



Erasing, Rewriting, and Propaganda in the Hungarian Sports Films of the 1950s*

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In the years following World War II, the radical structural transformation of Hungarian society and the establishment of the communist dictatorship affected the functioning of sports as a social subsystem. At the time, the Hungarian public still remembered the sporting successes of the Horthy era (the Berlin Olympics, the 1938 FIFA World Cup) from the previous decade. Thus, the Sovietization of sports as a social subsystem had two intertwining goals in Hungary: in addition to creating a new institutional framework for sports, the regime also had to ensure good results, which were regarded as a matter of prestige. Like the daily press, the schematic film productions of the era were also characterized by the ideological utilization of sports. A typical example of the schematic style was *Civil a pályán* ["Try and Win," 1951] by Márton Keleti, which used classical comedy elements to bring together the world of the factory and the world of the soccer field. Keleti's film was intended to popularize a centralized mass sports movement of Soviet origins called "Ready to work and fight" and to communicate the party's message to professional sportsmen who were considering emigration. *Én és a nagyapám* ["Me and my Grandfather," 1954], a film by Viktor Gertler, employed the sports motif in the first cinematographic representation of the one-party state's pioneer movement. The two versions of *Csodacsatár* ["The Football Star"], also by Keleti, reveal a lot about the changes that the role of sports in state propaganda and political image construction underwent after the loss to West Germany in the 1954 FIFA World Cup Final and then after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. My paper seeks to interpret these films within the context of the era's political and sports history.

Keywords: films and Communism, sports and Communism, football, soccer, Ferenc Puskás, the Golden Team

Introduction

Péter Esterházy, who played an active role in forming the literary memory of the communist dictatorship in Hungary, suggests in one of his texts which was published in a symbolic moment (Christmas 1989) that the relationship between the social-political climate of an age and its sports achievements cannot be understood as the product of a simple causal connection:

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The relationships between society and soccer are nevertheless enigmatic. A lot of books have been published in Hungary in the last few years which draw parallels between the anomalies in soccer and society, and rightfully so. Why would soccer be good if the setting is corrupt, if sports cannot function cleanly, because this function is always tainted with extraneous considerations, that is, political aspects. Yes. Still, the greatest Hungarian team of all time, which was a team formed of players who retained their individuality, a team which had not only spirit and elegance, but power, which brought reforms to the whole soccer scene of the age, this team was born under a total dictatorship.¹

Today, when the memory of the Hungarian national team, the “Golden Team,” which was active in the first half of the 1950s, is retained in the names of stadiums, public statues, tombs in Saint Stephen’s Basilica in Budapest, documentaries and movies, monographs and research essays, Esterházy’s lines do not seem unusual. Yet in the year of the regime change in Hungary, Esterházy’s approach was not at all self-evident, even if the late Kádár system, in a gesture of opening to the West, invited Ferenc Puskás home, and thus rehabilitated the name of the national team’s captain, who earlier had been regarded as a traitor by the regime. However, the Hungarian sports daily newspaper never reported on how Puskás went onto the field and scored goals in the old timers’ match celebrating his return in 1981 in People’s Stadium (People’s Stadium or “Népstadion,” which was opened in August 1953, was renamed Puskás Ferenc Stadium in 2002 and today is under demolition to make room for a more modern stadium). This highlights the politics of silence around his figure. The contrapuntal narrative of Esterházy’s text in 1989 foreshadowed a phenomenon still observable today, namely that the memory of the 1950s in post-transition Hungarian society is mostly negative, with one notable exception: sports. Memories of the regime and of sports have not only grown separate from each other, but they have come to constitute two opposing poles: in the negative memory of the Rákosi regime, sports (especially soccer) is the only constituent that conjures up positive associations. Today, only works related to the history of sports remind us that the “Golden Team” was at least in part an instrument of the Rákosi regime, which sought to profit from the team’s victories and prowess on the field in order to legitimize the regime’s hold on political power. The fact that it was part of the regime’s political image has faded in people’s memories of the national team. In

1 Esterházy, “A káprázat országa,” 121.

the “imagination” of a significant part of Hungarian society, the players, and especially Ferenc Puskás, the team’s captain, remain distinctive folk heroes who managed to keep their personal autonomy while exploiting—not submitting to—the opportunities offered by the system.

Through an analysis of the film *Try and Win* [Civil a pályán], my essay examines how Hungarian movie culture in the first half of the 1950s retuned the meanings associated with sports. Subsequently, I will focus on the film *The Football Star* [A Csodacsatár]² to demonstrate how this tradition was discontinued after the revolution of 1956.

The Film of Nationalized Sports: Try and Win

The Recent History of Sports Institutions

The structure of Hungarian society changed radically following World War II, and the establishment of the Communist dictatorship did not leave the sub-system of sports untouched. The last significant national competitions preceding the war brought major successes for Hungarian athletes. In the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Hungary came in third in the number of medals won behind the host, Germany, and the United States. In the soccer championship in France in 1938, the Hungarian national team made it to the finals. These successes of the Horthy era were remembered by the public a decade later. The Sovietization of sports required the establishment of a new institutional framework for organized physical training that would ensure that Hungarian athletes could continue to secure important achievements, which would mean prestige and hence a degree of legitimacy for the political system.

Change in the institutional framework of Hungarian competitive sports had started long before the Communists took power. The rise of state intervention in the late 1930s reshaped the image of sports, which until then had been largely a grassroots, civic movement since the turn of the century. In the last 10 years of the Horthy regime, politics was increasingly involved in competitive sports events. Between 1939 and 1944, the Jewish Laws were applied to sports organizations, and Jews were banned from participating in Hungarian sports. First, Jews were prohibited from leading sports organizations and associations. Later, teams with Jewish owners were abolished. In 1942, Jews were prohibited

2 I use the English title for this film given by the Hungarian National Digital Archive and Film Institute (i.e. *The Football Star* instead of “The Soccer Star”).

from playing sports, and after the German occupation, they could not even attend sports events as spectators. State intervention also affected workers' sports associations. For example, "Vasas," or the "iron" sports club, which was founded in 1911 by the Hungarian Union of Iron Workers as the "Vas-és Fémmunkások Sport Clubja," or the "Sports Club of Iron and Metal Workers," was compelled to change its name and its colors in 1944. State intervention also changed the economic foundations of sports: professionalism, which was introduced into Hungarian soccer in 1926, was eliminated on 1 January 1945.³

After the end of the war, Hungarian sports revived quickly, which was due in part to the fact that the competing political parties were striving to gain influence over the management of various clubs and the new sports institutions. The Independent Smallholders Party, the Social Democrats, and the Communists were especially active in this respect. The influence of politics on sports did not disappear after the fall of the Horthy regime. Professionalism was not reintroduced, and the athletes all had "civilian" jobs. The players of the Újpest TE soccer team, which was supported by the Independent Smallholders Party and which won 3 championships between 1945 and 1947, included industrial workers, officials, and various kinds of entrepreneurs (tradesmen, caterers).⁴

Mass Sports and Competitive Sports Tailored to the Soviet Model

When director Márton Keleti started making the film *Try and Win*⁵ in 1951, the Sovietization of Hungarian competitive sports had already been completed.⁶ Cinematic support for this process was not an important item on the filmmakers' political agenda. Rather, they were focused on making a movie that would help popularize the mass sports movement that had been imported from the Soviet Union. The finished work bridged the gap between the spheres of the workplace and competitive sports, and it presented an image of nationalized sports which

3 Szegedi, *Az első aranykor*, 437–72.

4 Dénes et al., *A magyar labdarúgás története*, vol. 3, 25.

5 The Hungarian National Digital Archive and Film Institute offers the following plot summary in English: "Pista Rácz, bearer of the title 'outstanding workman' is opposed to all forms of sport, and is especially antagonized by Jóska Teleki, a first-class sportsman, who seems to be a drawback for Rácz's brigade in terms of worker productivity. In order to please Marika Teleki, however, Pista takes on the role of sports official, and becomes an enthusiastic representative of those that are involved in the development of the sports movement. A reactionary coachman wants to involve Jóska in a plot to sabotage work, and he tries to persuade him to defect to the West. With a last minute decision Jóska restores the reputation of his football team. In the end, Pista and Marika become happy lovers." Hungarian Filmography, "*Try and Win*."

6 Based on the number of tickets sold, this film has become the most popular sports film in Hungary.

conformed to the official sports politics of the times. It also contained concrete messages for sportsmen who could not imagine their future prospects in the newly Sovietized sports system.

In order to understand the term “civilian” in the original Hungarian title, one must know the lyrics to the title song of the movie.⁷ The song draws a parallel between (Stakhanovite) labor competition in the sphere of production (industry and agriculture) and competitive sports. The plot of the film unpacks these parallels in more detail. The teams of workers are aspiring to secure victory in the Stakhanovite movement and on the sports field. However, competition is not the objective; it is merely a tool with which to strengthen the community and ensure social integration. Mass sports are portrayed in the film as a vehicle which helps people to become better workers.

Hungarian society became familiar with the slogan “Ready to Work, Ready to Fight” (“Munkára, harcra kész” or MHK in Hungarian) in 1949, when companies (factories, kolkhozes, enterprises) were compelled to organize mass sports activities based on the Soviet model. The program introduced in 1931 by the Komsomol in the Soviet Union played a central role in Soviet athletic culture, which attempted to increase workers’ production output (the modernization of production required a new worker’s body) and their military skills, hygienic awareness, and ideological commitment.⁸ The program was not set up to train athletes in certain sports, but rather to improve the overall physical condition of the population. The guiding principle was mass involvement, and the concrete goals were broken down by age groups. The socio-political function of sports was to channel the energies of new generations growing up in an urbanized environment into the praxis of healthy pastimes.⁹

Centrally organized physical education and pre-military training and a system which joined physical training with the workplace existed in Hungary under the Horthy regime, too. In 1921, Statute LIII on physical education created the basis for the “levente” associations (a paramilitary youth organization), and it obliged factories and enterprises with more than 1,000 workers to create the necessary infrastructure for their employees’ physical education. Similarly, the

7 “Come on, sports-mate, run to the finish line! / Go forward, be strong! / We are competing in the factories, / on the fields, and in the grass of the pitches! / Flags are flying, song is flowing / be happy and be daring! / Up with the chin, sports-mate, be / ready to work and fight! / Summer is here, the pitches are waiting for the young! There is a struggle coming, tally-ho! / Overcome every obstacle!”

8 Howell, “Sport and Politics Intertwined,” 138–42.

9 Riordan, *Sport, Politics, and Communism*, 71–72.

primary aim of the program taken from the Soviet Union at the end of the 1940s was “to engage the masses of workers and peasants who had never done sports before. The movement was extended to schools, offices, and the armed forces. The MHK-movement was expected to discover sports talents as well.”¹⁰ Trade unions were given the task of leading the initiative, but this did not always go smoothly. The promotion campaign was introduced with Socialist Realist posters, and it culminated in Márton Keleti’s film (the film features one of these posters), but the movie also reflects on the various difficulties encountered by the MHK-movement in the campaign in 1950.¹¹

The scene following the title and the title song is dramaturgically unexpected, as it stages a soccer match being played in front of crowded stands. A radio broadcast is covering the event, and the stake is to take two points in the championship.¹² These circumstances indicate that the game is a first division soccer match, not some mass sports event. The credits inform the viewer that the soccer team Red Truck is playing against the “Dózsa team.” This refers to a typical phenomenon of Sovietization: institutional transformations were always accompanied by the rhetorical act of naming/renaming. (It is a peculiar connection between right and left wing sports politics that in 1944, Vasas, a club which was associated with the left wing, was compelled to use the name “Kinizsi,” whereas in 1951, this name was given to Ferencváros, which was regarded as a team with right-wing sympathies and fans. The name is a reference to Pál Kinizsi, a general who served under Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus. Kinizsi constituted a suitable heroic figure of Hungarian history for the communist regime in part because he allegedly had been the simple son of a miller.) The Újpest Athletic Association was founded in 1885. It was funded by local, mostly Jewish factory owners during the interwar period, and the athletes were quite successful. The club was brought under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1950, and the reference to the district disappeared from the name: the team became Budapest Dózsa. (In the countries of the Eastern Blok, the police teams usually featured the word “Dinamo” in their names, so the similarity of the initials also motivated the naming.) Thus, in the movie the actual

10 Földes, Kun and Kutasi, *A magyar testnevelés és sport története*, 346. Among the characters of *Try and Win* the young factory worker Lakatos is a fine example of a talent discovered by the MHK.

11 *Ibid.*, 347.

12 The basis of the script was the short story of György Szepesi, Gyula Gulyás, and István Csillag. The first two became well-known sport reporters beginning at the end of the 1940s. They comment on the match on the radio, and they also make appearances in the film.

players of a newly renamed ministry team (“Dózsa”) act as the members of a fictional factory team (Red Truck). In the opening scene they are playing a final with a trade union team, the Óbuda Vasas. The film thus reflects the ambition to sever the traditional social roots of major sports clubs by placing them under the lead of trade unions and ministries (they were nationalized).¹³ This social program is in unison with the characterizations in the film. Specifically, we know nothing of the socio-cultural backgrounds of the characters. They all appear uniformly similar; the only features that make them unique are their flaws, which are not traced back to social factors and which, in the case of the protagonists, are easily overcome. Nobody in the film seems to be a “civilian”: neither the first division soccer players nor the workers stumbling on the athletic field have any kind of private, civilian lives that are unrelated to the workplace. The spaces of private life are almost completely missing. There is only one short scene that takes place in a flat, among family members, but one of the family members is just about to leave for work. The background is usually a factory or the sports pitch belonging to the factory. The characters have no free time: they go to the pitch to play sports, to play on the factory team, or to support their team. The vacation at Lake Balaton is no exception. It is also organized by the factory, so it is no surprise that the female protagonist (Marika Teleki) appears in the sports uniform of the Silk Factory of Újpest. Even though *Try and Win* stages the first steps in the romance between Teleki and Pista Rácz, the lovers only meet as private individuals once, and even then they are not alone. Moreover, when they talk about their feelings, they never forget that they represent a workplace community. Keeping distance from the community is represented in the film in an explicitly negative light. It is linked to conspiracy and (high) treason: when the forward of the Red Truck team, Jóska Teleki, is not with the team, he is conspiring with the enemy, and his absence from work hinders the Stakhanovite work of the group.

Even the very few leftist clubs that functioned successfully during the Horthy regime could not avoid the restructuring that came with Sovietization. In the first half of the twentieth century, organizations that promoted “cultured” and “meaningful” pastimes became more and more significant in Hungarian workers’ culture. Of these organizations, the Workers’ Physical Training Association (MTE) was the most prestigious. It was founded in 1906 and had among its members sportsmen who participated in Olympic Games and won medals in

13 Frenkl and Kertész, “A magyar sportirányítás 1945 után,” 65–67.

World and European Championships. Ferenc Pataki, who won a gold medal at the 1948 London Olympics, was a member of this association, and he played himself in the film. He supervised the sports festival in which the Budapest Red Meteor, the Honvéd, and the Építők teams performed gymnastic exercises. MTE was merged into Meteor in 1950, while Honvéd and Építők were new sports associations modeled on Soviet examples. Honvéd was overtaken by the army, while Építők represented the trade union of construction industry workers. In addition to Pataki, five other athletes are mentioned:¹⁴ Ferenc Várkői, Ágnes Keleti, Tamás Homonnai, Olga Gyarmati, and László Papp. Several factors, in addition to the prominence of these individuals as accomplished athletes whose names were familiar to the public, contributed to their selection as characters in the film. For instance, they all did outdoor sports that could easily be filmed: gymnastics, athletics and boxing. But one aspect stands out: all six of them were successful after World War II. Their achievements mentioned in the film were related to the 1948 Olympic Games, so their characters did not evoke the sports successes of the Horthy regime.¹⁵

The changed institutional framework of sports is highlighted by the sentence at the end of the title: “The sports scenes in this film were made with the direction and help of OTSB.” OTSB stood for the National Physical Education and Sports Committee, which was founded at the beginning of 1951.

14 The scene evokes the genre of news broadcasts with its choreography, quick cuts, and the commentary of two sports reporters.

15 Even though “the official sports governance condemned everything that happened before the liberation” (Zsolt, *Sportpábolos*, 69), the professional work that was carried out in the period was slightly more complex than that. The knowledge gained before the war was not thrown out the window, but was used within the frameworks of the institutions imported from the Soviet Union. This practice could be seen in the trainer Gusztáv Sebes’s strategic-tactical approach. Sebes was both the captain of the Golden Team and a sports leader who fulfilled a crucial role in the adoption of the communist sport models. Many of the sports in which Hungary was successful were very much a part of Hungarian society between the two World Wars, so in order to ensure that the country could remain competitive internationally in fencing, for instance (between 1924 and 1964, all of the people who won individual Olympic medals in men’s sabre were Hungarian) the regime allowed children of military officers and people from upper middle class backgrounds to pursue a career in competitive sports. Under the Rákosi regime, the curriculum vitae of the captain of the Hungarian fencing team, Dr. Béla Bay, began with the following description of his family background: “My father was a judge, landowner, one of my grandfathers was a hussar officer, landowner, the other was a lawyer and landowner, and even I got my income from the land I owned” (quoted by Zsolt, *Sportpábolos*, 92–93). Tibor Berczelly, Aladár Gerevich, Pál Kovács, and László Rajcsányi were members of the victorious Hungarian fencing team both in Berlin (1936) and Helsinki (1952). The other two members of the 1936 team could not compete in the Finnish capital. Endre Kabos died during the war, while Imre Rajczy settled in Argentina in 1945.

It became the most important organization in Hungarian sports. The success of the film helped the new committee earn legitimacy. We cannot be sure exactly why (perhaps in exchange for support) the protagonist of the film, Rácz, who becomes a successful mass sports functionary at the end of the film, performs the same job in the truck factory as Gyula Hegyi. Hegyi earned his living during the 1920s in the Renault factory as an iron turner. He became one of the most influential leaders in Hungarian sports after 1945 until his death in 1978, and he was acting president of the OTSB when the film was made. The armed forces also had a significant role in Sovietized sports. In addition to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Defense and the ÁVH (State Protection Authority) served as an institutional basis for competitive sports, and between 1948 and 1953 Minister of Defense Mihály Farkas had considerable influence over sports life, too. The prominent role of the military in sports explains why Feri Dunai, who went from being an iron worker to becoming a captain and who was played by János Görbe in the film (who wears a uniform throughout the film) is the most knowledgeable when it comes to how workers' sports lives should be organized. His character closely follows the example of the "father" figure familiar from Soviet Socialist Realist (literary and cinematic) narratives:¹⁶ as the representative of the communist party he is the only character in *Try and Win* who has a thorough knowledge of the vision of an ideal society, thus only he can be an advisor and mentor to the symbolic "son" (Rácz).¹⁷ His first appearance in the movie follows the example of the leading technique of the age: he gives an uplifting speech in front of portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Rákosi. He does not need to refer to his superiors, the representational context does that for him, and the viewer does not doubt for a single moment that what he says is right and needs to be accepted without question.¹⁸ The dialogues between Dunai and Rácz constitute a kind of reconciliation and merging of the two spheres of sports and the military, which were equally important for the communist party. The world champion Dunai argues for the importance of sports successes in promoting a positive image of the country, but he warns Rácz that his mistakes in the footrace do not make him a good soldier. This harmonizes with the vision

16 Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 167–76.

17 The metaphorical family is united at the end thanks to the cuts: Pista Rácz's running performance in the pitch is commended by the proud Dunai, who is sitting in the stands, after which Rácz's mother claims: "This is my son." Rácz's mother appears in several scenes of the film, yet his biological father is never represented.

18 Rainer M. and Kresalek, "A magyar társadalom a filmen."

of the communist party: “the leaders of the country emphasized the importance of physical education and sports from a military perspective,” and they tried to use “the propaganda power of sports successes in an international and domestic context.”¹⁹ Dunai also stands beside Rácz when the protagonist is enlightened and decides that he will revise his view on the social usefulness of sports and subsequently becomes the proponent of mass sports. Rácz’s conformist turn of heart also involves rational and emotional moments: the sports celebration at Balaton evokes certain scenes in Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympics*, which recorded the aesthetics of the moving body with such paradigmatic power. Keleti went beyond this in a certain sense: Riefenstahl photographed the naked body without any erotic appeal, emphasizing its embeddedness in nature, while *Try and Win* stages Marika Teleki walking among her fellow sportsmen and sportswomen as the object of Rácz’s desire. While the scene with all the red flags and the MHK marching song can be interpreted primarily through the codes of military processions, it also gives way to a touch of the erotic. The silk factory worker Marika Teleki is a lot more than a woman whose attention needs to be won by the protagonist. She embodies the ideal member of the MHK-movement, who is not a world class athlete, but is skilled in many sports (running, sailing, and volleyball). The film portrays a sports system where the boundaries of competitive sports and mass sports are blurred. The sports celebration at Balaton unites the two spheres, as evidenced by the greeting spoken on the loudspeaker: “We cordially greet [...] our Olympic, European, and college world champions, the MHK-sportsmen of the factories and the workers sitting in the stands”. The MHK-exercises are led by Ferenc Pataki, and Marika is marching among Olympic champions.

Changes in the Official Image of the Sportsman

The communist turn in Hungary also meant that the status of the competitive sportsmen needed to be “addressed.” While in Hungary the status of the professional athlete existed since 1926 at least in soccer, the Soviet Union did not allow athletes to compete as professionals. Soviet sports politics was critical of the British model of elitist amateurism on the one hand, i.e. the tradition according to which aristocratic gentlemen needed no revenues from sports. This was why the Soviet Union did not take part in the Olympic movement until the middle of the century. On the other hand, the Soviet Union also criticized the profit-oriented, businesslike environment in which soccer had come to flourish

¹⁹ Sipos, “Sport és politika 1949–1954,” 16.

in England since 1885. In the 1930s, a semi-amateur system was introduced in the Soviet Union. The sportsmen had workplaces (they could be factory or kolkhoz workers, employees, Red Army soldiers, or even university students), and they received remuneration for playing sports. However, sports organizations and clubs were not business enterprises.²⁰ This system did not change much after World War II, when the politicians in the Soviet Union decided to turn the country into a sports superpower which would compete at the most prestigious international events. (The Soviet Union first entered the Summer Olympics in 1952 and the Winter Olympics in 1956). A similar semi-amateur system evolved in Hungary before 1926, but the communists decided to abandon this model and replace it with the Soviet one. *Try and Win* promoted the system of centrally organized physical education among non-sporting social groups. At the same time, it fleshed out the new image of the competitive sportsmen: these sportsmen were civilians on the field, and they had civilian workplaces. The soccer players of the Red Truck club, which competes in the premier league, were factory workers themselves. Pista Rác is nominated to serve as the factory's sports representative by none other than the soccer player played by Géza Henni, the first division goalkeeper who was moved from the Ferencváros team to Dózsa.²¹ The replacement of the sports representative in the film was also indicative of how the communist party invaded the management of the clubs in 1948/49. The portrayal of this process in the film is essentially the exact opposite of what had actually happened: the new representatives arrive not to enforce political power, but to respond to the requests of the sports sphere. The film's first conflict is resolved by Rác's enlightenment, but the second conflict owes much to the fact that in the world on the screen there was a sport in which the harmony between competitive and mass sports is not total: soccer. It would be an exaggeration to claim that the makers of the film tried to stage this as a systemic problem, but the choice of soccer could not have been accidental.

Soccer in the Cross-Hairs

The prominent role of soccer in the film could be explained in many ways: beginning at the turn of the century, soccer was the most popular sport, and it attracted the largest numbers of spectators. Professionalism and a business-mentality emerged most prominently in this sport: players and coaches were

²⁰ Edelman, *Serious Fun*, 4–6.

²¹ Ferenc "Bamba" Deák, who shared a similar fate, also appears in the movie. Dénes, Hegyi, and Lakat, *Az ottthon szüld fivén*, 158.

well-paid, they received remuneration for playing matches abroad, and players were bought and sold. Towards the end of the 1930s, the radical right wing started to consider soccer a Jewish business, so they tried to sabotage it in various ways. Still, the heritage of this system was tangible after the war, as most of the players and trainers had been socialized in it. However, official professionalism was never introduced again. The deep structural changes that occurred after the communist takeover affected this sport the most: teams were renamed and their identities were altered arbitrarily (e.g. changes in team colors). The destruction and the building of teams was met with considerable antipathy by the public, especially among Ferencváros fans, who were considered “enemies” of the system. The international connections and the professional networks that had been developed in the interwar years were also destroyed after 1945. As Szegedi has observed, “before 1945, more than five hundred Hungarian soccer players and trainers played for and worked on European teams, and they used their knowledge and experience to develop these national teams (many of them are now dominating the pitches!).”²² Many players emigrated to the West after the war: several members of the national team that won the silver medal in 1938 left the country before 1948, including Gyula Zsengellér and Dr. György Sárosi. After the Western border had been closed, the players could only leave Hungary illegally. László Kubala, for example, was successfully smuggled out of the country in 1949 (he later became a legendary player for FC Barcelona), but the same year the ÁVH thwarted the defection of 20 other players (including the goalkeeper of the national team, Gyula Grosics).

This sketch of the historical background helps us understand why the world of soccer was the ideal backdrop against which the image of the enemy working for the capitalist West with the aim of subverting the Communist system could be staged. The tragic actuality and the menacing message of the movie also need to be highlighted. Márton Keleti’s team started shooting the film on 28 June 1951, three weeks after Sándor Szűcs, the defender of Újpest, who played for the national team on 19 occasions, was executed. Together with his girlfriend, the singer Erzsi Kovács, Szűcs tried to emigrate to the West in order to escape political harassment, but the ÁVH lured them into a trap. It was believed that he had an offer from Italy. It tells a lot about the nature of the Rákosi regime that Ferenc Szusza, a former teammate of Szűcs, played the part of a player in *Try and Win* who was also invited to Italy. Szűcs actually sent Szusza a message

22 Szegedi, *A magyar futball európai expanziója*, 3.

from death row asking his friend to try to convince the authorities to grant him a reprieve. While Szusza tried to help, he could do nothing to change the verdict. Márton Keleti's film, by evoking the fate Sándor Szűcs in the scene in which the organizers of defection are arrested, sent a clear message to all sportsmen highlighting the dangers of embarking down the forbidden path.

The Heterogeneity of Cinematic Tradition

In addition to references to real events, *Try and Win* was also linked to the cinematic traditions of the time. It is quite telling about the situation of cinema in Hungary that it was the 46-year old Márton Keleti, who began his career under the Horthy regime, who directed a film which was a propagandistic portrayal of the change of elites implemented by the communist takeover. Pista Rácz is the prime example of the kind of social mobility, which was triggered by workplace achievements and loyalty to the system, rather than expertise, the significance of which was diminished.²³ However, the fact that after 1949 Keleti changed his techniques of representation, as well as the ideological characteristics of his movies, did not mean that he discarded traditional frames of representation.²⁴ *Try and Win* employs the clichés of production and sabotage films in its representations of the two protagonists (Rácz and Jóska Teleki), but it combines these techniques with features adopted from romantic comedies and operettas. Both the director of and the actors in *Try and Win* who had become famous under the Horthy regime (Kálmán Latabár, Gyula Gózon) were familiar with these genres, and the scriptwriters (István Békeffi, Károly Nóti) were also representatives of the interwar tradition of Hungarian film comedies. Latabár reenacted the stock characters he had played before the war: he played the loud-mouthed but clumsy figure in *Love of Sports* (1936). In this amalgam of Socialist Realist and pre-war genres, the traces of the past are not erased, but they represent a world completely different from the one before. One can even spot how the unintentional effect of Rácz's infantile naivety (portrayed by actor Imre Soós, who only recites dry and lifeless sentences) is juxtaposed with Latabár's more natural figure (Karikás), who, although he is cartoonish, has a more subtle understanding of interpersonal relationships.²⁵ The songs certainly

23 Rainer M. and Kresalek, "A magyar társadalom a filmen."

24 Reviewers were quick to criticize the film because of this: "The plot of the film evokes the trivial and banal situations found in bourgeois comedy." Gyertyán, "Civil a pályán," 4.

25 It is telling that a reviewer from another daily criticized the performance of actors who did not use the conventions of Social Realism to portray their characters. Kisjő, "Magyar színes sportfilm," 4.

contributed to the popularity of the film, yet they end up being metafictional mechanisms that emphasize the inauthenticity of the representational strategies and the fictional quality of the story. In the middle of the film, there is a scene in which Karikás and three of his colleagues want to entertain the other factory workers, but the act goes awry. The workers laugh at the four singers, who stand in front of the MHK-emblem and slogan, and as the excessive laughter does not fit the ridiculousness of the situation, the MHK, which tries to make sportsmen out of workers, itself becomes the object of laughter. These kinds of scenes unintentionally subverted the overtly propagandistic content of the film.

The use of features of romantic comedies in the film mellowed the Manichean, bipolar world of the Socialist Realist sabotage-movies: we do not see two antagonistic groups (good vs evil) described in similar detail and in a mirror-like fashion.²⁶ The juxtaposition of MHK and competitive sports is only applied in the case of one character, the manager of the Red Truck soccer team. However, Bogdán, who hopes to profit from the center forward's illegal Western contract, is not the enemy of MHK. He is a “retrograde” representative of the business mentality of professional soccer that the post-1948 nationalization and centralization meant to erase. The communist party also eliminated the financial foundations of this mentality by sacking the bourgeois sponsors who financially supported the previous system. The agent who cooperates with Bogdán utters the key sentence in the film: “Sports is no longer business in this country.” This utterance is all the more significant as this is the only verbal reference to the fact that there had been an earlier period of sports history before the one that we see on screen: the film otherwise makes no mention of or reference to Hungarian sports traditions before 1948. Although the film's generic structure and the performances of some of the actors emphatically evoke the heritage of cinematic traditions of the Horthy regime, there are hardly any references to the pre-war period. The filmmakers made sure that this intention found expression in a spatial sense as well. It comes as no surprise that the most important architectural project of the Rákosi regime, People's Stadium, was also used in the film, and the narrative emphasizes the novelty and monumentality of the building, which as noted earlier was only completed in 1953. Apart from the factory and the pitch attached to it, the film shows only the working class residential districts and the Socialist Realist architecture of the buildings of these districts or the historic city center of Budapest, which is occupied by athletes

²⁶ Varga, *Fent és lent*, 56–65.

wearing red stars on their jerseys, pioneers waving their ties or holding portraits of Stalin, Lenin, and Rákosi, and policemen wearing Soviet-style uniforms. Another sign of the appropriation of space is the fact that during the holiday at Lake Balaton factory workers also compete in sailing, which was traditionally regarded as an aristocratic and bourgeois pastime.

Retouched Soccer History: The Football Star

One Title, Two Films

The recipe for *Try and Win* (a Socialist Realist narrative, the application of techniques of representation suiting the spirit of the age, the use of a new generation of actors together with actors who had been popular before World War II, and the recycling of cinematic traditions inherited from an earlier period) was used again in subsequent films by Keleti.²⁷ In addition to works depicting ideologically informed representations of the world, Keleti also shot historical movies in this period. One of these films, *Up with the Head*, has a special significance in historical memory, as it was the first feature film in Hungary that took the history of the persecution of Jews as its theme. The theme of sports gained particular emphasis again in 1956, when Keleti started shooting *The Football Star*. The public response to this film was peculiarly affected by history. While his previous film on soccer represented the world of club soccer in Hungary, *The Football Star* addressed the fame of the Hungarian national team specifically. The film's theme was based on a real life event, which indicates the international renown of the team and gives some sense of the media environment of the age. In 1954, the Hungarian press reported that a certain László Veréb had impersonated József Zakariás, a midfielder on the Hungarian national team, in order to secure a contract with Olympique Lille, but one match had been enough to expose him.²⁸ In order to appreciate the historical context of the film, it is worth noting that the image of the national team changed significantly between 1954 and 1956 as a result of the loss in the World Cup final in 1954, after which the reputation of the team started to deteriorate. In fact, when Keleti was shooting the film (between June 18 and August 27, 1956), the "Golden Team" was on the verge of breaking up. Gusztáv Sebes, who put together the team and coached the players on 69 occasions between 1949 and 1956, had had

27 The most typical examples of this are *Young at Heart*, in which the Soós-Latabár duo appears again, and *Penny*, the protagonists of which are workers who battle the saboteurs. Both films were made in 1953.

28 "Hogyan lett a kacsából – Veréb?" 6.

his last match with them on June 9, 1956. When the new coach, Márton Bukovi, managed the team for the first time on 15 July, only four of the players who had participated in the legendary match against England in 1953 entered the pitch. In all likelihood, Keleti had intended to uphold the team's fame,²⁹ but the film failed to achieve this goal. The premiere was supposed to be held on November 8, 1956, but it was cancelled due to the outbreak of the revolution a few days before. The film lay in a box for some time, and a handful of scenes were re-shot with new actors in 1957. (Ferenc Puskás was replaced by Nándor Hidegkuti, for example.) While some scenes were retained, the sound was altered, clips showing the game were changed, and the photographs were retouched. The new version of the film was eventually screened in cinemas in September 1957. Hungarian television channels broadcast the original version only after 1989.³⁰ Subsequent DVD editions first featured the original film, but since 2016, both versions have been available.

A Parodic Use of One's Heritage

*The Football Star*³¹ can be regarded as an exemplary case in historical memory not only because of the differences between the two versions, but also because one can recognize references to events, figures and discourses of both interwar and postwar Hungary in both iterations. The fact that *The Football Star* entered into a dialogue with *Try and Win* is obvious from the juxtaposition of the two opening sequences. The opening scene of *Try and Win* features commentaries about a Hungarian championship match, whereas in the opening scene of *The Soccer Star* the national teams of two imagined countries (Footballia [Futbólia] and Kickania [Rugánia]) are playing against each other, when one of the Footballia fans exclaims sarcastically, "Civilians on the field!" Keleti invited real sports commentators to act in *Try and Win* in 1951, while the broadcaster role here is performed by an actor. This decision is symptomatic of a different approach:

29 Dénes, Hegyi, and Lakat, *Az ottbon zöldséjében*, 150–51.

30 The 1994 monograph on the Hungarian film industry between 1954 and 1956 does not refer to the re-shoot and inaccurately claims that the film's original version featured Hidegkuti. Szilágyi, *Életjel*, 522.

31 The Hungarian National Digital Archive and Film Institute offers the following plot summary in English: "Cabinet crisis threatens Footballia, due to a series of lost matches. The prime minister gives admiral Duca the task to bring the football star of the Hungarian team presently playing in Switzerland to Footballia. In Switzerland Duca mistakes one of two Hungarian fraudsters (Jóska) to be the star and he 'buys' him. Footballia prepares for the decisive match against Rugánia, everyone puts their fate into Jóska. Before the match Duca finds out the trick, and he prepares to get hold of power. During the match total confusion reigns, but Jóska and his mate are able to escape." Hungarian Filmography, *The Football Star*.

the openly propagandistic work used real life persons (known journalists and sportsmen) to reinforce the authenticity of the represented world and to affirm the world outside the film. The latter film, however, created a critical distance from the world to which the cinematic narrative refers.³² *The Football Star* focuses on how soccer becomes intertwined with politics. The commander of the naval fleet of Footballia, Admiral Alfredo Duca, is preparing a military coup, and, at the same time, he tries to increase his popularity among the masses. He uses soccer to achieve this goal: on the pretext of the supporters' demonstrations following the defeat of the team, he takes control over soccer, and with the help of a Hungarian "soccer star" he tries to make the national team successful again using every media channel to let people know that these successes came about only because of him. Whereas in *Try and Win* the upper echelons of politics only appear implicitly (for example through the pictures of Rákosi), *The Football Star's* story explicitly portrays a conflict between the leaders of an imagined country. The radio commentator of the match in the opening sequence of the film introduces the politicians in the presidential box in the following manner: "The great figures of our country [...] are exhorting our team to play with all their might." Even though the Latin-sounding names, the top hats, and the monocles of the politicians conjure up images from the distant past, the introduction of Duca's character as "a friend and patron of soccer and the commander of our glorious fleet" encourages a satiric-allegorical interpretation and evokes references to the Minister of Defense of the Rákosi era, Mihály Farkas. The way in which the film stages the rise and fall of Duca can also be compared to Farkas's career, who belonged to the inner circle of the Rákosi regime. Farkas's decline started in 1953, when he temporarily lost all his positions. He regained some of them due to Soviet pressure, but in the summer of 1956, when the shooting began on the film, he was already a fallen politician: he had been expelled from the Communist party, he lost his rank in the military, and he was eventually arrested in October. When the retouched version of *The Football Star* was presented in cinemas in 1957, he was already in jail, like Duca at the end of the film. This partly explains why the early Kádár regime decided to release the film in 1957. The political system intended to consolidate its power by eliminating the legacy of Stalinism in Hungary. János Kádár also played an active role in removing Farkas from his positions in 1956. The fact that from Farkas's perspective the summer of

32 In addition to *The Football Star*, other Hungarian films of 1956 had a satirical tone, e. g. *Tale on the 12 Points* (*Mese a 12 találatról*) and *The Empire Gone with a Sneeze* (*Az eltűszentett birodalom*).

1956 was nothing like 1951 is also reflected in the relationship between Márton Keleti's two sports films. *Try and Win* also featured the character of Feri Dunai, a character who resembled Mihály Farkas and represented the role played by the military in sports. However, while Dunai, the representative of the party, appeared as a symbolic father-figure, Duca, whose name alliterates with Dunai, is an explicitly negative character. His character bears resemblances not only with the communist Minister of Defense, but also with the memory of Miklós Horthy in at least three aspects: 1. Admiral Duca at the top of his career is promoted to a rear admiral;³³ 2. as the leader of the army he tries to gain political power; 3. he has a tattoo on his forearm.³⁴ The amalgamation of the memories of Farkas and Horthy in a single character constituted a gesture which would have been unimaginable before 1956 in Hungarian cinema.

There are further examples of symbols that were promoted in Keleti's film in 1951 but were parodied half a decade later. While in *The Football Star* the poems, songs, portraits, workers' choirs, and school compositions (which imitate the ode-like tone and dubious quality of such "works of art" created under the dictatorship) greeting the fake soccer player and the admiral have a comic effect, *Try and Win* presents the MFK marching song and the portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Rákosi on the walls of the community room of the iron factory as indispensable components of the social reality of the time. In addition, *The Football Star* presents the career which is based not on knowledge but on loyalty to the system satirically. At Footballia's government meeting, Admiral Duca presents his new program for soccer, but it eventually ends in failure due to a lack of knowledge and experience:

Duca: Gentlemen! First of all: Coach Rodrigo will be thrown out. We will appoint Captain Ventura, my adjutant, as the state trainer.

Venturo: But Admiral! I am no professional.

Duca: Reliability is the key this time.

Venturo: Then I will do it.

As part of the media campaign to popularize the film, the film's scriptwriter admitted the following in the spring of 1956:

33 This is nonsense from a military perspective, because the rank of rear admiral is a lower rank than the one he had previously held.

34 Whereas Horthy's tattoo was a detailed depiction of a dragon, Duca's is only a primitive anchor.

[I should have written] a satire, yes, but who would have been the target? The confidence-man, who tries something but later gets exposed. This would be the easier solution. But is he the ‘real enemy,’ the most ridiculous? The people who fall for his trick are more amusing, those who are so blinded and deafened by an anti-communist zeal and soccer ardor that they themselves demand and even ‘produce’ such swindlers?

Beyond any doubt, Footballia, with its skyscrapers, elegant hotels, lavish saloons, roofed stands, and sports marketing, seemed a distant land to Hungarian society at the time. The fact that the supporters’ devotion to the players can suddenly turn into anger and culminate in violence was quite familiar in Hungary, especially in light of the protests in Budapest following the world cup finals in 1954. After Footballia’s defeat, the angry supporters even throw their seat cushions at the boxes of politicians, at which Duca comments: “This is a rebellion, this is chaos, this is a revolution!” It is needless to emphasize how differently these words must have sounded in 1957 than at the time of their recording in the summer of 1956. The film’s concluding scene allows us to infer why a reference to revolution could remain in the second version of the movie. After the defeat against Cornerland, Duca’s coup attempt also fails miserably. The frustrated fans invade the pitch, the two leaders of the fans on their way home want to get revenge on the “soccer star,” but the radio reporter—freshly out of jail—persuades them not to, because Duca is already in custody. After the rebellion, chaos, and revolution at the end of the film, order is restored, and the people responsible for the scandal are locked up in jail. The national team plays another match one week later, and the supporters wholeheartedly cheer for them again.

Rewritten Media Texts: Radio, Film, Photograph

A comparison of the two versions of *The Football Star* sheds light on why the film constituted a significant mnemopolitical document of 1956 and the following years. The fact that the two title sequences are the same entails many things. The year of production remains 1956 in the second version, thus the creators wanted to erase the temporal distance, the re-editing, and re-shooting. The act of retouching needs to conceal itself. The retouched work is only functional if it steps into the place of the original in a manner that hides the act altogether. The re-dating created the impression that the film was created before the revolution: only those who were well versed in sports could have known that Hidegkuti

was actually touring with his team (MTK) in Western Europe in November and December 1956, so he could not have been available for the shooting. This created the impression that dissident soccer players never featured in the film when it was shot in 1956, as if they had not been part of the Hungarian national team at all. In fact, the opposite was true: József Bozsik, Ferenc Puskás, and Sándor Kocsis played the most matches with the team in 1956. Hidegkuti's name and fame become all the more important in the scene that differs radically in the two different versions of the film. On the plane trip from Footballia to Switzerland, Admiral Duca and his adjutant, the newly appointed trainer Captain Ventura, are listening to a radio broadcast. The scene appears in both versions, and the images of the first 25 seconds are identical, but the voice-over was changed: the radio commentary is different (though we hear the voice of the same reporter), as is the dialogue between the two men. According to the voice-over, it is the last minutes of the 39th Hungarian–Swiss soccer match that is heard on the radio.³⁵ The commentator mentions the names of two players: Puska and Kocsi. These names clearly refer to the two forward players of the Hungarian team, Puskás and Kocsis. Admiral Duca exclaims, “Hear that? Puska! This is our guy.” In the second version of the film the context of the radio broadcast is the same, but the players mentioned are Bozsik and Hidegkuti. The lips of the actor playing Admiral Duca say Puska here, too, but the voice says, “Hear that? Hidegkuti! This is our guy.”

To understand the background of the name change, we need to go back to November 1, 1956. Budapest Honvéd, the team of the Ministry of Defense, left Hungary to train in Western Europe for the matches against Athletic Bilbao. Between the two games, they played other international matches, and after the team dropped out from the European Cup, the players did not return to Hungary. Political and sports leaders asked the former captain of the team, Gusztáv Sebes, to visit the players in the Belgian capital³⁶ and persuade them to come home. Honvéd chose a South American tour in January instead, from which they only returned to Vienna in February 1957. The team also split. Most of the players returned to Hungary, but Ferenc Puskás, Sándor Kocsis, and Zoltán Czibor decided to stay abroad. When *The Football Star* was screened in cinemas,

35 The Hungarian team played three matches against Switzerland between 1952 and 1955, and the last of these took place in Lausanne, just like in the movie, but this was “only” the 27th time the two teams faced each other, and the Hungarian team won with a score of 5 to 4 (not 5 to 2).

36 The UEFA moved the second match against Athletic Bilbao to December 20 in Brussels due to the situation in Hungary.

Puskás had been accused of high treason, while Czibor, partly because of the role he played in the revolution of 1956, had good reason not to return home.³⁷ The Hungarian press launched a campaign against Puskás: he was accused of acting as the head of a smuggling network and was considered ungrateful to his country.³⁸ The second version of the film mentions the name of József Bozsik, who joined the South American tour, but returned home when it ended. Hidegkuti also had a chance to remain abroad during the MTK's tour, but he decided to return home. They became crucial members of the new national team in 1957, and they played key roles in helping the team qualify for the world cup in 1958 in Sweden.³⁹

The 25-second segment analyzed above is followed by images of a match to “verify” the words of the radio commentator. The original version of *The Football Star* uses a scene from the Hungary–East Germany game on June 20, 1954 in Basel, which was won by the Hungarian team with a final score of 8 to 3. Availability could have been the reason for this choice: the creators of the movie might have had difficulties obtaining the relevant archive footage. In any case, the German-language advertisements in the stadium suited the setting for the Switzerland–Hungary match, even though Lausanne is in a Francophone region, and not in a German-speaking one. The montage shows Grosics, who is playing goalie, kicking the ball out of the goal, Bozsik doing a crossover, Kocsis dribbling, and Puskás scoring a goal after an assist from Hidegkuti. (This was the second goal of the game, scored in the 17th minute.) The inserted footage showed Bozsik and Hidegkuti, too, but they were not mentioned, only “Puska” and “Kocsi.”

How does the 1957 version portray the same scene? It also features a montage about the most famous victory of the “Golden Team,” the victory over London with a final score of 6 to 3. At the beginning, the initial moments of the match are shown: after the kick-off, Bozsik crosses the ball to László Budai, who passes the ball to Kocsis. The following sequence shows a play involving Bozsik, Zakariás, Bozsik, and Hidegkuti, but Hidegkuti does not score the goal from a distance like he did in Wembley. Instead, there is a cut that is almost impossible to notice, and the scene jumps ahead in time and shows his goal that was disqualified because of an off-sides call. Two goals from the Hungary–England game were

37 Majtényi, “Czibor, Bozsik, Puskás,” 229.

38 Szöllősi, *Puskás*, 104–05.

39 In the World Cup in 1958, only Grosics was redrafted from the “classic” setup of the Golden Team that played in London in 1953.

thus merged into one. There must have been technical reasons for the creators of the film not to have used Hidegkuti's goal scored in the first minute of the match. (At least, I cannot come up with any other plausible explanation.) Images of the off-sides goal could not have been used extensively, because the goal was preceded by a play between Puskás and Hidegkuti. The players in the two different footages in the two versions of the film are mostly the same—in both cases, the “Golden Team” was on the pitch—but the commentary is different, as only “Buda,” Bozsik, and Hidegkuti are mentioned by name.

In the subsequent scenes two Hungarian immigrant fraudsters (Jóska and Brúnó) and the freshly appointed soccer officials of Footballia (Admiral Duca and Captain Ventura) meet in the hotel where the Hungarian national team is staying. The scene in which Jóska and Brúnó are trying to sell low-quality fountain pens to the soccer players is a reference to the connections members of the “Golden Team” had with émigré tradesmen, and it also highlights the way Hungarian authorities overlooked cases of smuggling which supplemented the “civilian” wages of the players. Although Duca and Ventura have explicit political intentions and their aim is to reinforce Footballia's national team with the Hungarian forward, their proposal might also remind us of the extremely generous contracts Western European clubs offered players on the Golden Team. In the original version of *The Football Star*, Jóska and Brúnó are recommending fountain pens to Puska and Kocsi, but the two stars reply wittily:

Puska: The pens are garbage.

Kocsi: The deal is not that urgent.

The 1957 version of the film included a revised version of the scene. Brúnó offers the pens to Hidegkuti, who repeats Kocsi's sentence. However, the scene remains slightly less effective than in the original film, due to Hidegkuti's moderate acting and the absence of extras behind the actors, who might have lent a cheerful atmosphere to the setting. In the original version, the members of the Hungarian team are shown drinking and chatting in the background.

It is worth noting at this point how Hidegkuti remembered the role he played in the film. Hidegkuti came from a social background that was not preferred by the regime. His name was originally spelled Hidegkuthy (the letters “h” and “y” in this name suggest an aristocratic background), but Gusztáv Sebes suggested he change the spelling in order to fit into the team. The young man, who came from a middle-class social milieu in Óbuda and whose mother was a factory

director while his father was a nobleman, came to be represented as the child of a distinguished workwoman. The proletarian version of the family story was presented in newsreels, and this narrative was still remembered well after the end of the Rákosi regime, partly because Hidegkuti's own autobiography—published in 1962—reinforced this image.⁴⁰ Jóska's image as a soccer star is similarly reinforced by a wholly fictitious feature film (!) after he arrives in Footballia. While Hidegkuti's autobiography does not mention *The Football Star*, he later claimed that “he was persuaded to appear in the movie when he was told that the filmmakers wanted to do the film with Puskás, but Puskás remained abroad. He was very surprised when he learned that these scenes had already been shot with Puskás.”⁴¹ One could question the plausibility of this explanation, but one thing is certain: Hidegkuti replaced Puskás in several scenes in the film, so he had an opportunity to verify the story he had heard from the makers of the film.

Who were the other team members who were shown in the scene in the hotel? The reporter of *Gazette de Lausanne* approaches Puska and asks him about the victory. Then, he takes a group photo for which the soccer players in the background also come forward. The camera does not show them for too long, so not all of them are recognizable, even when the film is scrutinized frame by frame (many of them stand behind others). Duca and Venturo later try to identify the legendary Puska with the help of a photograph with the names in close-up: Fenyő, Gula, Szibor, Buda, Puska, Kocsi, Bozsi, Lórád, Dalnok, Buza, Tilly, Kotál, Mátra. The slightly altered names refer to Máté Fenyvesi, Géza Gulyás, Zoltán Czibor, László Budai II, Ferenc Puskás, Sándor Kocsis, József Bozsik, Gyula Lóránt, Jenő Dalnoki, Jenő Buzánszky, Lajos Tichy, Antal Kotász, and Sándor Mátrai: the most prominent members of the national team.

In the 1956 version of the film, Puska's interview is shot with the four characters facing the camera in a line. As the actor performing Jóska left the country in 1956, he needed to be replaced in the new version. The character had to be near the location of the interview, even though the actor could not be used again. The creators solved this problem by making the characters stand in a circle, and Jóska has his back to the camera (thus, the audience does not see that a different actor is playing the part). His lines concerning the words of the soccer star are spoken by Brúnó and addressed to him (“You hear that Jóska? Good training, half a victory”). Hidegkuti thus took on the roles of Puskás and Kocsis, but since the

40 At dawn, the parents hurry from their modest home to the brick factory. Hidegkuti, *Óbudától Firenzéig*, 7–11.

41 Méray, “Egy történelmi tényről van szó,” 18.

scene with the group photo was not altered, only shortened, he was not actually present in that sequence in the 1957 version of the movie. While the two-second-long scene is hardly noticeable, it is clear that in a physical sense the second version could not completely erase the “dissident” soccer players from the film: a frame by frame analysis shows that Jóska is accompanied by Zoltán Czibor and Ferenc Puskás, and Sándor Kocsis steps forward from behind the curtain.

The scene in which Duca and Ventura falsely identify the forward based on the photo in the daily newspaper had to be altered as well. (The conflict originates in the film when Puska and Jóska are mixed up, and Footballia’s national team hires not the soccer star, but rather the clumsy “civilian.”) The Admiral and his adjutant compare the names below the photo and the soccer players’ faces and they mention the names of “Fenyő, Gula, Szibor, Buda, Puska.” The newly shot version deleted the pictures of the three soccer players and thus condemned them to oblivion. The scene reused the original photo, but they cut Kocsi(s) from the left side of the image. Szibor’s face also disappeared under an unknown man’s visage, while Hidegkuti’s portrait replaced Puskás’s photo. The filmmakers also made sure that, of the names under the picture, only Fenyő, Gula, Bozsi, and Lórád remained legible for the audience, while the names Szibor and Puska were blurred.

After the selection of the “target,” both films jump forward in time to the Hotel Continental again. The scene shows the elegantly dressed Hungarian soccer players strolling in the hotel corridors. The players are led by Czibor and Puskás, although we need to pause the film in order to recognize them. They are followed by a recognizable Buzánszky, Lóránt, Bozsik, and Budai, while Kocsis does not appear in this section of the film. The 12 second-long sequence was included in the 1957 version without any modifications. The subsequent scene, however, was reshot entirely. In the original film Puska is sitting at a table in front of an ornamented fireplace with Brúnó on his right and Jóska on his left. They are having a conversation:

Jóska: Mr. Kocsi?

Brúnó: I promised him a dozen [fountain pens] for today.

Puska: A dozen?

Brúnó: He’s got a big family. They say you like to bring home presents.

Puska: Well, a soccer player’s fame does not last forever. One or two years, one or two matches, you have to live with it while it lasts.

The scene has a crucial role in the narrative because Jóska’s and Brúnó’s knowledge of the world of soccer—knowledge on which they rely after they

travel to Footballia—consists of what they learn in this dialogue and the Puska interview. On the other hand, Puska’s arguments in favor of smuggling, euphemistically referred to as “buying presents,” fit the film’s aim to rehabilitate and rebuild the myth of the “Golden Team”: it presents the practice of smuggling, but gives a reasonable explanation for it.

The 1957 version presents Brúnó and Hidegkuti in a similar situation. Jóska’s “double” was not smuggled into this scene, so we hear a dialogue:

Brúnó: I’ve brought the fountain pens, a dozen.

Hidegkuti: A dozen?

Brúnó: Yes. They say you like to bring home presents.

Hidegkuti: Well, a soccer player’s fame does not last forever. One or two years, one or two matches, you have to live with it while it lasts.

This particular scene from the second version of *The Football Star* furthered the attempt to erase the figures (and reputations) of Puskás and Kocsis from the world of cinematic fiction by replacing them with Hidegkuti.

Conclusion

The rivalry among communist leaders in Hungary and the rise and fall of Mihály Farkas in particular were inscribed into the representations in the original versions of *Try and Win* and *The Football Star* of the interplay of sports, ideology, and politics. The 1951 film attempted to portray the successes of Hungarian sports as the achievement of the new system, erasing all references to the accomplishments in sports under the Horthy regime. *The Football Star* depicted in a satirical, critical light the propagandistic use of sports and the ways in which sports contributed to the promotion of a system and its leaders. The almost complete elimination of the dissident soccer players from the 1957 version was the inevitable result of the mnemopolitics of the Kádár regime. Since these players were among the 200,000 Hungarian citizens who fled or chose not to remain in Hungary after the fall of the revolution of 1956, their memory had to be erased as well. The erasure of the popular soccer players from cinematic representations of the recent past was part of the process of making the memory of 1956 taboo. The film’s premiere in 1957 was not only about the past and its reinterpretation, it was also about the present and the future. The film was first screened in cinemas when life in Budapest had “returned to normalcy”: entertainment venues opened again, the reorganized Hungarian

soccer cup was relaunched, the national team was rebuilt, and in September 1957 the team played twice in the People's Stadium in front of more than 90 thousand people. The film proved prophetic in the sense that its conclusion shows a world in which soccer is part of mass entertainment, and it is no longer used to pursue a direct political agenda. With the Kádár regime this new “world” came into existence. While the making of the second version of *The Football Star* implies the political intention of radically rewriting and partially erasing the memory of the most successful Hungarian team, the rehabilitation of Ferenc Puskás in the early 1980s and the 1982 documentary about the “Golden Team” attempted to revive memories of the former achievements by emphasizing their importance in soccer history instead of the political context. At this time, the separation of the memory of the Rákosi regime and Hungarian sports of the era began to take form in the public sphere, and the separation of the two remains very much a part of the popular imagination in Hungarian society today.

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