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Sócrates, Corinthians, and Questions of Democracy and Citizenship

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Contrary to what the title might suggest to less than fanatical fans of international soccer, the article that follows does not discuss Greece, but Brazil. The Corinthians in question travel rarely (if ever) by boat, and this Sócrates, although given to philosophizing, is a popular soccer hero, better known for his athletic abilities. "Corinthian Democracy," to get to the point, refers to a political movement developed by team administrators and soccer players in an attempt to alter the management/labor relations of a São Paulo club called "Corinthians." The movement came to the public eye in a big way for the first time in 1982 on the eve of elections for club president, in part because of the soccer stars involved and in part because of the similarity between internal club politics and the Brazilian political moment. Two tickets competed for the presidency of the Corinthians, the "third most important position in the country, after the governorship of São Paulo and the presidency of the Republic"¹: "Order and Truth" and "Corinthian Democracy." The nature of the dispute was clear from the beginning. Corinthian Democracy, already in power at the time of the election, represented the *abertura* ticket, an expression of the political liberalization underway at the level of national politics in Brazil since the late 1970s.² Its platform was antiauthoritarian above all else, proposing new forms of team administration based on the participation of players, administrators, and fans in club operations. "Order and Truth," however, proposed quite the opposite: authoritarian and personalistic control of the club in the hands of the "folkloric" soccer *caudillo*, the former club president, Vicente Matheus. The soccer magazine *Placar* summed up the dispute as a battle between "liberalization and heavy handedness, efficiency or paternalism, new times or old methods, Waldemar Pires or Vicente Matheus."³

The Corinthians, like athletic teams almost everywhere outside the United States, is a non-profit organization governed, in principle, by club members (title holders), who elect a body of counselors, which in turn selects the administrators of the organization. In practice, however, this form of governance has translated into paternalistic, clientelistic control of Brazilian soccer by entrenched administrators popularly known as *cartolas*, or "top hats." These are typically middle-aged businessmen who obtain positions within the club by demonstrating their dedication to the team, frequently via monetary donations. The top hats' motives, as Janet Lever has explained, are not always entirely altruistic. The importance of soccer in Brazil is such that club administrators are able to use their positions in alliances with representatives of the military, legal, and governmental systems.⁴ Laudo Natal, to cite the best known example, moved from the presidency of the São Paulo Futebol Club to the governorship of São Paulo.⁵ The attention generated by Corinthian Democracy, moreover, derived in part from the ambitiousness of any attempt to change this well-rooted oligarchical system of control.

The novel character of Corinthian Democracy's platform increased the excitement and urgency of the 1982 elections. The climate, according to *Placar*, was the same as that of "a real election."⁶ And if there were any doubts, the importance of the event was confirmed by the campaign expenses of the two tickets--somewhere in the neighborhood of U.S. \$500,000.⁷ Commercials were placed on television and radio; campaign T-shirts, caps, costumes, and musical groups guaranteed a festive air. Several players made public their support for the Democracy ticket, running for the position of club counselor. They were supporting not only Waldemar Pires for president and the sociologist Adilson Monteiro Alves (one of the theoreticians of the movement) for director of *futebol*, but, most important, a philosophy of management and a new interpretation of soccer's place in Brazilian society. Sócrates, a lanky, bearded medical doctor, captain of Brazil's 1982 World Cup team and the Corinthians' star player, contributed to the urgency of the elections, making his position clear beforehand: he would retire from soccer in the event of an "Order and Truth" victory.

With the hindsight of a Monday morning quarterback, the electoral victory of 1982 appears as but one among many of Corinthian Democracy's accomplishments. Between 1982 and 1984 the movement spilled over the walls of the club and into the national political arena, where it played an interesting role in the political liberalization (*abertura*) underway in Brazil since the late 1970s and, more directly, in the 1984 campaign for free elections. The elegance of the soccer played by Casagrande, Sócrates, Wladimir, and company, the 1982 state title, won with "Democracia Corintiana" printed on their uniforms, together with the presence of the team in the increasingly refreshing events of national politics, sent fans into near delirium. The best selling author Marcelo Rubens Paiva, a dedicated fan, went so far as to write that "if ET shows up around here, the Corinthians is the only team he'll invite for a match on his planet."⁸

It had never felt so good to be a *corintiano*. An element of Brazil's rich and mysterious, carnivalesque and spirited urban popular culture, the Corinthians suddenly appeared in the forefront of national politics, alongside unions, opposition parties, and social movements. Drawing cultural identity into the realm of political action and debate, moreover, Corinthian Democracy clarified a theoretical point for social scientists that, in retrospect, seems rather obvious: Sport is not only a reflection,⁸ but just as important, a part of society.

Sport, Brazilian Soccer, and Popular Culture

But what part? Clearly, the nature of the relationship between sport and society depends upon the nature of the society in question. In this sense, two points need be made at the outset. First, soccer, as Anatol Rosenfeld observed in 1956, is not one among many, but rather *the* sport in Brazil.⁹ In spite of the growing (and, in most cases, somewhat recent) interest in basketball, surfing, and many other sports, soccer continues to occupy a privileged place in the spectrum of Brazilian athletics.¹⁰ The difference, and this is the second point, is that soccer, unlike all other sports--with the possible exception of *capoeira*¹¹--is part of the characteristic and unique popular culture that emerged in Brazilian cities around the turn of the century, while volleyball, surfing, squash, etc., certainly are not. As such, *futebol*, to use the Brazilian term, should be grouped not with other sports, but within a tradition that includes cultural manifestations such as carnival, Afro-Brazilian religions, popular music, and Catholicism.

Gilberto Freyre, Anatol Rosenfeld, and the journalist Mário Filho count among the first analysts to approach soccer as a revealing and characteristic element of Brazilian culture.¹² Rosenfeld, for example, citing Shiller, compares *futebol* to the horseraces in London, bullfights in Madrid, and the "gay good life" of the processions of Rome, in an attempt to get at the character of Brazilian society, remarking that "the unrivaled success of soccer in Brazil, with the complete suppression of rugby, played with equal enthusiasm early on, certainly offers food for thought."¹³ The renowned sociologist Gilberto Freyre examines the game in light of his understanding of "racial democracy" and national character: "In soccer, as in politics, Brazilian 'mulatto-ness' is characterized by the pleasure of elasticity, surprise, and rhetoric, bringing to mind capoeira moves, or the steps of a dance."¹⁴

For my own purposes of analysis, it is not so much national character or "mulatto-ness" that draw soccer into the realm of carnival, popular religiosity, and music, but rather a common history, a tradition, and most significant, the ability to generate social, national, and individual identities. Without an understanding of this cultural context, part of the relevance of Corinthian Democracy within the history of soccer is lost. In February

1983, for instance, shortly before carnival, Sócrates set forth the objectives of his activities in the Corinthian Democracy movement:

I'm struggling for freedom, for respect for human beings, for equality, for ample and unrestricted discussions, for a professional democratization of unforeseen limits, and all of this as a soccer player, preserving the ludic, joyous, and pleasurable nature of this activity.¹⁵

If it did not come from an athlete referring to professional soccer, this combination of "pleasure," "joy," "struggle," "freedom," and "democracy" would quite possibly go unnoticed, say, in the Paris of May 1968. Sócrates's vision of the nature and possibilities of soccer in Brazil, however, are less a result of the influence of the artistic vanguard or intellectual left than of the Corinthian fans and the carnivalesque climate they generate in the stadium. When he started to play for the team, Sócrates "commemorated goals in championship games like you swat a fly." "Today," continues Marcelo Rubens Paiva, writing in 1982, "even when the team is winning 10 to 1 he commemorates a goal like an adolescent beginning his career."¹⁶ The atmosphere generated by the Corinthian following, the second largest in the country after Flamengo in Rio de Janeiro, is, in other words, contagious.

Soccer in Brazil shares the exuberance and certain of the festive forms of carnival and Brazilian popular music's mistrust of labor; all three of these cultural expressions insist on the values of spontaneity, pleasure, and enthusiasm. These common elements stem from a common history, very different from the history of popular culture in most of Spanish America, Europe, and the United States. Writing of popular music, José Miguel Wisnik has set out the specificity of urban popular culture in Brazil compared with European manifestations:

If in Europe the advance of capital seems to have contributed to the discontinuation of carnivalesque festivals from early on, undermining the common denominator of the public celebration, in Brazil industrialization and modernization (I'm thinking of the first decades of the century) contributed initially towards an amplification of the celebration, of the space of the city, the record industry, giving an electric and urban voice to the carnivalesque substratum active in popular culture, and creating, in this manner, the very phenomenon of Brazilian popular music as a mixture of classes in a dialectic of order and disorder.¹⁷

In their current forms, carnival, soccer, and popular music developed in Brazil at about the same time as the urban proletariat, a fact that deeply marked their character and content. "The sphere of labor," writes Gilberto Vasconcellos, "projects itself over Brazilian popular music as a powerful *inverted image*; the systematic and radical negation of the values elevated into a positive light by work became the preferred poetic theme of our popular composer in the twenties and thirties--one of the richest and most notable periods in Brazilian popular music."¹⁸ The popular composer inverts this image, according to Vasconcellos, by way of the figure of the

malandro, a bohemian rascalsque character of Brazilian lore who, with skill and savoir faire, moves between the spheres of "order" and "disorder" in Brazilian society, taking advantage of the breaches and gaps in both.

Mommy, I don't want
 Mommy, I don't want
 to work from sun up to sun down,
 I want to be a singer on the radio
 a soccer player¹⁹

Florestan Fernandes, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and José de Souza Martins have shown in their studies of slavery and abolition how labor emerged for the newly freed black as the inhuman activity par excellence. In Cardoso's words:

the free black had to opt between continuing to work under the same conditions as before with the formal status of a citizen, or rebelling against everything that labor--disqualified by slavery--represented, living in idleness and disorder.²⁰

Idleness and disorder were not, however, the only reactions of groups excluded by the economic and social order to the new sort of social life emerging in Brazilian cities at the beginning of the century. In music, carnival, religion, and soccer, popular classes, or better, segments of them, brought their energies to bear, altering the trajectory of Brazilian culture.²¹ To the dark poverty of lower class life and the (new sorts of) rigors brought on by proletarianization and/or economic marginalization, they opposed the joy and sensuality of dance, the irreverence of carnival and the ambivalent, sometimes tragic life of the *malandro*, master in the art of ducking the severity and inflexibility of labor. Without disregarding differences across regions and genres (important, in the final analysis), it is possible to see the mark of a common aesthetic, in Brazilian popular culture, the mark of a carnivalesque substratum perhaps.

Soccer in Brazil incorporated elements of this aesthetic both in the stands and on the field at about the same time as popular music generated its critique of labor. Football, as it was called at the time, was a pastime limited almost entirely to the sphere of urban elites in the first decades of the century.²² A refined game, something like tennis, polo, or squash in the country today, it was played at aristocratic clubs where English was spoken on the field and important matches were followed, not with exuberant celebrations in the street, but with fashionable, formal balls animated by waltzes. The popularization of football in Brazil, started around 1900 and officialized with professionalization in 1933, changed the style of play, the character of the fans, altering the overall aesthetic of the game in the process. Soccer, in short, took on an increasingly carnivalesque aspect as fans turned the stadium into a celebratory space.²³

On the field, the popularization of soccer generated a new sort of player--acrobatic, elastic, full of unexpected moves, elegance, and individual power. It is even possible to say that the message offered up in the

lyrics of Vasconcellos's composers, clear at the level of content, is passed along on the feet of Brazilian soccer players. Players such as Leonidas in the thirties and forties, Garrincha in the fifties and sixties, Pelé in the fifties, sixties, and seventies--to cite some of the better known--are the highest expressions of this individualistic, acrobatic, happy style.²⁴ The anthropologist Roberto Da Matta explains this style in terms of soccer's liberating place within a highly structured, hierarchical social order:

... in the institutionalized and "structured" spheres of Brazilian society, the dominant and explicit mode of relationship is "hierarchization" by means of networks of personal relations. In this plane, everything has its place and individual variations are impossible. In areas such as *soccer*, *carnival*, and *umbanda*, individual variations are possible and consequently individualism and "hot-dogging" are the dominant ideologies.²⁵

The game comes to be interpreted as ludic celebration and irreverence--Pelé kicking the ball lightly over a defender's head and running past him to receive it himself; or Garrincha, who, ahead 3-0, "dribbled three adversaries, obliged the goalie to make a spectacular leap and fall flat on his face, and then, with an open net for the final shot, he waited for the fullback Robotti to arrive, dribbled him in front of the goal and only then knocked the ball in."²⁶ As an unsuspect journalist, Alastair Reid, writing of the 1982 World Cup in *The New Yorker* put it: "Brazil's whole play seemed more instinct than design, and it was clear that the Brazilians relished playing the game--an impression that came all too rarely in the Mundial."²⁷

Christian Messenger, in his study of sport in American literature, has examined the contradictory nature of sport in North American society: "It liberates in play, but binds its players in strenuous work."²⁸ "America's puritanical society with its fierce work ethic has nurtured a deep suspicion of play," he writes, going on to point out that this explains, in part at least, the highly disciplined nature of American sports at the level of ideology and practice.²⁹ In its popular form, Brazilian soccer, in contrast, was born as a liberation from labor and a society hierarchical in nature, a fact which its style reflects. It is interesting to note that the Corinthian Democracy movement picked up on this aspect of the Brazilian soccer tradition and style, emphasizing the ludic quality of the game, as well as the players' right to the control of their own bodies and personal lives. It succeeded in doing away with pre-game "confinement," brought beer into the locker room, and generally made it clear that what the players did on their own time was their own and not the club's business. Rejecting the hypocritical moralism of previous generations of soccer stars, Sócrates and Casagrande, for instance, gave interviews in bars, revealed their taste for a *cervejinha* or two, and explained that they really enjoyed smoking cigarettes and did not plan to quit. What was at stake, broadly speaking, was the athlete's control over his body and, just as important, an interpretation of soccer, not as discipline, but as enjoyment. To use Sócrates's words, Corinthian

Democracy sought to preserve the "ludic, joyous, and pleasurable" nature of the game.

Identity, Soccer, Corinthian Democracy, and Citizenship

The novelty of Corinthian Democracy, of a social movement within a soccer club, raises a series of questions and revives others with respect to the significance and role of the game in Brazil. Among them: Does soccer merely reflect the structures of domination in the country, or can it be seen as a creative intervention in Brazilian society? The two most common interpretations of *futebol* to date--that which sees it as the "opium of the people" and that which highlights its role in national integration--have emphasized soccer's subordination to ideologies and the state. The "opium of the people" thesis interprets the intense popular interest and identification generated by soccer in a negative light as a form of massification which, in keeping the masses' attentions turned from more serious concerns, results in alienation and social manipulation. The national integration thesis exalts popular identification with the game insofar as it strengthens the cultural strings that tie the nation together. In both interpretations soccer emerges as a sort of empty container, filled by the political and ideological structures of the moment.³⁰

Corinthian Democracy, on the surface of things at least, would seem to challenge such perspectives insofar as it proposes to unite players, fans, and administrators in an attempt to achieve soccer's autonomy vis-à-vis the authoritarianism of Brazilian society, forging an independent set of values. Or should Corinthian Democracy be considered merely the exception that confirms the rule? Or the reflection in sports of the redemocratization underway in the country since the late 1970s? What sort of autonomy, if any, does Corinthian Democracy, or soccer in general, present with respect to the state and ideologies in Brazil?

The World Cup of 1970 vividly confirmed interpretations that looked upon soccer as a form of social manipulation. The Médici government, the most violent and repressive in the history of the dictatorship installed in 1964, went to great lengths to reap the political benefits of the national team's victory. Médici declared a national holiday in recognition of the victory, received the team in Brasília, was photographed with the Jules Rimet trophy, and took it upon himself to reward each player with the equivalent of U.S. \$18,500 tax free. In a speech shortly after the World Cup, Médici offered his own interpretation of the relationship between soccer and society in Brazil: "I identify this victory, achieved in the fraternity of sport, with the ascension of faith in our struggle for national development."³¹

The dictatorship felt compelled to do more than merely use soccer for propaganda purposes, however. After 1970 it began to take the game

seriously, remaking the national team in its own image. Captain Claudio Coutinho was given the task of "modernizing" the Brazilian style of play and, as Joel Rufino dos Santos points out, his technique and goals betrayed a number of commonalities with the military's efforts to "modernize" the Brazilian economy.³² In practice this modernization translated into an emphasis on discipline and obedience to the detriment of improvisation, on teamwork in place of individual expression, on physical force instead of art, and on imported technocratic jargon where popular wisdom had previously prevailed. In his article "A implantação de un modelo alienígena exótico e outras questões pertinentes: A Seleção Brasileira de futebol - 1978," the art critic Jacob Klintowitz shows how Coutinho made a point of avoiding players who, for one reason or another, were capable of calling into question this dull and authoritarian style of play, players such as Paulo César Caju, Marinho, Falcao, Serginho, and others who were "dribblers known for a happy style, or expressive."³³ Coutinho, observes Dos Santos, went so far as to define the "dribble, our speciality, 'as a waste of time and proof of our weakness.'"³⁴

Given the success of Brazilian soccer in the fifties, sixties, and early seventies, it seems paradoxical that the government felt compelled to undertake such a drastic reformulation. In 1970, after all, Brazil had won its third of the four previous World Cups and was generally considered the country with the best soccer in the world. Pelé in turn was internationally recognized as the best player in the history of the game. One Argentine journalist put the difference between the 1978 team and those of previous decades in racial terms: "Pero, ¿dónde están los negritos? Cuando Brasil venía con unos negros bicudos jugaba bien; ahora vienen unos rubios de pelo largo y no juegan nada."³⁵

Understandably, leftist intellectuals reacted strongly to the euphemistic, nationalistic propaganda that surrounded the 1970 World Cup, some even going so far as to root against the Brazilian squad.³⁶ To my queries about the period, for example, one Brazilian friend replied that "the cheers of the fans drown out the screams of the torture victims." The film *P'ra Frente Brasil*, which takes Brazil's 1970 World Cup victory march as a title, makes use of the same juxtaposition. If there were any doubts beforehand, it was clear to intellectuals by the end of the Cup that soccer, to use the Althusserian language of the period, served as an ideological state apparatus, the opium of the people, or some combination of the two. From a different political perspective, Janet Lever arrives at a not dissimilar conclusion, arguing that soccer in the Médici period facilitated national integration and buttressed the dictatorships, but that its political significance depends ultimately on one's opinion of the government's objectives.³⁷

In light of *abertura*, the demilitarization of the 1982 World Cup team, and Corinthian Democracy, however, the relationship between politics and soccer--which seemed fairly clear in the 1970s--comes to appear more complex and can be interpreted in a different manner. What is significant in retrospect, in other words, is not so much the identity between the state, its ideologies, and soccer, but precisely the distance between the

military regime and the nature of the game in Brazil; the fact that in spite of the success of the country's soccer, the government felt obliged to undertake a complete overhaul of this form of popular expression, attempting to alter what had come to be recognized as the Brazilian style of play, sometimes called "samba soccer" in the international press; from which it can perhaps be concluded that the dictatorship did not feel entirely comfortable with a form of play based on improvisation, individual prowess, irreverence--that is, filled with carnivalesque elements. Ultimately, the military proved incapable of absorbing the game's meaning and attempted, via militarization, to use soccer as a vehicle for another set of messages closer, much closer, to its own set of values and ideology.

Seen as a cultural form that expresses more than either facile nationalism or the gray neutrality of sheer alienation, the problem of popular identification with soccer in Brazil takes on a richer, more complex weave than that offered up in the "national integration" or "opium of the masses" theories, and remains unresolved. The opinion poll cited by Lever to the effect that 90 percent of Brazil's lower classes identified soccer with the nation in 1970, for example, does not answer, but rather raises, a question: With what nation? What is at issue, to put it another way, is not the fact that social and national identifications and identities are generated, in part, by way of *futebol*, but the content of these identities and the nature of soccer's role in their creation.³⁸

An analysis that takes as its central element not the proximity but the distance between soccer and the military regime in the decade of the seventies finds support in certain recent treatments of Brazilian culture. Anthropologist Roberto Da Matta traces the importance of popular cultural manifestations in the creation of social and national identities in Brazil:

If carnival, popular religiosity and soccer are in fact so basic in Brazil, everything would indicate that in contrast to certain European countries and North America, our sources of social identity are not institutions central to the social order, such as laws, the constitution, the university system, the financial order, etc., but rather certain activities which are taken as secondary sources of identity in the center and dominant countries.³⁹

This reflects, on the one hand, the strength of popular cultural manifestations in the country, as well as, on the other, the weakness--at the level of social reproduction--of both the Brazilian state and of certain institutions typical of civil societies in Western capitalist countries. Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos, for example, concludes in his study of liberalism and the state in Brazil that:

Aside from keeping a few radicals under control and aside from the use of police power to break up strikes, the state apparatus (in Brazil) is of little value and has never been seen as a strategic structure for social reproduction.⁴⁰

Richard Morse, drawing on literary examples, registers the bourgeoisie's inability to impose an identity on Brazilian society:

If today it takes three adjectives to divide the Brazilian bourgeoisie--national, international, bureaucratic--they are still walk-ons without hegemonic penetration. Their presence has not yet disenchanted Mário (de Andrade's) city (São Paulo), much less its salacious rival, Rio. In Mariátegui's terms, if the European bourgeoisie is crepuscular, the creole one is unauthentic.⁴¹

Finally, Da Matta goes on to point out that the identities created by popular culture on the one hand, and official institutions on the other, do not converge, but rather run parallel to each other:

In comparison with the United States, we have, then, a relationship which is entirely inverted as well as very interesting from a sociological point of view. In the United States society is reproduced by way of its modern and individualistic civic structure which is identical to the nation and society. In Brazil, however, national identity is multiple. On the one hand it is produced at one social level by the popular institutions mentioned above (carnival, hospitality, umbanda, soccer, etc.). But, on the other hand, it continues to reproduce (although with difficulty), the North American and European models at the level of the "nation" and the "government," where such paradigms are obviously in force.⁴²

It is, moreover, precisely this gap, the empty spaces between the multiplicity of identities Da Matta speaks of, that makes Corinthian Democracy so interesting: it draws on the unofficial, supposedly (and in fact) less than serious side of Brazilian culture in order to formulate an explicit critique of one of the country's serious sides--its political structure.

Corinthian Democracy assailed official culture on different flanks. It criticized the paternalism of the Brazilian soccer establishment as well as the authoritarianism of Brazilian society in general. The players established a sort of dialogue with the cheering masses of fans in the stands, entering the field during the deciding game of the 1982 São Paulo state championship with a banner that read: "Win or Lose, but Always with Democracy." Labor relations, club hierarchy, soccer tactics, national politics, and the internal regulations of the team were discussed among the players, as Corinthian Democracy took its place among the social movements that gained strength and form in the 1980s. In this sense, Corinthian Democracy was very much a product of the political liberalization underway in Brazil since the late 1970s. Prior to this time, players who called into question the policies of the soccer establishment or the practices of the military regime, "pre-Socratics,"⁴³ such as Reinaldo or Afonso, were, as Dos Santos shows, marginalized.⁴⁴ There was, particularly at the level of the national team, little room for independence or irreverence on or off the field between 1970 and 1978. *Abertura* changed this, permitting freer expression both in terms of political opinions and style of play. Corinthian Democracy took creative advantage of the new

possibilities opened up by the political moment, dismantling some of the barriers between leisure and politics, play and seriousness.

Abertura, as Bernardo Kozinski among others has argued, was the product of crisis.⁴⁵ The end of the Brazilian "economic miracle," financial scandal, growing foreign debt, and inflation contributed to undermining whatever legitimacy the dictatorship might have had prior to the second half of the 1970s. Brazilian civil society took advantage of this breach in the authoritarianism of previous years, reorganizing itself. The labor movement, professional organizations, ecclesiastical base communities, housing associations, feminist groups, etc., came together and widened cracks that the military government was unable to plug. The crisis of authoritarianism posed a question that has long troubled not only Brazil, but almost all Latin American countries: The legitimacy of political representation. The military governments had attempted to legitimize themselves in power, in large part anyway, on the basis of force. The social movements and opposition parties that challenged the regime in recent years looked, not to force, but to an identity of objectives and goals with the Brazilian people, to representativity, as their major source of political legitimation. They claimed to express (and did to varying and unknown degrees) the needs and desires of *the people*--a central concept in recent years.

Attacking the dictatorship for its lack of representativity, the social movements and opposition parties of the *abertura* period called for increased popular political participation and posed, implicitly and explicitly, a question as yet unresolved: The basis and character of citizenship in the country.⁴⁶ "What are we?" asked Celso Furtado in a 1984 article on politics and culture; Afonso Romano de Sant'ana asked the same question with the title of a recent book: "What Country Is This?" (*Que país é esse?*), as did Roberto Da Matta with his "What Makes Brazil, Brazil?" (*O que faz Brasil o Brasil?*).⁴⁷ It is probably not by chance that re-examination of the identity and fundamental values of Brazilian society are appearing with increased frequency in recent years. The imminent political reorganization of the country urges a discussion of what it means (or should, or might) to be a Brazilian citizen.

Implicitly, Corinthian Democracy answered the "What Country Is This?" question as follows: One of soccer fans and players. Which is not to say that soccer (or carnival, or samba, etc.) is all that Brazilians know how to do, but rather that they take the game seriously as a source of identity and form of expression. With this response, Corinthian Democracy added its contribution to the political debate of the moment, broadening the concept of Brazilian citizenship to the point where it could incorporate social and national identities generated by popular cultural expressions, in this case soccer. In a sense, this was nothing new. Soccer has long served as one of the many forms of "unofficial" citizenship in a country that has had difficulty realizing official forms. For decades Brazilians--or at least segments of Brazilian society--have recognized themselves as such based on a common identification with soccer and the way it is played in the country. The specific contribution of Corinthian

Democracy on this score was to legitimate what had been unofficial, taking advantage of the carnivalesque climate of the free elections to do so.

Corinthian Democracy reached its apotheosis at the April 1984 free election rally in São Paulo, a few days before the Congressional vote on the constitutional amendment re-establishing free elections was scheduled to take place. Sócrates, moved by the event, and speaking before some 1,500,000 people, pledged that were the amendment to pass he would refuse a million-dollar offer to play in Italy and stay in Brazil to participate in the reconstruction of democracy. It was a polemical gesture, criticized by many as demagogic, but absolutely consistent with Corinthian Democracy. As a representative who gave voice to at least certain popular aspirations, he felt obligated (excited might be a better word) to stay in the country and help finish what he had helped start. Those who considered the vow demagogic betrayed, in the final analysis, discomfort with a player who drew on the identification and legitimacy generated by soccer to make a political statement.

The free elections amendment did not pass. Sócrates went to play for Fiorentina in Florence, where he spent part of his time auditing political science classes. Apparently he had difficulty adapting to the Italian style of play and made the following assessment of Italian soccer: "The players are excellent professionals, but their game lacks joy."⁴⁸ Casagrande, another symbol of Corinthian Democracy, was lent to the São Paulo Futebol Club. He watched the Corinthians lose the 1984 São Paulo state championship to Santos in the final; the television cameras picked him out in the stands, crying amidst the crowd.

Corinthian Democracy faded into the background together with the free elections campaign in Brazil. Its future as a movement is unknown.⁴⁹ It made its mark, leaving behind a sense that soccer in Brazil would never be quite the same. Corinthian Democracy added a new dimension to the sociability that revolves around *futebol* in São Paulo and in Brazil. In the press, on the radio, on television before and after games, and in bars--principally in bars--throughout the city, fans, journalists, and announcers discussed whether or not soccer belonged in politics. Following the lead of the Corinthians, teams throughout the country developed movements supporting the free elections campaign.⁵⁰ Intellectuals who had been skeptical of the nature of the game's influence in society found themselves obliged to look at it in a slightly different light.

Soccer in Brazil would never be quite the same after Corinthian Democracy . . . or would it? Those who continued to see soccer as little more than the opium of the masses tended to consider Dr. Sócrates almost entirely responsible for a movement that represented "the exception that proved the rule." In the wake of Corinthian Democracy, however, it became more difficult to ignore the force of soccer--and of popular cultural manifestations in general--in Brazilian society. *Futebol* invaded politics, traditionally the terrain of elites in the country. In doing so, it revealed (paradoxically) an autonomy vis-à-vis political structures that has been overlooked, in large part, by intellectuals concerned with the relationship of popular culture and power, popular culture and ideology. This auton-

omy, moreover, obliges a recasting of the notion that soccer integrates the nation: if it does so in fact, it is in a manner not necessarily in tune with the integration carried out by dominant political and economic structures.

The history of soccer in Brazil is such that it ended up as more than a sport. Closer to carnival, it has generated an identity that has served as a sort of unofficial citizenship in the country. A form of cultural expression, *futebol* interprets the world around it, but the aesthetic dimension of the game as it is played in Brazil has been all but ignored by analysts of sport and society. The result is a sociological analysis of a cultural manifestation that ignores content and form, and consequently collapses culture into politics and economics. Corinthian Democracy was able to draw on the tradition of the game and on the identity generated by soccer in Brazil to effect its political critique precisely because it did not make this same mistake . . . and because Sócrates, Casagrande, Wladimir & Co. played great soccer.

Notes

- ¹ According to Wadih Helu, a former president of the club, cited in "A vitória da Democracia," *Placar* (11 March 1982): 15.
- ² Robert M. Levine, "Brazil: The Dimensions of Democracy," *Current History* (February 1982): 60-63, 86-87.
- ³ "A vitória da Democracia," p. 14.
- ⁴ Janet Lever, *A loucura do futebol* (Rio de Janeiro, 1983), pp. 85-86.
- ⁵ Lever provides further examples in *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- ⁶ "A vitória da Democracia," pp. 14-15.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ⁸ "Corinthians, ou o sonho que não acabou," *Placar* (11 March 1982): 37.
- ⁹ "O futebol no Brasil," *Argumento 4*: 61-86.
- ¹⁰ The magazine *Placar*, formerly dedicated almost exclusively to soccer, has recently changed its format to become, in its own words, "the magazine of all sports in Brazil."

- ¹¹ *Capoeira* is a dance/fight practiced originally by slaves in Brazil. It is performed as a show, used as a form of self-defense, and is currently practiced in competition. The question is to what extent or in what sense it can (or should) be considered a sport.
- ¹² Mário Filho, *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 1962); Rosenfeld, "O futebol no Brasil"; Gilberto Freyre, *Sociologia* (Rio de Janeiro, 1945); and Freyre's preface to the Filho volume.
- ¹³ "O futebol no Brasil," p. 61.
- ¹⁴ Freyre, *Sociologia*, cited in Rosenfeld, "O futebol no Brasil," p. 82.
- ¹⁵ *Folha de São Paulo* (13 February 1983): 23.
- ¹⁶ Paiva, "Corinthians, ou o sonho que não acabou," p. 37.
- ¹⁷ Cited in Gilberto Vasconcellos and Matinas Suzuki, Jr., "A maladrage e a formação da música popular brasileira," in *Historia geral da civilização brasileira, III: O Brasil republicano, Vol. 4, Economia e cultura (1930-1964)*, ed. Boris Fausto (São Paulo, 1984), p. 508.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 505.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 510.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 513. See also Florestan Fernandes, *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo, 1977), and José de Souza Martins, *O cativo da terra* (São Paulo, 1980).
- ²¹ On carnival see José Carlos Sebe, *Carnaval, carnavais* (São Paulo, in press). On Umbanda in this period, see Renato Ortiz, *A norte branca do feiticeiro negro* (Petrópolis, 1981). On soccer see Filho, *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, and Joel Rufino dos Santos, *História política do futebol brasileiro* (São Paulo, 1982).
- ²² Filho, *O negro no futebol brasileiro*; see also Robert M. Levine, "Esporte e sociedade: o caso do futebol brasileiro," in *Futebol e cultura: coletanea*, eds. José Sebastião Witter and José Carlos Sebe (São Paulo, 1982).
- ²³ See Rosenfeld, "O futebol no Brasil."
- ²⁴ For Leonidas, see Rosenfeld, "O futebol no Brasil"; for Garrincha, see Telmo Zanini, *Mané Garrincha: o anjo torto* (São Paulo, 1984). There is good material on Pelé's style of play in Armando Nogueira, *Bola na rede*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 1974).

- 25 Roberto Da Matta, "Futebol: opio do povo vs. drama social," *Novos Estudos Cebrap*, 1:4 (1982): 60.
- 26 Zanini, *Mané Garrincha*, p. 27.
- 27 Alastair Reid, "The Sporting Scene," *The New Yorker* (1st November 1982): 118.
- 28 *Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction: Hawthorne to Faulkner* (New York, 1981), p. 2.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 The "opium of the people" thesis is difficult to find in the Brazilian literature on soccer. It is sufficiently commonplace, however, to draw responses from Da Matta in "Futebol"; Paiva in "Corinthians"; and Juca Kfoury in *A emoção Corinthians* (São Paulo, 1983). Roberto Ramos, *Futebol: ideologia do poder* (Petrópolis, 1984) takes to extremes the "soccer as a state ideological apparatus" argument. The best formulation of the national integration thesis is found in Lever, *A loucura do futebol*.
- 31 Lever, *A loucura do futebol*, p. 92.
- 32 Rufino Dos Santos, "Na CBD até o papagaio bate continencia," *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira* 5 (December 1978): 121.
- 33 In *Encontros com a Civilização Brasileira* 5 (December 1978): 115-16.
- 34 Dos Santos, "Na CBD," p. 121. On the militarization of soccer in Brazil in the 1970s, see also Isney Savoy and Júlio Cezar Garcia, "No país do futebol," *Retrato do Brasil* 19 (1984): 217-22.
- 35 Cited in Rufino Dos Santos, "Na CBD," p. 122.
- 36 This was a fairly common attitude among certain sectors of the left in this period. Fernando Gabeira, *O que é isso, companheiro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1980) offers some interesting insights into the left and Brazilian soccer in the late 1960s.
- 37 Lever, *O loucura do futebol*, pp. 194-98.
- 38 Ibid., p. 197.
- 39 "Futebol," p. 60.
- 40 *Ordem burguesa e liberalismo político* (São Paulo, 1978), p. 115.

- ⁴¹ Richard Morse, "Brazilianists, God Bless'em! What in the World Is to Be Done?" *Stanford/Berkeley Occasional Papers in Latin American Studies* 5 (Winter 1983): 7. For a more developed treatment of the same point see Morse's *El espejo de Próspero* (Mexico City, 1983).
- ⁴² Da Matta, "Futebol," p. 60.
- ⁴³ Thanks to Milton Lahuerta for this term.
- ⁴⁴ Dos Santos, "Na CBD"; Levine, "Esporte e sociedade," p. 37. See the interview with Sócrates and Afonsinho in the Bar do Bexiga, reported in Chico Malfitani, "Sócrates e Afonsinho, douteres em liberdade," *Folha de São Paulo* (10 June 1984).
- ⁴⁵ Bernardo Kozinski, *Abertura, história de uma crise* (São Paulo, 1982).
- ⁴⁶ On social movements and citizenship, see Eunice Ribeiro Durham, "Movimentos sociais, a construção da cidadania," *Novos Estudos Cebrap* 10 (October 1984): 24-31.
- ⁴⁷ Betty Milan cites these titles as a case of "symptomatic repetition" that reveals the intelligentsia's inability to resolve the question of identity; *Isso é o país* (São Paulo, 1984).
- ⁴⁸ "Fiorentina não libera Sócrates," *Folha de São Paulo* (31 January 1985): 38.
- ⁴⁹ After three games without a victory, an article appeared in the local press calling for the "de-bureaucratization" of Corinthian Democracy; Matinas Suzuki, Jr., "Adilson deve pensar em abrir uma Burocracia Corintiana," *Folha de São Paulo* (4 March 1985): 20.
- ⁵⁰ Carlos Maranhão, "O futebol entrou na festa," *Placar* (3 February 1984): 24-27.