

DOCUMENTA

1970, 1925, 2009: whistling in the stadium as a form of protest

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The discovery and documentation of a clandestine handbill dating from the end of Franco's regime calling on supporters to whistle in protest at the dictator at the Camp Nou provides the departure point for a revision of the relation between football as the game of the masses and citizen protest in the case of Catalan political (and sporting) culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is based on antecedents and more recent cases of protests at big sporting events, in view of the continuing use of whistling at anthems or government authorities under different political regimes.

Keywords: sports; politics; football; Barcelona; Madrid; Spain; Catalonia; Gamper; Guruceta; Franco

The historical archives of the Civil Government of Barcelona are in a car park five hundred metres from the sea and the Olympic beaches. Forgotten and unattended by the authorities, their holdings comprise a haphazard mix of part of the everyday chronicle of the province from the nineteenth century up to the present day. In one of the boxes in the archives, bearing the label "Documents pending classification," we found¹ a series of cases opened by Franco's police after a handbill with the title "Catalans!!" was distributed in the environs of the Camp Nou. The document in question is a flyer, typewritten on one side, which reads:

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CATALANS!!

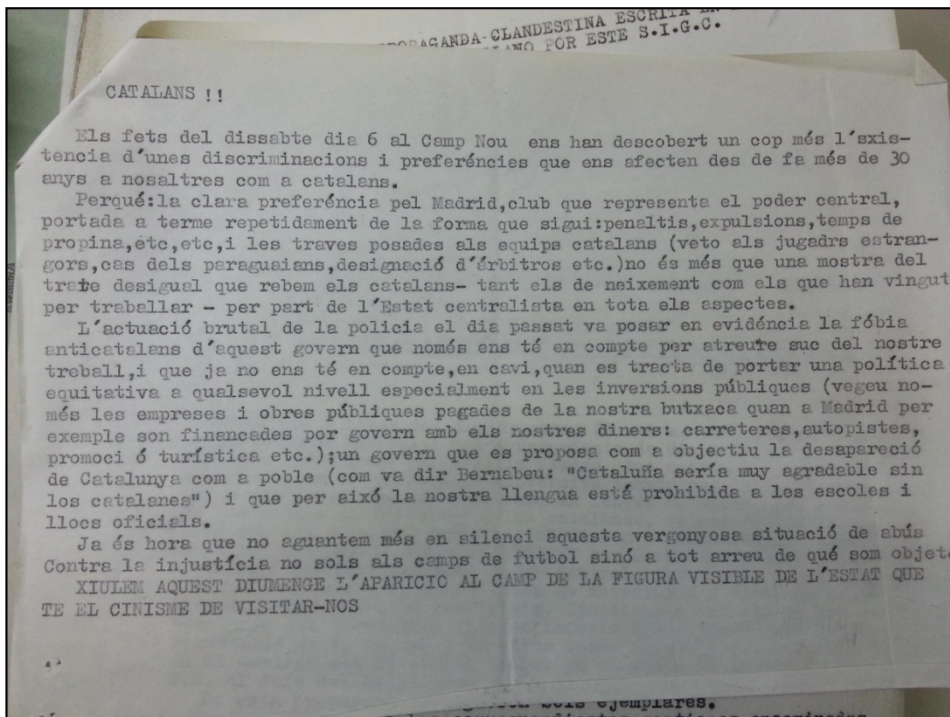
The events of Saturday the 6th at Camp Nou once again revealed the existence of discriminations and preferences that for over 30 years have affected us as Catalans.

Because: the marked preference for Madrid, the club that represents central power, repeatedly manifested in a variety of forms: penalties, sendings-off, inflated extra time, etc., etc., and the obstacles placed in the way of Catalan teams (veto on foreign players, the case of the Paraguayans, appointment of referees, etc.) is just one example of the unequal treatment we Catalans receive, both those who were born here and those who have come here to work, by the centralist State in every respect.

The brutal police action on the day in question highlighted the anti-Catalan feeling of this government, which only takes us into account to exploit our work, and which ceases to take us into account when it comes to applying an equitable policy at any level, in public investment (just look at the public companies and works paid for out of our pockets when in Madrid for example they are financed by the government with our money: roads, motorways, tourism promotion, etc.); a government that has set itself the aim of making Catalonia as a people disappear (as Bernabéu said: "Catalonia would be very pleasant without the Catalans"), which is why our language is banned at schools and in official places.

The time has come to put an end to our silent acceptance of this disgraceful situation of abuse. Against injustice not just on the football pitch but everywhere to which we are subjected.

COME AND WHISTLE THIS SUNDAY AT THE APPEARANCE IN THE STADIUM OF THE VISIBLE FIGURE OF THE STATE WHO HAS THE CYNICISM TO VISIT US



“Come and whistle this Sunday...”

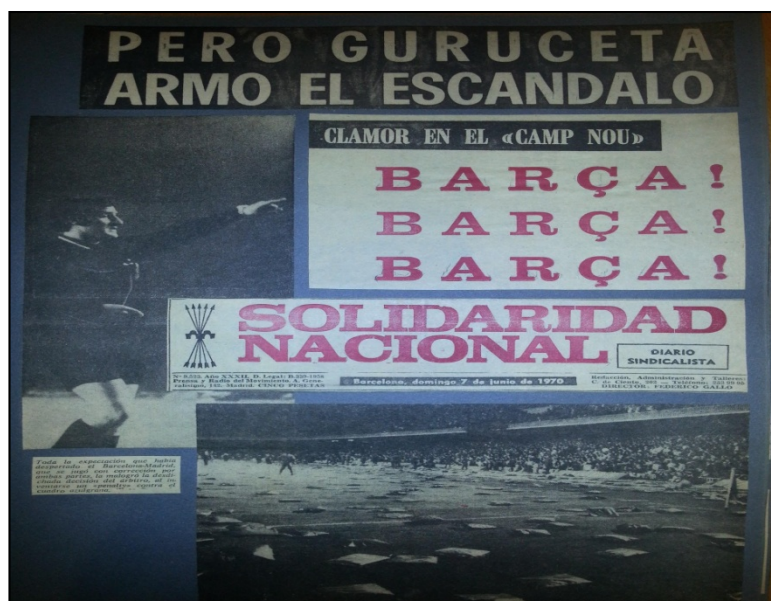
The document has no date or signature. While some phrases in the text (such as the references to the “unequal treatment” received by Catalans, to the government that only takes them into account to exploit them, to inequitable investment) could suggest it is contemporary, the references to “Saturday the 6th” and to the Camp Nou, Madrid and thirty years of discrimination serve to identify the football match mentioned as the one involving the refereeing scandal that marked the second leg of the quarter-final of the Copa de S.E. el Generalísimo between Barça and Real Madrid in the stadium of F.C. Barcelona on 6 June 1970. Having lost the first leg two-nil (a controversial defeat, with the referee Daniel Zariquiegui allowing Amancio’s goal which was clearly offside and a beer bottle thrown from the crowd that hit the head of Barcelona player Joaquim Rifé, as well as subsequent fines for Barça players Rifé, Gallego and Juan Carlos for protesting, and for the home club for incidents involving its spectators), Barça were obliged to win to stay in the Cup, the final of which was to be played at the Camp Nou. The stadium was full: almost a hundred thousand people were whistling the rival and cheering on the local team, and there was definitely tension in the air. Perhaps forewarned, the Prince and Princess of Asturias (Juan Carlos de Borbón had been named Franco’s successor by the Cortes Españolas a year previously, in July 1969), who had initially announced their attendance, did not show up.

The match was going well for Barcelona, who had gone ahead with a goal by Carles Rexach before halftime, until in the 59th minute, the referee, a newcomer to the First Division called José Emilio Guruceta Muro who had been hitherto well regarded by Barcelona (Fernández Santander 1990, 205), awarded a penalty after a foul by Joaquim Rifé on Velázquez, clearly outside the box:

A few seconds of silence and stupor. And when the penalty is a done deal, the crowd chokes out its incoherent cry and the gesticulations of the Barcelona players display all the signs of hysteria. This useless display of conviction centres on the referee. The seat cushions start to look like poppies in green wheat fields. The Armed Police stand up to locate the throwers. All of a sudden, the Barça players start to retreat towards the changing rooms. Rifé, Torres, Rexach and Reina look the most resolute. Night poppies continue to bloom on the grass. The rain of seat cushions is spectacular. (Vázquez Montalbán 2006, 146)

Barcelona’s English coach, Vic Buckingham, convinced the players to return to the pitch. Amancio converted the penalty, and then the situation got out of control, with

Barça's captain, Eladio, being sent off for accusing the referee of favouritism and applauding him ironically, followed by a pitch invasion as seat cushions rained down, and the suspension of the match five minutes before the end with the intervention of the security forces. Forced to leave the stadium, some fans headed for the Canaletes fountain on the Rambla, occupying that part of the city until three o'clock the next morning (Santacana 2005, 109).



The significance of the protest did not escape the notice of either the authorities or the public present that day. As Francesc de Carreras, son of former Barcelona president Narcís de Carreras i Guiteras, recalled: “On the day of the Madrid match, the crowd invaded the pitch for reasons that had nothing to do with football and for one immediately football-related reason: the famous penalty” (Shaw 1987, 210). For the historian Josep Fontana,² who was also present that day at the stadium, it was comparable only to the tram strike in Barcelona of March 1951, since it was a collateral event (in that case, the increase in the price of tickets and the grievance in comparison with Madrid prices) that spontaneously developed into a significant political protest (Richards 1999).

Football and politics

The leaflet transcribed and translated above, kept in the archives of the Civil Government (that of the police force of the time), denounced the favouritism shown by

referees, federation and bureaucracy to Real Madrid and, indirectly, the persecution of F.C. Barcelona on the football field. In the second paragraph, however, the focus shifts to identify it as one more example “of the unequal treatment we Catalans receive.” The mix of sporting and political grievance did not end here, or did not remain a simple grievance, since the anonymous author proposed an action of protest and sabotage to take advantage of the announced presence of the dictator, Francisco Franco, at the final of the Copa del Generalísimo which was to be played in Barcelona on Sunday 28 June that same year, 1970. An action of this kind had just one precedent: what were known as the “Events at the Palau” on 19 May 1960, when, during the concert held to mark the centenary of the birth of the poet Joan Maragall organized by the Orfeó Català choral society, in the presence of Franco’s ministers, a group of activists intoned the prohibited “Cant de la senyera,” written by Maragall, as they threw leaflets denouncing the regime from the upper floor of the Palau de la Música Catalana concert hall. Subsequent repression cracked down on the organizers of the protest, including Jordi Pujol, who was sentenced to prison by court-martial (Canals 2013).

In the case of the document that concerns us here, the political significance was even more direct. Firstly, the role of F.C. Barcelona was consolidated as a national and political outlet for a large part of the Catalan people. To quote the writer Vázquez Montalbán, Barça was “the unarmed army of Catalonia,” somehow making it “the only legal form of Catalan nationalism” (Salgado 2009, 345-9). The club had started to play this role as early as in 1908, when its founder, Joan Gamper, took over the presidency to avoid the disappearance of a club created just nine years previously, primarily by foreign nationals, and promoted a growing identification of the club with Catalonia and Catalan nationalism. This trend was accentuated as the century advanced, especially during periods of deprivation of liberties (Burns 1999, 70-96). Nor was it an isolated phenomenon: “Since almost all forms of potentially nationalistic activity were banned, football, which Franco personally liked, became one of the very few legal ways by which Basques could demonstrate who they were and what they were made of” (MacClancy 1996b, 192).

It was a case of Francoism itself turning football into a political issue. From the outset, with the creation in 1941 of the National Sports Delegation by the Falange, the single party with fascist roots, under the direction of General José Moscardó e Ituarte,

the dictatorship realized the unifying and diversionary power of sport. As the well-known president of Atlético de Madrid, Vicente Calderón, declared in November 1969: “If only football would anaesthetize the country so that people thought about football for three days before and three days after the match. Then they wouldn’t be thinking about more dangerous things.” (Preston 1987, 12) At the same time, it also played a major propagandistic role. An important element in this respect was the use and promotion of Real Madrid’s successes in Europe which, for Barcelona’s followers, involved the perception/conviction of injury towards their team into the bargain (Quiroga 2013, 474-84).

According to Burns,

The “Guruceta case” was charged with symbolism, a liberation after a long period of self-restraint, a time when Barça seemed to assume once again its political mandate on behalf of a repressed Catalonia. What is remarkable is not that the explosion took place but that it was so long in coming. One explanation is that by 1970, Barça was being run by a management team, part of which strongly identified with the growing calls for democratic rule and political autonomy for Catalonia. [...] Protests against the regime there were, but they never got as out of the authorities’ control as in 1970, perhaps because Franco’s strategy when it came to the politics of football was more subtle than the paranoia of many of his opponents made it seem. (1999, 170-2)

Barcelona’s president, Agustí Montal, accused the referee of rigging the match, calling his decision one action more in an anti-Barça campaign on the part of referees, federation and government. The Madrid representative, their manager Antonio Calderón, was not exactly conciliatory: he blamed F.C. Barcelona. The polemic spread to the press, with comments and statements being made by all the parties involved amid growing tension. In a statement on 8 June, Barça’s Board insisted on considering it not as an isolated event, but as further proof of disrespect for the Catalan club, in line with the opening of the leaflet that appeared a few days later. As Carles Santacana said,

Never before this moment, at the height of Franco’s dictatorship, had such clear and forceful voices spoken out. Not only to denounce the treatment received by the club, but also to say that some of the problems the club was facing were a result of its symbolic role. Or, in other words, of its clear emergence as a symbolic point of reference in absolute contradiction with another, related to the regime, which was none other than Real Madrid. (2005 106-31)

Accordingly, the controversy did not end here. Four days later, the Competition Committee penalized F.C. Barcelona with the maximum fine, ninety thousand pesetas,

and a warning of closing the stadium; the captain, Eladio, with a two-match suspension; and the referee Guruceta with a six-month suspension. The suspension of the referee outraged the Guipuscoan Institute of Referees and the president of the Referees' Committee, José Plaza Pedraz., who, according to a journalistic rumour, is supposed to have declared that "as long as I'm president of the referees, Barça won't win the League," and finally resigned in protest. His resignation was only temporary, however, and in 1975 he was restored to the position until 1990, keeping to his promise or threat.³

Meanwhile, Real Madrid eliminated Athletic de Bilbao in the semi-finals and went through to the final of the Copa del Generalísimo against Valencia at the Camp Nou on 28 June 1970. The date had been set a long time in advance to coincide with the official visit to Barcelona of Francisco Franco (the sixteenth and last he was to make as Head of State). The dictator paraded around the city in an open-topped car, visited the Drassanes shipyard and the castle on Montjuïc (where he was met by "ex-soldiers, ex-prisoners, the families of prisoners and members of the youth organizations"), unveiled new amenities including the Picornell swimming pools, and chaired a cabinet meeting at Pedralbes.⁴ That evening he was to attend the cup final to present the trophy that bore his name.

The regime was certainly aware of the wave of protests and had been trying for days to calm things down, limiting the controversy caused in the press by Barça's elimination to a refereeing issue and hastening the Competition Committee's decision to enable Barcelona's Board to save face. However, the official calm was not mirrored in unofficial circles and, whether because of the flyer in question, other similar pamphlets, or growing rumours, the regime was taking possible threats very seriously. On 22 June 1970, six days before the match, a confidential report by the military information service (SIM) of the armed forces warned of the situation of unrest and potential incidents: "These rumours and comments centre on the fact that the day of the football match could involve incidents not in keeping with the attendance of the Generalísimo; there is conjecture surrounding these fears and how to ensure that events of this nature do not take place." The informant solicitously enclosed a whole series of measures to prevent "any unpleasant events" or "a major absence of the public," since the next day, Monday, was a holiday, Barcelona were not playing, and the match was being televised (Canals and Perelló 1996, 84-5). In total, five measures were proposed:

1. The federation invites all the Real Madrid supporters, expenses paid, which can be organized jointly through the Club.
2. The same procedure is followed with Valencia supporters.
3. Separate all the tickets for seats surrounding HE's box (top, bottom, sides and front) and give them to staunch supporters, through the Civil Government and the Provincial Headquarters of the Movimiento.
4. Give most of the tickets to Town Halls in the province to present to all persons who travelled to receive HE.
5. A very limited number is put on sale, and this limited number of seats is interspersed with groups of persons who could, if necessary, counter any attempt at opposition or disturbance. (Canals and Perelló 1996, 85)

The authorities implemented the final three recommendations, with highly detailed plans of the Camp Nou, seat by seat. "The aim was to create a closely monitored scenario that looked like a full house with an enthusiastic crowd" (Canals and Perelló 1996, pp. 85-86). With an official capacity of 93,053 spectators, a tenth were given free entry to the stadium to guarantee enthusiastic applause of the dictator, and the whistling that had been called for did not take place.⁵

Antecedents

It was no surprise that Franco's dictatorship regarded an act of whistling at a football stadium as a possible political threat; there were precedents. On 14 June 1925, under the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the stadium in Les Corts (inaugurated in 1922) hosted a match between F.C. Barcelona and Club Deportivo Júpiter, the Spanish first and second division champions respectively, in honour of the Orfeó Català, which had just returned from a triumphal tour of Italy.

Despite its scant footballing interest, there was an attendance of 14,000 spectators (Les Corts had a capacity of thirty thousand, and the club, 12,207 members), drawn by the desire to pay tribute to the persecuted cultural organization, by rumours of governmental reluctance to grant permission to hold the match, by discontent with the repression exerted by the dictatorship, and by the euphoria of recent victories in the Catalan and Spanish championships (including a friendly match against Uruguay, the current world champion). It was less than two years since 11 September 1923, when, coinciding with the Catalan national day, a series of incidents had ended in police baton charges, a fine for the club of ten thousand pesetas and the threat of stadium closure. Two days later, Primo de Rivera's coup put an end, with royal approval, to parliamentary monarchy. Despite his promises to the leaders of the Lliga Regionalista party who saw him onto the train that took him to Madrid, and probably influenced by

what he had experienced in Catalonia, Primo de Rivera immediately (on 18 September 1923, just five days after coming to power) produced a “Royal Decree against separatism.” This new legislation described separatist actions and propaganda as one of the principal problems facing Spain, endangering the safety of the State and the people, and it placed all of these supposed crimes under military jurisdiction. A new process of “Spaniardisation” was also promoted by means of the cultural and linguistic assimilation of Catalan and Basque provinces. As a result, the mandatory use of the Spanish flag and language at public events was imposed, at the same time prohibiting the display of regional insignia. According to the dictator, it was all to ensure that “Spanish sentiment crystallize[d] in Catalonia for its own good” (Quiroga 2007, 49-53). A protest document addressed to the king and signed by the principal Catalan institutions was presented to no avail on 1 December 1923: on 9 January 1924 the dictator communicated to representatives of the Catalan monarchic right wing that he was thinking of “putting an end to unhealthy separatism.” For months, the authorities applied themselves to the persecution of any events, persons or organizations suspected of Catalan nationalism, including the Catalan Church. And the Orfeó Català.

In this atmosphere, F.C. Barcelona celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1924 with a game against Real Irún, advertised with a poster in Catalan on which, in addition to the Barça flag, the other colours used were yellow and red, signalling a growing identification between the club and Catalonia: “Despite having been founded by a Swiss man, F.C. Barcelona soon presented the image of a far more Catalan club than their local rivals, R.C.D. Español” (Shaw 1987, 22-3). Under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, this link was consolidated by the regime’s suspicious attitude towards the organization and the obstacles placed in the way of both its functioning and the normal use of the Catalan language and symbols. As Jeremy MacClancy states, sports “help to define moral and political community. They are vehicles of identity, providing people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves and others, whether latitudinally or hierarchically” (1996a, 2). In the case of Barça, this was obvious to the leader of the Lliga Regionalista, Joan Ventosa i Calvell (Minister for Finance under García Prieto and later under Maura, and an associate of Francesc Cambó), for whom the club “has often been the sporting representative, the patriotic representative, of Catalonia. Not because it has been involved in political activity, but simply because in sport, as in all things, it is not possible to form a strong, lasting, representative body

without it being informed by a live-giving spirit of our country” (Llauradó and Monclús 2000, 51-2). Accordingly, the significance of the tribute match for the Orfeó Català escaped no one’s notice. Jordi Pujol wrote: “The Barcelona president presented a scroll to the representatives of the Orfeó which read that the club and the choral society were: ‘twin columns that raise to the sky the invisible flag of the Homeland.’ (The adjective ‘invisible’ was far from innocent: Primo de Rivera had forbidden the use of the *Senyera* [the Catalan flag]!)” (2000, 9).

The incident that gave the match historical significance took place at halftime. Joan Gamper, the founder and president of F.C. Barcelona, had invited the band of a division of the British Royal Navy, which had been anchored in the port for a few days. After playing other pieces, and in deference to the public, the band decided to perform the Spanish national anthem and went into the *Marcha real* only to find, to their bewilderment, that the crowd started to whistle and shout unanimously, completely drowning out the music. In the executive box, the Barcelona president and various authorities (including leaders of the Lliga, such as Cambó and Ventosa i Calvell, mentioned above) remained seated, “in a show of agreement with the public and indifference to the significance of that piece of music. Even the government delegate, in confusion, remained seated” (Llauradó and Monclús 2000, 56-7). The fact that the protest had a political motivation became clear when the band, perhaps to get out of this awkward situation, moved on to *God Save the King*: The whistling gave way to respectful silence followed by loud applause. Although the match ended with no further incidents, the initial astonishment of the authorities was followed (after complaints from some of the spectators present) by indignation and repression. That evening, the captain general of Catalonia, Emilio Barrera, and the civil governor (and former captain general) of Barcelona, Joaquim Milans del Bosch, agreed to bring proceedings against F.C. Barcelona and the Orfeó Català. Pending instructions from Madrid, several arrests were made and some supporters were put in La Model prison, before being released days later for lack of evidence.

The civil governor of Barcelona visited Madrid between 17 and 23 June to receive instructions, but meanwhile persecution of the club began to take shape. First thing on the morning of 18 June, a group of policemen appeared at the offices in the Plaça del Teatre to close down the society; the Board meeting the following day had to

be conducted under the supervision of a Civil Government delegate; and, on 21 June, the proceedings were completed. On 24 June, the civil governor announced the decision to the press: the closure of F.C. Barcelona for six months and of Orfeó Català until further notice. Furthermore, Joan Gamper was forced to resign and return to Switzerland (Llauradó and Monclús 2000, 58-68). Despite the harshness of persecution (wearing a Barça pin on a lapel was considered a crime), the club was saved by the response of its members. A bank account was opened at Banca Jover for contributions towards the 50,000 pesetas needed to meet running costs during suspension, supporters renewed their membership fees and some even offered personal loans to cover the absence of income. The Catalan Federation and the rest of clubs even decided to postpone the start of the Catalan Championship until December 1925 to allow the reigning champions to defend their title. Whereas the Orfeó Català was able to reopen on 13 October, Milans del Bosch (who, as civil governor, a few years later was responsible for demolishing Puig i Cadafalch's four columns on Montjuïc) insisted that F.C. Barcelona should complete the full term of suspension, until 25 December 1925. Finally, on Christmas Day, the club celebrated its reopening with a game against First Vienna, winning two-nil, with Arcadi Balaguer as accidental president.⁶ These vicissitudes, however, merely served to strengthen the bond between F.C. Barcelona and Catalan nationalism.



Going back to the match on 6 June 1970 and the feeling of grievance that prompted the handbill presented at the beginning of this article, rivalry between the two big Spanish football clubs had developed into profound hostility, given the identification of Real Madrid with Franco's regime and of F.C. Barcelona with Catalan nationalism and opposition, and given the discriminatory treatment that F.C. Barcelona was at the receiving end of (with the Di Stefano affair of 1953 still fresh in many people's memories). Just two years before the return leg of the quarter final of the Copa, other serious incidents had taken place on the occasion of the final of the Copa del Generalísimo, played at the Bernabéu stadium on 11 July 1968. The Barcelona president, Narcís de Carreras, had initially protested at the fixture being staged at the Madrid stadium. Surprisingly, however (Madrid had won the League after a great season, and Franco and his leading government officials were in the box to top it with the Copa), it was F.C. Barcelona who lifted the trophy after beating their rival one-nil, amid local protests at the refereeing, during which the crowd threw so many objects onto the pitch that the match is remembered as the "cup final of the bottles."⁷ In the box, the wife of the Minister for the Interior, Camilo Alonso Vega, went up to De Carreras to congratulate him with these words: "Congratulations, because Barcelona is Spain, too, isn't it?" Rumour has it that the Barcelona president replied: "Seriously now, madam!"

In 1970, then, the memory of the "cup final of the bottles" was still fresh in the minds of many Barça fans, after being knocked out of the Copa and the refereeing of Emilio Guruceta. In the days after the Camp Nou match, declarations appeared hard and fast. The Real Madrid president, Santiago Bernabéu, said to *Murcia Deportiva* newspaper: "And those who say that I have no love for Catalonia are quite wrong. I love and admire it, despite the Catalans." The newspaper was shut down. Bernabéu decided not to travel to Barcelona on cup final day. It was not the first time he had publicly disparaged the Catalans, as he often boasted of having entered Barcelona with Franco's troops in 1939. In the words of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán: "The president of Real Madrid is one of the great provocations to the Camp Nou public. People here can't forgive him for looking like a jumped-up corporal" (Shaw 1987, 210). Former Barcelona president Narcís de Carreras, for his part, replied: "We have to fight against everything and everyone, because we are the best and because we represent what we

represent”⁸ (Shaw 1987, 205-7). This declaration, made in 1970 with cautious ambiguity, vindicated the significance of the club beyond the strictly sporting context and denounced the alleged persecution of Barça. To some extent, it was a variant of the now famous “*més que un club*” [more than a club] that De Carreras first used in January 1968 in his investiture speech, and which his successor, Agustí Montal i Costa, was to turn into an electoral and institutional motto. Today, this motto can be read on the seats of Camp Nou as evidence of the club’s social significance (beyond the strictly sporting realm and beyond the city of Barcelona).

As Francoism was intent on controlling sports associations, their boards of directors tended to comprise members who were either staunch supporters of the club of the regime or at least ideologically reliable from the regime’s point of view. This gave rise to some distance between directors and football fans, but not to absolute separation, particularly when grievances at unfair treatment of the club were involved. Narcís de Carreras came from a pro-Catalan background, as a former militant of the Lliga Regionalista and secretary to Francesc Cambó before the war, though he had no problem acting as supreme representative in Catalonia of the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica and as a provincial representative for Girona in the Cortes Españolas. He was not, then, an open opponent, but nor was he indifferent to the feelings of Barcelona’s members (Santacana 2005, 282-92). In October 1969, when he had been president for a year, he resigned after failing in his attempt to create a unified board, and new elections were called, voting in Agustí Montal i Costa, mentioned above, just thirty-two years of age and son of the man who had been president from 1946 to 1952, Agustí Montal i Galobart (Santacana 2005, 106). The club thereby returned to the hands of textile industrialists. The two previous presidents had also been members of a Catalan bourgeoisie that was increasingly uncomfortable with Francoism, and, in political terms, there was a degree of continuity: “Like his predecessor, Montal was fully prepared to use the prestige and protection offered by being president of Spain’s biggest sports club to speak out against the lack of justice and democracy in football, as well as in the broader political context” (Shaw 1987, 208).

Six months into the young Agustí Montal’s presidency, the Guruceta affair irrupted, providing him with the ideal occasion to consolidate his position at the head of the club and take a strong stance on the grievances suffered (Santacana 2005 105-7).

Guruceta continued to cast a shadow in the collective imaginary (for years his name was chanted by the public at the Camp Nou to disparage bad referees), despite never refereeing another Barça match, with the exception of a friendly in 1985.⁹ When in February 1975 the new Barcelona star, Johan Cruyff (signed after once again having to dodge all kinds of government obstacles), was controversially sent off during a match in Malaga, the old grievance resurfaced and president Montal denounced “the huge campaign unleashed against Futbol Club Barcelona and what it represents” (Shaw 1987, 212). That incident of 1970, with roots fifty years earlier, was to become a recurrent motif in Barcelona’s rhetoric.

The return of whistling

This was not the only recurrent element in the rhetoric of football viewed from a broader social perspective. There was also the aversion of political power to whistling at football grounds.¹⁰ After two dictatorial periods in Spain in the twentieth century, with just the short-lived Second Republic as a democratic parenthesis, the death of General Franco in 1975 gave way to a political transition to constitutional monarchy with a representative democracy and decentralization in the form of autonomous communities. Despite the change in socio-political context, in the early twenty-first century, in 2009 and 2012, there were two major incidents of whistling in football grounds with a clearly political intention and reception. Once again, F.C. Barcelona was involved, and again it was on the occasion of two finals of the Copa del Rey (replacing the former Copa del Generalísimo). In both, furthermore, the opposing team was Athletic de Bilbao, a club strongly identified with Basque feeling and language (MacClancy 1996b).¹¹

The first incident took place on 13 May 2009 at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia. During the previous weeks, in response to public calls to boycott the presence of the monarch and the playing of the Spanish national anthem, various declarations had excited heated feelings on both sides. The whistling was practically unanimous, which television coverage by RTVE (the Spanish public television channel) tried to disguise by not initially showing images, only doing so once the soundtrack had been manipulated. The resulting scandal led to the dismissal of the channel’s Head of Sports by its director. The controversy in the media immediately extended to the political and even the legal arena, as the case reached the Audiencia Nacional [Spanish national court], where the judge, Santiago Pedraz, finally dismissed the case presented by the organization Denaes

(a foundation “for the defence of the Spanish nation”). The second incident, on 25 May 2012, was marked by the same agents and supporters and a final of the Copa del Rey, but in a new location: the Vicente Calderón stadium in Madrid. To receive them, presupposing what would happen at the stadium, several far-right groups had organized a “March for the unity of Spain” and against separatism for the same afternoon in the capital. Again, the whistlers were in the majority. In this case, learning from experience, the match organizers chose to reproduce an abridged version of the Spanish anthem (just twenty-seven seconds long) at full volume to drown out the protest, which was broadcast by RTVE. The whistling was joined by insults aimed at the president of the Autonomous Community of Madrid and prominent leader of the Partido Popular, Esperanza Aguirre, who, four days before the final, had publicly advocated that the match “be suspended and played elsewhere behind closed doors” to prevent the anthem or the authorities from being whistled. With a significant line of argument similar to that of Primo de Rivera’s laws, Aguirre pointed out that “insulting the flag or the anthem are crimes under the Penal Code. [...] This is the championship of Spain. This Cup was presented by the president of the Republic when there was a Republic, by Franco when Franco was alive, and now it is the Cup of His Majesty the King, but it is the Cup of Spain.” This argument unintentionally confirmed the historical continuity of the phenomenon, the institutional fragility of a State that lacked sufficiently consolidated symbols and the political instability of a Catalan nationalism that needed sport to manifest its peculiarity.¹²



The Spanish anthem is not the only one to have been whistled at a football match, though it illustrates the persistence in time and political background of these protests. The incidents of whistling at *La Marseillaise* (the French national anthem) in stadiums in recent years have been more one-off in response to specific protests. One of the most talked about occurred at the 2002 French FA Cup Final between the Corsican club Bastia and Brittany's Lorient. The Bastia supporters started whistling vigorously when they heard the anthem's opening chords, repudiating the centralism of Paris. The president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, stormed out of the box, calling it intolerable. Cases of whistling have been repeated since, but on the occasion of the French national team's matches — presented as symbols of reconciliation between the former *Métropole* and its overseas departments — against Algeria (2001, when the match was suspended after a pitch invasion by hundreds of supporters), Morocco (2007) and Tunisia (2008). Here, the motivations were social rather than regionalist or administrative in origin. After this last incident of whistling, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy went as far as saying that if these protests were to re-occur, the match would be called off, and the Minister for Sport, Roselyne Bachelot, said that government members would leave the stadium and all friendly games with the rival country would be suspended for a period to be determined. As MacClancy points out, “[s]ports and sporting events cannot be comprehended without reference to relations of power: who attempts to control how a sport is to be organized and played, and by whom; how it is to be represented; how it is to be interpreted” (1996a, 5). Indeed, as Duke and Crolley (1996) remind us, football wonderfully captures the notion of an imagined community.

In the examples discussed in this article, we see how two nationalisms are brought into confrontation by football, with their symbols (anthems, flags, leaders) as the subject of debate. Throughout contemporary times, “the political use of sport as a catalyst for latent regionalist or nationalist feeling was very frequent in Spain” (Shaw 1987, 184). Moreno Luzón and Núñez Seixas suggest that it is precisely in areas of popular culture and everyday life that nationalism “is reproduced by different means,

penetrating perceptions of the world through conscious and semi-conscious mechanisms” (2013, 10). In this respect, it is clear that both Spanish nationalism and the country’s political authorities under different regimes and in different circumstances have promoted an identification between national symbology and sport as a permanent reminder of the character (or the illusion, or the programme) of a single common nation for all citizens that is accorded to Spain. However, the need to resort to coercive formulae seems ultimately to reveal the fragility of this nation-state. Catalan nationalism in turn has made the most of the fact that sports “are vehicles and embodiments of meaning, whose status and interpretation is [sic] continually open to negotiation and subject to conflict” (MacClancy 1996a, 7-8). As a result, then, of political weakness, Catalans and, on their behalf (or symbolizing them), F.C Barcelona have taken refuge in (also in different political circumstances and regimes), or had recourse to, sport “against injustice” and to denounce each “disgraceful situation of abuse,” as a way too perhaps of preserving their own difference and questioning monolithic Spanish national unity. In both cases, the fact that sport is more than just sport and Barça is *més que un club* might be regarded as manifestations of a cultural and national exceptionality.¹³

Notes

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¹ The discovery was made jointly with Marc Gil, lecturer in the Department of Arts and Humanities at the UOC, to whom we would like to express our thanks.

² Personal interview conducted on 4 December 2013.

³ F.C. Barcelona only won the League twice during this period: in the 1973/74 season (with José Plaza absent from the presidency) and in 1984/85 (when, exceptionally, the appointment of referees was transferred to a committee). Just when Plaza retired, Barça won four consecutive League titles, between 1990 and 1994.

⁴ The RTVE archives contain the NO-DO newsreel dated 29-VI-1970 (no. 1434B), which includes a report about the visit: <http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-1434/1486504/>

⁵ There were 440 members of the protection service of the Jefatura Superior de Policía de Barcelona [provincial police headquarters]; 119 members of the dictator's entourage; 440 people from the Spanish Football Federation; 630 plainclothes police officers from the 41st Division of the Guardia Civil; 10 guests of the Guardia Civil (including the commander in chief); 100 members of the security forces; 5,000 guests of the Provincial Trade Union Delegate; 2,037 employees of Barcelona Civil Government; and the regime's local, provincial and State authorities.

⁶ Gamper was finally authorized to return, albeit on the condition that he had no relation with the club. Morally much affected as a result and financially ruined by the 1929 crash, after becoming depressed, he committed suicide on 30 July 1930 in Barcelona. His funeral, two days later, was hugely attended, and F.C. Barcelona awarded him membership card number one in perpetuity.

⁷ The following day, *ABC* newspaper, probably without irony, wrote that football "is an ongoing democracy, with the great danger that votes are, on occasion, placed wildly inside bottles that are thrown onto the pitch, like messages tossed into the sea."

⁸ In December 2013, when the Spanish revenue authorities opened an investigation into the tax returns of Leo Messi, Barcelona's then president Sandro Rosell cited this comment verbatim to point out that the operation was no coincidence.

⁹ He was not ostracised as a result, however, since on recovering the presidency of the National Institute of Referees, José Plaza promoted him, making him the Spanish representative in international competitions. Controversy continued to surround him, though. Even after his death (in a road accident in 1987), his name appeared again in the press when it was proved that he had accepted a bribe of one million Belgian francs from the president of Anderlecht to favour them in the second leg of the UEFA Cup semi-final, on 25 April 1984. Even today, the prize awarded to the best Spanish referee of the season (awarded by *Marca* newspaper) is the Trofeo Guruceta.

¹⁰ A similar incident to those explained here took place in Barcelona's Olympic stadium on Montjuïc when it was reopened in 1989 for the Athletics World Cup. This event was the test run for the 1992 Olympic Games and was surrounded by controversy. Firstly, torrential rain during the ceremony showed up construction problems. And, secondly, the civic and political collective Freedom for Catalonia used the opportunity to whistle at King Juan Carlos I. This prompted the particular care taken in designing the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in the same stadium, on 25 July 1992, which was broadcast worldwide, and the brilliant diplomatic move of staging the appearance of the King and Queen of Spain while *Els segadors*, the Catalan national anthem, was playing.

¹¹ More recently, the phenomenon has extended to the world of basketball, specifically to the final of the Copa del Rey in this sport, too, also played in the monarch's presence. The incidents took place on 21 February 2010 in the Bizkaia Arena in Bilbao, during a game between the basketball sections of F.C. Barcelona and Real Madrid, and on 10 February 2013 at the Fernando Buesa Arena in Vitoria, at the final between F.C. Barcelona and Valencia Basket Club. It is important to note that, in addition to the Barça supporters, in both cases the local Basque crowd joined in the whistling.

¹² There is a selection of journalistic news items about both finals (online open access) at the end of the article, after the bibliographic references.

¹³ This paper was completed in 2014 and therefore does not include references to more recent developments related to the 2015 Copa del Rey. F.C. Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao met once again in the cup final at the Camp Nou in Barcelona on 30 May 2015, when supporters whistled at the Spanish anthem.

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