to the contemporary sociology of sport. In it, the author emphasizes that sport is a "direct reflection of social reality" - warning that knowing the characteristics of sports actually introduces us to the characteristics of a society (Giulianotti, 2008).

As a recognized social institution, sport influences the formation of certain "professional statuses", in which each person who engages in sports activities takes his place. Sport includes an individual in social communities and public organizations as a full member of society and forms certain social relationships. As a social factor, sport preserves and strengthens the essential mechanisms of a person's social and cultural life, forming him as socially competent. It is a type of self-determination and self-affirmation of the individual, which penetrates deeply into the subculture, shaping the lifestyles of the individual (see: Coakley, 2007; Skembler, 2007).

Sport is a social phenomenon like any other (Giulianotti, 2008). Ponomarev, one of the leading sociologists in the field of physical culture and sport, names about forty functions specific to physical culture and sport as a social phenomenon (Ponomarev, 1974). Awareness of physical culture and sports, as a social and individual value, as one of the means of socialization in itself can become an important incentive for the identification and mobilization of reserves for the development of physical culture and sports in our country, but also for the emergence of new trends in the formation of

public awareness. and personal motivations that contribute to the active development of the value of physical culture and sports by society and individuals. Sport in itself is increasingly penetrating the everyday life of all sections of the population (Delaney, Madigan, 2014). Sport, as an important social phenomenon, permeates all levels of modern society, and thus has a wide influence on the main spheres of society: on national relations, business life, social status, shapes fashion, ethical values, and the way of life of people. It is well known that sport contributes not only to the comprehensive and harmonious development of the individual; reducing the number of occupational diseases and injuries; preserving and strengthening the health of the nation and the country's genetic stock; but also the formation of social activity of people and stability in society; as well as the sharp reduction of negative phenomena in society, especially among young people.

Hence, there is an increasingly urgent need for special scientific research in order to study the interdependence of the influence of physical culture and sports activity on the process of forming the needs of motivation and value orientation of individuals and different social groups (more in: Prodović, Milojković, 2020). Value orientations focused on the "active structure" of leisure precisely indicate the highest level of personality formation of an individual/nation/state. The British sociologist Skembler, against the ecumenical/transistorist definitions of sport, puts forward the position according to which "sports activity finds its meaning in the culture of which it is a part and therefore can be fully understood only by taking into account the context of that culture" (Skembler, 2007: 21).

In this context, Ivana Milovanović and Sandra Radenović emphasize "that contemporary sport is largely shaped by market relations in mass society, pointing to the importance of sociological research on the mutual effects of sport on society and society on sport, with a critical reaffirmation of the issue of contextual knowledge opportunities and social conditioning of sport" (Milovanović, Radenović, 2020: 237-254).

As an illustration of the possible development of the sociology of sport (Koković, 2000; Krsmanović, 2006; Milovanović, 2017; Pavlović, Vejnović, 2014; Žugić, 1996, 2000), we can cite the emergence of the sociology of football, which appears as an "answer" to the great popularity of football today (Armstrong, Giulianotti, 1999; Giulianotti, 1999). The subject of sociology of football - as a sociological discipline about a type of sport - tries to critically reflect on

various aspects of the mutual relationship between society and football (Hesketh, Sullivan, 2020: 1-19). It relies on the understanding and critical operationalization of key concepts from the field of sociology of sport. It seeks to develop critical knowledge about how in modern societies a type of sport has “fought” to become “the most important secondary activity of man”. In research, that discipline also tries to develop specific theoretical approaches, but also to critically point out the consequences in social life that football and activities related to it leave on the structural and developmental problems of modern societies (Milovanović, Radenović, 2020: 249).

Sports in general, including football, as without a doubt the most popular and widespread discipline, became an integral part of national culture by the middle of the 20th century. This is confirmed by the fact that watching sports competitions in the last century covered the largest part of the average individual's free time. Referring to the past, Scambler points out that for centuries only relatively wealthy citizens participated in the games, considering that only they could spare the time necessary for extensive preparations for the games. In addition, he presents the fact that women slaves and foreigners were not allowed to participate in sports competitions (Skembler, 2007).

Football as a game similar to today's appeared in the 19th century in England as a product of English culture that spread throughout Europe and the world through colonization and trade. Before it, similar ball games trace their roots back to Antiquity, and games with many similar elements appeared at parties in Florence as early as the 16th century (Vrcan, 2003). In the last fifty years, according to Nenad Đurđević, football has “become the most popular sport on the planet”, and is often referred to as “the most important secondary thing in the world” (Đurđević, 2015: 1047). According to Vrcan (2003), football is the most relevant European sport in terms of media, fans, and politics.

In this sense, activities such as the game of football and everything that accompanies the game of football have a much greater social impact than is usually given to them. Dejan Zec (2011: 50) specifically warned about this in his work. Given that “social” can only be understood through the mutual relationship between macro and microstructures, that means, on the one hand, structures, norms, values, rules and rituals, systems and orders of power, and on the other hand, situations, and actions, it is no coincidence that sociologists and scientists from the field of culture

have repeatedly dealt with football because it is the cultures of movements that are a suitable object of observation to make social practice obvious (Klein, 2012: 7).

Like other phenomena of popular culture, football came into the focus of scientists in the sixties of the twentieth century, attracting attention primarily because of its massiveness and popularity. Today, dealing with football as a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of social sciences and humanities represents a relatively widespread academic practice throughout Europe and the world, as evidenced by a large number of study programs, books, and professional journals dedicated to the study of topics related to football (Đorđević, 2009). Thus, football in sociology was and remains a favorite subject of observation and interpretation within certain sociological theories (Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu). In Europe, for example, there is almost no type of sport on which so many scientific works have been published, as is the case with football (Klein, 2012; Radenović, Milovanović, 2019: 28-29; Milovanović, Radenović, 2018: 54-56 ; García, Welford, 2015: 517-528).

Today, it is one of the biggest, not only sports but also any other attractions or manifestations that are offered to us on the market as entertainment or relaxation for spending free time. For Vrcan, “...the increase in the attractiveness of football is a phenomenon that can be far better described and commented on sociologically than explained” (Vrcan, 2003). In this context, the negative context given by McIntosh (McIntosh, 1963: 17, cited according to Skembler, 2007) is mentioned here when he points out that there was marked commercialization, considering that the heroes of the games became trophy hunters, according to which by the end of the fifth century BC era, the title of “athlete” ceased to be an honorable profession, and instead, this title became a mark of a separate class that, due to a special regime of life, was completely different from other/ordinary citizens (according to Skembler, 2007).

Although this popularity is highly visible, it is not superfluous to point out some quantitative indicators, which are at the base of this “football magic”. According to data from 2012, only one English football club - Manchester United (Andrews, 2004) has as many as 659 million registered fans worldwide, which makes it the most popular football club in the world. Of the 659 million registered fans, 325 million fans are registered in Asia, 108 million fans in China, 173 million in Africa and the Middle East, and the rest

are fans of that club who are registered in Europe (while specifying that only 1% of fans of this club made up of fans from Great Britain) (Radenović, Savović, 2018: 676). Today, the “Red Devils” have as many as 23 percent of the votes, followed by Barca with 18, followed by Real (16), Chelsea (8), Liverpool (7), Milan, Juventus (6), Arsenal (5), Bayern (4) and Inter (3). Of course, the predominance was brought by the Asian market, especially Iran, where 56 percent of people like United. In Europe, United is number one in Britain, Ireland, Turkey, Iceland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia is the only European country where Milan is the most loved. In Messi's Argentina, as many as 42 percent of fans are with Barca, 15 percent are with Real, and it is interesting that, despite Neymar, Brazilians prefer Real (36 percent) (taken from: *Telegraf.rs*). The above data is only an illustrative indicator of the influence of football on the daily life of “ordinary people” who devote their free time to “following” the football matches of the club they support and who to some extent shape their identity by belonging to certain fan groups (Radenović, Savović, 2018: 676).

Hence, it is clear that the enormous popularity of football and its influence on global society is an indispensable topic in the sociology of sport.

Sociology of sport as a special sociological discipline deals with issues of context and social conditioning of sport (Koković, 2007), observing sport as a form of culture, as a spectacle. It studies the impact of society on sport, but also the return impact of sport on society, therefore, issues of context and social conditioning of sport (Radenović, 2015: 43). Sociologists of sport generally believe that the sociology of sport investigates sport in order to learn as much as possible about society (Kuljić, Koković, 2012). There are also opinions according to which the mutual relationship between sport and society is the backbone of research in the contemporary sociology of sport (Radenović, 2014).

Football as a seismograph of cultural war or peace

Observing the world globally, the fact that the sociology of football is not very different is visible. Football certainly belongs to the working class. This does not mean, on the other hand, that there is no aristocrat in him. Of course, there are, but much fewer. In the case of the United States of America, for example, even less often. There was an “inversion of the class structure of the game” (Foer, 2006: 181), where, except for immigrants from South America, the working class was not interested

in football at all. This is confirmed by surveys of sports equipment manufacturers, which show that children of the middle class and wealthy parents play football, i.e. they come from a strong middle class and above. Such cultural divisions in America have often been the subject of summation by intellectuals. For example, in the 80s, there was talk of a “cultural war” - various battles over textbooks, abortion, religious education in schools, sponsoring the arts, but also the rift between those parts of the country that accepted football as their pastime and those that did not (see: Kuper, 2007). Such a distinction “lays bare an underestimated source of America's cultural divide: globalization” (Foer, 2006: 182). Football fans say that such critics are “xenophobes and reactionaries intoxicated with a sense of cultural superiority”, representing the “sports wing of conservatism” (Foer, 2006: 183).

In the context of the aforementioned view, two clear trends of globalization in the USA can be distinguished. One, which believes in the essential foundations of globalization and religion - as a reflection of one world opinion. This group shares cultural values with Europeans, considering themselves part of a cosmopolitan culture that transcends national borders. On the other side, there is another group that believes in the so-called “American exceptionalism” - the idea that America's history and unique form of government have given this nation a unique role, as someone who should be above international laws and institutions. For them, football is a symbol of America shedding its traditions to join the way of life of the rest of the world.

From all this, we can point out that it is no coincidence that this game - football - is a stumbling block in the cultural war (Kuper, 2007).

As for politicians, sport is a “national hobby” capable of uniting society with one national idea, filling it with a kind of ideology, people's desire for success and victory, it also has its other side. Namely, looking at the historical data, we can see that throughout history, and especially during wartime, football has been extremely important. Despite the uncertainty of the state itself, war destruction, human casualties, prisoners, and material shortages, football stood out as one of the most popular sports. Even in such circumstances, he showed extraordinary vitality, which represented the reform of sports in the spirit of the new order. The sole aim of sports was to train young people to be useful members of the new society. Calling historical facts to help, we can see that sport, as an extremely important social activity, had a significant

impact during pre-war Yugoslavia. Apart from the fact that he "...occupied the public and had as his goal, not only to promote a healthy lifestyle and physical and mental fitness and endurance, he also had a prominent place in the political and patriotic education of citizens, especially the younger generations, who through sports associations offered (read: imposed) the ideal of chivalry, patriotism and loyalty to the state and dynasty..." (Zec, 2011: 50-51). "Football's extraordinary capacity to channel the emotions and frustrations of the population, on the one hand, and the possibility to use it for propaganda purposes, and to provide the same population with cheap entertainment and short-term relief from the otherwise difficult position it was in, on the other hand, indicates that German authorities and their domestic collaborators were interested in keeping sports competitions and clubs under control and influencing the football audience through clubs and players" (Zec, 2011: 51).

That political action through sport is possible, even very effective, is indicated by the very important social features of sport (Vrcan, 2003: 235-253):

- 1) cohesive, given that communities, teams, and fraternities are easily created through sports clubs;
- 2) educational, because it is easier to carry out political and ideological indoctrination through communities;
- 3) propaganda, because by propagating the sports successes of a team (in our case, a nation), the efficiency, organization, and functioning of a political system are presented;
- 4) preparatory, because citizens physically and mentally prepare their bodies for war efforts through exercise and sports activities;
- 5) relaxation, because sports allow the authorities to offer cheap entertainment to citizens, in order to divert their minds from political and military events.

Football represents interaction in the game, the tension of which is not reflected in the relationship between the emotion-motion poles but consists of the struggle for victory or defeat. Precisely based on the final result and its uniqueness, football creates clear calls for identification and arouses emotions, but also causes effects that, for example, dance cannot cause (see: Klein, 2012). While the influence of dance is that the audience can be moved, surprised, and even seduced, but still mostly remains a passive consumer, in football it is a much more active integral part of the event with a great deal of power of manipulation. She is often said to be the

twelfth player. Perhaps it is precisely on the basis of this uniqueness that football is capable of being "a seismograph of social and political relations, unlike dance, which is always ambiguous, and it is precisely based on this ambiguity that it possesses a mysterious, enigmatic, erotic, seductive and subversive power that makes it 'To the "others" of modern society" (Klein, 2012: 14).

Contrary to the previous understandings, which are always positively valued, in sports a large number of sports disciplines are also considered mastery, almost art, so top athletes are sometimes called artists and masters; two other concepts of sport are often negatively qualified. These are sports understood as business and sports as politics, and even "continuation of war by other means" or "mimicry of war" (Kovačević, 2020: 100; Vrcan, 2003). A large number of sports branches already in the second half of the twentieth century brought moments of strong influence, even the dominance of politics over sports and the use of sports for political purposes. That component of sport is present in all international competitions, and it completely prevailed in the totalitarian systems of the twentieth century (fascism, socialism), which tried to prove the superiority of race or social order through sport (Sage 1979: 5). The association of football fans with daily politics in the countries of the former Yugoslavia is a distinctive and very striking feature of this subculture in the last two and a half decades (see: Đorđević, 2014: 925-940; Čolović, 2000; Vrcan, Lalić, 1993; Brentin, 2013). According to Čolović, the specificity of the role of football fans in the territory of the former SFRY in the later war events was primarily reflected in the fact that football hooliganism in a certain sense served as "pre-military training" (Čolović, 2000: 348; 2002a: 456-481).

Yugoslavian society, rocked by the crisis which was manifested on the one hand by the growth of nationalist and secessionist trends, and on the other by a deep economic depression, showed signs of serious destabilization, which, among other things, was reflected in football and football stadiums, where the usual fan intolerance gradually consolidated in the ethnic dimension (Brubaker, 1996: 3).

Very often, observing the stadiums in Serbia, during football matches, one can notice a large number of banners and slogans on various topics, which often have nothing to do with football. Likewise, "chanting of derogatory and violent songs aimed at members of other religions and nations or sexual minorities is a common *mise-en-scène* of the

vast majority of football matches” (Đorđević, 2014: 926). This is a relatively unusual phenomenon in other European countries, where fan groups, even if they are politically profiled, do not give the impression of organized political formations that, through special “announcements”, express their position on the foreign policy of the country in which they live. Many articles and books have been written about the manifestations of political views in stadiums and it is not worth listing them. Far less attention was paid to the reasons for cheering when political action in the form of cheering is removed (such as the manifestation of Catalanism at every Barcelona game) (Kovačević, 2020: 98).

We have examples in practice that different systems (especially socialists) used football as a means of propaganda (Mijatov, 2020). The fact that the name Dinamo existed for a football club in Moscow, Kyiv, Dresden, Tbilisi, Zagreb, and Bucharest is used as proof of this. The same was true for the military club traditionally called CSKA, which also existed in almost every socialist country. Even in the former Yugoslavia, there were clubs oriented towards political orientation. Dinamo was a Ustasha club, Zvezda was a Chetnik club, and Hajduk and Partizan were Yugoslavian clubs. Similar divisions were also present in other countries where, for example, Barcelona is a Catalan club and Espanyol is a Spanish club. Apart from the national one, class ideology also appears: for example, the Sarajevo club *Željezničar* is supported by the working class, and the Sarajevo club by the middle class (Mijatov, 2020; Radenović, 2021: 533-536). From the side of sociological imagination, all these and similar divisions are extremely important, because in addition to determining fan behavior, they also significantly influence the development of the personality of the fans themselves.

It is football that makes all social and cultural differences disappear with the passion behind the aura of the event. “The fascination with the football game itself was, and is, in the experience of communication beyond speech” (Klein, 2012: 8); because football “represents a turn towards a performative society, towards a society that has lost its structure and destabilized, and which needs and produces flexible and stable subjects” (Klein, 2012: 11).

Referring to the existence of different theories about the origin and origin of sport, we can see that some find the origin of sport in play, others see its origin in work, while still others believe that the beginning of sport should be sought in the field of combat, which would mean that sport in was initially

an organized form of warfare training (Skembler, 2007). If the relationship between war and football is understood in such a way that football is not a continuation of war, although many perceive it as its replacement, then the film *Coach* can be summarized in the sentence: “The Germans, justifiably, lose wars, but also justifiably, win in peace”. Puriša Đorđević did not utter this sentence, not a single character from the film uttered it, but the entire film can be reduced to it (see: Kovačević, 2020: 58).

However, as a social phenomenon, football cannot be responsible for the course of any war, and the relationship between the conflicting parties. Although, very often, exactly, through football, all those contradictions that exist in a subdued and devastated society are broken and clashed. This is also true when it comes to our (Serbian football), it was one of the mirrors of Serbian society and is therefore considered worthy of research and analysis by numerous researchers.

Globalization of football to explain the world

Representatives of the theory of modernization, originating from Karl Marx, which was refined in the 60s by academics like Daniel Bell, proceed from the position that progress in the economy inevitably leads to progress in terms of politics □ liberal, tolerant, and democratic. Proponents of the globalization theory (Beck, 2000) add that everything will be assimilated into an increasingly homogeneous mass of entertainment culture, in which “...television comedies and film romances connect different races and a new community...”. Such business”... will give rise to multiculturalism □ United Colors” (Foer, 2006: 13).

This global process has not, and will not, bypass sports, and with it, football (Allison, 2006; Biti, 2008). Despite all the disadvantages of globalization, it has succeeded in football which no one else has been able to do □ it has brought it to the farthest corners of the planet (Giulianotti, Robertson, 2007). The globalization of football was made possible by the revolution in electronic communications (Giulianotti, Robertson, 2004; Giddens, 2005: 37-38; Eriksen 2007: 82-84). It was not until modern means of communication that football spread to those countries that were mostly on the sidelines during the history of this sport, having other sports as leaders. A communication tool that was contemporary with the origin and first expansion of football, radio, made it possible to follow football in those countries where football became widely accepted. The new global expansion began with television transmissions, which were made possible

by the terrestrial distribution of the television signal. The third revolution was achieved by the establishment of satellite transmissions in the late sixties and early seventies of the XX century (Kovačević, 2020: 135-136).

In the later combination of satellites with Internet distribution of television broadcasts of football matches, the complete coverage of the planet with football was completed. The possibility of watching football matches contributed to the spread of football to those parts of the world where football was not particularly popular, which was reflected not only in watching television broadcasts but also in the mass practice of football. Large and rich countries, such as the USA and China, are real examples of football expansion through the media, which paved the way for the complete acceptance of football both as a top business and as entertainment for the broadest sections of the population. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the globalization of football was completed and a balance was established between the competition of nations (states) and the competition of internationalized clubs (Kovačević, 2020). Thus, technological progress began to change the approach to football over time. From a few very talented and passionate individuals, football becomes accessible to all. On the one hand, almost everyone is familiar with British sports pages and players via the Internet; and via cable channels ("Fox Sports Word") suddenly become connoisseurs of European and Latin American football. It seems overnight, matches from Madrid, Paraguay, Holland, France, Brazil, Argentina, and England become available... It's hard not to be amazed by the power of megabrands (Manchester United and Real). All of us, whether we want to admit it or not, have been gripped by the globalization paradox - with an indescribable desire that allows individuals, corporations, and countries to reach the whole world further, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before. Globalization can also be recognized on the field itself - wherever we turn, state borders and national identity seem to have been swept into the dustbin of football history (Foer, 2006: 8). It is precisely from this context that football has perhaps advanced the most in the process of globalization than any other economy. If we take into account globalization trends - for example, baseball is a loser in globalization, given that it has not made the slightest effort to sell itself to a global audience, nor has it shown any desire for the game. To illustrate, according to the American Sporting Goods Association, the number of teenagers playing baseball dropped by 47% between

1987 and 2000. In the same period, one could see the expansion of the growth of interest in football - so that, for example, by 2002, 1.3 million more children were playing football than baseball. The story is also confirmed by the information that the viewership of some irrelevant game of the national football league is higher than the world championship in baseball (Foer, 2006: 185).

The globalization of football has led to a great increase in the finances related to this sport, which has made globalized football from "the most important secondary thing in the world" to a phenomenon that "explains the world" (Foer, 2006).

Concluding remarks

Sociological studies have shown that sport, to a greater extent than other types of social activities, is the carrier of specific social relations: the presence of communication with people who have common interests, belonging to a certain group, the carrier of a certain subculture, the influence of behavioral norms adopted in it; assuming certain roles through the process of imitation and identification. In this context, it is necessary to refer once again to the important social function of football, as a popular sport around the world, which also has an impact on communities. One of the aspects of football and its social function is the power of gathering and togetherness, as football matches and tournaments often attract large numbers of fans who gather to support their favorite teams. It can create a sense of belonging, pride, and unity in the community. Certainly, an important function of football is to promote a healthy lifestyle, given that it is a type of physical activity that requires movement, endurance, and teamwork. Playing soccer can encourage people of all ages to be active and lead a healthier lifestyle. Many schools, sports clubs, and organizations use football as a means of promoting health and exercise. As football is a team sport that requires communication, cooperation, and mutual trust between players, it also significantly affects the development of social skills: such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving; which can be useful even outside the field, in everyday life. It can also be a means of inclusion and integration of different groups of people, regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, or social status; which can significantly contribute to reducing social differences and promoting equality. Its special function is to influence national identity and pride, which can contribute to raising the country's self-confidence and reputation (Đorđević, 2006: 22-34). On the other hand, football is also a huge industry

that creates jobs, attracts tourism, and generates revenue through ticket sales, sponsorships, media rights, and other commercial activities. All these social functions of football indicate its wider importance in society and the impact it can have on individuals, communities, and even society as a whole.

The globalist processes that have inevitably taken all forms of sport under their wing indicate that the new globalist order nevertheless accepts traditionalist culture - in which the pride of their culture is freely expressed - without fear that such an act will be sanctioned. Examples of such things are the clubs Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad. There are certainly traditional hatreds between the biggest rivals. All these examples only show how much globalization has failed to diminish the local cultures of this game. In some contexts, it may even have strengthened them (Skemler, 2007).

The very claim that sport is a substantively expressed sphere of general social interests and a factor that strengthens the integrity of society speaks in favor of the social nature of sport as a specifically educational factor in personality formation.

His role, from all of the above, is not small in that football managed to do what many other disciplines failed to do - to combine the incompatible.

Thus, for example, the defeat of state, national, or ideological domination over sports is reflected and depicted in the scene in which the German officer von Steiner stands up and enthusiastically applauds the mastery of Pele, who scored the equalizing goal, which is accompanied by astonished and reproachful looks from the other German officers (Kovačević, 2020: 101). Its effect continues, precisely because "... European interclub competitions have done more for the integration of Europe at the level of world life and everyday life, than all the meetings, declarations and resolutions of the Council of Europe and the European Union" (Vrcan, 2003). That's how football □ as a socio-cultural phenomenon succeeded, even for some people, even for a short time, in turning their thoughts away from the harsh reality and thus helping to survive the various negative consequences of the sociological and political war.

The current holding of the World Cup in Qatar will serve as an indicator and an example of the indescribable power of football (Colovic, 2002); which is reflected in the statement of the first man of FIFA, Gianni Infantino, who stated:

"We are not so naive as to think that football can solve the world's problems." But the World Cup offers a unique platform, with an estimated five billion viewers. Let's use this opportunity to do everything possible to end all conflicts".

The point is that, according to Kasapinović (1942: 5) "... Morality, national and chivalrous spirit, order and discipline should be the principles on which our sport must rest from now on".

In the end, the author, aware of the weakness of the manuscript due to its theoretical but not methodological foundation, nevertheless mentions that the presented topic is intended for a wide scientific public i.e. to all those who find it tempting for repeated readings and deepened cognitive insights. A handful of facts and new perspectives on some issues, but also current affairs important for the analysis of the reality around us and everything that surrounds us, makes the work before us interesting for academic circles, where it can be useful for the student community and the wider readership. With this theoretical presentation, the author supports the fact that before the war, football was played by the poor and watched by the rich, while now the rich play and the poor watch!

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