

BODY AND POLITICS IN THE RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IN URUGUAY (1985-1990): INTEGRATION OF SOCIETY AND PERSISTENT VIOLENCE

*CORPO E POLÍTICA NO RETORNO À DEMOCRACIA NO URUGUAI (1985-1990):
INTEGRAÇÃO DA SOCIEDADE E CONTINUAÇÃO DA VIOLÊNCIA*

*CUERPO Y POLÍTICA EN EL RETORNO A LA DEMOCRACIA EN URUGUAY
(1985-1990): INTEGRACIÓN DE LA SOCIEDAD Y CONTINUACIÓN DE LA
VIOLENCIA.*

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Keywords

Body.
Politics.
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Abstract: This paper looks into the relationship between politics and body governing in Uruguay's return to democracy, following the last civilian-military dictatorship (1973-1985). During that period, several innovative proposals for the development of Physical Education, sport and recreation have emerged, changing ways and seeking to integrate a fragmented political society. However, the attempt to mitigate political effects of body practices suggests continuity with the dictatorship, displaying similarities in body governing between both political regimes.

Palavras-chave

Corpo.
Política.
Uruguai.
Educação.

Resumo: Analisa relações entre política e governo do corpo no retorno à democracia no Uruguai, após a última ditadura cívico-militar (1973-1985). No período, diversas propostas para o desenvolvimento da Educação Física, esporte e recreação surgiram com pretensão inovadora, mudando formas e procurando integrar uma sociedade politicamente fragmentada. Porém, a tentativa de aplacar os efeitos políticos das propostas corporais revela sinais de continuidade com a ditadura, evidenciando semelhanças no governo do corpo entre os regimes.

Palabras clave

Cuerpo.
Política.
Uruguay.
Educación.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza relaciones entre política y gobierno del cuerpo en el retorno a la democracia en Uruguay, luego de finalizada la última dictadura cívico-militar (1973-1985). En el período, diversas propuestas para el desarrollo de la Educación Física, deporte y recreación surgieron con pretensión innovadora, cambiando sus formas y procurando integrar una sociedad políticamente fragmentada. Sin embargo, la intención de aplacar los efectos políticos de las propuestas corporales revela señales de continuidad con la dictadura, evidenciando semejanzas en el gobierno del cuerpo entre regímenes.

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1 INTRODUCTION¹: BODY, POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

The end of the 1973-1985 dictatorship in Uruguay and the re-democratization process that began in the country in the 1980s were times of tense transformations as well as major national, political, economic and social changes. As in other Latin American countries, return to democracy in Uruguay was as a transition negotiated between the military and some of the traditional political parties, resulting in a government elected in part by preaching “national unity” and “peaceful change”. That restoration proclaimed the return to a past idealized as lost and better, prior to the dictatorship and which should be retrieved in terms of values such as democracy, freedom, tolerance and pluralism. Such past corresponded to a future of promises while there were economic, political and social inequalities and especially recurrent human rights violations (BUQUET, 2003).

That situation of tension and changes, institutionally interrupted in 1985 with the inauguration of new directly elected authorities (even though there were still proscribed political parties and banned people) leads us to question contemporary politics in the country. After being strongly involved in national political life with revolts in the 1960s and struggles for return to democracy, Uruguayan society depoliticized itself with the end of the dictatorship and faced the paradoxical return of politics to public life after nearly twelve years of dictatorship, but it tended to be restricted to State administration. The panorama that opens in the 1980s becomes fertile ground for understanding today’s political retreat and its effects on the human body.

This article focuses on that context, covering State discourses aimed at the body, thereby reaching the ways in which contemporary politics is shaped. Therefore, we analyze documents prepared by Uruguay’s National Commission for Physical Education (*Comisión Nacional de Educación Física*, CNEF)² between 1985 and 1990. That is the national agency in charge of promoting and organizing several activities related to Physical Education, sport and recreation in the country. We selected magazines and curriculum proposals prepared by the CNEF that were archaeologically compared with documents from other governmental agencies. In those discourses, we sought points of encounter and dispersion, disputes and consensus based on the political, social and historical conditions in which such utterances were possible.

The selected period (1985-1990), which many historians call “democratic transition” (e.g. CAETANO, 2005, CAETANO; RILLA, 1987), begins with inauguration of Julio María Sanguinetti as President in 1985 and covers his whole term – a time of political turmoil and strong national reorganization. It closes not only with the end of the Sanguinetti government but also with the passing of the Law on the Expiration of the Punitive Claims of the State³ (RICO, 2005).

1 This paper presents part of the master’s dissertation “Políticas do corpo e governo da cidade: do retorno à vida democrática na cidade de Montevideu – Uruguai” (*Body policies and government of the city: the return to democratic life in Montevideo – Uruguay*), presented at the Graduate Program in Education of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. The research, sponsored by CNPq (PEC-PG grant, process 190366/2011-7), is linked to the activities developed at the Center for Study and Research – Education and Contemporary Society (UFSC/CNPq Research Program in Critical Theory, Rationalities and Education, IV) and at the Group of Educational Policies and Research Policies for Physical Education (GPEPI/SEF/Udelar). A shorter version was presented at the 22nd Young Researchers Conference organized by the Association of Universities – Montevideo Group (AUGM), held at the University of Playa Ancha (Valparaíso/Chile) in September 29-October 1, 2014.

2 Executive Agency created in 1911 to develop the country’s “physical culture”. It operated until June 2000 and was replaced by the Ministry of Sport and Youth (from 2005, the Ministry of Tourism and then Ministry of Tourism and Sports).

3 *Ley de Caducidad de la Pretensión Punitiva del Estado*, Law No. 15848, passed in 1986, recognizing that “as a result of the logic of the events stemming from the agreement signed between political parties and the Armed Forces in August 1984 and in order to complete the transition to full constitutional order, the exercise of punitive State regarding crimes committed until 1 March 1985 by military and police – who were equaled and assimilated by political motives or during the performance of their duties and in conjunction with actions ordered by the commanding officers who served during the dictatorial period – has expired”. (URUGUAY, 1986)

This work is organized in two steps. It starts by showing a correlation between the forms of intervention on the body during the dictatorial government, outlining programmatic innovations that came with the return of democracy after 1985. Forms of presenting the body, organizing classes and gymnastics performances result in spectacularization of the body that is softened with the regime change. Integration of society becomes necessary and it is our next discussion topic. Promotion of public plazas for the exercise of citizenship seems to be the CNEF's innovation after the end of civilian-military regime, furthering voluntary and comprehensive participation of the entire population in order to overcome political differences that divided society. That movement emphasizing the body as a device to silence the word and reduce political differences has its political consequences, unifying society by reducing the population to a mere set of living organisms.

2 FROM SPECTACULARIZATION OF THE BODY TO INTEGRATION OF DIFFERENCE: NEW PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROPOSALS FOR A NEW URUGUAY

Almost twelve years of dictatorial government did not totally end direct elections. Regime change, the end of dictatorship and Uruguay's democratization from the 1980s on did not represent a radical break or a definite departure from authoritarian government dynamics. Its nature of "process" and its configuration as a "negotiated transition" were some of the characteristics that ensured several continuities between both forms of political organization. Even though the inauguration of authorities legitimately elected in 1984 was important, the characteristics of the dictatorial government continued.

Taking the body as an axis of analysis – specifically Physical Education, sport and recreational interventions on it – changes can be seen in CNEF proposals, but they do not always radically break away from the typical forms of dictatorial politics. Something remains within the programmatic structure that demands a brief look into the ways in which the body was articulated in interventions by the civilian-military government, one of the darkest periods of Uruguayan history in the twentieth century.

With a strong repressive character, the dictatorship installed in Uruguay between 1973 and 1985 used a number of strategies that were allegedly directed to "the country's development". Among repressive forms in public life perpetrated by the regime, we are interested in highlighting their effects on the body.

An analysis of CNEF procedures allows us to observe that in the context of the dictatorship, in addition to military interventions that can be considered as *force over the body* (exercise of violence, whether physical or symbolic: repression, torture, disappearances, persecutions, aggression and permanent surveillance), there was a whole network of actions intended to develop a *force of the body*. They were based on the power of the spectacle, uniformization of presence, the power of aesthetics of body interventions, standardization and moralization, especially of Uruguayan youth.⁴ Examples include gymnastic and sporting activities in public spaces as well as school Physical Education classes, detail in discipline, military formation, command voices – demands on the body that translated signs of the regime.

⁴ The reference to Orientalness, which emerges before the dictatorship, assumes an opposition to Marxism, marking its difference with the traditional parties of Uruguayan politics (DEMASI, 2013). The year of 1975 was declared that of Orientalness – "Año de la Orientalidad" – seeking to rescue "traditional" values that safeguarded Uruguay from "foreign subversive contamination" (CAETANO, RILLA, 1987). On CNEF's relationship with the Year of Orientalness, see Bailón (2007).

The CNEF was highly present in such interventions on the body during the civilian-military government, in an action that can easily be identified with what Foucault (1997) called “living pictures”. They classify, order, regulate individuals and behaviors, bodies and movements – a disciplinary distribution from which many effects can be expected, according to Foucault (1997). Ordering confused crowds was CNEF’s aim, facilitating the establishment of a military body aesthetics translated as the language of sport and fitness.

The 1974 CNEF regulation describes in detail what is expected from Physical Education teachers for “physical fitness and presence”. It establishes qualifications from 0 to 12, according to the “sporting ideal” to be achieved. Those qualifications include:

Grade 0: Obese physical presence, long and disheveled hair, unshaven, without proper equipment, and not very neat [...]

Grade 6: Keeps permanently in good physical shape; personal appearance and uniform are correct [...]

Grade 9: Physical condition, attitude, personal presence with respective uniform and punctuation are noted for their simplicity and regularity (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1974 cited in RODRÍGUEZ GIMÉNEZ, 2003, p. 104).

On the other hand, it is important to consider that, in 1973, and with the approval of the General Law of Education (URUGUAY, 1973), Physical Education enters the compulsory education system in stages corresponding to “basic secondary education” (12-15-year-old youth, approximately). However, the discipline did not enter it as “Physical Education”, but through mandatory “physical culture” encouraging “sports and recreational activities” (URUGUAY, 1973). Among the contents to be taught, it was called “Bolilla 5” (CONSEJO NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN, 1980), which explicitly reflected the military tradition of student marches and formations. That was the name given to the content of the Physical Education curriculum proposal, where *formations* and *command voices* were addressed, reproducing the military aesthetics of body presentation and class organization: class, formation, column, row, alignment, interval, distance, firm positions, resting position were some of the terms used to deliver content.⁵

Efficiency and order were permanently sought:

1- Class; 2- Attention. After a command of execution, students will take a standing position wherever they are, facing the teacher [...] 1- In a row. 2- Forming. After a command of execution, students start positioning themselves on the side of the base; when the class is in that situation, the teacher will command alignment to the side that indicated the base. The teacher will oversee the alignment and once it is finished, he or she will command: Stand. (CONAE, 1980, p. 4) [...] When the teacher finishes the class and wants to withdraw students, he or she commands: 1. Break rows [...]. After a command of execution, students take a step forward with their left feet, firmly join their feet, and leave the formation with as much order as possible (CONSEJO NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN, 1980, p. 6)

Physical Education classes in secondary education institutions are permeated by that typically military dynamics, where details are analyzed and uniformity is sought, thus reproducing a typical aesthetics of formations and martial provisions that intend to normalize and moralize the country’s youth.

Another significant aspect of that dissemination of military forms during the dictatorial period can be seen in gymnastic performances held at sports stadiums (in Montevideo, they

⁵ For a view on this topic, see Rodríguez Giménez (2006).

took place mainly at the Centenario and the Peñarol Stadiums) as well as in parades in the city's main avenues (18 de Julio avenue was the main scenario for those exhibitions in the capital) – a sign of control and mastery over of the body. That coordination of movements that conveyed a sense of unity and synchronized efforts was yet another propaganda strategy of the military regime, for which exhibition groups formed by gymnasts, students and teachers of the Higher Institute of Physical Education (ISEF) were summoned. That was the main national training center for professionals in the field of Physical Education. As examples of discipline and correct body use, the performances organized by the CNEF sought to revitalize “moral forces” by showing the “formative” and “healthy” purposes that would come from good body exercise (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976). However, demonstrations were not restricted to themselves. Camcorders allowed those rituals to be repeated and remembered so that the moralizing messages they were expected to convey would remain latent. Gymnastic shows and parades organized by the CNEF were taped and compiled in editions of *Uruguay Hoy* – a biweekly news programs that preceded movies in theaters from 1979 to 1984, which publicized events to the taste of the dictatorial government in charge of the National Directorate of Public Relations (*Dirección Nacional de Relaciones Públicas, DINARP*) (Marchesi, 2001).

From repression marked by arrests, torture and disappearances to the political technology of discipline and detailed militarization, the most evident forms of action on the body during the dictatorship were developed. However, the return of democracy caused those requirements for body exhibition and perfection to be attenuated, and in 1987 the CNEF rejected the possibility of holding a gymnastics show that had been requested by the leaders of the Uruguayan Football Federation. The idea was to hold a ceremony before a match of the Uruguayan football team, including a gymnastics festival held with students from sports plazas, the Uruguayan Gymnastics Federation and “some other federation whose activity allowed holding exhibitions”.⁶ Even though the CNEF made it clear that it was willing to hold the gymnastic act, it said that “holding the exhibition was not convenient since there [were] not enough human elements for that”.⁷ Was it lack of resources or lack of acceptance? Spectacularization of the body as a distinguishing feature of the military regime gradually lost visibility in the public space, and demonstrations and parades showing militarized bodies were reduced to strictly military spectacles, often in the presence of public authorities.⁸

After the return to democracy, a new proposal for intervention emerged at the CNEF. Between 1985 and 1990, the Commission prepared a set of documents including changes in ways to promote physical activity for the population. A magazine published in 1990, called *El Deporte, la Educación Física y la Recreación. Marzo 1985-Marzo 1990*, which had one issue, published the results achieved in the period, highlighting several changes in urban infrastructure to foster sports, and publicized action programs implemented in those years (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990). After a *Seminar for Curriculum Design and Program for Physical Education*, between January and April 1986⁹, four Curricular Programs were drawn up (*Sports Education Program, Physical Education program – school level; Physical Education program – middle level, Recreation Program*), distributed and implemented in 1989 under the

⁶ Proceedings of the National Commission of Physical Education 1987. f. 77756 (unpublished).

⁷ Proceedings of the National Commission of Physical Education 1987. f. 77756 (unpublished).

⁸ That can be seen in Sanguinetti's visits to several activities such as openings, award ceremonies, etc, during which parades and military celebrations took place (SODRE. Archivo Presidencial n. A144, min. 23:40 República Oriental del Uruguay, 1990. Unpublished).

⁹ The Seminar's director was José Sotelo Fariña, who also served as Director of the Teacher's Division and the CNEF's Planning Department. The seminar aimed at training teachers on issues related to curriculum, seeking to develop curricula for Physical Education, sport and recreation for non-formal contexts (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1988a).

following motto: A New Physical Education Model (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 42).

With the development of those four Curriculum Programs, the CNEF chose to intervene in non-formal environments of Physical Education, promoting a change in teachers' role, tending to "abandon the traditional gymnastics class and replace it with more attractive modalities of higher multiplier effect and equal educational power" (SOTELO FARIÑA, 1985, cited by COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1988a, p. 3). That new proposal for Physical Education expected to occupy the city with several recreational and sports activities that would include the entire population, but knowing that the main target public would be segments considered underprivileged. Especially in sports plazas¹⁰ and, in summer, at the capital's beaches, programs promoting physical activity were developed. From gymnastics to sports and recreation, and including "children's physical education rather than school physical education", that is, with Physical Education not restricted to educational institutions, the CNEF chose "non-formal" Physical Education, promoting a new formula for a new era in Uruguay. The community should encounter the proposals for Physical Education that would be developed in different areas of the city, in "vacant lots, green spaces, plazas and beaches" (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1988b, p. 3).

The return to democratic Physical Education arrived with an inclusive discourse, which sought "attractive" activities that would promote voluntary participation of all citizens, but, as pointed out by Sotelo Fariña, with the same educational power (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1988a). The magazine published in 1990 showed forms of intervention chosen by the CNEF for post-dictatorship society:

[...] We see sport not as something to make us ready to win, but as a weapon for social well-being that is **accessible to all citizens** and practiced every day by more and more people as a **voluntary action** (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 55, emphasis added).

The military body aesthetics would clearly have to be softened because the political turmoil of the time was accompanied by a significant rejection to the military.¹¹ Therefore, Physical Education programs proposed in the return to democracy sought to work by allowing difference from mandatory homogenization, from submission to an ideal standard in which the model of being athletic, Uruguayan and patriotic was built. The CNEF presented a proposal for Physical Education that tried to unify the population. Therefore, predominance of government action was in synch with inclusion, mainly by persuasion.

Unifying the population would not be an easy task and the appearance of a common "enemy" that unified distinctions emerged quite clearly in the development of sport, Physical Education and recreation. That is the more or less generalized struggle (at least at the level

¹⁰ Sports plazas, large spaces with courts, gyms and in some cases, pools and changing rooms were created by the CNEF after 1912. With an important hygienist and eugenicist character, typical of rationalist positivism that marked Uruguayan intellectuals from the prosperous early twentieth century, those plazas were important objects for action by CNEF's administrations. Rodríguez Giménez (2012) and Dogliotti (2012) conducted important studies about them.

¹¹ The year of 1983 was emblematic for rejection to the military by non-conservative sectors of society. Situated between the popular plebiscite manifestation of 1980, which rejected the constitutional reform proposed by the military to perpetuate themselves in power, and the reinstatement of national elections in 1984, 1983 became a key year for the transition. The political, social and union mobilization that had been growing after the rejection of constitutional reform manifests itself clearly in massive demonstrations and collective expressions of resistance. Widespread blackouts, "pot-banging" on the streets, the May 1, 1983 demonstration, protests commemorating the ten years of the dictatorship, the Student Week in September, the protests after democratic reestablishment in Argentina, the greatest mass demonstration in history of the country called by all political parties and under "A democratic Uruguay without exclusions" held at the Obelisk of Montevideo on November 27, 1983 were some of the popular expressions of rejection to the regime and announced the change.

of political discourse) that presupposes dilution of ideological differences that strongly marked society, unifying it in face of a common and generalized attack: the fight against poverty and marginalization. Searching to “comply with the most important and basic needs of the entire Uruguayan community” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 6) in the area of sports, Physical Education and recreation, the CNEF intervened by focusing on sectors with scarcer means for programmed physical exercise, “sectors of the city inhabited by low income people with little access to Sports Centers and [...] away from our coasts and beaches” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 11). “Poorer segments” often mentioned by the CNEF as the target public of their activities bear witness to the arrival of a sociological discourse in politics, just as the post-dictatorial political discourses used the argument of “social vulnerability”, causing society to present itself as a “victim” of violence, be it general, terrorist, natural, in the form of poverty, disease, etc. (RICO, 2005).

3 INTEGRATING THE URUGUAYAN PEOPLE: SPORT AS A MECHANISM TO OVERCOME IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

Sports plazas, designed by the CNEF in 1912, played a key role in linking the population's health and citizenship, something that was strongly resumed during the return to democracy seventy-three years later. Encouraging exercise during democratic reconstruction, the CNEF promoted strong investment in sports plazas in the capital and other towns. In them, sport would be a

basic weapon for social well-being by being closely and inextricably linked to health, education, proper use of leisure time, useful lifestyles and understanding among community members and even between communities themselves (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 46).

But investment in plazas would also be highlighted by the dictatorial governments. CNEF publications during that period highlighted the importance of sports plazas, saying they ensured services directed to

the entire general population: children, youth, adults, students or workers. New Sport Plazas distributed throughout the country conducted a work of primary importance for citizens' recreation, allowing them to do sports activities for free, which contribute, in the case of children and young people, to their formation, and for adults to make up for physical-mental strain that every work produces in man. (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 6).

These spaces would provide “learners with means and programs to make better use of their free time” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 20-21) and for their “physical, moral and spiritual” development (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 60). The argument repeats what the Commission said both in the 1990 magazine and in the already mentioned Curricular Programs. However, while investment in buildings had been strengthened during the dictatorship (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976), local, national and international competitions were much more significant in the Agency's propaganda, in order to “recognize the best of the year in each activity [...] and to [demonstrate] that with their practice and dedication, they were able to serve as a basis for Uruguayan national teams” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 38), offering young people the “opportunity to assess the power of their muscles” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDU-

CACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 32), and allowing “not only students’ open and honest struggle, but strengthening our youth’s closer spiritual ties “(COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 6).

With all these justifications, one of the major directions taken by the CNEF during the dictatorial period was that of holding competitive activities, among which the “Athletic Sporting Championships” held at sports plazas, the “National School Athletic Championship – so-called Gimnástico” the “National Inter-Sport Plaza Futsal Championship”, the “Military Institutes Athletic Sports Competition”, the “Student Sports Athletic Games (JADE),” the “National School Championship” celebrating Montevideo’s 250th anniversary and the “40th Anniversary of PLUNA Championship”¹² (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 52-56), in addition to those activities related to each of the Sports Federations, which were required to perform at least one national event per year (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 37).

With the end of the civilian-military dictatorship, the healthy body resumed the place from which it had been partially displaced because of the focus on athletic and militarized body, and comprehensive hygienism returned as a substitute for military thoroughness. If, as shown in the CNEF, one of the main actions in 1985-1990 was the improvement of spaces for the correct development of the population’s physical activities, it is because something in the organism must be preserved – no longer focusing on the spectacle of the body and the detail in its improvement the military did, but taking expansion of physical activity to the whole population with a strongly hygienist goal. This change modulates the disciplinary device that developed its full potential during the dictatorship and which changed directions but did not disappear after democracy was restored. From the individual body to the collective body, between discipline and biopolitics, the emphasis on devices is coupled to the new national scenario. The organism will not lose its key role, but the emphasis will change from detail to well-being, combining both forms of power in the relationship between life and politics.

The “revitalization” of sports plazas in the return to democracy, as well as improvement and construction of “existing but not essential works” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 5) to cover the population’s “basic needs” sought to reach all citizens, investing in inclusion and favoring sectors with lower possibilities for systematic practices of Physical Education. Not without political intentions, those activities were fostered by “emphasizing actions towards sectors with fewer resources and/or with bio-psycho-social problems – the handicapped, the elderly, the marginalized, etc. and/or those living away from centers suitable for sports practice” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 5).

The economically marginalized, the territorially and socially excluded will now be CNEF’s target public, becoming the alterity to be included in sports, Physical Education and recreational proposals. That is inclusion by exclusion, Agamben (2010) would say, if we consider that the distinction remains, integration is always partial, and its presence in society has a shade of marginality. But while alterity was excluded during the civilian-military dictatorship mainly because of worldviews or political party positions, now the “other” will be the poor, the victim of the economic, social and political crisis which the country intends to leave, and for which the discourse is presented as inclusion. Unifying the population by directing discourses to a common enemy before which ideological differences will not be evident will be a course of action (and manipulation) of the political word.

¹² PLUNA Líneas Aéreas Uruguayas S. A, *Primeira Linha Uruguaya de Navegación Aérea* (PLUNA). It operated from 1939 to 2012.

It is important to clarify that the common enemy did not focus primarily on people, but rather on the conditions of some segments of society. Therefore, differences can be established from the actions carried out during the dictatorship when the fight against communism and “foreign ideologies” demarcated a divide in society. There was no common enemy to unify against, only a dividing opposition. Subversion was a voluntary and individual *choice* and the government acted *against* it. In the case of poverty as a (transient) *condition*, the government’s discourse was presented *in favor* of the dispossessed, against their condition, but, in principle, not against individualities. Actually, that does not always mean that government actions were in their favor; government discourse was changed after the first years of transition, and the State relinquished the responsibility for the critical economic situation of those segments.

The process of unification and erasing of ideological differences placed sports as

an element for the development of awareness and culture with a deep humanistic sense, with respect for citizens’ rights and feelings, proposing [...] fraternal and deep understanding, regardless of political, religious and social views (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 55).

The integrating discourse was a way to spread and legitimate political power, and the CNEF took advantage of it to support its works – all of them, as its director indicates in a 1985 speech,

with a very clear sense of social justice, favoring those segments with the highest needs, that were farthest from the Beaches, in whose areas there were no clubs, and with fewer economic resources (MAGLIONE,¹³ cited by COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 54).

If we consider the unifying claims in the CNEF’s discourse, it seems that neutrality would be guaranteed and sport could be out of political views. However, its independence was circumstantial. Not long before, in 1976, another CNEF publication demarcated their connection with the military regime in a magazine that presented the actions developed over those years in a broad and detailed way and tried to “publicize events organized, sponsored or funded by the Agency, as well as the propaganda about its policy and the action taken to obtain national benefit under the doctrine of State development” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1976, p. 78). Shortly after that, this propaganda of the regime started asserting the possibility of sport to remain “out of political, religious and social views” (COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA, 1990, p. 5), indicating the CNEF’s directions to take Physical Education, sport and recreation to all citizens with no political distinction.

Sport’s becoming is not oblivious to political becoming. We are aware of sport’s political effects and that arbitrariness hides where neutrality is proclaimed. Not by chance, every major political event was more or less closely accompanied by major sports mobilizations. Distraction of the masses, unification of the people, praise to the race, supremacy of the strongest – individuals and nations – were some of the most common political uses of sport to a greater or lesser extent, especially in the Cold War years and shortly before that. Since a long time ago, sport as a modern phenomenon has maintained its links with governments’ intentions. It is the indirect rule of drives, a direct form to discharge body excesses; players and spectators – both groups indulge in sport in a gesture that includes, by itself, the fiction of politics.

¹³ Born in 1935, Julio Cesar Maglione studied dentistry at Uruguay’s University of the Republic. He chaired the CNEF in 1985-1990 and 1995-2000 as well as several sports federations.

4 FINAL REMARKS

The return to democracy in Uruguay, after nearly twelve years of dictatorial rule, did not come with a radical change in the interconnections between body and politics. News in the proposals came together with the renewal of devices, showing apparent changes but also facilitating continuity between forms of government.

The emphasis on remodeling sports plazas as well as on promoting spaces for sports, recreational and Physical Education practice were core elements of propaganda for CNEF's actions during the post-dictatorship period (1985-1990). Their main justification was to provide democratic and democratizing spaces that exceeded the political differences that had divided society so far. Sport will thus be conceived as a unifying and social cohesion practice, and the widest possible participation by all social segments will be claimed in these spaces, with an integrating discourse that sees itself as democratic and peacemaking. Unification of society became the watchword in government discourses about democratic reconstruction, in line with attempts at "peaceful change" and "peacemaking".

Interventions related to Physical Education in Uruguay's democratization after 1985 appear to depart from violent forms of government. However, they maintained their hard core when one considers that the government aims at the body, that is, it has the body as a target of its decisions. Politics guided by economic parameters, reducing the body to biological definitions and proclaiming physical activity as a way to overcome political diversities allows encapsulation of politics, action and speech, which is submitted to the silences of administration, to management of needs, or simply, to the voice – no longer to the word.

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