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American Behavioral Scientist 2003; 46; 1491

DOI: 10.1177/0002764203046011003

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The 1954 Soccer World Cup and the Federal Republic of Germany's Self-Discovery

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This article features the importance that the winning of the World Cup tournament in 1954 had for West Germany. Nine years after the defeat of the national socialist regime, this victory in soccer's most important event heralded West Germany's entrance into the international community of nations. The positive result in this forum contributed massively to the creation of a new West German collective identity. An essential ingredient of this identity was a positive orientation toward the newly established Federal Republic as a democratic structure, which—in the wake of this victory in soccer—attained growing acceptance and legitimacy among the West German public.

Keywords: *soccer; World Cup; West Germany; national identity; democratization*

I

At the end of the 19th century, the composition of Germany's sports space was decidedly lopsided. Gymnastics—which had been viewed as a form of national education and transformed into a kind of proto-military training at least since the debut of “*Turnvater*” Friedrich Ludwig Jahn—dominated the field by a wide margin. The official organization in charge of gymnastics, the *Deutsche Turnerschaft*, had a near total hold on the field of physical education. In 1900, Germany had 650,000 gymnasts active in 6,500 clubs, a monopoly the *Turnerschaft* was intent on guarding against the slightest hint of competition.

Other forms of body culture (cycling, track and field, etc.) eked out a rather marginal existence. Indeed, the very term *sport* tended to have a somewhat pejorative ring. It represented a generic term for imported, and therefore *un-German*, disciplines and games of movement (and not just on the index of prohibited athletics kept by the gymnasts' inquisitors).

Confronted with the *Turnerschaft's* claim to exclusive representation for every kind of physical education, the pioneers promoting new kinds of sports

Author's Note: *The author would like to acknowledge Jeremiah M. Riemer for translating this article.*

AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 46 No. 11, July 2003 1491-1505

DOI: 10.1177/0002764203252814

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had only two options: They could either negotiate a status as (at best) tolerated cranks under the care of the *Turnerschaft* or they would have to try getting their way alongside and in opposition to the *Turnerschaft*. Footballers chose the latter path: On January 28, 1900, the German Football Association (*Deutscher Fussball-Bund* [DFB]) was founded in Leipzig.

Soccer arrived in Germany in the 1870s, brought by Englishmen who had ended up on the Continent for professional or family reasons or who had crossed the Channel for education and training. Association Football, played in so-called Englishmen colonies (*Englaenderkolonien*), started acquiring interested spectators and enthusiastic imitators among secondary school pupils.

The *Turnerschaft's* initially easygoing reaction rapidly gave way to stern opposition. Anxiety about losing members and social influence began to spread among the gymnasts.

The gymnasts' struggle against the "English weed" of football ultimately proved to be a lost cause. Starting out as a game for the business classes and educated bourgeoisie, football quickly gained numerous adherents among the new middle class, consisting of white-collar employees.

Although the number of those championing soccer grew continually between 1900 and 1918, football experienced its definitive breakthrough in Germany after World War I. The introduction of the 8-hour day finally gave the working class, the country's largest social stratum, access to football, which now experienced a veritable boom. Membership in the DFB reached unimagined heights, and by the end of 1931, it crossed the million-man mark.

During the Weimar Republic, football became *the* popular sport in Germany, replacing gymnastics as the unequivocally dominant factor in the country's sports space. At the same time, its acceptance by millions of Germans created the preconditions allowing football events to be symbolically interpreted, to be accorded decisive meaning for the sport's social organization and for its participants' attitudes and behavior. At the same time, the sport's outstanding popularity produced a widespread craving to instrumentalize soccer's success for political purposes.

National Socialism's attempts to functionalize football may, on balance, be regarded as failed endeavors. Many soccer fans (nota bene, not its official functionaries), especially during the last phase of World War II, regarded the sport as a kind of refuge where they were able to escape from daily routine (at least for a while). Under conditions like these, efforts at mobilizing football on behalf of national stamina in the war effort were ultimately bound to fail.

The number one slot in Germany's sports space had been filled since the Weimar era. Nothing in the slightest changed about this after the war. The point was forcefully demonstrated by how the 1954 Football World Cup was perceived. The German team's journey toward world championship cast its spell not only on those who were already soccer fans. The triumph of Bern, which most West Germans followed not in private settings but in the quasi-public environment of pubs and standing in front of the windows of television and radio

shops, became a moment of collective bliss, which experienced a repeat performance when the players returned to their home towns.

The triumph of Bern served to make West Germans feel secure about where they were located and who they were. It signified—9 years after the end of a criminal regime and dreadful war—something like a re-entry into the world, this time in a civilized fashion. Winning the World Cup also gave the West Germans a chance to celebrate themselves against the background of an economic reconstruction that, although proceeding rapidly, was primarily being experienced individually.

The social etiquette for dealing with Bern required no explicit instructions. The event was only partly “manufactured” by its coverage in the press. All of the print media’s outlets seemed mostly concerned with preventing the public’s euphoria from spilling over into a fresh outbreak of nationalism. Thus, the World Cup gave the Germans and the rest of the world a new experience: that it was possible for German self-confidence to be kept to an environmentally compatible normal level.

This kind of reaction was by no means self-evident in the postwar atmosphere. Many West Germans did not exactly regard the young Federal Republic as their state. Accepting the new democracy could be a wrenching experience. Anti-Western traditions, rejection of the victorious powers, and the remnants of autocratic longings took their toll. Under these kinds of initial conditions, Allied efforts at reeducation proved to have only limited helpfulness.

To be consolidated, the Federal Republic urgently needed some initial signs of success: The *economic miracle* (“Wirtschaftswunder”) was far and away the most important of these. Winning the World Cup crowned this economic breakthrough and supplied a unifying symbol—above and beyond any individual German’s budding postwar consumer bliss—of that stretch of the road that had already been taken toward a new (and, to be sure, completely turned inside out) normality.

The World Cup title of 1954 is an indelible part of postwar federal German democracy’s success story, a tale substantiated (not least of all) by the way it helped rid the Federal Republic’s first decade of reminiscences of another (pre-democratic) kind of thinking more beholden to “popular continuity.”

II

There are twenty thousand all staring at a ball. It is extremely boring. But then the film camera’s telephoto lens picks out isolated faces from among the twenty thousand: a view of frightened faces, clenched jawbones, hate-contorted mouths, murderous cravings. *Is it total war you want? yeah, yeah, yeah.* From his seat in the darkened observation booth, Keetenheuve watched the faces gruesomely ripped out of their mass anonymity and composure by the malicious telephoto lenses . . . and he was afraid. . . . Keetenheuve was standing in the background. He was standing outside the genuine trouble spot of this assembly of twenty thousand. They

were united, they accumulated, they were a dangerous heap of nonentities, an explosive mixture, twenty thousand agitated hearts and twenty thousand hollow heads. Naturally they were waiting for their leader, for Number One, for the one who would confront them positively and turn them into a powerful figure, into a people, to the new Golem of that mixed concept: "ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer," one total hatred, total explosion, total downfall. (Koeppen, 1953, pp. 144-146)¹

In July 1954, there were definitely more than 20,000 people in Germany (both the Federal Republic and the GDR) staring at the soccer ball. The fifth World Cup began on June 16 in Switzerland. Enthusiasm picked up with each successive victory for the (West) German team, and by June 27, when the 11 triumphed over Yugoslavia under the guidance of coach Sepp Herberger in the quarterfinals, there could "no longer [be] any unsuspecting" potential fans back home ("Ganz Frankfurt spielte Fussball mit," 1954, p. 5). By the time of the final round on Sunday, July 4, an entire people was on the ball.

While the game was being transmitted on radio and TV,² streets were deserted everywhere, with few exceptions. In Kaiserslautern ("K-Town"), for example, "Only American cars and soldiers were still on the road" ("Jubel um die Sieger von Bern," 1954, p. 1). After the final whistle—"The game is over! Over! Over! Germany is world champion!!! and beats Hungary 3 goals to 2 in the final round at Bern" (Zimmerman, 1954, p. 137)³—the dam broke loose. Complete strangers embraced each other, flags hung out of many houses' windows, and the victory celebrations went on into the night. "Never before in Europe . . . did the Germans' collective feelings sparkle so exclusively for nothing other than their football team" ("3:2," 1954, p. 21).

Identifying with the players was not difficult. The biographies of the Bern team were barely distinguishable from those of average Germans. Captain Fritz Walter had served his country, and in the same way that a veritable majority of Germans claimed they had done, gone along because there was no other way, done their duty without having inflicted any serious damage. Fritz Walter, a national team member since 1940 and widely known as such, could easily see himself in this role of his, as a kind of permanent peace ambassador. To his comrades, he embodied the concepts "that appeared to be forever gone: peace, homeland, sports." One thing was sure for him after the war had been lost: "For anyone who has ever run across the field with young people from other countries, it is impossible to shoot at them." At that time, a pass like this was one that millions of Germans were only too ready to receive and convert. And with his appeal, "Let's not talk about war, let's talk about football" (Walter, 1959, pp. 10, 74, 208), the team captain was formulating something like a German credo for those times: the need to repress (and the feeling of being fed up with) the war era. The soccer elite of the country, these were world champions with a popular touch.

When the 11 world champions returned home in their special railroad car, thousands and thousands of fans lined the tracks, hundreds of thousands greeted

the team in Munich, and the celebration kept going in the home towns of the individual players.⁴ There were “riotous traffic mobs” (“Dr. Bornkessels Gruss: ‘Der Mai ist gekommen,’” 1954, p. 1); whether in Kaiserslautern or Cologne, Nuremberg or Fuerth, Duesseldorf or Essen, everywhere there was a “joyous inferno” (“Essen empfang Rahn”, 1954, p. 1). An “ecstatically excited, raging, screaming, laughing and weeping crowd” cheered on its world champions (“Begeisterung auch in Fuerth”, 1954, p. 2).

III

Pure joy, without ulterior motives, naïve, so to speak? Or wasn’t the jubilation in July 1954 perhaps concealing poor prospects, the ugly dimension to German euphoria?

In 12 years, the Germans had robbed the world of its moral fabric and themselves of their identity. They had initiated a world war and committed or tolerated crimes of unimaginable proportions. Didn’t the overboard reactions to the World Cup victory express a demand for recognition (retreaded for 9 years since the end of the war and now capable of being concealed only with great difficulty) or perhaps even a revived German mission? For the outside world, experienced in this kind of thing, perhaps an opportunity, once and for all, to take a careful look and pay attention (cf. Fabert, 1954, p. 5)?

It was unnecessary to search exhaustively for troubling signs of evidence. When the German national anthem rang out at the ceremony honoring the victors in Bern’s Wankdorf stadium, 20,000 fans naturally intoned *Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles* (the nationalist prewar first verse, rather than the post-war Federal Republic’s officially sanctioned third verse *Eingikeit und Recht und Freiheit—Unity, justice, freedom*). At other sites where follow-up rallies were held, it was always that “old and ever-young national hymn,” meaning the first stanza, that was rung out by the crowds (“Es gibt nur eine deutsche Fussballhochburg—das ist Kaiserslautern,” 1954, p. 3).

As if that were not enough, 2 days after the victory in Bern, at a beer fest for the world champions in the Munich Lowenbraeu cellar, the president of the German Football Association, Peco Bauwens, lauded the united team’s performance as “representative of the best of Germandom abroad,” thanked the Germanic God of War Wotan for his assistance, generally seemed keen to interpret the event in nationalist terms (after all, ultimately each player had been “carrying” the German flag “in his heart”), and even took pains at the end to invoke the “Fuehrer principle” (cf. Heinrich, 1994, pp. 91-93).⁵

These potshots from a “familiar enough vocabulary” (“Wotan und der Fussball,” 1954, p. 2) were not, however, some exclusive privilege of Bauwens’. Vocabulary of this sort, like “Sunday’s *final triumph*” (“Sonntags-*Endsieg*”), flowed glibly from the pens of quite a number of journalists (“Dr. Bornkessels Gruss: ‘Der Mai ist gekommen,’” 1954). Before the final game, still others

borrowed from the *The Law of Young Nations (Recht der jungen Voelker)* by Moeller van den Bruck (the right-wing nationalist who coined the phrase “Third Reich”) when they wanted to justify their partisanship “on behalf of the hungry” and “against the satiated,” simply because they saw it as a good thing “whenever somebody gets ejected from his safe position” (Besser, 1954, p. 10).

Relatively harmless were those efforts to fabricate an acquittal from the harsh indictment against 20th-century German history out of the geographical ignorance most Germans had regarding the first verse of the national anthem. (Public opinion surveys demonstrated widespread unfamiliarity with that verse’s demarcation of greater Germany’s borders *von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt* [from the Meuse river in Alsace-Lorraine to the Memel in Lithuania, from the Adige in northern Italy or southern Tyrol to the Belt or straits of Denmark].)⁶ Those completely incapable of rethinking things ended up having their say in letters to the editor. “It is degrading to have to ‘re-learn’ the text of the national anthem because it is too offensive. This sort of thing can only be done to Germans” (Brief an den Herausgeber, 1954, p. 34). The anonymous author of a book for young people placed the victorious football players among the ranks of once-admired “daring war heroes,” with the tiny difference that they hit a much better jackpot (*Das Spiel ihres Lebens*, 1954, p. 20). Others, keenly mindful of opinion abroad, warned in general against “abusing sporting events for political spitefulness” (“Achtung!” 1954, p. 3). And, all in all, many people in Germany felt totally misunderstood by their neighbors because foreign “fantasies” always struck them as resonating with “that unfortunate resentment about the German danger” (kjm., 1954, p. 3).

IV

The *miracle of Bern* as catharsis, as self-liberation from the burden of 12 years under the brownshirts, as a continuation of German heroism by other means? Winning the World Cup as an infallible sign of imminent regeneration of German hubris? As the crowning event of a development in politics, society, and economics that can only be appropriately defined as a *restoration*?

This kind of interpretation is not new. As early as 1954, there were plenty of critical voices who were reminded “embarrassingly of certain mass rallies from the Thousand-Year Reich” by the welcome that greeted the newly minted world champions (Brief an den Herausgeber, 1954, p. 34). To contemporary skeptics, the reception given for the World Cup victory looked like a relapse that needed to be taken seriously (even if not entirely unexpected). “It was feared that a bunch of people would recast our footballers’ victory . . . as a national event, along the lines of some shibboleth like ‘We lost two World Wars, but now we’ve triumphed after all’ ” (“Wotan und der Fussball,” 1954, p. 2). And a few of these commentators later construed this as a recurrence of German “megalomania” (Daniel, 1954, p. 4).

Critics in years to come have agreed unreservedly with all this assessment. Where '54 is concerned, later critics claim to have detected "high nationalist waves" ridden that year by "revitalized megalomaniacs" for whom the "effort" at Bern counted as a "symbolic second helping following the energy reserves missing at Stalingrad" and who were now, as a result, striving "to be, in the end, some kind of chosen people after all" (Seitz, 1987, pp. 27, 17, 19, 30). For others, hewing to the same interpretive line, Bern symbolizes the attainment of an eminently important milestone "on the way to restoring a German consciousness of final victory" (Schindelbeck, n.d., p. 5). These kinds of classifications keep; therefore, many people recently linked the demolition of the Wankdorf arena in 2001 with the hope that, simultaneously, "the memory of the 1954 World Cup final game [might] be blown up" ("Das ist ja furchtbar. Aber es ist gut," 2001, p. 18).

Assessments such as these draw their legitimation not least of all from the fact that they are endorsed by contemporaries who—endowed with the reputation of being "45ers" and not "13 lers" (cf., e.g., Kogon, 1954a, p. 642)⁷—made an effort to combat the multifarious restorative tendencies of the Federal Republic's early years. Yet, the Triumph of Bern never equipped the arsenal of those renowned critics of the 1950s "Adenauer state." It is only with proper distance in time that Germany the world champion can be inserted into the "era of restoration" (Dirks, 1950, p. 942).

This kind of procedure may seem justified; in the end, it is not necessary for a community of contemporary critics to have identified every single aspect of the political and social development whose fundamental outlines they correctly recognized. Nevertheless, this is an approach that tends to be pregnant with error.

On one hand, one incurs the advantage of chronological distance, which (as a matter of principle) makes it possible to take a second look. What appeared to many contemporaries as an oppressive, often alarming, development may present itself to the observer in a different light with the advantage of perspective, without thereby falsifying critiques and assessments made at the time or casting doubt on their value during the formative phase of the postwar Federal Republic.

On the other hand, whether implicitly or explicitly, May 8, 1945, was viewed as a historical rupture and, by implication, as *the* opportunity for what would later become the West German (successor) state (eventually launched after a 4-year waiting period) to enter into a fundamental political, social, and economic realignment. On this point, therefore, one encounters (willy-nilly) the very actors from back then whose overriding concern, acting on entirely different motives, was to highlight the presumed turning point of 1945 because they themselves tended to stand for the continuity of the functional elites and their conceptual worlds (cf. Doering-Manteuffel, 1993, pp. 24-26).⁸ The ability of the functional elites to regain the dignity of office (sometimes recovering their old jobs just as the transition to the Federal Republic was taking place) without ever having to surmount any real challenge is not something solely attributable to those two well-known strokes of luck, the economic miracle and the cold war;

“popular continuity” (Niethammer, 1983, p. 8) also made a substantial contribution. To leave out this fact would mean to fall behind what the community of contemporary critics understood quite well.

V

There is a great deal of public opinion poll data testifying to the sluggishness, persistence, and then gradual shift in convictions, views, and attitudes immediately after the war. There has been a payoff to the way Germans were under stringent observation here, first in the Trizone, then later on in the Federal Republic.

At first glance, what these investigations brought to light was irritating (to say the least). According to routine surveys conducted by the Office of Military Government (United States) in the American Zone, the share of those who saw in National Socialism a good idea gone bad merely because of the way it had been implemented climbed to 59% between 1946 and 1949. As late as 1951-1952, 41% could still see more good than bad in Nazi ideas; only 36% were of the opposite opinion. An infinitely tiny minority of 4% were willing to acknowledge a “certain guilt” for “Germany’s actions” during the Third Reich (Merritt & Merritt, 1980, p. 7).

The approval rating for the Federal Republic turned out to be rather meager. According to *Allensbach*, 51% voted in favor of constituting a state in the West, 40% were “indifferent,” and 33% appeared “moderately interested” (Noelle & Neumann, 1956, p. 157).

In 1951, 45% were still of the opinion that things had gone best for their country “in the Kaiserreich”; 40% viewed the period “between 1933 and 1938” as optimal (Noelle & Neumann, 1956, p. 126);⁹ 47% wanted the Federal Republic’s flag to be the monarchical black, red, and white, the colors of the Kaiserreich that were also favored by the Nazis, versus 18% advocating the republican colors of black, red, and gold. As far as the national anthem was concerned, 30% favored the third verse of the Deutschland-Lied, whereas 25% wanted to keep singing the first verse’s “Deutschland ueber alles” (Noelle & Neumann, 1956, p. 159); and 32% still advocated a “Kaiser or king.” Bismarck topped the charts of “great Germans” at 32% (Noelle & Neumann, 1956, p. 132).

Attitudes changed over time. This becomes especially evident in surveys of youth and young adults born between 1929 and 1938. In November 1953, 71% declared that they were willing to defend “our current form of state” against attack in public discussion. But antidemocratic reservations persisted; 37% tended to prefer an autocratic form of government. And even in the matter of value change, it was hard to detect a really comprehensive breakthrough; 28% were still of the opinion that “the flag [meant] more than death”; 55% appreciated “time in the military” as “the best education” (“Jugend zwischen 15 und 24,” 1954, p. 70).¹⁰

In the ensuing period, there was a pickup in the cautious trend of turning away from National Socialism and acknowledging democracy and pluralism as accomplishments:

By the mid-1950s West Germans had, for the most part, rejected the formal trappings of Nazism. These organizations and their leaders—not the German people—had thrust their country into a devastatingly destructive war. The population was in no mood to make the same mistake again. (Merritt & Merritt, 1980, p. 12)

Impressed by these developments, which were gradual but unequivocal about the direction in which they were heading, some observers, such as Fritz René Allemann, drew the conclusion that they were dealing with a profound “tremor in national consciousness.” There was no longer any “‘national idea’ capable of being politically mobilized at a moment’s notice,” and along with that “‘bourgeois’ patriotism” had been damaged and “gone to the dogs” (Allemann, 1956, pp. 114, 118, 117).

Allemann (1956) did not allow objections to the notorious calls for German unity (and to the not exactly cautious references to unity cropping up in popular parlance). For him, these were anything but “heralds of a national Renaissance”; rather, they were the “final spasms of what was merely a traditional, meaningless, completely externalized national feeling.” “Behind the windscreen of verbal affirmations about ‘solidarity,’” the Germans had long since settled for “coolly writing off” the Occupation Zone (Allemann, 1956, pp. 119, 127).

As far as attitudes, opinions, and their development are concerned, the Federal Republic in its initial years presents a rather diffuse picture. Residues of old thinking, such as the preference for rather authoritarian forms of rule, are clearly in evidence, and they often seem to have had a long shelf life. Approval of democracy and pluralism tends to be correspondingly modest. Only a minority, although a growing one, could be classified as “combatively democratic” (Allemann, 1956, p. 112). Here, however, an enormously stabilizing effect issued from the “prosperity for all”¹¹ that ensued (with some delay) from the economic recovery following the 1948 currency reform. (By 1950, production had caught up with prewar levels, and over the next several years, through 1956, it more than doubled.) The social market economy, Western integration, and a democratic constitution interacted to produce a model of success that gradually left behind its traces in the population’s consciousness.

It took people’s own practical experiences (at what seemed like the “apolitical substantive policy” level) plus economic success and the new order’s palpable efficiency before [that order could be] broadly accepted and recognized in an increasingly positive way, and only with generational change did there come a new series of thrusts helping to anchor democratic values. (Schildt, 1999, p. 33)

The formation of the Federal Republic took place “under the sign of the *Schlussstrich* [attempted closure on the Nazi period] and the burdens of the

German past” (Schildt, 1999, p. 116). Premised on these conditions, which a majority certainly desired, the task of dealing with the legacy of National Socialism was not the only thing left undone. The “politics of the past” in Adenauer-era Germany concealed many another unpleasantness (cf. Frei, 1996) whose filtering out by reference to the Federal Republic’s success story should be disallowed if for no other reason than that contemporary critics would otherwise be completely unintelligible.

VI

For many, the point was to deny attributing any kind of political dimension to the Triumph at Bern from the very outset. This was hardly viable, for the upshot of such efforts, based as they were on a decidedly restrictive conception of politics, was to favor attempts that tended toward classifying the Bern phenomenon in contradictory ways.

To be sure, our endeavors in international sports are also an expression of the German will to self-assertion. But they are active in an area that should remain free [of] any kind of politics. . . . The fates of peoples are not decided on athletic fields. Nevertheless: Since sports towers above any other institution of public life when it comes to popularity, any triumph in this area powerfully increases national prestige. That’s why our football players in Bern . . . have accomplished a feat filling us with confidence that we Germans, in peaceful competition among the nations, have surmounted the shadows of the postwar period, and that—in the spirit of that ideal to which the classical athletes of yore once paid tribute in Olympia—we “are there” again. (kjm., 1954, p. 3)

Such irritating interpretations should be given credit for their underlying motive: a motivation not to hang winning the title too high, in the hope that a moderating influence would now help avoid any kind of conspicuous nationalism; after all, the terms of probation under which the West Germans had just been released into a provisional state of their own were still in force.

The same motivations moved those who made no bones at all about the political implications of this sporting event. It would be “rather pointless,” Dolf Sternberger (1954) hinted tersely, “to keep defending the purity of sports against being sullied by politics.” Because “nations” are “political bodies,” politics is simply an integral component of such events (p. 463). The SPD Bundestag MP Wenzel Jaksch saw in the World Cup championship “more of a gain for the cause of freedom than any danger,” and in the triumphant 11 team members he saw “a bit of democratic West Germany embodied” (Jaksch, 1954, p. 5)—an evaluation, to be sure, that would have to be taken down a peg or two.

There was, to begin with, the qualitative reception of the event, which eclipsed everything else:

The World Cup victory has to be the biggest triumph of German sports, not only following the war but for all time. Football is *the* sport and *the* game of the masses, and last Sunday it was the game for *all* the Germans, since even those who otherwise prefer having nothing to do with soccer were seized and swept along. The match in Bern broke the mold. ("Grosse deutsche Siege," 1954, p. 24)

This assessment corresponded to the event's social and political ranking. At one fell swoop, Bern clarified how unbelievably meteoric the upward climb had been proceeding. For the Germans, there was nothing of comparable magnitude heretofore—not their reasonably successful performance at the World Cup in 1934 (third place) or the disastrous *Coupe du Monde* of 1938 (elimination in the semi-quarterfinals). The only measuring point in time, whether articulated or not, was May 1945. On the evening of July 4, 1954, there arose, from this time forward, a new feeling of community. The entire cast of Germans—hardworking and yet buried autistically inside their economic miracle and private spheres—was

seized by a hot flush of feeling that it would be wrong to interpret as a triumphant mood, but which is really the expression of a genuine national solidarity. This observation is astonishing. For we Germans have not been accustomed to emotions like this since 1945. ("Fussball und Politik," 1954, p. 3)

The 3-2 score allowed working Germans to pause for a moment and take stock and then jointly celebrate their new beginning.

They made it, they were *back again*,¹² certainly in an economic sense, but now they had also demonstrated self-assertion in another area and were able to rake in the appropriate recognition. Reentering the international stage as a victor, however, now took place in a thoroughly civilian field and thus implied, from the start, a learning achievement, especially since the overjoyed, proud people were evidently hesitant about immediately testing their new powers in other disciplines as well. According to Allensbach, 38% of those polled in June 1954 believed that Germany will "once again belong to the world's most powerful states"; 41% were of the opposite opinion (Noelle & Neumann, 1956, p. 125),¹³ figures that do not exactly testify to a nationalist resurgence. The reassuring conclusion drawn in Switzerland: "That people in Germany can let themselves get more excited about a game than about military marches actually reveals something natural and healthy at heart" ("Begeisterung", 1954, p. 5).

At the beginning of the 1950s, Hannah Arendt diagnosed the "nightmare of a physically, morally, and politically ruined Germany" weighing heavily on all of Europe (Arendt, 1989, p. 43). Ultimately, it would do everybody good to raise the German people to their feet again. From this point of view, July 4, 1954, was a downright stroke of luck. Against the background of the economic recovery, winning the World Cup helped Germany play for more time in the matter of adapting to democracy.

Real-life editions of the fictional character Keetenheuve also contributed decisively to the emergence of a democratic model of success from out of this initial situation. Refugees from Nazi Germany and resistance fighters jointly became champions for the establishment of a new Germany. As such, they were confronted with the troublesome fact that their fellow citizens were not even thinking of “becoming different because their form of government was changing” (Koeppen, 1953, p. 20). This newly formed group of former victims of the Nazi regime thus became something of a countervailing power in the new Germany. They did not conceal the fact of being scared stiff at encountering situations they deemed vulnerable to mass psychosis. The critics of restoration performed an invaluable service by inducing the CDU state under the aegis of Adenauer to perceive its limits at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s. In doing so, they equipped society with the capacity to acknowledge this important change and draw the appropriate conclusions.

Viewed from a distance, the Triumph of Bern also stands for this transition.

NOTES

1. In *Das Treibhaus* [*The Hothouse*] (1953) and two other novels (*Tauben im Gras* [*Pigeons in the Grass*], *Der Tod in Rom* [*Death in Rome*]), Koeppen became the first West German writer to take stock, in a critical fashion, of the young Federal Republic. The main character in *Treibhaus* is the Bundestag MP Keetenheuve.

2. At that time, practically the only places with TV sets were radio shops and pubs.

3. This was the end-game report by Herbert Zimmermann in *Wie wir Weltmeister wurden: Kampf und Sieg der deutschen Fussball-Nationalelf* (1954). The book came out in mid-July 1954 with an initial printing of 100,000 copies; the publisher was counting on selling a million by September.

4. People made sure that this was an orderly program of events, for example, by telephoning in advance reservations for railway platform tickets (“Die Pfalz feiert ihre Weltmeisterschaftssieger,” 1954, p. 3).

5. Bavarian radio reached a point where it no longer cared to inflict this on its listeners; the live transmission—whether for reasons of political correctness or because the program ran out of time—was cut short (cf. “Wotan und der Fussball,” 1954, p. 2).

6. It was said that the majority of Germans were incapable of being seduced “by the pan-Germanic emotions that foreigners feared” in the first verse of the national anthem for the simple reason that they “had no idea about the location of the Meuse, Memel, Adige, and Belt” waterways (“Wer die Gewaesser kennt,” 1954, p. 6).

7. In Kogon’s terminology, those who traded on the company name of the “45ers” were avowed opponents of the Nazis, whereas those going under the name of the “131ers” were the political and administrative functional elite rehabilitated in accordance with Article 131 of the Basic Law (“Former Members of the Civil Service”) and the accompanying “Law on the Regulation of Persons under Article 131 of the Basic Law” of April 10, 1951.

8. On the continuity of the functional elites, compare, for example, Reifferscheidt (1951, pp. 90-100).

9. For 80%, the Occupation period ranked last (Noelle & Neumann, 1956, p. 125).

10. Critics of the Adenauer state were not unaware of the changes.

An 11 per cent minority that has maintained a "certain sympathy" for National Socialism, yet wants to look like film actors by 10 per cent, that regards happy marriages between non-Jews and Jews as possible at 46 per cent, is against one-man rule in government at 45 per cent, characterizes time spent in the military as not the best education for youth at 28 per cent, does not prefer the uniform to civilian clothing at 33 per cent, only values the flag higher than life at 43 per cent, 67 per cent of whom have declared their willingness in a public discussion to advocate the current form of government, and 55 per cent of whom would give up on the nation-state . . . a minority like this can no longer be viewed as some kind of nihilistic danger. Whatever remains of that has not the slightest chance of developing under current conditions for the average German youth. (Kogon, 1954b, p. 280)

11. The programmatic title of Economic Minister Ludwig Erhard's book, which came out in 1957 (Erhard, 1957).

12. It is astonishing how the formula *We are somebody again* usually crops up in retrospective observations about the 1954 World Cup. This strikes me as an interpretation whose clearly nationalistic pitch was added retroactively to the event.

13. Even if it came just in the nick of time for this argumentation, the Allensbach survey took place in June and not in July 1954, as Axel Schildt maintains (Schildt, 1995, p. 310).

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