

Bullfights Redux: Business, Politics, and the Failure of Transnational Cultural Transfer in 1920s Budapest

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Abstract: Spanish bullfights have been organized twice in Hungary: in 1904 and 1924. Unlike in 1904, when the bullfights arrived in Budapest from Paris and were held with the city's urban tourism promotion interests in mind, the 1924 corrida was connected to the internationalization of Spanish bullfights through their support by fascist Italy, causing a domestic political imbroglio in Hungary due to competing political and business interests at home. At the same time, the bullfights represented another novelty in the field of transnational popular entertainment, whose different waves had continuously reached Budapest since the late nineteenth century. Focusing on the 1924 event, the article argues that the bullfights organized in Budapest that year need to be understood from the perspective of interactions between postwar European authoritarian cultural politics, the domestic political scene in Hungary, and Spanish attempts to turn the bullfights into a transnational spectacle rivaling the popularity of British football. Although the bullfights did not take root in Hungary, their organization in Budapest represents an important chapter in the global advance of twentieth-century popular culture, a historically informed understanding of the formation of which requires consideration not just of successful but also failed processes of cultural transfer.

Keywords: Budapest, popular culture, transnational networks, interwar politics, cultural transfers, Hungary, Spain, Italy, bullfights

The band plays the beginning of "Up toreador" (My God, what else could they play!) and the side door of the arena opens up to let in the pageant. In front, two horsemen on fiery, fastidious steeds, and after them with a conquering posture and smiling, clad in silk and velvet, and decked all over with gold and silver trimmings, enters a third one, the prima donna, a.k.a. the picador. Even his hackney is covered with ribbons and paper flowers. Its tail is like a motley, rainbow-colored flag. After the horsemen, follow the pedestrian [*chulos*] in blue, green, purple, yellow, and brown silk [clothes] with rich gold and silver embroideries. They are the slender and dashing sons of distant Spain and southern Italy, both strong and powerful with eyes full of fire. They are the toreadors.

The pageant concludes with the procession of the blue and red-clad servants who are seasonal Hungarian supernumeraries and at the very end there are three horses pulling lightly behind them a rough iron hook. —It is the hook that will be used to pull out the stabbed bull, explain the

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specialists [among the crowd] and while the pageant is still in movement, a thrill of expectation and interest hovers above the grandstands.

Sándor Lestyán, "Bika viadal," *Az Ujság*, 19 October 1924

TOGETHER WITH THE IMPORT of South American dances like the tango, maxixe, and samba to North America and Europe during the prewar and interwar periods,¹ the bullfights of Spain, Portugal, and several Latin American countries, where this blood sport originally developed into a national pastime during the preceding centuries,² also spread to other parts of the world. For instance, many bullfights were organized during the late nineteenth century at various world's fairs or in European and North American cities that were not traditionally associated with this practice.³ At the beginning of the twentieth century they made it to Hungary as well. Due to the exoticism and the interest they triggered elsewhere, in 1904 clever impresarios sought to sell bullfights to city boosters in Budapest as a means to promote interest in the Hungarian capital abroad and thus spur the development of urban tourism. Although they failed to catch on at that time, bullfights returned to the Hungarian capital twenty years later. In October 1924 thousands of spectators could again see *banderilleros*, *picadors*, *chulos*, and *toreadors* engaged in several bullfights. These bullfights, however, took place in a different context than those held at the beginning of the century. The 1904 bullfights, managed by the Budapest Tourism and Travel Company, were organized to attract foreign tourists and market Budapest as a cosmopolitan metropolis, triggering in response a moral panic among nationalists and conservatives.⁴ Those held in 1924 took place in the aftermath of complex negotiations between business interests (both foreign and domestic) and local right-wing politicians. The question of Budapest's urban tourism was a nonissue this time—a sign that the city had matured, overcoming the anxieties of its turn-of-the-century rapid rise as a young metropolis. Another important difference was that, despite continuous nationalist attacks in the press, the 1904 bullfights were supported by a liberal government and municipality, while the 1924 corridas were approved by conservative and nationalist officials who were criticized for doing so by a more radical right-wing faction from within their own ranks.

As I argue in this article, there are three different contexts within which one can analyze the return of the bullfights to Budapest. The first context, especially valid for the 1924 bullfights, is that of a nexus of a new type of cultural politics that created important connections between

¹Kerstin Lange, *Tango in Paris und Berlin: Eine Transnationale Geschichte der Metropolenkultur um 1900* (Göttingen, 2016); Sophie Jacotot, *Danser à Paris dans l'entre deux guerres. Lieux, pratiques et imaginaires des danses de société des Amériques, 1919–1939* (Paris, 2013); Astrid Kusser, *Körper in Schiefelage: Tanzen im Strudel des Black Atlantik um 1900* (Bielefeld, 2013).

²Elizabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Bullfighting: A Troubled History* (London, 2010); Bartolomé Bennassar, *Histoire de la tauromachie: une société du spectacle* (Paris, 2011); Jean Ortiz, ed., *Tauromachie et représentation du monde en Amérique Latine* (Biarritz, 2005).

³For the bullfights organized at the 1889 World's Fair in Paris in a large arena seating twenty thousand people see Claude Popelin, *Le Taureau et son combat* (Paris, 1993); while for a history of the French corrida since its introduction to the country in 1853, see August Lafront, *Histoire de la Corrida en France du Second Empire à nos jours* (Paris, 1977) and Eric Baratay, "Représentations et métamorphoses de la violence: La corrida en France, 1853 à nos jours," *Revue Historique* 297, no. 2 (1997): 489–520. Bullfights were also planned by Mexican entrepreneurs at the Mexican Village set up at the Cotton States International Exhibition in Atlanta in 1895, see Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley, 1996), 186.

⁴See my "Bullfights in Budapest: City Marketing, Moral Panics and Nationalism in Turn-of-the-Century Hungary," *Austrian History Yearbook* 41 (2010): 143–69. For another description of the 1904 bullfights, which equates them merely to a colorful episode in the history of Budapest, see Oliver Perczel's magazine article, "Bikaviadalok Budapesten (1904 június 11.–július 14.)," [Bullfights in Budapest (11 June–14 July 1904)], *Budapest*, July 2012, 18–20.

various postwar authoritarian regimes.⁵ What connected Italian, Spanish, and German Fascists—and global Fascisms generally—was their common emphasis on masculinity and strenuous physical activity as a means for men to display virility.⁶ While by the 1920s and 1930s bullfights in Spain had found a powerful competitor in the newfound popularity of football,⁷ Fascist leaders like Benito Mussolini, Primo de Rivera, and Francisco Franco embraced them as vehicles for strengthening one's physical endurance and masculinity.⁸ The building of the Fascist myth of masculinity found a favorable echo among authoritarian regimes in East-Central Europe, an interest that was also shared by the early 1920s Hungarian right-wing and conservative government of István Bethlen.⁹ At the same time, at a moment when the turning of British football into a new national sport enabled Spain to break out of its isolation by entering the arena of international competition,¹⁰ bullfights, still considered by many as Spain's traditional sport, also started to expand internationally through the emerging postwar pan-European Fascist and authoritarian nexus. Their early embrace by Mussolini was indeed a boon, enabling the Spanish corrida to become a matter of international export through the postwar authoritarian networks,¹¹ which emerged within a preexisting and much broader global popular culture nexus.

Second, once the Spanish bullfights reached Hungary in the 1920s, their meaning was refashioned at the level of local politics, with competing groups using them as vehicles for promoting their own agendas. The actors involved in the 1924 bullfights held in Budapest were indeed many: ministers of the Bethlen government, the mayor of Budapest, several vice mayors and other municipal officials, businessmen, football team managers, journalists writing for dailies with various political orientations, the Budapest public attending the corrida, and the Spanish toreadors. Each of these actors positioned themselves within a field shaped by their own priorities and the political, economic, and cultural interests of their

⁵For an exploration of such connections, see the essays in Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, eds., *Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945* (New York, 2017).

⁶See the essays in J. A. Mangan, *Superman Supreme: Fascist Body as Political Icon—Global Fascisms* (London, 2014).

⁷Katrine Helene Andersen, "A Revolt of the Masses: Culture and Modernity in Early 20th-Century Spain: From Bullfights to Football Games," *Call: Irish Journal for Culture, Arts, Literature, and Language* 2, no. 1 (2017); Juan Antonio Simón, *Construyendo una pasión: el fútbol en España, 1900–1936* (Logroño, 2015); and José María Baez Pérez de Tudela, *Fútbol, cine y democracia: ocio de masas en Madrid, 1923–1936* (Madrid, 2012).

⁸On Mussolini's embrace of the bullfights see the evidence that I provide later in this article; while for Primo de Rivera and Franco's support of them, see Rafael Núñez Florencio, "Bullfights as a National Festivity," in *Metaphors of Spain: Representations of Spanish National Identity in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Javier Moreno-Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (New York, 2017), 181–98, esp. 191; Carrie B. Douglass, *Bulls, Bullfighting and Spanish Identities* (Tucson, 1997), 83–84; Demetrio Gutiérrez Alarcón, *Los toros de la guerra y el franquismo* (Barcelona, 1978); and María Verónica De Haro de San Mateo, "Bullfighting as Television Entertainment during the Franco Regime," *Communication and Society* 29, no. 3 (2016): 69–85.

⁹For the Hungarian cult of masculinity as expressed in the 1921 creation of the Levente institution for the military training of young males, see Ferenc Gergely and György Kiss, *Horthy leventéi. A levente intézmény története* [Horthy's Leventes: A history of the Levente institution] (Budapest, 1976); and János Szabó, "A levente intézmény és társadalmi környezete" [The Levente institution and its social milieu], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* no. 4 (1989): 495–520.

¹⁰See Andersen, "A Revolt of the Masses," 10.

¹¹More recently, historians of the budding friendship between Mussolini and Primo de Rivera that led to the conclusion of a Spanish-Italian political alliance during the 1920s see it as a phenomenon that could be "fruitfully . . . analyzed as interacting sets of dynamically evolving networks comprised of people and practices"; see Matteo Albanese and Pablo del Hierro, *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century: Spain, Italy and the Global Neo-Fascist Network* (London, 2016), 2. I consider the changing attitude toward the Spanish bullfights in Italy an important element enabling the coagulation of such networks.

counterparts, as well as by the new postwar realities in Hungary, where a Christian national course, tinged with antisemitism, took hold in mainstream politics.

The third context that is necessary to look at is that of a transnational popular culture of spectacle that, after its emergence in the nineteenth century, continued its globalizing march well into the interwar period.¹² The world's fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century familiarized millions of visitors by way of national architecture, ethnographic villages, and music and short films with exotic elements of distant cultures.¹³ The success of Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows in North America and Europe,¹⁴ together with African American dances and music like the cakewalk, ragtime, and jazz;¹⁵ Hollywood movies; and the building of amusement parks modeled after New York's Coney Island in places like London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Tokyo,¹⁶ spearheaded a process of Americanization at the level of popular culture in many European and Asian cities.¹⁷ European exports, however—like those of the Olympic idea, Parisian and Austro-Hungarian operetta, and British football¹⁸—contributed to the emergence of a global popular culture of entertainment, sports, and mass spectacles by the turn of the century. It must be kept in mind that the business and profit-making motivations for the 1904 and 1924 bullfights—and more generally that of the commercial character of an increasingly global and entrepreneurial popular culture spreading from city to city, whose main purpose was to entertain while allowing investors to make money—are also crucial elements for understanding why bullfights were organized for a second time in Budapest.

¹²See Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (Oxford, 2008); and Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869–1922* (Chicago, 2005).

¹³Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Basingstoke, 2010); Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester, 2005); Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1989): 217–36; and Emily S. Rosenberg, "Exhibitionary Nodes," in *A World Connecting, 1870–1945*, ed. Emily S. Rosenberg (Cambridge, 2012), 886–918.

¹⁴Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History* (New York, 2000).

¹⁵See Neill A. Wynn, ed., *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe* (Jackson, 2010); Catherine Parsonage, *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain, 1880–1935* (Abingdon, 2005); Matthew F. Jordan, *Le Jazz: Jazz and French Cultural Identity* (Urbana, 2010); E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham, 2001); Jonathan Wiplinger, *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race and American Culture in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor, 2017); Anna Harwell Celenza, *Jazz Italian Style: From Its Origins in New Orleans to Fascist Italy and Sinatra* (Cambridge, 2017); S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917–1991*, rev. ed. (New York, 1994); Robert A. Davidson, *Jazz Age Barcelona* (Toronto, 2009); Bradley G. Shope, *American Popular Music in Britain's Raj* (Rochester, 2016); Eugene Marlow, *Jazz in China: From Dance Hall Music to Individual Freedom of Expression* (Jackson, 2018).

¹⁶Mark Glancy, *Hollywood and the Americanization of Britain: From the 1920s to the Present* (New York, 2014); Arwen P. Mohun, "Amusement Parks for the World: The Export of American Technology and Know-How, 1900–1939," *Icon* 19 (2013): 100–12; Johanna Niedbalski, "Vergnügungsparks," in *Weltstadtvergnügen: Berlin, 1880–1930*, eds. Daniel Morat et al. (Göttingen, 2016), 153–92; and Johanna Niedbalski, *Die Ganze Welt des Vergnügens: Berliner Vergnügungsparks der 1880er bis 1930er Jahre* (Berlin, 2018).

¹⁷For an excellent work discussing the overall meaning of Americanization on the European continent, see Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁸Allen Gutmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Urbana, 2002); Gerald P. Schaus and Stephen R. Wenn, *Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games* (Waterloo, 2007); Laurence Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* (Cambridge, 2017); Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (New York, 2003); Bill Murray, *The World's Game: A History of Soccer* (Urbana, 1996); David Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Soccer* (New York, 2006); Matthew Taylor, "Football's Engineers: British Football Coaches, Migration and Intercultural Transfer, c. 1910–c. 1950," *Sport in History* 30, no. 1 (2010): 138–63; Paul Dimeo and James Mills, eds., *Soccer in South Asia: Empire, Nation, Diaspora* (London, 2001); and Adrian Harvey, *Football: The First One Hundred Years: The Untold Story* (London, 2005).

With these contexts serving as my analytical thread, I will retrace in the following pages the postwar trajectory of the Spanish bullfights, from Spain through Italy to Budapest. I will then discuss them from the perspective of foreign and local business interests, on the one hand, and clashing municipal and governmental politics, on the other. In the last two sections of the article I will offer a narrative description of the three bullfights held in Hungary in October 1924 to provide, based on an analysis of the reactions that they triggered among the public and the press, a cultural transfers-connected interpretation not just of why they failed to take root in Budapest but also of why their failure to become a local attraction matters from a transnational history perspective.

Business and Politics

After the caesura caused by World War I, in the early 1920s the bullfights left Spain once again to continue their push to become a transnational spectacle. Their first stop in the emerging postwar pan-European authoritarian nexus that facilitated their export abroad was Fascist Italy. In the spirit of his newfound fondness for Spain and his attempts to forge a political alliance with the Iberian state, which would continue to blossom under the regime of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, Benito Mussolini made an unprecedented move and encouraged, as a sign of his increasingly pro-Spanish cultural policy, the organization of corridas in Italy.¹⁹ As a result, in 1923 a large group of Spanish toreadors and *picadors* appeared in bullfights organized in Rome, Bologna, Milan, Verona, and Trieste.²⁰ The Hungarian press of the time eagerly followed these developments. For instance, several newspapers reported in early May 1923 on the first bullfights that took place at the new stadium in Rome. As one of them wrote, “Prime Minister Mussolini also attended the corrida, which features Spanish matadors exclusively.”²¹ Although they also reported that many Italian newspapers and church officials criticized the newfound interest in the corrida in Italy, their main point was to highlight an exchange of gifts between matador Francesco López Parejo (a.k.a. Parejito) and Mussolini, which consisted of the former dedicating to the latter the bull that he was about to kill, as well as, in the aftermath of him successfully stabbing it, gifting to Il Duce “his richly decorated revolver and cape.”²² Mussolini was no less generous; he reciprocated by giving Parejito his “gold-encrusted port-cigarette.”²³

The Rome bullfights, each of which were attended by tens of thousands of spectators, also triggered interest within the United States. American journalist Stark Young, who witnessed the exchange of gifts between Mussolini and Parejito, wondered aloud in a piece published in *The New Republic* whether—with his official endorsement of bullfights—Mussolini, “like the Caesars,” meant “to wheedle the population to his will with spectacles and shows, or like Scott and Phillips he means to make them men of blood and iron.”²⁴ In fact, due to the

¹⁹“Discreditable to Mussolini: Italian Premier Encourages Bullfight despite Prohibition by Law,” *The National Humane Review* (Dec. 1923): 228.

²⁰For news clippings discussing the bullfights held in Bologna that were organized by the Casa del Fascio di Combattimento of Emilia-Romagna, which also cashed a part of the profits that were made at the event, see “La corrida al velodromo di Bologna negli Anni '20,” *Controcorrente*, 7 July 2017, accessed 11 Mar. 2018, <https://controcorrente.globalist.it/cultura/2017/07/11/la-corrída-al-velodromo-di-bologna-negli-anni-20-2001788.html>.

²¹“Az első bikaviadalok Olaszországban” [The first bullfights in Italy], *Az Est*, 13 May 1923, 7.

²²*Ibid.*, 8.

²³“Háziasszonyok paradicsoma: Bikaviadalok Romában” [The heaven of housewives: Bullfights in Rome], *Szózat*, 20 May 1923, 5.

²⁴Stark Young, “Mussolini’s Bullfight,” *The New Republic*, 11 July 1923, 174–76, quote p. 174.

popularity that the corridas enjoyed all over Italy and the manly spirit that Mussolini wanted to cultivate among spectators by allowing the Spaniards to kill every fifth bull, one can find ample evidence for both. As someone who wanted to take Italy to the heights of its ancient imperial glory, the bread and circus motive was certainly not foreign to Mussolini as a ruling principle,²⁵ while the emphasis on a strong sense of masculinity was a common feature of Italian Fascism and the other Fascist movements that it inspired.²⁶ The Rome bullfights also allowed Mussolini to exhibit his talents in working the crowd. Indeed, taking cue from the popular enthusiasm that the Roman corrida stirred among spectators, a Hungarian observer compared Mussolini's stance in the stadium to that of a film director managing a large crowd. The observer depicted him as a crowd pleaser and populist, with the latter made obvious when in the aftermath of the bullfights Mussolini offered a private audience to Parejito, a man of the people by comparison to the top diplomats and politicians who until then were the only ones enjoying such privileges.²⁷

The Italian bullfight craze and the international attention that the 1923 bullfights held in Italy gathered in the American and Hungarian press turned inspirational elsewhere as well. Hungarian newspapers reported that, in late summer of that year, to add to the appeal of its planned international trade fair, the municipality of Bratislava (known as Pozsony until 1918, when the city became part of the newly created Czechoslovakia) also planned to organize bullfights.²⁸ For this purpose local authorities hired six Spanish bullfighters and committed to provide three bulls for each bullfight, while a French film crew was tasked with recording the event. The Bratislava bullfights were scheduled to take place at the end of August in the local SK stadium in a specially built arena that sat twenty thousand spectators.²⁹ The setup changed slightly by 22 August: instead of an exclusive team of Spanish bullfighters, the Czech František Mrna took up the role of the main torero.³⁰ Unlike in Italy, however, public protests against the corrida became louder in Czechoslovakia,³¹ forcing the Czech government and—through its intercession—the Slovak ministry and the local official of the county in which the city of Bratislava was located to call off the event.³² A similar attempt made by a group of investors to organize bullfights in several Viennese football stadiums failed a week later as well.³³

²⁵See the allusion to this in “Bika-versek” [Bull poems], *Népszava*, 30 Aug. 1930, 6.

²⁶See Gigliola Gori, “Model of Masculinity: Mussolini, the ‘New Italian’ of the Fascist Era,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 4 (1999): 27–61; and J. A. Mangan, “Global Fascism and the Male Body: Ambitions, Similarities and Dissimilarities,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 4 (1999): 1–26.

²⁷Jenő Szatmáry, “A legnagyobb politikai filmrendező” [The biggest political director], *Világ*, 30 May 1923, 7.

²⁸“Bikaviadalok Pozsonyban” [Bullfights in Pozsony], *Pesti Hírlap*, 5 Aug. 1923, 9; and “Pozsonyban bikaviadalokat rendeznek” [Bullfights are being organized in Pozsony], *Pesti Napló*, 7 Aug. 1923, 5.

²⁹“Augusztus 23-ikán kezdődnek Pozsonyban a bikaviadalok” [The Pozsony bullfights start on August 23], *Pesti Napló*, 8 Aug. 1923, 5.

³⁰“A pozsonyi bikaviadalok” [The Pozsony bullfights], *Pesti Hírlap*, 22 Aug. 1922, 4.

³¹“A pozsonyi bikaviadalok,” *Az Est*, 11 Aug. 1923, 5; and “Pozsonyban bikaviadalokat akarnak” [Bullfights wanted in Pozsony], *Népszava*, 11 Aug. 1923, 6.

³²See “Pozsonyban tilos a bikaviadal” [The bullfights are forbidden in Pozsony], *Pesti Hírlap*, 19 Aug. 1923, 6; “A pozsonyi bikaviadalokat betiltották” [The Pozsony bullfights are banned], *Pesti Hírlap*, 24 Aug. 1923, 4; and “Mégsem lesz bikaviadal Pozsonyban” [There will be no bullfights in Pozsony], *Az Ujság*, 24 Aug. 1923, 5.

³³“Bécsben nem engedélyezik a bikaviadalokat” [The bullfights are not allowed in Vienna], *Pesti Hírlap*, 28 Aug. 1923, 6. The intention of the Budapest circus to include bullfights in its program was also called off for technical reasons in early September; see “Nem lesznek bikaviadalok” [There will be no bullfights], 8 *Órai Ujság*, 1 Sept. 1923, 5.

Yet this was not the end of the bullfights' avatars in Central Europe. The Spanish toreadors, who had covered themselves with glory in Italy just one year before and returned again to great acclaim to Rome in the summer of 1924,³⁴ turned up a couple of months later in Budapest.³⁵ They were in Hungary due to a business agreement between one of the top Hungarian football clubs, the Ferencvárosi Torna Club (Ferencváros Gymnastics Club or FTC), and a group of Spanish and Italian investors who had sponsored the Spanish toreadors' trip to Budapest.³⁶ Founded in 1899 as a football club by middle-class youth from the district of Ferencváros in Budapest, the team played in its stadium on Soroksári út (Soroksári Avenue) until 1911. After 1911, however, the club moved to a newly built stadium at the corner of Üllői út (Üllői Avenue) and Hungária körút (Hungária Ring). Although located more centrally in the city than the former one, the new stadium could accommodate spectators only on a single seating stand along one side of the soccer field. After the war, with the club's fan base on a relentless growing curve, the club's administrators came up with the ambitious plan to extend the existing seating to run around the whole field. However, the costly extension of the Üllői Avenue Stadium completed by FTC between 1920 and 1921 caused financial stress, which the club was eager to mitigate by hosting events like boxing matches and bullfights.

Given that the FTC's president at the time and the majority shareholder of the Ferencvárosi Pálya Rt. (Ferencváros Football Stadium PLC), Dr. Ernő Gschwindt, was a rich liquor magnate who was also a parliamentary deputy in Count István Bethlen's ruling conservative Unified Party (Egységes Párt),³⁷ the club was able to easily obtain an official permit for the bullfights from Deputy Prime Minister József Vass and Minister of the Interior Iván Rakovszky. Similar to the decision of the prewar Hungarian government headed by István Tisza on the occasion of the 1904 bullfights in Budapest, the Bethlen government's only condition was that the Spaniards not kill the bull and, given the unfavorable reaction that the bulls goring the bellies of the *picadors'* horses (a common occurrence in Spain) would cause among spectators in a horse-loving nation such as Hungary, where horses enjoyed a "veritable cult," they could not use horses in the arena.³⁸ Upon issuing his permit, and in response to the FTC leadership's invitation, Vass even made it known to the organizers that he would be present at the event.³⁹ At the same time, to gain approval at an even higher level, the leadership of the FTC also sent a separate letter to Regent Miklós Horthy inviting him to attend the bullfights.⁴⁰

At a time when Hungarian football clubs' finances, including those of the FTC, were in dire shape, the government's approval of the bullfights was a veritable financial boon to the club and

³⁴See Luis Nieto, "Los toros han estado presentes a lo largo de la historia de Italia. En 1924 hubo tres corridas con 'lleno hasta la bandera' en Roma," *ABC*, 19 Aug. 1994, 76, accessed 11 Mar. 2018, <http://hemeroteca.abc.es/nav/Navigate.exe/hemeroteca/madrid/abc/1994/08/19/076.html>.

³⁵"Bikaviadal Magyarországon" [Bullfights in Hungary], *Világ*, 23 Aug. 1924, 12.

³⁶See the report in *Friss Újság*, 6 Sept. 1924, 3. For the reference to an Italian financial group also sponsoring the event, see *Az Újság*, 28 Oct. 1924, 5.

³⁷Gschwindt was the seventh richest person in Hungary at the time, see Zsuzsanna Antal, "Pengőmilliomosok" [Pengő millionaires], *Forbes* (Hungarian edition), Nov. 2017, 28–29. For a brief biographic notice on Gschwindt, see Ágnes Kenyeres, ed., *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*, 4 vols. (Budapest, 1967–94), accessed 17 Oct. 2018, <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/ABC04834/05513.htm>.

³⁸"Mégse lesz bikaviadal" [There will be no bullfights], *Magyarország*, 26 Sept. 1924, 4.

³⁹"A torreadorok vasárnap indulnak Madridból" [The toreadors leave Madrid on Sunday], *Szózat*, 21 Sept. 1924, 11; and "A torreadorok vasárnap indulnak Madridból" [The toreadors leave Madrid on Sunday], *Pesti Hírlap*, 21 Sept. 1924, 12.

⁴⁰See notice in *Ország-Világ*, 28 Sept. 1924, 286.

the shareholders of the stadium. The FTC's leadership saw the business agreement with the Spanish and Italian investors as an opportunity to make enough profit to continue renovating the stadium and turn it into an almost new sports facility.⁴¹ To accommodate the event, the Magyar Labdarugó Szövetség (MLSZ—the Hungarian Football Association) even changed the schedule of the 1923/24 football season to allow for the bullfights to take place on 28 and 30 September and 4 October in the FTC stadium. Wedged between the Austria-Hungary match on 14 September, the Germany-Hungary game on 21 September, and the FTC's two national championship games that had to be preemptively moved to the MTK stadium, the bullfights were described in the sports press as a “vivid competitor” for football supporters' interests, with the club expecting a considerable financial boost from them.⁴²

Bullfights and Domestic Political Infighting

Before they could take place, however, the bullfights hit a snag. Whereas in early September, in addition to the government's approval, the FTC's leadership together with the Spanish-Italian financial group that sponsored the bullfights were also able to secure a permit from the financial chamber of the Budapest municipality,⁴³ by mid-month they lost it due to a technicality. Referring to an older agreement between the municipality and the FTC in regard to the club's leasing from the municipality the plot of land on which its stadium was located that specified that the lease was valid in perpetuity for sporting events involving only humans, the municipal council refused in its 17 September 1924 session to grant approval for the bullfights.⁴⁴ It is likely, however, that there were other reasons for this refusal. In contrast to the Egységes Párt (Unified Party), which, based on a coalition between the Christian National Unification Party led by Bethlen and István Nagyatádi-Szabó's National Small Holders and Agricultural Laborers' Party, constituted the moderate right wing of the conservative Christian political spectrum and was in charge of the Hungarian government since 1921, the Budapest municipality was the fief of another conservative group, namely the Károly Wolff-led Christian Municipal Party. Known shorthand as the Wolff Party,⁴⁵ their more extreme antisemitic and xenophobic views had often brought them into direct collision with the domestic consolidation politics pursued during the early 1920s by the Bethlen government.⁴⁶

The conflict between these two right-wing political camps reached a new height within the confines of the Budapest municipal council in August 1924 when the government called to life the Ferenc Ripka-led Unified Communal Citizens Party (Egységes Községi Polgári Párt) as a separate political group within the municipality, with the goal to reduce the influence of the Károly Wolff-led lobby in municipal politics. As it soon became clear, those municipal

⁴¹“Bikaviadalok Budapesten” [Bullfights in Budapest], *Budapesti Hírlap*, 17 Sept. 1924, 6.

⁴²See the notice regarding the changed schedule in *Nemzeti Sport*, 3 Sept. 1924, 1.

⁴³*Friss Ujság*, 6 Sept. 1924, 3.

⁴⁴“A tanács nem engedélyezte a bikaviadalok megtartását” [The council did not allow the bullfights], *Pesti Hírlap*, 18 Sept. 1924, 7.

⁴⁵For a general history of this party see Jenő Gergely, *A keresztény Községi (Wolff-) Párt, 1920–39* [The Christian Municipal (Wolff-) Party, 1920–39] (Budapest, 2010).

⁴⁶For more on the consolidation politics of the Bethlen government, which led to a rift between it and the extreme right, see Mária Ormos, *Magyarország a két világháború között, 1914–1945* [Hungary between the two world wars, 1914–1945] (Debrecen, 1998), 85–100; and Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874–1946* (Boulder, 1995), 172–217.

councilors who had turned against the bullfights indeed had an ideological axe to grind. As a classic illustration of the meeting between two ideological extremes, members of the Wolff Party embraced a position argued earlier by the Budapest left-wing press, according to which the bullfights were—in a direct allusion to the stance of the Bethlen government—just a “bloody spectacle” condoned by race-protectionist (*fajvédő*) politicians.⁴⁷ Leaving their own identification with the Magyar race subdued in the debate, right-wing municipal councilors argued in a similar vein that, with the organization of a barbaric corrida, Budapest would risk losing the whole world’s esteem.⁴⁸ Because of the financial losses that it would incur due to such a late reversal in the municipality’s initial decision, the leadership of the FTC promptly challenged the municipal ban. FTC leaders referred to the governmental permit (including that of the Budapest chief of police) that they had acquired earlier and threatened to bring the issue to the attention of the Ministry of the Interior. They also emphasized that the bullfights they had planned to organize were not intended to be “bloody” because, per their previous agreement with the government, they had decided not to use horses in the arena and that the toreadors were not allowed to kill the bull.⁴⁹ Solving this imbroglio with the municipality became an urgent matter for the organizers because—as several newspapers reported—both the corrida’s impresario, Don Consuelo Estrella, and the Spanish toreadors were ready to embark on their trip to Budapest.⁵⁰

As news of the FTC’s insistence on continuing its preparation of the bullfights spread, the conflict between the government and the municipality intensified.⁵¹ Taking the side of the Károly Wolff lobby within the municipality, the social democratic newspaper, *Népszava*, openly voiced its concern that powerful business interests involving many members of the government were at stake, a stance that provided further fuel for the conflict.⁵² Another municipal session, held on 23 September, started favorably for the FTC because Dr. József Csupor, a councilor in the municipality’s financial office, spoke in favor of the corrida. He was interrupted, however, by Vice Mayor János Buzáth, who threatened to leave the meeting in case the council supported Csupor’s position. Buzáth’s threat was backed by Mayor Sipőcz, who signaled his readiness to do the same. Blackmailed by its leaders, the municipal council upheld its initial decision, continuing to forbid the event on municipal property.⁵³

⁴⁷See “Bikaviadal Budapesten” [Bullfights in Budapest], *Népszava*, 23 Aug. 1924, 8.

⁴⁸See “Eröltetik a bikaviadalokat” [They are pushing the bullfights], *Friss Ujság*, 20 Sept. 1924, 3. According to a later notice published in *Az Est* (11 Oct. 1924, 10), the first to call the bullfights an example of “barbarism,” and thus trigger an antibullfights stance within the municipal council, was Jenő Zilahy-Kiss, one of Budapest’s vice mayors and a prominent member of the violently antisemitic Association of Awakening Magyars (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete).

⁴⁹“Az FTC megfellebbezi a bikaviadalokat betiltó tanácsi határozatot” [The FTC appeals against the municipal ban], *Pesti Napló*, 19 Sept. 1924, 6.

⁵⁰“A torreadorok vasárnap indulnak Madridból” [The toreadors leave Madrid on Sunday], *Pesti Hírlap*, 21 Sept. 1924, 12.

⁵¹See Károly Wolff, the hidden eminence behind the decision of the municipality, and Ferenc Ripka, the supervisory delegate of the Bethlen government in charge of municipal affairs, locking horns in a caricature published under the heading of “The Budapest Bullfight” (*A budapesti bikaviadal*) in *Pesti Hírlap*, 23 Sept. 1924, 20. Ripka, who would become mayor of Budapest in 1925, was appointed by Bethlen to the newly created position of supervisory delegate to exert pressure at municipal level on Wolff and Gyula Gömbös, the two prominent leaders of the extreme right who had tried to bring down the Bethlen government just a year before on the occasion of the 15–16 Mar. 1923 student disturbances in Budapest; see Romsics, *István Bethlen*, 194.

⁵²“A kormány és a főváros szembekerültek a bikaviadal ügyében. Nem törődnek a főváros tilalmával?” [The government and the municipality in crosshairs in regard of the bullfights. Is the municipality’s decision ignored?], *Népszava*, 21 Sept. 1924, 4.

⁵³See *Az Est*, 11 Oct. 1924, 2.

Vice Mayor Buzáth, who took charge of the council's handling of the bullfights, argued in a populist vein that if they were to allow the bullfights to proceed, it would provoke the anger of both the "workers living in misery" and "impoverished middle-class people" living in Budapest.⁵⁴ Pushed by Buzáth, three days later the municipal council went on the attack, ordering the bullfight arena that had been built in the meantime in the Ullői Avenue stadium⁵⁵ to be dismantled.⁵⁶ Councilors aligned with Buzáth and the Wolff group also threatened the FTC with the expropriation of its sports facility if it continued to oppose the municipal ban on the bullfights.⁵⁷ Although the minister of the interior, intervening on behalf of the organizers, had supposedly admonished the Budapest municipal council for its obstinacy, it seems the latter won its case anyhow, because at the end of September rumors started to circulate in the press about the bullfights being moved from Budapest to the Neuschloss-Lichtig industrial plant in Albertfalva. Detractors of the bullfights, however, were not happy with this development because, as they argued, due to the proximity of Albertfalva to Budapest, the event (which now they described as a "grave and ugly offense" against "the Magyar nation and the esteem of the Magyar state"⁵⁸) would therefore still be seen as a Budapest one, and would thus taint the Hungarian capital's international prestige.

The Albertfalva rumor, however, proved to be unfounded. In early October the issue of the bullfights' permit came back to the desk of the municipality with the FTC leadership arranging a face-to-face meeting with Budapest mayor and Wolff's front man within the institution, Dr. Jenő Sipőcz.⁵⁹ According to a report published in *Budapesti Hírlap*, a well-known conservative national press organ, on 3 October 1924, Sipőcz met an FTC deputation led by the club's vice president, Dr. Ferenc Springer Jr.⁶⁰ At the beginning of the meeting, Sipőcz showed empathy toward the FTC's plea, but things turned sour when Nándor Sziebert, a prominent businessman from Ferencváros and head of the FTC's financial lobby, tried to respond to the municipality's moral condemnation of the bullfights by highlighting that the FTC was always a "supporter of the Christian idea and that its executive committee did not include Jews."⁶¹ However, as the author of the anonymous article in which this information appeared pointed out, this was untrue and blatantly refuted when Ernő Hecht, a Jewish member of that committee, joined the meeting exactly at the moment when Sziebert was making his point. Afterward, Sziebert (who, as the author of the same article implied, was not to be taken seriously anymore) condemned the council's decision in very strong terms, engaging in a verbal fight with Mayor Sipőcz, as a result of which the latter changed his initially sympathetic attitude and ended the meeting by reiterating his strong support of the decision against the bullfights made days earlier by the municipal council.⁶²

That the political resentment toward the government's interference in municipal politics and Wolff's supporters' antisemitism aimed at the leadership of the FTC were more decisive than all

⁵⁴See *Az Ujság*, 23 Sept. 1924, 2; and *Világ*, 23 Sept. 1924, 4.

⁵⁵"Terepszemle és seregszemle az Üllői-uti sporttelepen" [Location and troops' review at the Üllői Avenue sports arena], *Nemzeti Sport*, 27 Sept. 1924, 3.

⁵⁶*Fővárosi Közlöny*, 30 Sept. 1924, 822.

⁵⁷"Mégse lesz bikaviadal" [There will be no bullfights], *Magyarország*, 26 Sept. 1924, 4.

⁵⁸"Albertfalvára költözik a bikaviadal" [The bullfights move to Albertfalva], *Világ*, 30 Sept. 1924, 8.

⁵⁹"Csütörtökön újból foglalkozik a tanács a bikaviadalok ügyével. Mód van a revízióra" [The council looks at the issue of the bullfights again on Thursday: There is room for revision], *Az Ujság*, 1 Oct. 1924, 9.

⁶⁰"Harmadszor sem engedték meg a bikaviadalt" [The bullfights weren't allowed for the third time], *Budapesti Hírlap*, 3 Oct. 1924, 5.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*

the administrative and moral objections previously raised against the bullfights was confirmed in a notice published by the liberal press organ *Az Ujság*. In it, another anonymous journalist interviewed one of the FTC leaders, according to whom Sziebert lost his battle with Sipőcz because he stubbornly maintained that “it was never the social condition or religious belonging of [the club’s] members but only the cause of sport that the FTC cared about.” As Sziebert emphatically pointed out, “Among our members, football players, and champions, there are Christians and Jews alike, and both had always entertained the best relations and served with the best of their abilities the cause of Hungarian sport.”⁶³ For a mayor such as Sipőcz, known for his strong antisemitic stance, such arguments had no purchase, and they ultimately sank the bullfights’ prospects in the Hungarian capital.⁶⁴ Even a deputation of thirty Spanish toreadors who had been languishing in Budapest since the end of September, and who managed to make it to his office several days later (decked in their national costumes) to present the corrida to him as an example of the blossoming Spanish-Hungarian friendship that required his support, could not change his mind.⁶⁵ An offer from their part—made in another meeting with the mayor the following day—to organize the bullfights for only a restricted audience as a philanthropic fundraising event for the Budapest poor, also failed to trigger Sipőcz’s interest.⁶⁶ The same fate befell a plea from the Budapest Tanners and Saddle Makers Association, which had been offered a large contract for making soccer balls by the Italian and Spanish investors organizing the bullfights, an offer that—according to the association—would have enabled it to reduce unemployment among its members and deliver to the police the belts that had previously been ordered from them but could not yet be made due to the lack of appropriate funds.⁶⁷ Sipőcz stood firm and rejected every attempt to tease out a different outcome. Even a plea, supported by both the Spanish and the Italian embassies in Budapest, presented to Interior Minister Iván Rakovszky to overturn Sipőcz’s decision failed to produce the expected result.⁶⁸ Thus, after three weeks of political wrangling, the bullfights were banned from taking place in Budapest.

The Bullfights Move to Újpest

While the group of Spanish and Italian investors threatened to sue the FTC for loss of revenue,⁶⁹ they also looked for other options. By the evening of the FTC’s failed meeting with Mayor Sipőcz, they found more willing partners for a deal in another football club official, János Szűcs, the president of the UTE (Újpesti Torna Egyesület—Újpest Gymnastic Association) and Albert Semsey, the mayor of Újpest, a separately administered town adjacent to the

⁶³“Nem kérkedett az FTC azzal, hogy nincsenek zsidó tagjai” [The FTC did not brag that it does not have Jewish members], *Az Ujság*, 3 Oct. 1924, 2.

⁶⁴“Az FTC gazdájának mai támadó beszéde miatt nem támogatta Sipőcz polgármester az FTC kérését” [It was because of the FTC proprietor’s offensive speech that Mayor Sipőcz did not support the FTC’s supplication], *Magyarország*, 3 Oct. 1924, 4.

⁶⁵“Harminc spanyol Sipőcz előtt” [Thirty Spaniards before Sipőcz], *Friss Ujság*, 8 Oct. 1924, 2.

⁶⁶“Jótevény célra sem engedélyezik a bikaviadalokat” [The bullfights are not permitted even for philanthropic purposes], *Az Est*, 9 Oct. 1924, 4.

⁶⁷“Az újpesti Stadionba szeretnék már vinni a bikaviadalokat” [There is a desire to take the bullfights to the Újpest stadium], *Magyarország*, 3 Oct. 1924, 4.

⁶⁸“Végleg meghiúsulnak a bikaviadalok” [The bullfights fail for good], *Az Ujság*, 4 Oct. 1924, 4.

⁶⁹“Megindulnak a kártérítési pörök” [Compensation suits are started], *Az Ujság*, 3 Oct. 1924, 2.

northeastern administrative boundaries of Budapest.⁷⁰ On account of the more sympathetic attitude of these officials, a decision to dismantle the bullfight arena that had been built in the Üllői Avenue stadium and rebuild it in the UTE's stadium in Újpest was immediately taken into consideration.⁷¹ The negotiations between the Spanish and Italian investors and Újpest officials were ultimately successful, and by 11 October an agreement was reached to organize three corridas in Újpest.⁷² In spite of concerns voiced by representatives of the Hungarian Football Association against messing up the football season's schedule, the bullfights were rescheduled to take place in the UTE stadium on 18, 19, and 26 October.⁷³ In preparation for the corrida, the stadium's turf field was covered along a circular perimeter with four inches (ten cm) of sand, surrounded by a double ring of wooden planks.⁷⁴

Although it lost the battle with the municipality, the Bethlen government confirmed once again its public support for the bullfights. As the date of the first Újpest corrida was set for Saturday, 18 October, rumors began to circulate that both Regent Horthy and Archduke Joseph would attend the event.⁷⁵ It was only left-wing deputies in Újpest's municipal council who berated the fact that after the national and Christian "course-setting capital city had denied" the bullfights to take place in Budapest, "they were permitted by the liberal [mayor of] Újpest."⁷⁶ In spite of their forecast that, due to the grim economic situation of the Hungarian capital, there were only very few people who could afford paying for the bullfights, the public's interest in the corrida seemed to heighten. A day before the bullfights' opening, newspapers reported that, despite their high prices, more than half of the tickets had already been sold.⁷⁷

However, on 18 October 1924 the number of spectators in the UTE's sports facility was lower than expected. According to one estimate, there were about two thousand paying spectators in the stadium's seats and about four thousand nonpaying ones standing on the hill slopes and flat factory roofs overlooking the field. The latter were mostly workers and youth from Újpest who could not afford the high ticket prices.⁷⁸ Another source estimated there were about fifteen hundred ticket holders present,⁷⁹ with the author of the higher estimate also conceding that overall there were less people in the stadium than there would be at a football game of some importance. According to the latter eyewitness, "[O]n the streetcars [connecting Budapest to Újpest] there was neither overcrowding nor pushing, cars did not stir sand clouds behind them, one didn't have to wait at the cash turnstiles, and no one's place was taken by someone else."⁸⁰

Although many of the regular customers of overpriced events in Budapest were absent, there were many well-known actors and actresses in the audience. The crowning of the event was the

⁷⁰Today Újpest is a district of Budapest, having been integrated in the city in 1950.

⁷¹"Újpesten lesznek a bikaviadalok" [The bullfights will take place in Újpest], *Az Ujság*, 3 Oct. 1924, 2.

⁷²"Az összezsugorodott bikaviadal" [The shrunken bullfights], *Friss Ujság*, 11 Oct. 1924, 2.

⁷³See *Nemzeti Sport*, 8 Oct. 1924, 2.

⁷⁴"Jövő csütörtökön, szombaton és vasárnapon bikaviadalok lesznek Újpesten" [There will be bullfights in Újpest on Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday], *Az Est*, 11 Oct. 1924, 10.

⁷⁵"Bikaviadalok Újpesten" [Bullfights in Újpest], *Az Est*, 18 Oct. 1924, 8.

⁷⁶"A munkásosztály a bikaviadalok ellen. Újpest város közgyűlése" [The working class against the bullfights: The general meeting of Újpest municipality], *Népszava*, 16 Oct. 1924, 8.

⁷⁷Tickets were sold for prices between fifty thousand and three hundred thousand crowns. See *Nemzeti Sport*, 18 Oct. 1924, 1; and "Bikaviadalok Újpesten" [Bullfights in Újpest], *Az Est*, 18 Oct. 1924, 8.

⁷⁸Sándor Lestyán, "Bika viadal ... nem volt diadal" [The bullfights ... were not a success], *Az Ujság*, 19 Oct. 1924, 5.

⁷⁹"A főváros közönségét nem érdekli a bikaviadal" [The public of the capital is not interested in the bullfights], *Szózat*, 19 Oct. 1924, 12.

⁸⁰Lestyán, "Bika viadal," 5.

presence of His Royal Highness Archduke Joseph⁸¹ together with his wife, Princess Augusta. In addition to Archduke Joseph's attendance, the official character of the corrida was also emphasized by the fact that a "military band played [the Hungarian] national anthem.... After which it was the turn of the Spanish anthem." As one reporter wrote: "Spectators listen to both in a standing position. On the railings of the stadium it is the flags of different European nations that fly in the wind, together with the star-spangled banner of the United States. [In addition,] on the [ring's wooden] fence there are small Hungarian, Spanish, and Italian flags that [also] flutter."⁸²

Another factor adding to the international character of the event was the presence of two Spanish ladies, dressed in black and white robes, respectively, complete with headdresses, both ornately adorned in their national style, who (through the exotic character of their outfits) stole the show and turned themselves into another highlight of the event.⁸³

Unlike in the case of the 1904 corrida, when the main matador, Pouly *fls*, came from southern France, the 1924 Újpest event sported well-known Spanish bullfighters. According to a notice that had appeared earlier in the Budapest press, among them were Pedro Basauri, a.k.a. Pedrucho (also referred to as Asin Pedrucho) as *gran espada*,⁸⁴ Ramon Alegre Boltanes (horse-mounted toreador), Francisco Lopez Parejito (the *espada* who distinguished himself in Rome in 1923 under the eyes of Mussolini), Victor Jouve (*saltador*), and Aguilino Morina Catalino (another toreador). They were joined by two dozen Spanish *picadors*, *banderilleros*, and bullfight helpers.⁸⁵ As the quotation at the beginning of this article suggests, their colorful pageant was met with initial enthusiasm. The spectators liked the encounter between the toreadors and the first bull. They applauded when the *saltador* used a long pole to lift himself and jump across the bull, and they also liked it when another bullfighter elegantly avoided the bull's horns. However, the repetition of these tricks with other bulls caused a loss of momentum. Many spectators became bored. There was another swell in interest when

⁸¹The direct descendant of a branch of the Habsburgs whose ancestors had served in the early to mid-nineteenth century as the monarch's deputies (*nádor*) in Hungary. Because of Hungarian prime minister István Tisza's opposition, Archduke Joseph narrowly missed the opportunity to take up the role of Hungary's *nádor* at Emperor Charles's coronation as Hungarian king in 1916. During World War I he served as commander of the Habsburg army, initially on the Eastern Front and, close to the war's end, on the Italian front. After the collapse of the Habsburg military he became King Charles's official representative in Hungary, in which capacity he appointed Count Mihály Károlyi as prime minister of the first postwar Hungarian government. After the passing of power by Károlyi in March 1919 to Kun's Communist government, he withdrew from politics and was kept under surveillance. With the victory of right-wing forces over the Communists in the summer of 1919, Joseph retook the role of being the representative of the former king around Horthy. Although he openly sympathized with the monarchist cause, after Charles IV's failed attempts in 1922 and 1923 to retake the Hungarian throne, he continued to reside in Hungary and play a prominent role at *mondain* events in Budapest. In 1927 he became a hereditary member of the upper House of the Hungarian Parliament.

⁸²See Lestyán, "Bika viadal," 5.

⁸³See *ibid.* According to a different report, one of these ladies was the wife of the Spanish ambassador in Budapest, see István Lázár, "Vörös posztó az újpesti porondon" [Red cloth in the Újpest arena], *Pesti Hírlap*, 19 Oct. 1924, 4.

⁸⁴Pedro Basauri Paguaga, a.k.a. Pedrucho (1893–1973), was born in Eibar, Basque country. He apprenticed as a toreador in Barcelona where he debuted in the ring as a matador for the first time in 1914. See Alberto López Echevarrieta, "Pedrucho, ciné y toros," *Bilbao*, 2007, 42, accessed 2 Feb. 2019, <http://www.bilbao.eus/bld/bitstream/handle/123456789/17234/pag42.pdf?sequence=1>; Tomas Orts-Ramos, *Pedrucho de Éibar: Pedro Basauri Paguaga* (Barcelona, 1927; Madrid, 2014).

⁸⁵"A bikaviadorok névsora" [The names of the toreadors], *Az Ujság*, 1 Oct. 1924, 9. In a Spanish corrida the *gran espada* is the pedestrian toreador (a.k.a. the matador) who fights and kills the bull; the *picadors* are horse-mounted toreadors who harass the bull with their lances; the *banderilleros* stick decorated darts into the backs of the bulls; and the *saltadors* are acrobats who use a long wooden pole to perform daring somersaults over the bulls.

the *banderilleros* started “to stick paper flower–decorated sharp darts (piques) in the bulls’ backs,”⁸⁶ but that subsided soon as well. Even the release of white pigeons in the air as one *banderillero* piqued another bull caused little excitement. However, there was again heightened interest among spectators as the second bull in pursuit of one of its tormentors charged the fence surrounding the arena, climbing it and falling into the narrow corridor between the circular wooden planks that surrounded it. The bull wreaked havoc among the bullfight helpers and attendants, who quickly fled from him. After this incident, one of the attendants didn’t dare return to his prior spot.

The third bull let into the arena was met by a mounted *picador*. He stabbed the bull with another flowered dart, from which a pigeon carrying a long piece of bunting flew. This made many people smile, but also to think, according to our reporter, of “magic tricks performed on an Orpheum’s stage.”⁸⁷ Per the Spanish tradition, the *picador* turned toward the stands and offered his broken dart to the elder of the Spanish ladies, and while making a slight bowing movement from “his jumping horse” toward her, he offered another pique to a young blonde Hungarian girl watching him from the stands, who suddenly found herself the center of everyone’s attention. The chasing of the fourth bull caused little interest among spectators, who grew increasingly detached from what was going on in the arena. The archduke and his wife, however, stayed until the very end of the show, when the “toreadors, picadors, [both] pedestrian and horse mounted . . . said farewell with stage-like bows” to everyone in the stands.⁸⁸ When the spectacle was over the lingering feeling was one of general disappointment:

[A well-known] actor and a famous opera singer left the stands holding each other’s arms and scolding the organizers for having swindled them. A cross-eyed and fat market hall butcher got disappointedly into his car; he was also angry at the organizers. . . . The only person to take advantage of the event for his own clever advertising was the owner of the Stadium restaurant.

He was standing in front of his establishment with his full staff, engaging with them in a yelling match to play out the following dialogue in front of the departing spectators:

“Want to see a bit of bull’s blood?”

“Yes.”

“Then come in, because you can see and drink here the finest and noblest *egri* bull’s blood that you can get.”⁸⁹

The public’s dislike of the bullfights was a trope reiterated in other newspaper reports. While one reporter tried to save the event’s face by emphasizing that at the end of the bullfights spectators stood up one more time to listen to the Hungarian and Spanish anthems, thus enabling the “souls of the Hungarian and Spanish nations to embrace each other,”⁹⁰ another one admitted that members of “the audience were expecting more than just acrobatics for their high-priced tickets, and were therefore a bit disappointed when they left.”⁹¹ One journalist was even more outspoken, calling the *corrida* a “pathetic and low-quality show

⁸⁶Lestyán, “Bika viadal,” 5.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹See Ibid. *Egri bull’s blood* (*Egri bikavér*) is a famous Hungarian red wine produced in the wineries of Eger, about sixty miles east of Budapest.

⁹⁰Lázár, “Vörös posztó,” 4.

⁹¹“A főváros közönségét nem érdekli a bikaviadal” [The public of the capital is not interested in the bullfights], *Szózat*, 19 Oct. 1924, 24.

(*kutya-komédia*.)” Because of this, there was a sense that the bullfights would produce only a “pitiable [financial] outcome” for their organizers.⁹²

Despite these woeful predictions and complaints, the second corrida, held on Sunday, 19 October, got better press. While one notice mentioned the public’s enthusiasm in greeting the toreadors,⁹³ another highlighted their delight in watching their “sportsmanlike accomplishments.”⁹⁴ In conjunction with these praises, the Spanish bullfights continued to be seen through the lenses of municipal politics, except that this time—together with football as their distant cousin—they were presented as being more inspirational than domestic political infighting. One journalist wrote in this regard:

Last Sunday was the day of the bullfights. Football competition in Budapest and bullfights in Újpest, horse races also in the capital, while in the countryside political meetings; among which the *fajvedők* (race defenders’) flag unfurling ceremony in Kecskemét was the most prone to violence, with Count Apponyi’s speech in Jászberény not lacking in combativeness either.

Interest is split between the intellectual and physical sports, but it is indubitable that both the bullfights and the football had many more spectators than the number of those who expressed interest in political movements. Although at the sport competitions there was less excitement, passions were kept more under control and the number of wounded was lower than at the Kecskemét flag unfurling, a political sport in which many were wounded by the stabbing horns of words. Moreover, there was even such a catastrophe as that of Count István Bethlen and his party leaving the arena having been stabbed from all sides. What was reassuring though, was that this deadly stabbing, just like at the bullfights in Újpest, was only metaphorical.⁹⁵

As it turned out, this later metaphorical comparison between the fighting fortunes of premier Bethlen (attacked by radical right-wingers and left-wingers alike) and those of the toreadors was inaccurate because at the Sunday bullfights attended by ten thousand spectators in Újpest (almost double the number of those who watched it the day before)⁹⁶ there was bloodletting. Contrary to spectators’ expectations, however, it wasn’t the bulls that were stabbed at the event but two toreadors. Both Pedrucho, the *espada*, and toreador Borro suffered injuries, their calves and ankles gored by the bulls’ horns. A medical team immediately bandaged their wounds, which ultimately proved to be minor,⁹⁷ and they were able to return to the arena.⁹⁸ Their courage drew applause from the spectators. Although the bulls could not be killed, the bullfighters’ own bloodletting had warmed up the audience to their productions, a change in mood that also made the Spaniards feel more at ease in the arena.⁹⁹ According to one commentator, the Sunday bullfights were extremely pleasurable, continuously suspenseful, enabling spectators to get a much better idea of what a real bullfight entailed than they had been able to on Saturday.¹⁰⁰

⁹²“Lecsúszott a bikaviadal” [Interest in the bullfights is lost], *Friss Ujság*, 19 Oct. 1924, 6.

⁹³“A budapesti bikaviadalok” [The Budapest bullfights], *Ellenzék*, 25 Oct. 1924, 2.

⁹⁴“Megkezdődtek a bikaviadalok Budapesten” [The bullfights have started in Budapest], *Ellenzék*, 22 Oct. 1924, 7.

⁹⁵“Viadalok” [Fights], *Új Barázda*, 21 Oct. 1921, 1.

⁹⁶“Élvezetes és izgalmas volt a második bikaviadal” [The second bullfight was pleasant and suspenseful], *Az Ujság*, 21 Oct. 1924, 9.

⁹⁷“Két toreádor megsérült” [Two toreadors were wounded], *Világ*, 21 Oct. 1924, 11.

⁹⁸“Baleset a bikaviadalon” [Accident at the bullfights], *Budapesti Hírlap*, 21 Oct. 1924, 8.

⁹⁹“Komoly baleset volt tegnapi a bikaviadalon” [Yesterday there was a serious accident at the bullfights], *Az Est*, 21 Oct. 1924, 5.

¹⁰⁰See “Élvezetes és izgalmas volt a második bikaviadal” [The second bullfight was pleasant and suspenseful], *Az Ujság*, 21 Oct. 1924, 9.

Spurred by this favorable development, the bullfight organizers pushed on. To increase the size of the audience, the third bullfight, held on Sunday, 26 October, was advertised for a considerably lower ticket price.¹⁰¹ Prior to taking place, however, there were two important developments. Just a few days before the event, the financial comptroller of greater Budapest (which included the city of Újpest) visited the Spanish impresario and the bullfighters to request the immediate payment of the entertainment tax levied from the first two bullfights' revenues. Referring to the considerable losses that they already had incurred due to the bullfights' move from Budapest to Újpest, the organizers refused to pay. The bullfighters also joined the fray by vociferously protesting against such an unjust claim. In response, the next day they were visited in the UTE stadium by police officers and other officials, who seized the amount of 125 million crowns that they had collected during the first two bullfights and took the money with them to the Újpest financial office.¹⁰² The organizers tried to contact different local officials for help but no one was available. They hired a lawyer and even sent a delegation to Hungarian minister of finance János Búd. Fortunately, Búd was willing to help, and on account that the organizers had already lost two billion crowns by not being able to hold the event in Budapest, he ordered the Újpest authorities to return the money (minus the bullfight tax) to them.¹⁰³

Two days before the third corrida, the UTE arena also witnessed an unplanned bullfight that highlighted the fact that, after all, the Spanish toreadors were much more skilled at handling the bulls than the locals. The profit-seeking organizers sold the eight bulls that were used for the first two bullfights to local butchers. The latter had sent a group of their apprentices to take the bulls to the Újpest slaughterhouse. However, upon trying to tie the bulls, the apprentices failed. "The bulls started to run in a circular fashion in the arena without allowing the apprentices to come near them. If one of them tried to get close, they charged at him. One of the apprentices fell and almost got into a critical situation with a bull trying to stab him. However, two other apprentices grabbed the person on the ground and pulled him away from the charging bull."¹⁰⁴

The apprentices were joined in the wild pursuit by several reinforcements sent in from the nearby slaughterhouse. However, even their joined efforts proved to be useless. The apprentices chased the bulls for hours throughout the afternoon, only catching one in the end. "They tied this one up and pulled him to the nearby slaughterhouse, but they weren't able to handle the other seven bulls, which were left to spend the night in the arena. It was only next day around noon that they were able to complete their job."¹⁰⁵

Although eight bulls were turned into sausage by the end of that day, there were still seven unsold ones left to fight the toreadors. The cluelessness of the Hungarian butcher boys in reining in the bulls was good advertisement for the skills of the Spanish toreros. Therefore, on Sunday,

¹⁰¹See the advertisement in "Bikaviadal Újpesten az újpesti Stadionban (UTE-pályán)" [Bullfights in Újpest on the UTE's stadium], *Az Újság*, 24 Oct. 1924, 14.

¹⁰²Due to the high inflation that the Hungarian crown (*korona*) experienced during this period against the dollar and other currencies such as the Swiss franc. See János Botos, "A fizetőeszköz inflációja az első világháború alatt és után, 1914–1924" [The currency's inflation during and after World War I, 1914–1924], *Múltunk* no. 3 (2015): 70–138, esp. 130. The 125 million crowns were worth the equivalent of about sixteen thousand dollars in 1924, or approximately two hundred thousand dollars today.

¹⁰³"Torreadorok győzelmes harca a vigalmi adó ellen" [The toreadors' successful fight against the entertainment tax], *Világ*, 26 Oct. 1924, 5–6.

¹⁰⁴"Péntek délutántól szombat délig kínlottak újpesti mészáros legények nyolc spanyol bika megfékezésével [Eight butcher apprentices have struggled from Friday afternoon to Saturday morning to stop eight Spanish bulls]," *Magyarország*, 26 Oct. 1924, 4.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

26 October, the wounded Pedrucho was ready to engage the bulls in a new fight and capture again the sympathy of the public. However, as soon as the last corrida started, he fell and one of the bulls' horns pierced his arm. His wound was immediately bandaged and Pedrucho decided to continue the fight amidst the "frantic applause of the public."¹⁰⁶

Despite the audience warming up to the bravery of the Spanish matador, however, the bullfights ended with mixed results. Although after the end of the third corrida the toreadors celebrated the end of their stay in Budapest at the Ritz Hotel, where most had been housed throughout their stay and where they "drank close to 100 bottles of champagne,"¹⁰⁷ their cheerfulness was not shared by their impresario. According to one estimate, he had lost more than 500,000 Italian liras by having been denied the opportunity to organize the bullfights in the Ullői Avenue stadium.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, even if they were ultimately organized in Újpest and several thousand spectators watched them there, the bullfights did not turn into the big attraction and financial success that Consuelo Estrella had hoped they would become when he brought the corrida to Budapest.

Spanish-Hungarian Cultural Transfers and the Bullfights' Failure to Catch On in Budapest

From a broader perspective, the Újpest bullfights were not just the outcome of political infighting between different right-wing groups that led to financial loss for the Spanish-Italian investors but also a renewed attempt to enable a Spanish-Hungarian cultural transfer in the field of Budapest popular culture. The 1924 corrida was indeed the second time when a "contact zone" allowing for cultural negotiations was established between Budapest as a host context and a Spanish cultural import.¹⁰⁹ The 1924 bullfights were even more significant from the perspective of Spanish-Hungarian cultural exchanges than those that the city had hosted before because, unlike in 1904 when the "Spanish" bullfighters were from Southern France (and were thus criticized by locals for their lack of authenticity), the corridas of 1924 were performed by authentic Spanish toreadors. Significantly, just as in the case of that prior cultural exchange, the 1924 bullfights brought forth questions about the relationship between transnational and national culture in Budapest. Were they bridgeable, or irredeemable strangers to each other? And if the latter, should the former be kept at bay?

Based on the Hungarian government's permit for the bullfights in 1924, the easy answer to such questions is that, if political expediency required it, transnational popular culture was welcome in Budapest. The fact that both Spain and Italy, two countries that had embarked on an authoritarian path, supported the bullfights¹¹⁰ facilitated their support by the Bethlen government that wanted to actively join a right-wing transnational network of ideas, practices, and people—a network that also included newly embraced mass leisure

¹⁰⁶"Ötszázezer líra deficittel zárultak a budapesti bikaviadalok" [The Budapest bullfights have ended with a deficit of five hundred thousand liras], *Az Ujság*, 28 Oct. 1924, 5.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹For the concept of "contact zone" defined as a "space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations," see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Acculturation* (New York, 1992), 8.

¹¹⁰The Spanish-Italian connection by way of Fascism was also highlighted in an article about the Rome bullfights; according to its author, the cultivation of martial attributes by Mussolini allowed for the internationalization of a practice that up to then was confined to the borders of Spain; see "Bikaviadal" [Bullfights], *Világ*, 16 May 1923, 1.

practices.¹¹¹ Taking cue from this, many Hungarian journalists were eager to offer sympathetic portrayals of the toreadors. They described their specific habits and interviewed the main protagonists of the Újpest bullfights on several occasions. At a time when Hungary had embarked on a national Christian course, with religion being politically instrumentalized,¹¹² these journalists wanted to cultivate empathy for the Spanish guests by emphasizing that—despite making big money—the toreadors contributed prolifically to religious philanthropy. As one of them wrote: “[The toreadors] spend most of their money to support religious causes. They are extremely religious, devout Catholics, and very superstitious; each of them has a patron saint and many cabalas. They are praying twice every day. In the Újpest stadium a small wooden chapel was especially built for them, where they ardently pray before the bullfights.”¹¹³

At the same time, journalists admitted that there was a gap of understanding between the public and the toreadors that had to be overcome. They emphasized that while the Hungarian spectators found the toreadors’ productions boring, the toreadors complained that what they missed during their first bullfight, for instance, was a “rapturous, yelling public in a hot and fiery arena, with women who would throw flowers and kisses at them.” Instead, as they lamented, they had found only “empty stands and a cold wind” blowing over an arena in which spectators did not applaud when they “risked their lives.” How different this was from Spain where “the stands were built to directly overlook the arena”; “the toreador becomes one with his public”; and “the public rages in delight [at their deeds], where one gets drunk in storms of applause, and where one gets to dare everything encouraged by the smiles of women.”¹¹⁴

The toreadors expected to be met not only by welcoming officials but also by a public sympathetic to the Spanish *corrida*. Radical right-wingers, in their domestic squabbles with the government, and a set of public commentators, however, embraced an older mix of conservative, religious, and animal welfare views that presented the bullfights as a blood sport mired in a barbaric past, a difference in perception that obstructed comprehension between toreadors and their public. As descriptions of the three Újpest bullfights in various Hungarian newspapers reveal, many commentators disliked the *corrida* because of their antiquated understanding of the nature and meaning of the Spanish bullfights. As in the case of the opponents of the 1904 bullfights, they judged the *corrida* to be a barbaric sport with roots in Roman gladiator fights, which had a long tradition in and was peculiar to Spain, illustrating the backwardness of the Spaniards.¹¹⁵ However, by reiterating such condemnatory views, interwar critics of the bullfights failed to acknowledge that the *corrida* experienced a continuous growth and expansion in Spain during the half-century between the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. According to Adrian Shubert, a scholar of the history of bullfighting in Spain:

[T]he period beginning around 1870 was one of dramatic expansion: The number of bullfights increased, and the price of fighting bulls and the fees bullfighters commanded both skyrocketed.

¹¹¹On the trans-border connections between different Fascist and authoritarian regimes during the interwar period, see Arnd Bauerkämper, “Transnational Fascism: Cross-Border Relations between Regimes and Movements in Europe, 1922–1939,” *East Central Europe* 37, nos. 2–3 (2010): 214–46.

¹¹²See Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism, 1890–1945* (Ithaca, 2006).

¹¹³Sándor Lestyán, “Látogatás a spanyol torreadoroknál a Dunapalotában” [A visit to the Spanish toreadors in the Duna Palace], *Az Újság*, 25 Oct. 1924, 3.

¹¹⁴“A budapesti bikaviadalok: Espadák panaszkodnak a magyar közönségre” [Budapest bullfights: *Espadas* complain about the Hungarian public], *Ellenzék*, 25 Oct. 1924, 2.

¹¹⁵Dr. Zsigmond Falk, “Bikaviadalok” [Bullfights], *Ország-Világ*, 26 Oct. 1924, 316–17.

But this was expansion from a solid and longstanding base: the corrida had existed as a commercialized, spectator entertainment at least a full century before the period that [historians] identify as the beginning of commercialized leisure. In this sense, [as Shubert argues], the bullfight that had emerged in the eighteenth century was not archaic and atavistic but fully modern. From the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, the bullfight was one of the most modern things in Spain and a herald of the future of a wider world.¹¹⁶

The modernity of the corrida was further proven by its commercially minded association with world's fairs, athletic competitions, and silent movies.¹¹⁷ For instance, before going to Rome and Budapest, Pedrucho had played in four tauromachic movies that were filmed in Spain.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the early 1900s and the 1920s were times when Spanish bullfighters and show business impresarios made a bid to insert the corrida into the transnational popular culture flows that made urban popular cultures increasingly global through constant cultural transfers from other regions of the world. The hype and success that football, athletic competitions, air shows, the cakewalk, the tango, cabaret acts, jazz music, the foxtrot, and the Charleston encountered in Central European cities as diverse as Berlin, Vienna, and Cracow¹¹⁹ were living proof of this intense cultural exchange—not just for inhabitants of Budapest but for Spanish people as well. However, unlike in the case of those types of mass entertainment whose transnational circulation was more successful because they had either ancient Greek, working-class, industrial, subcultural, or African American origins that made them less associated with a modern national identity, the perception of the corrida in Budapest continued to be weighed down by the connection that was forged in the nineteenth century between bullfights and a nation-state like Spain. Throughout the nineteenth century, travelers to Spain drew a direct link between the barbarity of the bullfights and Spain falling behind the modern civilized world. Moreover, powerful animal rights groups that condemned the killing of the bulls emerged everywhere in Europe. As a result, civil and religious groups in Hungary—such as the Physical Education Council, the Union of Roman Catholic Teachers, and the Vegetarian Association—also condemned the import of the Spanish corrida to Budapest in 1924.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶Adrian Shubert, *Death and Money in the Afternoon: A History of the Spanish Bullfight* (Oxford, 1999), 14–15.

¹¹⁷For a Hungarian example discussing the commercial nature and the popular appeal of the Spanish bullfights, see Falk, “Bikaviadalok.” The difference between Falk’s and Shubert’s interpretations is that while for the latter the early commercialization of the bullfights represents an important episode in the history of transnational mass leisure, for Falk it was something disturbing and worrisome.

¹¹⁸They were, in order of their production, *Pobres niños* (1921), *Flor de España, la historia de un torero* (1921), *Militona, la tragedia de un torero* (1922), and *Pedrucho* (1922), see López Echevarrieta, “Pedrucho, ciné y toros.”

¹¹⁹On the encounter between British and Austrian teams on Viennese football fields in the first decade of the twentieth century see Roman Horak, “Austrification as Modernization: Changes in Viennese Football Culture,” in *Game without Frontiers: Football, Identity and Modernity*, eds. Richard Giulianotti and John Williams (London, 1994), 47–71; for a discussion of the turning of football into Viennese popular culture see Roman Horak and Wolfgang Maderthaner, *Mehr als ein Spiel: Fussball und populäre Kulturen im Wien der Moderne* (Vienna, 1997). For cakewalk’s early impact on turn-of-the-century Vienna see especially the essays by James Deaville, “African-American Entertainers in *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna: Austrian Identity, Viennese Modernism and Black Success,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 3, no. 1 (2006): 89–102; and “Cakewalk contra Walzer: Negotiating Modernity and Identity in *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna’s Dance Floors,” in *Musik in der Moderne*, eds. Federico Celestini, Gregor Kokorz, and Julian Johnson (Cologne, 2011), 55–68; while for Cracow’s encounter with European modernity, including various types of global popular culture, see Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (De Kalb, 2010).

¹²⁰See “A bika viadal-ügy újabb fejleményei” [Newest developments in the bullfights business], *Friss Ujság*, 4 Oct. 1924, 2; “A bikaviadalok rendezősége megfellebbezi a főváros elutasító határozatait” [The organizers of the bullfights appeal against the dismissive decision of the municipality], *Szózat*, 27 Sept. 1924, 7.

However, coming into contact with bullfights as a form of modern mass entertainment that played an important role in the circulation of transnational popular culture (like other commercialized leisure sites and cultural forms, such as the variety theater, the circus, and the music hall) was disturbing for some Budapest audiences. Since the turn of the century, Magyar nationalists saw modernity as an international solvent that corroded national traditions, a worldview that was expressed by radical right-wingers and culturally conservative commentators alike in spite of the recent transnational exchanges spurred by the right-wing transnational networks established between authoritarian regimes during the interwar period. Because of such fears, while certain foreign cultural imports such as football, operetta, and film could pass muster and be appropriated locally, others could not pass through the nationalist sieve.

Yet despite the *corrida*'s sinking on the rocks of domestic political infighting and cultural conservatism in Hungary, bullfights continued to interest Budapesters. While by the end of October all the toreadors had left the Hungarian capital for Cairo, Egypt—the next stop on their tour¹²¹—a brief spell of their exploits continued to linger on in the city. In October 1924, a cabaret couplet titled “I was at the bullfights in spite of it!” was sung by Ilona Kökény as part of the Lujza Blaha Theater’s new program.¹²² Photographs of the Újpest bullfights were also published in *Színházi Élet*, a theater weekly in Budapest.¹²³ A newsreel documentary was shown in Budapest movie theaters during the time the bullfights took place in Újpest and for several weeks after they were over.¹²⁴ A mid-December article published in *Esti Kurír* highlighted the fact that at the grand opening of an exhibition of pupils from the Hungarian Royal School of Fine Arts visitors could see, among other art displays, the promising paintings of Aurél Emőd and Lajos Bicsérdy, whose subject was the Újpest bullfights.¹²⁵ The bullfights were also reexamined from the perspective of reports about a new Metro-Goldwyn production with the title *Bandolero*, filmed at the end of 1924 on location in Spain. However, in the cross-examination between the two productions, the projected film, which included a real *corrida*, beat out the Újpest bullfights because the former, which recorded the death of a toreador and deadly wounding of another—per the film critic’s desire for Spanish authenticity—was deemed more appealing to audiences worldwide than what people were able to see in Budapest.¹²⁶

Four years after their conclusion, the bullfights reemerged in the Budapest press as a result of the FTC’s participation in a football tournament in Port Said, Egypt. Prior to their game, while strolling in the city and wondering about the lack of advertising for their game, members of the team could not believe their eyes when they saw a forthcoming bullfight advertised everywhere on posters hanging on Port Said’s buildings. The poster displayed the image of a bullfighter that was initially printed for the event that was supposed to take place in 1924 in their own stadium

¹²¹Although it is not clear whether the 1924 Cairo bullfights were more or less successful than those held in Budapest, thirty years later, the same Pedrucho, together with a Greek impresario, took the *corrida* once again to the Middle East, organizing several bullfights in Cairo, Alexandria, Beirut, Istanbul, and Damascus as part of the Francoist regime’s efforts to cultivate friendship with the Arab countries of the region by way of acquainting them with Spanish cultural products. For more on this, see Irene González González, “La ‘hermandad hispano-árabe’ en la política cultural del franquismo (1936–1956),” *Anales de Historia Contemporánea* 23 (2007): 183–97.

¹²²See *Színházi Élet*, no. 41, 1924, 20.

¹²³See *Színházi Élet*, no. 43, 1924, 77.

¹²⁴“Új műsor az Olympiában” [New program at the Olympia], *Magyarország*, 25 Oct. 1924, 12.

¹²⁵“Művészet: Fiatalok—Az Országos Magyar Királyi Képzőművészeti Főiskola kiállítása [Art: The Young—The Exhibition of the National and Royal Hungarian College of Fine Arts], *Esti Kurír*, 19 Dec. 1924, 8.

¹²⁶“Ez nem olyan mint az újpesti bikaviadal” [This is not like the Pest bullfights], *Színházi Élet*, no. 48, 1924, 49.

in Budapest!¹²⁷ By that year, however, the memory of the 1924 event was fading from public consciousness; people writing about Spanish bullfights started to make references again to the public impact of Pouly *fiis*' 1904 exploits rather than those of Pedrucho that took place in the city just four years before.¹²⁸

Fast-forward forty years and the memory of what happened in 1924 becomes even more blurred and less accurate in the few available recollections of the event. By 1969, although a sports writer correctly identified 1924 as the year when Spanish bullfights took place in Budapest, he did not elaborate any more on their reception but saw it more as an episode in the FTC's history—despite that the *corrida* had taken place in the UTE's stadium—that should embolden the players to behave like bulls in their game against the visiting United Leeds football team.¹²⁹ More than a decade later, the idea of organizing bullfights again in Budapest was revived by Pál Schmitt, the director of Hungary's National Stadium. He toyed with the idea of including a *corrida* together with a rodeo and cockfights in the celebratory program of the thirtieth anniversary of building the sports facility. However, commentators at the time condemned Schmitt's plan on account that, as one sportswriter put it, “the Hungarian people hate bullfights, especially because they lack fair play. It is not equal sides that confront each other, but the bulls are brought into a disadvantageous situation through a variety of tricks.” Moreover, as required by the ideological expectations of the socialist times when the article was published, the same commentator pointed out that such an undertaking would be an indignity against those who built the stadium with their sweat because the bullfights would taint the stadium's anniversary with their “cruel and bloody fair-like show,” which is so foreign to the mindset of Hungarian people.¹³⁰

Conclusion

Be it during the capitalist or the communist period, the bullfight as a component of a highly commercialized transnational popular culture spreading worldwide made little headway in Budapest. While in the early years of the twentieth century the Hungarian capital—like its Viennese counterpart—welcomed transnational exchanges at the level of mass sports and popular entertainment with other cities and countries, in the case of the bullfights such exchanges turned out to have produced only minimal results. Indeed, the bullfights failed to turn Hungarian spectators into a cheering crowd and dedicated bullfight fans, and thus enable the acculturation process to happen. Instead of embracing it, public opinion as fashioned by conservative cultural commentators in Hungary continued to embrace older notions of the *corrida* as something intrinsically connected to Spanish national identity, with many seeing the bullfights as a product that could hardly find an adequate staging outside Spain.

Yet, together with the import of mass sports and other popular cultural genres to Hungary during this period, the bullfights represent an important chapter in the broader history of the cultural transfers that shaped Budapest's, and more generally European, popular culture at the time. Therefore, their reinsertion in the overall scholarly landscape is necessary to enable

¹²⁷“AZ FTC Egyiptomban: Újpesti bika-plakát a szuezi parton” [The FTC in Egypt: Bullfights poster from Újpest on the Suez shore], *Nemzeti Sport*, 20 Jan. 1928, 3.

¹²⁸“A toreadorok ezentül sem szúrhatják le a bikákat” [The toreadors are still not allowed to stab the bull], *Pesti Hírlap*, 12 Apr. 1928, 8.

¹²⁹“Most lehet” [Now it is allowed], *Népsport*, 18 Mar. 1969, 1.

¹³⁰László Feleki, “Napló: Fel, torreador! ...” [Diary: Stand up, toreador! ...], *Képes Sport*, 4 May 1982, 22.

us to globalize the city's history and gain a more complete picture of its avatars in the twentieth century. The passions that the 1904 and 1924 bullfights stirred in Budapest, together with their ultimate rejection, also make them important for cultural historians interested in analyzing various configurations of Hungarian domestic politics concerning the reception of transnational popular culture, as well as in shaping public discourses about mass entertainment both prior to and after World War I. Although no bullring bulls were killed in Budapest, their polarized reception among right-wing politicians in 1924 and failure to catch on as a regular offering killed the chances of Spanish bullfights to expand internationally and become—beyond their initial success in Italy—a more permanent form of East-Central European urban entertainment. Yet, although the cultural transfer of bullfights as a form of modern entertainment failed in 1924, just like in 1904, Budapest was again connected to cultural practices that were familiar to people not just in Spain but in Mexico, Peru, and Southern France. Thus the study of the 1924 Budapest bullfights allows one to gain a more nuanced understanding of phenomena taking place within the sphere of global cultural exchanges, with the Hungarian capital being a place where many components of the popular culture of the time, such as British football, Viennese operetta, and Hollywood movies, among others, were celebrated and adopted, while others such as the Spanish bullfights failed to make it. For us to gain a more complete picture of the transnational cultural exchanges of the time, however, the *corrida's* brief appearance in Hungary deserves better than to be forgotten or ignored.

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