

# FOOTBALL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY: THE CASE OF HUNGARY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY\*

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European football was characterized by special features, making it specially suited for an important social role. In the late nineteenth century, athletic events rarely implied a rivalry of various clubs but of individual contestants with more or less identical social backgrounds. Football, by contrast, became a real mass sport, not only in terms of the number of spectators but on account of its social composition, in which significant masses of people become indirectly involved in a symbolic fight for possession of a collective space. Fans do not only support individual players on account of their personal qualities, but rather identify with a team and the meanings incorporated in football teams often express sociologically relevant distinctions. The contest of two football teams becomes the confrontation of the social meanings which they carry and of the social groups they appear to belong to. Indeed, football, perhaps more than other sports, has always been related to an intricate field of forces involving politicians, sports leaders, sports specialists, journalists, patrons, fans, and, of course, players.

Attachment to a team, 'fanship', always develops as a more or less reflected cluster of various elements of identity, knowledge, attitude and emotion; motives of the individual life-path or effects of collective embeddedness may equally be part of it. The common specificity of all these elements of individual and collective identity is that they are part of the web of relations of the grandstand thanks to the presence of a well-

defined antagonist. The football stadium is a constructed space of social interaction in which team identity is constantly redefined and reinforced. Due to the structural constraint of the stadium, those elements come to the fore which are relevant in relation to the given opponent. In this situation the connotations and meanings rising to the surface, often unintentionally and unconsciously, may include a few that in normal situations would be intolerable.

The teams can be differentiated in clear terms from the very beginning. Their playing styles, prestige, the values associated with them sometimes interpretable in political contexts, the ways in which the identification of fans is expressed, the social composition of the public, are all rooted in a deep and long-term socio-historical process. If one wishes to understand the significance of football and the emotions, passions, and complex meanings that surround it, it is advisable to go back in time at least to the end of the nineteenth century and start studying the social functions of the game from the establishment of the first clubs. This essay will focus on the transformation of the clubs, and examine the incessantly changing composition of their social bases. It will also concentrate on the supporting political forces (sometimes imposed on them), as well as the identity construction mechanisms, in order to offer a one hundred-year social history of football in Hungary.

### **The Beginnings**

Around the turn of the twentieth century, in the festive atmosphere of the thousandth anniversary of the country's foundation, sports clubs were mushrooming. The network of socio-occupational, religious-ethnic groups and identification mainly rested on local grounds with each team attached to a town, neighbourhood, district or group of districts. Very soon, however, other connotations also clustered around these local elements of identity, forming a centre of collective social identification which though not distinctly defined was relatively well understood by all those concerned. Prior to, and partly during, the nineteenth century, the sports followed by the aristocracy were primarily those in which competition was conveyed via trained animals or animals condemned to death. Greyhound racing or hunting were all outlets of male virtue hardened in fighting and implying murderous drives. They were activities in which the adversaries

found it beneath their rank and dignity to mobilize their own physical strength. The noblemen, dressed elegantly, showed off on horseback, jumping to trumpet flourishes, wielding swords, and startled the wounded wild boar from his lair at its angriest. Galloping wildly on his fiery steed, thundering Baron Miklós Wesselényi in a helmet is the Hungarian embodiment of this type. At the same time, this form of fighting marks a major step forward in the process of civilization from the original model: real warfare. From the nineteenth century onwards only animals are killed, and with decreasing frequency, too: the newer male sports attest to a further sublimation of male virtue. It is symptomatic how pigeon shooting gradually gave way to clay pigeon shooting. And compared to the earlier disdain for the 'sweating nobleman', a fencing, rowing, boxing or swimming aristocrat was forced to deploy his entire physical potential, that is, engaging and placing at risk his own body. These sketchy references suggest the circumstances that largely determined the preconditions of one of the firsts sports organizers in Budapest, Ignatz Clair of Vienna. A former captain of Napoleon's guard, he attempted to introduce German gymnastics to the Hungarian capital in the 1830s, an activity totally opposed to the traditional way of life of the aristocracy. The sportsman who worked out tableaux vivants and decorative exercises, who began building his body consciously in his childhood, who was in control of himself, whose goal was, instead of defeating others, to build his body gradually, consciously, and systematically in concerted cooperation with others similar to himself - was eventually the carrier of an ascetic bourgeois ethos. The NTE (Nemzeti Torna Egylet - National Gymnastics Club) founded upon Ignatz Clair's initiative in 1840 was mainly the sports club of the middle strata of German culture on the way to Magyarization whose attempts to introduce gymnastics in schools were motivated by similar ideas. The major social conflicts of the second half of the nineteenth century are reflected clearly by the the two main sports of the time: gymnastics based on self-training and athletics, centering around male rivalry. The Hungarian nobility modelling the British example preferred athletics pursued by 'free, modern, christian gentlemen in the open' to 'fixed, conservative, Jewish-German chamber exercises'. At that time, athletics included, apart from walking, running, jumping and throwing, boxing, wrestling, weight-lifting, rowing, skating, swimming and badminton. And, what is more, the promoters of athletics regarded gymnastics as part of athletics, hence

seeing its separate institutional system as perfectly redundant (needless to say that the representants of gymnastics did not accept this position). Abreast of the international trends of the modernization of sporting activities, the Hungarian aristocrats founded an exclusive club in 1875 with Count Miksa Esterházy at the helm of which only Hungarian Christian gentlemen were allowed membership. Obviously, in this situation all those open to modern sports with a different background, that is, those whom the Christian gentlemen did not admit among themselves, also hurried to establish their own sports associations. In the 1880s the sports clubs partly founded on local and partly on group-specific principles began cropping up in Budapest. UTE (*Újpesti Torna Egylet*: Újpest Gymnastic Association) and BTC (*Budapesti Torna Club*: Budapest Gymnastic Club) were set up, in which the initially predominant gymnastics was gradually paired with other athletic activities. Breaking away from NTE, a group mainly of bourgeois Jews, who deemed gymnastics too conservative, founded the MTK (*Magyar Testgyakorlók Köre*: Circle of Hungarian Body Trainers) in 1888. Compared to the more locally organized but socially heterogeneous UTE and BTC, MTK-with the word 'Hungarian' in its name expressing the assimilating motives of Jewry-stood for 'universal Hungarianhood' free from local particularities. The neologism 'body trainers' was meant to reject the spiritual halo surrounding the concept of gymnastics, while 'circle' confronted both elitist 'club' and conservative 'association'. Thus, MTK was the first middle-class sports club which set as its main goal the exercise of modern and free athletics. The founding and financing liberal Jews of Budapest's downtown, mainly businessmen and professionals, wished to set up a sports circle in which 'everyone, without discrimination, had a chance to pursue the 'latest' sports at a high level'.

Athletics, updating the dispositions of noble masculine rivalry, and gymnastics, which incorporated the rationality of the ascetic way of life of the rising middle classes, can be reduced to a common denominator despite representing two contrasting worlds and life-styles. The gymnast, runner, wrestler or swimmer are all at one in fighting themselves and their opponents single-handed. These sports are not collective but individual activities of self-conscious upper and middle-class members. By contrast, football is a mass sport because it can be pursued by several persons and supported by masses of people in the stands. The teams as carriers of

identity can satisfy the distinctive collective needs of different social strata.

Football divisions of gymnastic and athletic clubs were organized one after another in the 1890s. New clubs were also born, mainly as a result of the football craze. The most important for subsequent development was the establishment of FTC (*Ferencvárosi Torna Club*: Ferencváros Gymnastic Club) in 1899. The name of the club tied to the capital's ninth district implies the peculiar duality of the founders' social background and aspirations. The concepts of the Latin-English 'club' and German 'gymnastic' and the reference to a district inhabited mainly by workers and the lower middle class attest the peculiar mixing of local patriotism and universalism, exclusivity and democracy. The nickname of the club 'Fradi' used to this day refers to the neighbourhood called Franzstadt populated mostly by people of German origin. The colours of the team-white and green-evoke the national colours red, white and green except for red (since red and white were the colours of the BTC), indicative of the national commitment of the lower middle class urban groups of German origin.

### **1900 – 1945**

The Hungarian Football Association was founded in 1901, and nearly every year since then championships have been held. In 1901 and 1902, five teams entered the first league and from 1903 to the outbreak of World War One it was eight or ten. The first two championship seasons saw BTC on top, the oldest club with the oldest football section, but from 1903 the rivalry of FTC and MTK dominated the first league: between 1903 and 1929, one of these two teams were always the champions. This rivalry eventually reflected the competition of the Hungarian Jews and the Germans for assimilation. The outstanding achievements of the Hungarian national team, based on the players of these two clubs can be interpreted as compensation for a kind of 'inferiority complex' vis-a-vis the Austrians.

The social differences of the teams were also manifested in their playing style. BTC played 'kick and rush' since the team members were all strongly built, technically unskilled athletes and gymnasts who kept

running forward, simply knocking over any opponents who got in their way, often hitting the ball together with the goalkeeper into the goal (which was, at that time, allowed by the rules). The FTC players also started along this line, playing 'with guts', forcefully, though heading and dribbling were soon to appear. The MTK were the first team to copy the elements of contemporary Scottish football: their footballers played with 'brains', 'elegantly', feinting 'scientifically', passing the ball 'along the grass'. The charismatic president of the club Alfréd Brüll engaged a Scottish player (Edward Shires) and, later, in 1911, a coach (Robertson). The FTC also followed suit, indicating that its players were keen to learn from MTK, and with some success.

The rivalry of the two clubs was of course not restricted to the football ground but carried on in the intricate material and symbolic universe enveloping it. It was obviously not accidental that the MTK inaugurated their own stadium in 1912, just a year after the opening of Fradi's ground in Üllői street. The MTK stadium, which was twenty minutes walk from that of the Fradi's, was a shade more up-to-date than Fradi's then world-standard stadium with a capacity of 20,000. It is perhaps also no accident that Brüll and the MTK high command chose the Hungária(!) road for the location of the stadium, demonstrating as it were the efforts of the pro-MTK middle-class Jews not to lag behind the Fradi fans in the race to assimilate.

For the fans, the Fradi-unlike their great antagonist-played with its 'heart', not its brains. At the beginning of the century, the concept and connotations of the 'Fradi-heart' implied quite openly the opposition of a sensitive, good-hearted, compassionate, enthusiastic petty-bourgeoisie who felt Hungarian, as against the coldly calculating, businesslike, alienated big bourgeoisie of foreign origin of the MTK. It is possibly not too far-fetched to presume that an important component of the self-identity of a Fradi fan was the petty-bourgeois ethos determined by the semi-peripheric social situation predisposing those in it to moralizing. This identification is based on the pattern of the 'honourable', uncompromising', 'right-minded', 'grass roots' 'honest-to-God Hungarian', a pattern that does not merely govern behaviour in the stadium but may also become an important constituent of off-the field politics.

However, the composition of the players of these football teams by social origin does not fully tally with the prevalent images. Undoubtedly, there was some difference derived from the different neighbourhoods, as would-be Fradi players were scouted or recruited by the coaches mostly from the squares of the ninth district, while those of the MTK could come from other parts of the city. Their class identity, however, did not differ much, since most came from worker and lower middle-class families. It is notable that more than half of the MTK players and about a quarter of the FTC footballers were Jewish. It is not true at all that Jews were only represented by the MTK, and it is false to claim that the FTC was a 'christian' team and MTK was Jewish from the beginning.

There is no doubt, however, that with the passing of time, obviously not independently of the ever harsher and more and more institutionalized anti-semitism of the ideological and political spheres, the confrontation of the two teams was increasingly fed by the Jew vs Gentile polarization. The intensification of this polarization reflected the external political-ideological situation rather than the sociological composition of the two teams. Between 1916 and 1925, MTK won one amateur championship after another (after 1913, the FTC did not top the table until 1925/26); after the establishment of the professional football league in 1926, MTK, renamed Hungária(!), was demoted to second or third place, with only three first places until the outbreak of World War II (in 1929, 1936 and 1937). Between 1926 and 1941, clearly the most successful team was Ferencváros, winning seven championship titles. On five occasions, the rising UTE was placed first.

The waves of Aryanization in various spheres of economic and spiritual life also affected the microcosmos of sport. In 1939, in the course of replacing Jews with Gentiles, an extreme right-wing government commissioner was appointed to head Hungária, and a year later the team was dissolved. (The other 'Jewish team' of the first league, the National, committed to assimilation down to its name, was also banned.) In this situation, the leaders of MTK called on their fans to support Vasas. The seemingly astonishing symbolic union of the 'bourgeois Jewish' and 'labour social democratic' clubs can also be interpreted with the help of common features derived from their places in the ideological space: social non-conformity, marginalization, anti-fascism. After Aryanization and

the exclusion of its great rival, Fradi became the official team of the ever more extreme right wing regime to such an extent that in 1944, during the German occupation, Andor Jaross became its president, who, as the minister of the interior during the Hungarian fascist regime of the cross-arrow party, was a chief organizer of the deportation of the Jews. After the war, as an arch war criminal, he was sentenced to death and hanged. The ambition of the short-lived pro-nazi government was obvious: by exploiting the popularity of the Fradi, they wished to enhance their own dubious glory.

It is however oversimplifying to declare that the supporters of the Fradi were only and exclusively extremist in politics. Undoubtedly, the proportion of votes for the cross-arrow party was very high in the 9th district (Ferencváros) of Budapest in 1939. The Fradi fans of Ferencváros: artisans, retailers, skilled factory workers often of German origin, admired the technology of the Third Reich and could be drawn under the spell of the pro-German extreme right, often by rediscovering their German roots. The small timers of plebeian affinities who were disappointed by the social democrats could sympathize with the right on account of its egalitarian ideology and populist-anti-semitic nationalism. Petty bourgeois rightist populism, however, was not only averse to the 'non-Hungarian' Jewish middle-classes but also to 'greater Hungarian' official revanchism and irredentism of the upper strata.

The supporters of the Fradi cannot simply be tied to the extreme right because it was far broader than the 9th district population of the capital. Back at the beginning of the century, before the professional league was established, FTC was a plebeian team of the suburbs as against the downtown big bourgeois MTK. Since for nearly thirty years FTC was the only team (until UTE in 1930) that had a say in shaping the table, the social groups identifying with 'uptown populism' became almost necessarily Fradi fans. A great majority of the football fans in suburban neighbourhoods, which had no first-league teams, took the side of Fradi against MTK. This is not meant to diminish the significance of the Hungarian-alien, or christian-Jewish opposition, which was also reflected by the Fradi-MTK rivalry. It is merely to emphasize that superimposed upon this national-religious-racial polarization, one may find connotations of the centre vs (semi)periphery, and (big) bourgeois vs. petty

bourgeoisie antagonisms as well.

It also has to be remembered that up to the 1980s only clubs of the capital vied for the top places in the Hungarian championship almost without exception: the first provincial team, Rába ETO of Győr, did not win a fully valid title until 1982. (It makes sense to regard the war-time titles of Csepel and Nagyvárad as well as the 'incomplete championship' won by Győr in 1963 as valid but the latter result was possibly not free from manipulation.) It is thus almost natural that a rural supporter would also root for a first-league team of the capital apart from the local eleven. In the knowledge of the social connotations implied by the Budapest teams, one cannot be surprised to find that the overwhelming majority of rural supporters took the side of the Fradi.

Owing to this broad socially based support, Fradi could not unambiguously become the representative team of a regime shifting ever closer to fascism. During the war, this role was filled by the teams connected to the Aryanized war industrial centres of the country, such as Csepel sustained by the Manfréd Weiss Works and UTE and Gamma supported by the Gamma Company. (The outstanding performance of UTE and Csepel was obviously not independent of the fact that the players of these teams were not called up, or if they were, they had short service tenures as 'nurses'.) It is perhaps not completely unfounded to suggest some political machination behind the series of slightly suspicious one-goal victories which led the newcomer Csepel to the top of the table twice during the war, in 1942 and 1943. Whereas in the last championship season of 1944/45 (interrupted by the advance of the front) when the representative team of the reannexed areas, NAC of Nagyvárad (today: Oradea, Romania) came out on top, Csepel finished as low as ninth.

### **From the communist take-over to 1956**

Between 1945 and 1948, football could preserve some autonomy, although the privileged clubs of wartime managed to keep their advantageous positions. After the communist takeover, however, the entire organisation of sport was reshaped to fit the new ideological requirements. In the first division nothing took place without being thoroughly dependent in some way on the will of political top dogs in the Rákosi regime.

According to an apparently authentic anecdote, on a Monday morning in 1949, Mátyás Rákosi asked his secretary what the outcome of the Fradi-Vasas encounter had been the day before. Unfortunately for him, the secretary said he didn't know because he had been absorbed in far more important political questions over the weekend. Stalin's best pupil then gave him the following lesson: sport was an important political issue, especially when a 'leftist' and a 'rightist' team were clashing. Sport was chiefly a political issue for the power holders. In 1950 football teams were brutally transformed, with the hardly concealed intention of gleichschalten, subordinating each team to a ministry, economic branch or regional unit. In other words, the communist regime tried to deprive the teams of their earlier semantic contents, material bases, and often, of their fans. In the course of the redistribution of these material and symbolic resources, the regime deemed FTC as the most perilous among the leading club teams, on account of its ominous contacts with the extreme right and its outstanding popularity. The year of the turnover (1948) found the club in a very uncertain position: the threat of liquidation was looming large. But the Communist Party did not dare to accept the odium of abolition. Although in retaliation for the 'fascist provocations' of some hardcore supporters (who sang anti-semitic songs), the team was suspended from the championship for four weeks, the enormous outrage made the decision-makers change the penalty to one of closing their ground. The strength of FTC was shown by the fact that even under such circumstances it was capable of winning the championship with a margin of 11 points ahead of second-placed MTK. In 1950, however, the team was all but eliminated: their traditional green and white colours were changed to white and red and the best players removed to set up the team of the Hungarian Foodworkers' Union, first called ÉDOSZ and then Kinizsi from 1951. (The name of the 'Turk-hammering' Pál Kinizsi holding Ottomans in both hands and mouth was found suitable by both nazis and communists for football teams. In the Nazi period, Vasas was also renamed Kinizsi. From the fifties until the late eighties, hundreds of barracks and one of the most popular beer brands were also named after this hero.)

In 1949, when all major football clubs received a decisive political figure as director (the rank of a team can best be assessed by the political position

of its director), the president of Ferencváros became Ferenc Münnich, the chief of police of Budapest at that time. His appointment was possibly attributable, apart from his weightless figure and subordination to the central officials of power, to his German name and origin. In this way, at the beginning of the Rákosi regime the enfeebled team carried - in a peculiar form - reminiscences of its former 'Swabian' affinities. (Münnich, anyway, was an exception for two reasons: very few communist leaders of German origin can be found in this period, and almost none who did not have Hungarian original or adopted names. The members of the communist power elite largely of Jewish origin tried to assume 'Hungarian national' characteristics. The adoption of Hungarian names was one method alongside others such as wearing a moustache, using popular speech, cultivating rural dialects and mixed marriages.) After 1950, when FTC became ÉDOSZ SE (then Kinizsi), its leaders came from among the managers of the food industry who played no role in top politics, and the team performed accordingly in the championship (though rising again nearing 1956).

The communist leaders had no reason to take similarly intolerant measures against MTK. At the same time, the 'Jewish character' associated with the team caused some reservations (peculiarly enough, they changed the colours of the team to red and white, trying maybe to avoid any possible connection from the blue and white colours of the Israeli flag). It is undeniable, however, that in 1950 the Textile workers' Union became the supporter of the club, modifying the name of MTK to Textiles, which can be seen as a sign of symbolic continuity since from the moment of its foundation the club had been primarily supported and maintained by Jewish textile manufacturers and merchants. A similar sign of continuity was revealed by the fact that in the early '50s, István Vas, the president of the planning office, and as such, a leading member of the party elite, was appointed to head the club. He was one of the very few party leaders who did not veil their Jewish origins, and even dared to voice his Zionistic sympathies on certain occasions. In 1951, however, the MTK became the official team of the most deeply hated and feared power organ of the regime, the secret police, or ÁVH. Its name changed to Bástya [Bastion] in 1951 ('Hungary is not a crack but a powerful bastion in the fight against imperialism', said the official slogan) and Vörös Bástya (Red Banner) in

1953. With this institutional background and name, the connotations implied by the club all but verify a nearly perverted continuity between the old and new, for in the public mind the ÁVH was the terror organ of the 'Jewish-Communist power centre'. For football fans, logically, the team of the Jewish elite of the old political system became identical with the team of the Jewish elite of the new system. Thus, the basis for the reproduction of anti-Semitic feelings against the team held its ground.

In the fifties, the FTC-MTK rivalry lost its derby character, since MTK was too powerful. But while the number of local MTK supporters was cut back radically by the Nazi genocide and the emigrations FTC still remained the most popular team. The measures taken against it even created a feeling of moral superiority for the club and its supporters. In the period's general climate of intimidation and omnipresent control no manifest anti-Semitism or political dissent could be voiced (the last such instances being at a match in 1948 as a result of which the FTC ground was closed for four weeks). These passions were to burst to the surface in the more liberal atmosphere of the Kádár era with increasing frequency. The favourite team of the regime was without doubt Honvéd, the reshaped team of the former Kispest (their colours-red and black-modified, for a change, to red and white). The team of this fundamentally lower middle-class, petty bourgeois suburb whose fans mostly supported Fradi of the top teams was regularly placed in the lower part of the first division table from the launching of the professional league in 1926 until 1948. By transferring the best players to it in 1949, however, the political elite created the most outstanding team of Hungarian football history. Indeed, at that time, Honvéd was probably the best team in the world. Subordinated to the 'people's army', the team's name (literally defender of the country, that is, soldier, and specifically, the name of the Hungarians fighting for independence in 1848-49) sufficed for a political platform. These officially offered elements of identification implicitly stimulated the plucking of the strings of strictly suppressed nationalism. The association of the name with 1848 contributed to rendering the new-type militarism represented by the people's democratic army acceptable.

From that point onwards, the expectations of the communist leaders were more or less realized. Honvéd (or more precisely, the Hungarian national eleven) was capable of demonstrating the appearance of the superiority of

communism over 'imperialism' and thereby contributing to the legitimation of the power of the party. The meteoric rise of the often low-born, not infrequently illiterate footballers parading in officers' uniforms, their extraordinary privileges, their fabulous financial means by the standards of the time and their worldwide fame offered miraculous prospects for the common people within the context of the people's democracies. Many believed that these footballers exemplified the unlimited possibilities of social mobility under communism based on merit.

Totalitarian systems always and everywhere like spectacular mass demonstrations which afford the opportunity for the euphoric expression of emotional harmony between the people and the regime - a sort of circus-ring legitimation. May Day processions, workers' meetings, mass singing spectacles or the pioneer life all fulfilled the same function in the fifties as sports in general and football in particular. Football proved far more effective than the rest, for in the long run the forced participation in actions organized by the workplace or school only enhanced the antagonism of those mobilized from above. Football matches, by contrast, offered possibilities for complex emotional and passionate identification for the people deprived by force of their traditional group attachments. In this capacity, football matches were perfectly unique in the years between 1948 and 1956. No wonder then that tens of thousands thronged to them. And although, in theory, teams representing various official actors and institutions of socialist production, such as miners and railwaymen, the people's army and the police, the food and textile industries were vying on the field, it is easy to see that the fans had the opportunity to attribute their more traditional local, ideological or symbolical meanings to the teams. Obviously, ÉDOSZ and Textiles continued to be Fradi and MTK for the fans - together with all the historically attached connotations. In addition to the traditional elements, superimposed upon them as it were, the new meanings remained politically legitimate alternatives in the ideologically constructed symbolic space. The omnipotent party thought itself powerful enough to control the physical energies and symbolic forces mobilized by football. It also deemed the game a sufficiently significant tool of legitimation to invest immense amounts of money into it. That explains the stadium-building and reconstructing spree in the first half of the fifties: the grandstands of most first-division clubs became renewed and fitted out to

seat more spectators. In 1953 the Népstadion (People's Stadium), with room for one hundred thousand, and one of the most modern football arenas by international standards was opened in Budapest. Much was also done to maintain the national football selection in order to promote the communist propaganda of success. The 'golden squad' of the fifties with eight players from Honvéd and three from MTK were worth the privileges they got (Honvéd players: Grosics, Lóránt, Bozsik, Budai II, Kocsis, Budai I, Puskás, Czibor. MTK players: Lantos, Zakariás, and Hidegkuti.). In 1952, they won the Olympics and in 1953 they were the first continental team to defeat the English at home (6:3). The logic of this string of successes and the political significance attributed to it provides the ground to interpret the boomerang effect of the unexpected defeat (2:3 against West Germany) in the final of the World Cup in 1954. Practically for the first time in the history of the regime the outraged and disillusioned fans expressed their anti-communist sentiments in their demonstration. In that situation, the regime deemed it wiser to silence and gloss over the incidents instead of acting against them. (A peculiar paradox to the Hungarian football disaster was the West German football euphoria after the final. Their victory over the Hungarians was the first symbolical act of international weight suitable to satisfy German aspirations of national greatness and identity so badly damaged in the world war.) The third privileged team of the regime was Újpesti Dózsa - recruited from the reformed UTE. This club also had a complex of past and present meanings as its name alludes to a once separate town north of the capital populated mainly by industrial labourers and Jewish (petty) bourgeois people on the one hand, and to the feudal landlord György Dózsa, declared by the communist regime to be a national hero, the 'revolutionary leader of the peasantry's class struggle' in the 16th century, on the other. The symbolism of the name was thus directed at locality and a sort of leftist populism. The fans, however, saw it as both working class and 'Jewish' in character. What is more, the team was not devoid of some rightist-militant fans traceable to its wartime support by the Aryanized Gamma Works. It can be presumed that the club was ascribed to the Ministry of the Interior, precisely the police force, in order to offset the above implications and enhance its 'people's democratic' character. This move also relegated Dózsa into the family of the Dinamo teams of the police forces in 'comradely countries' sustained by the interior ministries (such as the Dinamos of Moscow, Kiev, Bucharest,

and Berlin). (The name of György Dózsa was obviously chosen for his name's initial letter-'D' like Dinamo!-apart from its ideological connotations.)

During the 'democratic reorganization' of the clubs, the regime tried to allocate some of the available resources to other teams as well. This was naturally done without jeopardizing the position of the privileged, but even so the competition between the clubs implied the possibility of (calculated) chance. In addition to the distribution of players and resources, the Party also saw to it that the names of clubs should serve the 'building of a socialist society'. Among provincial clubs the local Dózsa and Honvéd teams appeared, together with names taken from branches and slogans of 'socialist industry': Bányász (Miner), Vasutas (Locomotive), Haladás (Progress), Építők (Builders), Előre (Forward). In spite of that, Budapest remained the decisive theatre for football during the new regime. Proof of that is the fact that only on two occasions did one of the eight provincial teams (Dorogi Bányász (Dorog Miner)) finish as high as fifth in the national tournament involving fourteen teams.

Mention must be made of the Vasas (Ironworker) team towards whom the communists showed a somewhat ambivalent attitude. The name of the Angyalföld team-a suburb of Budapest epitomizing left-wing opposition in the previous regime-was the only one to remain unchanged, hence it represented a sort of locally well definable leftist continuity. However, there was some suspicion in the minds of the ruling officials caused by the team's social democratic affinities. (Let us remember: the Social Democratic Party was simply devoured by the communists in 1948.) Though they did not take the risk of disbanding it, they divided the funds in such a way that it could never finish ahead of the advantaged Honvéd, Bástya, and Dózsa.

Let us finally mention the modification in the meaning attached to the Csepel team. Paradoxically enough, the communists could handle far more easily the club compromised by the support of the greatest Hungarian war factory in World War II. Unlike Angyalföld, Csepel had no strong and unambiguous social democratic traditions. Moreover, the occasional extreme rightist connotations stuck to the football team of Csepel were so far removed on the ideological spectrum from the extreme leftist ideology

of the new regime that they could be easily concealed by the legends of 'red Csepel', that is, the actions of the Csepel proletariat of the anti-fascist 'red zone' in the outskirts. It is noteworthy, at any rate, that in the wave of renaming, the club received the name Csepel-Vasas, thereby being subsumed in the family of ironworkers and metallurgists distinguished as the proletarian vanguard of socialist construction. Compared to its position in the war and in the coalition years, the team's performance gradually declined.

### **Football during the 'Kádarian consolidation'**

Studying the world of football is especially informative because it sheds light on several characteristics of the everyday routine of East-Central European political regimes. This also applies to the Kádár regime whose different strategies related to distinct social fields can be reconstructed well through an analysis of it. The slow increase in the autonomy of football precisely reflected the ambition of the power centre to shift toward 'consumer socialism' controlled by the state. Under the social contract offered by the regime, the relative autonomy of individuals and institutions increased in return for political indifference and obedience. However, the relativity of this autonomy cannot be stressed enough, for its basis was the contrast it professed as against the brutal totalitarianism of the fifties. Using the historical contrast as a tool of legitimation (which was complemented and then substituted by the easily obtained effect of a comparison with surrounding 'comradely socialist countries') proved more or less successful as long as the connotations the regime pushed to the fore were not undermined by western influences. The peremptory and crude interventions of the fifties gave way to a more sophisticated sport policy manipulating with subtler and more indirect manoeuvres as a sort of 'meritocratic pluralism'. Through the allocation of resources monopolized by the Hungarian Football Association, the power centre continued to modify the power relations within the first division teams. However, these power relations were already basically moulded by the inner rules of the football world; the chance of deviating from the state kept increasing with time. Thanks to this policy, FTC and MTK, the two teams with the oldest and most deeply rooted historical traditions, got back their former names and club colours and thereby-as the policy-makers hoped-the resentment of those identifying with these clubs was deflected. The main

goal of the regime was to pacify the huge camp of Fradi. From the late fifties, elements suggesting the local importance of teams were reemphasized again. Provincial teams continued to belong to an economic branch of regionally decisive 'socialist enterprise', but compared to the previous regime, they had more chance to express their local characters. From among the leading post-war teams, Újpesti Dózsa and Budapesti Honvéd remained under the supervision of the police and the army respectively until 1990, by way of an indication that the reorganization and reinterpretation must remain within the limits allowed by the government.

Even a cursory glance at the championship tables reveals that in the Kádár era the privileged position of MTK and Honvéd ceased. Although in 1958 MTK still had the chance to win the competition, it became weaker and began to fall down the table (dropping out of the first division in the early '80s), remaining an average mid-table team until the 1987 championships. Honvéd was also rocked by the emigration of its best players and by the withdrawal of its state promoted advantages. It had to wait until the mid-1980s before it could finish first again. Yet Honvéd in general played a more important role than MTK did. The third privileged team of the previous regime, Újpesti Dózsa, by contrast, rose to an ever more favourable position, winning the championship twice in the 1970s and eight times in the 1980s, almost always making it into the final round. The most successful team of the Kádarian period, however, was Vasas handled with some care by the Rákosi regime as they finished top of the table five times from 1956 to the end of the 1960s. The first of its victories was in the first, incomplete championship series in 1957. It is needless to emphasize the symbolical weight of this fact. As for the once glorious Csepel, in 1959 they managed to top the table but after that fell so much that in the 1980s they twice dropped out of the first division.

Although the Kádár regime had official reservations about Fradi, the team's position changed considerably from the '60s. It can be taken as a subtle indicator of the process of consolidation that Fradi won the championship in 1963, the very year that many of the political prisoners jailed after 1956 were released. It is not accidental that the fans of the winners chanted: 'The champion is Ferencváros, the top man is Kádár János.' (*Bajnok lett a Ferencváros/ fasza gyerek Kádár János.*) It was typical that by the end of the decade, Fradi had won another three titles,

becoming the second most successful team after Vasas in the period. It should also be remembered that the largest football investment in the 1960s and 1970s was the reconstruction of the FTC stadium in Üllői street in 1974.

It is a novelty of the Kádár era that the provinces gained more and more momentum in the first division. Prior to 1926 only the teams of the capital city and its suburbs were involved in the first division. A provincial team, Nagyvárad which was practically identical with the Transylvanian selection, finished on top in 1944, but only under politically dubious circumstances. It is therefore doubly significant that the Győri Vasas won the (incomplete autumn) championship of 1963, though not without some hustling. This victory was then twice repeated by the team in the 1980s, now called RÁBA ETO. Not only the footballers of the city of Győr performed well in the championships. What was earlier inconceivable-provincial teams outdoing some of the great Budapest elevens-became common from the 1960s. A reflection of the successes of socialist industrialization was the miners' team of Tatabánya, Salgótarján, Komló or Dorog, and from the 1970s Videoton of Székesfehérvár, and later Rába ETO of Győr. All would finish among the very best. Another sign of the rising weight of the provinces is the change of the former one-way flow of players and coaches into the capital, replaced by movement in the opposite direction as well. The ambition of the regime to regulate the competition, to tilt the Budapest-provincial axis back towards equilibrium, can be traced here. In fact, however, the predominance of Budapest remained prevalent throughout, proven - apart from the championship placings - by the rare involvement of provincial players in the national team before the 1980s.

Searching for the causes of 'meritocratic pluralism' in football, the first to be mentioned is that football's function as a legitimating factor for the regime lost much of its weight with the rise in living standards and the emergence of the second economy, characteristics of the emerging 'consumer socialism'. The relaxation of the cold war also decreased the significance of the game, since in a more peaceful international climate there was less justification for investments effected to express symbolic superiority. In this situation, the chance for the (re)emergence and freer motion of non-controlled, non-calculated values and identities implied by

football naturally increased. For example, the regime abstained from exploiting the charismatic personage of the uncrowned emperor of Hungarian football in the sixties, Flórián Albert, and refrained from removing the most popular Hungarian footballer from his place as centre forward for the Fradi.

If football did not seem so important to government then it could not expect to receive high-priority investments. In other words, the functional weight of football was in inverse proportion with its growing autonomy, and its inner layout becomes more and more determined by the power relations of local, and even personal interests. What in the 1960s and 1970s took place in the centre, dependent upon a more or less arbitrarily constructed contest of symbolical meaning shifted in the 1980s to the arena of real struggles between local institutions with financial, political and administrative resources. That meant in practice that provincial teams financed by socialist heavy industry were pushed farther and farther back by teams supported by large enterprises of 'red barons' with 'good socialist connections'. It was also unusual in the light of the precedents that a club organized around a large enterprise in the provinces would defeat the teams of the police force or the army because they were able to invest their resources more efficiently in football than the central organs of law enforcement. That does not necessarily mean that the Rába Works of Győr or Videoton of Székesfehérvár had more money than the police; it merely indicates that the police no longer considered the support of football indispensable compared to its other tasks.

In a period of three decades, the autonomy given to professional football was limited by firm boundaries. The outstanding performance of Vasas in the 1960s, for instance, can certainly not be separated from the fact that the post-Stalinist regime looked upon this team as their official favourites and Kádár himself often turned up for their matches. Purged of its former social democratic associations, Vasas became the representative of the 'working class' destined to build socialist society, that is, the social stratum postulated as the mass basis of the system, with its local identities in the Angyalföld also being reinforced. And when Vasas was pushed into the background, it gave way to Újpesti Dózsa which was emphatically and admittedly to proclaim the glory of the police and (as a member of the 'Dinamo family' surviving until the fall of communism) the law-enforcing

agencies of the Soviet-type systems. But the excellent performance in the '80s of Rába ETO and Videoton should not be ascribed to the innocent outcome of coincidences, for underlying these golden provincial teams one would find top leaders of large enterprises in strong positions who could mobilize the necessary resources for the teams, lobbying in the uppermost circles of the party elite. Or, to cite yet another example: while the regime supported most leading teams except Fradi until the end of the 1980s, MTK, carrying risky connotations, was condemned to the purgatory of mediocrity. Kádár and his collaborators were afraid that the anti-semitism which a successful MTK might entail would mobilize uncontrollable elements of national identity which might endanger their own positions. Since popular belief still identified the Rákosi regime with 'Jewish communism', the leaders of 'consumer socialism' tried to avoid being relegated to the uncomfortable position of the heirs of 'Jewish power'. (In this sense, the championship title of MTK in 1987 could, with some grandeur of interpretation, be seen as the harbinger of the collapse of the system. If this seems too strong, it can certainly be asserted that the rise of MTK reflected a radical decrease in the efficiency of central control.)

### **Symbolic violence in the stadium**

In the Kádár regime, the meanings derived from the opposition of Fradi and MTK lost much of their earlier richness and intensity, but their basic connotations, though after several modifications, did survive. The changing of these meanings is undoubtedly also connected to the fact that for some twenty five years Fradi and MTK were in different brackets: while the former was vying for the championship title, playing in international cups and having many of its players in the national team, the latter never finished higher than sixth. FTC remained the most popular team, while MTK's fans dwindled: the holocaust and the emigration of most of the Jewish community after 1945 and then in 1956 undermined the support for MTK. And it should not be forgotten that MTK was the only team without specifically local attachments. The MTK stadium, built at the beginning of the century close to the Kerepesi cemetery, railway lines, vacant lots and slums was not located as it was because masses of MTK fans lived closed by but because of the national symbolism by the Hungária road and first and foremost because of the closeness of the FTC stadium. A child born

in the 1950s or 1960s was more likely to support Budapesti Honvéd or Újpesti Dózsa on the basis of his background rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> districts respectively even if his parents were averse to the political system. At the same time, becoming an MTK fan out in the street, without these local ties, was almost impossible. The chance of being an MTK supporter on the basis of family background was also weakened by the fear of anti-semitism. Parents often concealed their origin and pushed their children towards other teams, even the FTC. In the 1950s and 1960s some Jewish families changed from MTK to Újpesti Dózsa, partly owing to emotional ties linking them to the communist police and partly to the one-time 'Jewish references' implied by Dózsa, and again, because it was the team carrying the least antagonistic symbolic contents as well as having the best chance of victory. All of these factors exerted a cumulative influence.

In spite of all that, MTK is associated with connotations of a 'Jewish team' to this day, although in the past forty years or so there have been few players of Jewish origin. But the collective memory of the fans has preserved several examples of anti-Semitism displayed by their Fradi opponents. In one incident a group of FTC fans burnt newspapers in front of the rabbinical training college in Budapest chanting 'we've defeated Israel' after an FTC-MTK match in the early '60s. Many also remember the paradoxical manifestation of discriminative identification when just after the 1967 six-day war Fradi fans celebrated the MTK in the People's Stadium, thus expressing their joy over the defeat of Arabic countries under Soviet influence. And while from the '70s relatively few anti-Semitic actions against MTK are known, in the mid-'80s such incidents multiplied. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the often shockingly brutal texts are only shouted by the hard core of Fradi fans. It is just as possible to hear abuse of the Jews and references to the gas chambers among the fans of Dózsa, Vasas or Honvéd when their team is confronted with MTK. Just as it may happen in MTK's encounters in the provinces that - in keeping with the archaic verbal and visual schemes of popular anti-Semitism - local fans send a goose with a blue ribbon into the field, accompanied by appropriate rhymes about the geese vendors. (In the last century, Jews were often associated with geese in Hungary because village Jewry traded in their feathers and liver.)

Several historical factors might explain the re-emergence of these atti-

tudes. The intensity of antagonism is obviously influenced by the position of the rival: while MTK was in the lower reaches of the table and its opponents stood a good chance of beating them, there was no ground for a major emotional-passionate investment. The moment, that MTK proved dangerous (as in the second half of the 1980s), the sense of threat generated more extreme reactions in the fans. It might also have contributed to the spread of symbolic and real violence in the stadiums that in the '80s the regime gradually lost much of its police state character. This change was widely experienced from less aggressive actions against dissenters to a more tolerant, or at least more timid police attitude towards symbolic violence in the stadiums. This formerly unknown state of freedom led almost automatically to the emergence of collective aggression, especially in a context in which the chance of providing an outlet for emotions and self-identification on a large scale was enhanced by the symbolic presence of an opponent or enemy. The emergence of discriminative passions was also facilitated by the fact that the crowds in the stadiums had changed fundamentally in numbers, age, and social composition: the earlier populous public of widely different social groups and age gave way to a smaller and more youthful public. With the passing of time, attendance dwindled to a fragment of the earlier interest: while in the 1950s and 1960s a hundred thousand would fill the People's Stadium for a match between Dózsa and Honvéd, in the 1980s even the Fradi stadium was half empty. Owing to the absence of the middle-aged and older generations belonging to the middle classes (which, in turn, can be ascribed to the increased burdens of this generation, the spread of other forms of recreation, the plummeting of the level of football, and, partly, to the increased aggression in the stadiums - just to mention a few of the well-known causes), the weight of the lower or underclass strata increased. Thus, a few hundred 'football-hooligans' in a crowd of some three thousand can determine the atmosphere of a stadium in a way not possible earlier. This applies especially to cases when the main aim of their presence is (verbal) confrontation taking the ritualized form of collective aggression. This passion may be directed not only against the players of the opposition and their supporters but also against the referee, the police and at times even against their own players or coach. The aggression can be intensified to brutality if its targets are persons (Gypsies, Romanians, Yugoslavs, Russian football players) or fictitious entities ('Jewish team') all tinged by xenophobia.

Another explanatory factor can be outlined by exploring the question what attitude the young Fradi fans assumed towards the establishment. As is known the supporters of the FTC soon spread beyond the boundaries of Budapest's 9<sup>th</sup> district called Ferencváros. Attachment to the FTC, therefore, expressed no local affinities in the first place but a sort of 'general Hungarianness'. The 'national' character of the Fradi stems from the social heterogeneity and geographical decentralization of its supporters. A telling sign of the strength of this identity is the fact that its provincial fans often back Fradi in opposition to their own local team. If in this context we concentrate on anti-Semitism as one of the most characteristic forms of symbolic aggression, this phenomenon can be interpreted in at least three different ways.

Firstly, these verbal actions can be seen as manifestations of a code prevailing in any society in which a social group perceived as alien are postulated in the dichotomy of 'we' and 'they', and set on the opposite pole. In Hungary, the groups denoted by this code included mainly Germans or Austrians in the last century and Jews or Gypsies today. It never applies to actual persons but to the generalized enemy image of a social group of blurred contour. When, after a match, some fans reciting cruel anti-semitic slogans were interrogated by the police, it turned out that they had never met a Jew in person and actually they had no real problem with Jews. What they said revealed that it was the structural constraint of the stadium which imposed upon them pre-mediated ideas offered by the opportunity, without actually 'meaning wrong'.

Secondly, the anti-semitic symbolic actions can be interpreted with reference to the self-image of the fans. A Fradi fan would most probably declare himself to be 'everyday', 'normal', a 'decent Hungarian' person, the simple son of the nation in opposition to the 'establishment' - that is, 'those above', the 'power-holders', the 'office', 'officialdom', 'representatives of the regime' (in the given concrete situation, the stadium police, guards, referees). This self-image structured around the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' reflects the social experience of ordinary citizens in a totalitarian regime. The basis of this experience is that the perceived relations and distinctions of a person's life are deformed, invalidated and homogenized by the brutal and inhuman social reorganizations 'conducted from above'. And since in the everyday stereotypes 'those above' are often postulated

as 'Jews', hostility towards the establishment is highly likely to appear in the form of anti-Semitism.

Thirdly, the slogans chanted by the people on the stands may also be expressions of racial anti-semitism. There are presumably some young people who have directly learnt from their parents about the 'underjanitors' revolution' of the Hungarian fascist period and their behaviour in the stadium is fed by nostalgia for those dark years. That dreadful period of history may appear in the legend of their families as the miraculous reshaping of more traditional social arrangements when the relationship between the exploiters and the exploited shift in favour of the interests of 'those below', the 'people of the street', and when the freedom of theft, burglary and murder implied the ecstatic experience of upsetting the social order, of retaliating against injustice, the historical revenge of the lumpen proletariat. From this angle, the uncontrolled and uncontrollable anti-Semitic rage is to be seen as the aggressive ritual of the intellectually, economically and socially poorest 'sub-society' groups acted out at the red-hot moment of emotion and passion which football provides. The targets of this rage were not only the Jews but anyone who represented the 'order' dictated from above.

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