

## **Sport images in Polish People's Republic. Sport performances as key point in Polish cultural history 1945-1989.**

Thinking about sport presented in this paper is determined by the theory of cultural performance proposed by John MacAloon. He defined cultural performance as an event where we as a culture or society reflect on ourselves and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and our history, present ourselves in different editions to ultimately change in some respects and remain the same in others. Cultural performances reveal and establish a tangle of various narratives, myths, imaginations, and social dramatizations. Cultural performances concretize, produce and appropriately redirect collective emotions (overt or hidden) and social energies of specific culture.

In the dissertation, the perspective outlined in this way makes it possible to show that sports events are a place to release collective emotions and allow on the effective articulation of affects and experiences repress and block in other cultural spaces. Therefore, sport at work is placed in juxtaposition in the context of other events, ideas, and political strategies that control emotions, shape the collective imaginary, influence everyday practices and construct ways of experiencing reality. In this approach, sports events are used to express and establish complex constructs synthesizing collective experiences, ways of thinking and expressing emotions and created ideologies.

This approach is presented on three examples of sports performances taking place in post-war Poland (from 1945 to 1989): cycling The Peace Race, European Championship in boxing in Warsaw 1953 and participation of Polish national football team during two consecutive World Cups in 1974 and 1978.

Each of these sporting events has become legendary in the collective memory and has been covered with many different narratives. They are one of the most important events in the social history of Poland, deeply rooted in the collective consciousness. Due to the complexity of these events representations, they had an impact on many cultural fields and were recorded in various cultural documents and texts analyzed in the work. In the People's Republic of Poland sports disciplines that became the basis of these performances were also a kind of social institutions. Road cycling, boxing and football created a specific social myth which, on the one hand were used by the authorities, and on the other hand adopted by society on its own terms. Selected sports performances provided an insight into these myths formation mechanism and revealed hidden social and cultural issues connected with these myths.

Therefore, these three types of sports representations created a complex story about how Polish post-war society was shaped, how it transformed its myths and modified or tested the current systems of cultural and symbolic imaginations. In other words, all these three performances intent to show how through sport performances the fragile, non-obvious and problematic alliances between power and society were made. The examples presented in the work also illustrate how the public sphere expands to include affective, unpredictable and dynamic cultural scenarios. Described above sports performances were also shown as the central events for the process of shaping post-war Polish modernity and became assessment of the modernization processes effectiveness

The work shows that in the communist period, sport was neither an insignificant escape from reality, nor merely a politicized means of propaganda and just a tool for disciplining the individuals in the process of shaping "new socialist man". The dissertation shows that sport was an important area in which the relations of power and the scope of public activity were negotiated and re-established and where different groups and classes were included in that space. Exploring the history of that period through these sports events created different perspective of perceiving political, social and cultural changes in Poland between 1945 and 1989.