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Just a sport or a moral obligation? Football between pressures of politics, financial power and progress from Mussolini to Qatar

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"Non-political" sport?

"Sport and politics do not mix." "We just play; we are not interested in politics." Sportsmen and -women repeat these phrases and politicians nod approvingly. In principle, it is difficult not to agree: today, it is hard to imagine that audiences in democratic societies approve of instrumentalizing sporting events for power political ends, at least if it is done as blatantly as during the Berlin 1936 or Moscow 1980 Olympic Games.

In practice, it is impossible to separate sport from political, national and economic connections or society more broadly. Disagreements over how to define the "political" demonstrate this. What is "politics", and what sort of politics do we mean? It is easy to consider it wrong when nationalist and authoritarian leaders use sport to advance their political status and goals, or when individual athletes express party political opinions. At the same time, most of us regard it as self-evident that sportsmen and -women have a right to express support for human values without any negative consequences or sanctions from sports organizations.

Today, we consider it appropriate and morally right that football teams take the knee in support of the Black Lives Matter -campaign, or that the captains of national teams are entitled to wear rainbow armbands (which they were *not* allowed to do during Qatar World Cup), or that athletes, like the United States women's football legend Megan Rapinoe, are active in civil rights movements (see Rapinoe, 2020). Or that Ruud Gullit, the Dutch football star, protested against South African apartheid in the 1980s. The debate about the human rights situation and thousands of deaths linked to the construction of the football stadiums in Qatar was very intense in the Western world.

One of the main problems is that there is no global consensus on who has the right to define human values and how. Besides, these opinions are shaped by different historical periods. Between the world wars it was taken for granted that nationalism, making the individual a part of a collective, and maintaining a biologically-framed division of men's and women's functions in society, were the right human values, which should be advanced by all means. To use a modern phrase, these values were the ones that were supposed to be "on the right side of history". In our times, most of these opinions are considered out-of-date and even oppressive. On the other hand, this is a very Western way to see things. Not only authoritarian political systems, but also large shares of the global population reject secularization, internationalism, rainbow armbands and feminism, and see them as signs of immorality, Western decadence, colonialist posturing or

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something else equally negative.

We can very well appreciate the thought that politics and sport should not mix. However, in real life this sort of assumption is naive.

Early pioneers

It would be equally naive to assume that politics and society, in general, would not have noticed how useful sports can be for them. There are very few other things that are so widespread, that move the masses, that raise so intense emotions and have so much symbolic value for one's identity – and, at the same time, are relatively easy to arrange if one wants to practice them as a hobby and for recreation. Nobody would be able to meticulously separate sport from society and politics, particularly when it comes to the most popular and most passionately followed type of it – football. It would take a very incompetent and unambitious politician not to notice such a useful channel of influence. This works the other way around as well. Football players no doubt usually do not care about politics, but they know who has the power to allocate resources to them: political godfathers.

Sport was a political issue very early on, for which Finland provides one of the earliest examples. Finland took advantage of both the 1908 Olympic Games in London and the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm to make the point that it was a separate national entity, not a Russian province – especially as Russian authorities were attacking Finnish autonomy at the time. Finland had a team of its own, was a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in its own right, and the team demonstratively left a gap of several dozen meters to the Russian team during the opening ceremonies. The Stockholm public supported the Finnish athletes loudly and protested with boos and whistles when the Russian flag was hoisted after Finnish victories. (Forsman & Tikander, 2012; Jukola, 1952, pp. 48–49.) There was also a sporting reason for this – Finland won 25 medals, whereas the Russian team was miserably unsuccessful.

Sport was also supposed to advance people's health and their moral progress – building self-discipline, a sense of responsibility, readiness to sacrifice oneself, team spirit, etc. Sport grounds were supposed to be "sport sanctuaries", arenas of civic education. This ideology was especially evident in the United States, Britain, Germany, and the Nordic countries. Moreover, sport was supposed to strengthen national defence, both concretely and psychologically. Urho Kekkonen, who later was to use more sovereign power than any other political leader in Finnish history, took his first political steps as a former athlete. He used military symbolism when he gave speeches about the meaning of sport in the 1930s: "*… even during times of peace we need the same capacities as in the war fields, we need actions of peace, that can bring out manliness, the sense of sacrificing oneself, courage".* Sport was a peace-time battle that "*brings out, refined, the best of those manly qualities, which were admired in war heroes of the previous centuries".* (Kokkonen, 2008, p. 134)

All this belonged to the "natural" way to see the world in the early 20th century. Politics mixed with sport when the victorious powers of the First World War excluded Germany and its allies from international sport cooperation and the 1920 and 1924 Olympics. They also refused to play football against Germany and originally tried to exclude countries not following this line (Hesse-Lichtenberg, 2003, p. 55). Political divisions were evident also when left-wing organizations arranged special Workers' Olympic Games in 1925, 1931 and 1937 (Nygrén, 1969). This division originated from socialist identity politics rather than from a bourgeois attempt to exclude socialist athletes.

The exclusion of women can be regarded as a political statement as well – at the very least, it was a decision that reflected the values of society at that time. The reluctance to accept women in competitive sport was based on an ideology which assumed that biology had decreed different functions for men and women, and this was as it morally should be. Therefore, competitive sport was not "suitable for females", since it required the character of a warrior. Several medical doctors claimed that women who practised sport might lose their ability to have children. Besides, it was argued that a woman who pushes to the lim-

its of her strength looks repulsive –not aesthetic, not ”womanly” (Guttman, 1991, pp. 132, 139, 140, 154). However, activists for women’s sport managed to gradually get a foothold in the Olympics. They arranged an unofficial Women’s Olympics as well (Guttman, 1991, pp. 163–171).

However, football was a male bastion. It was claimed to be especially unsuitable for women because of their biology and psychology. During and immediately after the First World War, women’s football gained momentum, because men’s competitive football was on hold; some matches gathered tens of thousands of spectators. However, national football associations stopped this development in the early 1920s. Women’s football recovered half a century later, in the 1970s and 1980s when society had changed, and equal rights had become a major political issue and a political factor (Vares, 2022, pp. 25–71).

The crucial milestone was the ban issued by the English Football Association (FA) in 1921. It has often been claimed that women’s football was forbidden or even made illegal in England. This was not the case, nor did the FA, strictly speaking, prohibit women from playing football. This would not have been legally possible in a democratic society anyway. The FA forbade its clubs to open their grounds to women’s games because football was ”quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged”, and because of financial disputes (Williamson, 1991, pp. 68–70). The effect, however, was the same, since it meant that women’s football clubs could not get an income from ticket sales after 1921. In some countries, women’s football was forbidden by law, for example, in Brazil between 1941 and 1979 (da Costa, 2014, pp. 81–92; Williams, 2021, pp. 27–28).

However, the first to realize the political and symbolic importance of football were totalitarian regimes: fascism, national socialism and communism.

Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin

Despite his bombastic and ultranationalist propaganda, Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator (1922–1943/45), was convinced that he led a nation of poor quality. He considered it fascism’s mission and duty to harden the Italian people physically and spiritually – and to unify them. The state of Italy had been created as late as 1861, and regional differences were still considerable. Even the language was not as homogeneous as in most other nation-states. It has even been claimed that football coverage on the radio eventually created a reasonably unified Italian language, which all Italians could understand.

Mussolini portrayed himself as a very athletic man, riding a horse, swimming, playing tennis etc. In fact, he was not, but he understood the propaganda value of sport and its potential to unify the nation. The current football league *Serie A* was his creation. The national team was even more important because all of Italy could cheer for it. It was extremely important to Mussolini that Italy hosted the second World Cup in 1934, and even more important than athletic success was the chance for Italians to prove that they could arrange a World Cup. Mussolini knew that in the eyes of other great powers, his country had a reputation for being disorderly, unorganized, inefficient, careless and weak. Italy had to show that fascism had brought about a new spirit and that Italians had turned into a dynamic, self-reliant and efficient warrior nation, ready to fight not only on the pitch.

Mussolini succeeded in this project. The organization ran smoothly, trains were on time, accommodation for foreign spectators was arranged, and the new stadiums represented a new Italy, built on the classic Roman Empire, a new ideology and modernist architecture. This impressed foreign spectators and the sporting side was in order as well; there were no incidents on the pitch or among the Italian public, tickets were cheap and even Mussolini himself, eager to present himself as a man of the people, bought his ticket. It was preferable that the Italian team would play well, but that was not as important as the efficient and smooth organization of the event. (Foot, 2007; Martin, 2004.)

The team’s athletic success was a bonus: Italy triumphed at the World Cup. They also won Olympic gold in Berlin in 1936 and defended their World Cup title convincingly in 1938. The team naturally posed in photographs with the Duce. For Mussolini, football – *calcio* in Italian – had successfully played the

circenes part of the old Roman wisdom of *panem et circenes*. It had served totalitarianism and fostered satisfaction and popular support for the regime.

Hitler used the 1936 Olympic Games for the same purpose. They offered a chance to prove that National Socialist Germany was amiable, friendly and efficient and that the German population was very satisfied with the new system – quite unlike its gruesome reputation. Evidently, this goal was partly achieved for at least some time. Moreover, the results seemed to prove how athletic and healthy the German nation was, as Germany was by far the most successful country in the Games – even though Jesse Owens' stardom was a thorn in their side.

As an individual, Hitler was not particularly interested in competitive sport, especially not football. Between the world wars, Germany had not been very successful in football and had only a relatively weak tradition in the sport. Football had been considered too "English" to suit German patriotism; it had even been called "the English disease" (Hesse-Lichtenberg, 2003, p. 25). German nationalists and *Bildungsbürgertum* had championed gymnastics, *Turnen*, especially in large groups. *Turnen* was supposed to be truly German in nature, an important tool in the nation-building process, which advanced physical health and stamina. In the case of men, it served to prepare for the conscript army (or as a way to maintain military fitness after discharge from the army). This, however, was not a national socialist invention, but a tradition from the 19th century.

National socialist reforms affected German football quite directly. Jews and "Marxists" were expelled from the clubs, and the regime started to invest in the national team. The games against England in 1935 and 1938 were considered especially important – for propaganda purposes.

The 1935 game was played in London, and the Germans did not expect to win it: they knew they had a weaker team than England. The fact that they had been invited by the FA and could play the match at all was the crucial issue. They knew that the reputation of national socialism was bad, and now they had a chance to show that Germans were just as ordinary, peaceful and sport-loving a nation as their hosts. Over 10 000 German spectators travelled to London. They arrived during the day, left after the game in the evening and behaved admirably, in an entirely unpolitical way. The German press reports on the game were unpolitical and concentrated on sport, emphasizing that no politics should ever be mixed with it (Downing, 2000, pp. 26–43). However, it is clear that Germany's goal had been political: to counter the claim that the new system was repressive and violent and that all Germans were bellowing SA-men. The propaganda value was undeniable. (Vares, 2018, pp. 116–134.)

The 1938 match was played in Berlin. It was not an equally friendly affair. The international atmosphere was tense after Germany annexed Austria in the *Anschluss*, and Germany had already raised political and territorial claims on Czechoslovakia. The threat of war was palpable. A gesture of *détente* was made, but with traumatic effects for the English players: under pressure from their Embassy, they were persuaded to give a Nazi salute to the audience and the organizers. (Downing, 2000, pp. 44–56; Vares, 2018, pp. 135–144.)

By the way, England won both matches, 3–0 in 1935 and 6–3 in 1938.

Socialism and football

The Soviet Union did not take part in international sport between the World Wars. However, also this branch of totalitarianism learned to use sport for political purposes: sporting success would be proof that the socialist system had defeated capitalism. Moreover, it was logical that a system based on the working class would appreciate physical prowess, and the regime wanted to prove that it took care of the health and recreation of its citizens.

However, socialism never managed to defeat capitalism in football. Hungary succeeded in it fleetingly during the early 1950s, but suffered a bitter defeat against West Germany in the 1954 World Cup final, even though they had been the overwhelming favourite. The team never truly recovered from this and the time

of the ”golden generation” was definitely over after the crushing of the 1956 uprising.

The Soviet Union and its most loyal apostle, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), never challenged the West in a determined way in football. Their strategy was to prove the supremacy of socialism by winning quantitatively – as many medals in the Olympic Games as possible. Therefore, they concentrated on individual disciplines. Especially the GDR remained average in football. They played only once in the World Cup, in 1974. Surprisingly, they defeated West Germany 1–0 in the early stages, but the achievement largely lost its propaganda value when West Germany won the tournament, while the GDR did not make it to the medals podium (McDougall, 2014).

The politically most important Soviet football narrative, however, does not have to do with winning medals. Former Kiev Dynamo players played against a German garrison team in occupied Kiev in 1942. The socialist legend maintains that the malnourished and intimidated squad defeated a German world-class team despite the brutal playing style of the latter, the partiality of the referee and threats to execute the players if they did not agree to lose. When they won and the Nazi ”supermen” had been thus humiliated, the Kiev players were said to have been taken to the Babi Jar gorges and shot, still in their playing kit.

German and Ukrainian historians have been able to establish that the German team was no world-class team (it was a garrison team, *Flakelf*, formed by their air defence crew), there is no proof of death threats, and no one was executed after the game. The players were arrested later when they had defeated a team of Ukrainian nationalists. Besides, they were detained because of their status as officers in the Soviet secret police (NKVD), not as players. Four of them died in the camps. Those who survived had difficulties getting work and social benefits in the Soviet Union later, as according to the heroic legend they should not have been alive at all. Putin’s Russia has revived these discredited old myths and replaced Ukrainian heroes with Russian heroes; moreover, the Ukrainians were turned into villains in a film version of the story (Dougan, 2002; Bredenbrock, 2008, pp. 504–515; Krugliak, 2015, pp. 259–280; Tillmann Schwab, 2015, pp. 371–407).

However, football was not at the centre of the Cold War sporting rivalry. Neither of the superpowers was a superpower in football, and there were more concrete and symbolic collisions in other disciplines. Ice hockey suited this role better, although the West was mainly represented by Canada, not the USA. An exception was the Lake Placid Olympics in 1980. A team of young American college players surprised everyone by defeating the mighty “Red Machine” 4–3, eventually winning Olympic Gold. Since this happened during a time of American political and economic depression, after the Vietnam and Watergate traumas, the occupation of Afghanistan, and in a period of national pessimism, this “Miracle on Ice” became part of a national legend. It has been turned into a film twice (O’Connor, 2004; Stern, 1981).

There was one football match between the Soviet Union and a rebelling smaller socialist country that carried political weight: Yugoslavia versus the Soviet Union in the Helsinki Olympics 1952. The countries were bitter political enemies because of the conflict between Tito and Stalin. There was drama, but only on the pitch: Yugoslavia led 5–1, but the Soviet Union managed to draw the match in the dying moments; there was a re-match, and Yugoslavia won 3–1. However, Yugoslavia was not in the role of a helpless victim, because Tito held his own in the political arena, and Stalin could not crush him and his country (as Hungary was crushed in 1956 and Czechoslovakia was occupied in 1968). (Mills, 2016, pp. 1736–1758; Vares, 2019, pp. 173–190.)

The power of money

Lately, it has not been superpower rivalry that has gripped the world of football, but money. The old, famous Western clubs and the major tournaments have been purchased by political elites from authoritarian countries, who have been able to provide sheer limitless resources to cover expenditures. The Qatar World Cup was the sad culmination of this development – so far, that is.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the maximum weekly wage in the English league was 20 pounds. In the

late 1970s, Liverpool sold Kevin Keegan for half a million pounds to Hamburger SV, which was considered an unheard-of transfer fee at the time. Probably, the same sum already is or is soon going to be the weekly wage for a world-star player. The majority of the most famous Western clubs are in the hands of the oil and gas sheikhs of the Middle East or those of Eastern oligarchs. Clubs subject to democratic control simply cannot compete. But even if they could, these sums are so ludicrous that it is doubtful whether such massive expenses would make any sporting sense.

Pandora's box was opened when the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) started to actively seek sponsors and commercialized its functions during the presidency of João Havelange (1974–1998). The same process took hold of the Western top clubs in the 1990s. Despite being substantially smaller than today, the sums were already considered disproportionate at the time. The Pope expressed his concern when the price tag of the most wanted player was 20 million dollars (Gannon, 2012). Nowadays, the most expensive transfer ever paid is 222 million dollars, but this record is likely to be broken again.

Simultaneously, Havelange started to expand FIFA to strengthen his position against the traditional European superpowers of the game. The change might have been healthy for FIFA, had it been executed in a way that advanced principles of justice, equality and democracy. Unfortunately, the opposite was the case. Havelange secured the new members' allegiance to himself by means of bribery and favours. Since the countries in question were more often than not governed undemocratically, their football associations operated in circumstances exposed to corruption. Therefore, the FIFA leadership could easily create a sort of vassal system by means of financial rewards.

Because of all this, autocratic rulers and economic power have increasingly taken over international football and used the World Cup to their advantage. The World Cup has been the best possible instrument to showcase one's mightiness and to offer drama and entertainment for the masses, to diminish the visibility of domestic political problems, human rights violations and the lack of liberty. It is the path that Mussolini opened, but present rulers have outdone him in this regard. The World Cup 1978 in Argentina and 2018 in Russia were the most blatant cases of football tournaments instrumentalized for political whitewashing, to create a brand and a way for dictators to satisfy their megalomania (for a general view on FIFA, see for example Jennings, 2015).

Football has not been the only arena for all this. Several Olympic Games have lately taken place in countries whose record of respect for human rights, freedom and constitutional government is deplorable. During the last 15 years, China has hosted both the summer and winter Olympic Games, Putin's Russia the winter Olympics and the World Cup, and in Brazil the poor *favelas* were torn down to be replaced by expensive building projects and corruption connected to the World Cup and the Olympic Games.

It seems that major international sport events have become the playing ground and toy for authoritarian countries. In a sense, this is logical. It can be argued that FIFA and the IOC resemble in many ways hierarchical authoritarian states, even though they control no land area. They are second to none in corruption and oligarchy, and they possess one single "natural resource" to finance their greed and lust for influence: the monopoly to approve and arrange all registered football activity in the world, especially to grant international events to the highest bidder. They "own" football and the Olympics. In this sense, FIFA and the IOC are like authoritarian countries that rely on natural resources, so it is no wonder that they feel a kindred spirit with other authoritarian, corrupt leaders. Heads of state honour the President of FIFA and IOC almost like another head of state – perhaps also like the Pope.

The system rolled out a red carpet for corruption, and it created a sense of all-mightiness, a sense of hybris in FIFA and the IOC. The flow of money was endless, and especially FIFA leaders have felt untouchable. The FBI has described FIFA as an organization that resembles the mafia. It is not surprising that of the 24 members of the FIFA Executive Committee, who made the scandalous decision of 2012 to grant the next two World Cups to Russia and Qatar, almost all have later been convicted of corruption or have been accused in court of some other malfeasance.

In this sense, it is logical that Qatar won the bid to host the 2022 World Cup with practically no merits at all and against all rational arguments. Qatar is located in a region where it is impossible to play during

the traditional season for World Cups – in summer. Playing in Qatar at any time requires vast building projects and arrangements which are senselessly expensive and a burden to the environment. Qatar's human rights record is suspicious, to say the very least. Qatar has had no sporting merits and no real football culture. One of FIFA's arguments was that the Middle East had never had a chance to host a World Cup before; but on those grounds, there would have been more reasonable candidates than Qatar in the region (for a general view of the process, see Blake & Calvert, 2016).

The most serious accusations against the Qatar World Cup related to the way Qatar used corruption to obtain the World Cup hosting rights, to the shockingly bad working conditions at the building sites, and to the state of human rights in the country, especially for women, sexual minorities and migrant workers. Nothing of this should have surprised FIFA. The defects of Qatar's human rights legislation were well known, and so was the fact that migrant workers have been exploited and abused on previous massive Qatar building projects.[1]

Criticism and calls to boycott the Qatar World Cup came mainly from Western countries. This angered Qatar and it resorted to political arguments when its assurances of migrant workers' well-being failed to convince critics. Qatar played the colonialism and racism cards and labelled the debate on human rights as Western hypocrisy, imperialism, and an expression of racist prejudices.

It is not particularly credible when an oil sheikh or a ruling emir tries to identify himself with the poor of the world. However, this argument draws sympathy as well. It must be borne in mind that Western countries are not innocent as far as the present state of football is concerned, and even less so with regard to the state of the world order and its injustices. But Qatar's counter-attack is not only directed towards the West. It is also an invitation to potential clients of other Qatar megalomaniac building projects: the rich elites of Asia and Africa, who do not care about the circumstances in which the buildings have been constructed. Working conditions are often even worse and more unfair in these countries, and the same applies to the status of human rights. They have no scruples about dealing with Qatar.

The current President of FIFA, Gianni Infantino, decided to become a supporter of Qatar. He decided to back Qatar blindly and swallowed all of Qatar's explanations, even if they were colliding with facts that were obvious for everyone to see. In football terms, he parked his bus in front of the goal of Qatar. Just before the World Cup started, he gave a speech in which he wasted the chance to take responsibility, accept critique or even express credible sympathy for the plight of the migrant workers. He saw Qatar as a flawless victim, stating that the West should apologize for the next 3000 years, in order to compensate for its failings of the last 3000 years. It is clear he is not a professional historian, since 3000 years ago there was no other "West" than backwood forests and ice. The developed empires were elsewhere.

However, Infantino's effort to identify his own experiences with those of the oppressed and deprived caused even more astonishment.

> "Today I have very strong feelings. Today I feel Qatari. Today I feel Arab. Today I feel African. Today I feel gay. Today I feel disabled. Today I feel a migrant worker. I feel like them because I know what it feels like to be discriminated, to be bullied as a foreigner in a country. At school I was bullied because I had red hair and freckles. I was bullied, plus I was Italian, so imagine. I didn't speak good German. What do you do then? You lock yourself down in your room, you cry and then you try to make some friends. You try to engage … You don't start accusing or fighting, you start engaging. This is what we should be doing." (Infantino, 2022, as cited in MacInnes, 2022)

In effect, Infantino's message to those who were oppressed and deprived was: I had a hard time at school, you should try a little more.

It is true that Qatar did not invent corruption nor did it introduce it to modern football. It entered a system that was playing by distorted rules already, and Qatar had overwhelming resources to play just that game. FIFA was already corrupt, and the symbol of its corruption, FIFA's president Sepp Blatter, did not

come from a dictatorial or a Third World country, but from wealthy Europe. Moreover, it has to be remembered that if you demanded a boycott against the Qatar World Cup, you should also ask yourself why you still watched the previous World Cup – organized by a country that had attacked its neighbour and annexed some of its territories. Not even Hitler had done that before the Berlin Olympics.

Conclusion

Politics has always been present in sport. However, there will never be a consensus about what is considered ”politics” and what are the human values that sport is supposed to defend. There is nothing to indicate that the importance of sport as a mobilizer, influencer and source of identity is diminishing. The mammoth disease of international sport does not inspire optimism, but it is a good sign that by now most dictators have had their chance to arrange a giant event, and it is more difficult to make as flagrant decisions as FIFA did in 2012.

However, change is slow, since FIFA does not understand any other language than money. There have been reforms, but attempts to democratize FIFA’s structures have remained hollow so far. Sponsors may exert effective influence. They have to think of their reputation, which hopefully raises the threshold to damage their brand by fraternizing with dictators and human rights abusers.

When Russia attacked Ukraine, the fact that almost the entire sporting world found the backbone to exclude Russia from the international sport was encouraging. A great power received the same treatment as a small one – Yugoslavia (Serbia) in 1992. Moreover, if you think of the positive atmosphere of progress that could be sensed in an event like the Women’s Euro 2022, it is more and more difficult for anyone to ignore problems such as those so evident in Qatar. Naturally, this applies only to societies which can guarantee freedom of information. However, the latest efforts of the IOC leadership to prepare a route for Russian and Belarus athletes to the Paris 2024 Olympics significantly reduce optimism.

To conclude, it is not possible or reasonable to demand athletes abandon practising a sport, or fans quit supporting a team for political reasons. These aspects of sport are also highly emotional. However, athletes and fans alike should be expected to raise a discussion and ask questions. Former Finnish football national team captain Tim Sparv put it as follows: he admitted that he would not have boycotted the Qatar World Cup if Finland had qualified to play in it, and, in his opinion, nobody should be told not to follow it. But he emphasized that questions ought to be asked before the matches, and they should not be forgotten after them. (Sparv, 2022.)

Endnotes

[1]For details on the plight of migrant workers and the thousands of deaths during the construction work of the Qatar stadiums, see Sami Kolamo’s excellent Finnish-language book *Riistopallon MM-kisat Qatarissa* (2022). The often-mentioned number of 6500 deaths is probably an underestimation. Qatar admits to three such deaths.

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