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Bullfighting as television entertainment during the Franco regime

Abstract

This paper analyses bullfighting programming featured on Spanish public television (TVE) between 1956 and 1975. As such, it covers live broadcasts of *corridos*, specialist news programmes and related documentary films broadcast during the final twenty years of the Franco dictatorship. Given that no actual footage has been preserved, other material such as broadcast schedules published in the press, newspaper sections devoted to the subject and archive collections of bullfighting magazines have been examined and analysed in order to reconstruct a clear picture of programming in this genre offered by TVE during the period. It also provides a critical assessment of the ways in which the Franco regime sought to use bullfighting-related programming to promote tourism and pursue other economic objectives as well as an evaluation of the contribution of live broadcasts of *corridos* to the technological development of television in Spain and the gradual professionalisation of journalism devoted to this particular topic. Bullfighting related programming, which was quite popular among TV audience, did much to stimulate public interest in the medium as well as the world of tauromachy.

Keywords

History of television, Francoism, Televisión Española, bulls, televised bullfights, entertainment

1. Introduction

1.1. Bullfighting and social and economic development in Spain

Although Televisión Española (TVE) was officially founded in 1956, during the "prehistory of television in our country" (Barrera, 1995: 84) several prior trial broadcasts were made that focused on bullfighting (Baget, 1993; De Haro, 2016; Díaz, 2006; Rodríguez & Martínez, 1992). As late as 1958, TVE's weekly programme *Fiesta Brava* used only still photographs supplied by the news agency Cifra to enliven its coverage of the "Feria de San Isidro" (an important bullfighting event celebrated annually in Madrid). The specialised press complained about the

The research reported here was conducted as part of a larger project titled "Television and popular culture under Franco: programming, programs and television consumption (1956-1975)" funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (Ref: HAR2011-27937).

absence of bullfights on television, pointing out that television broadcasts "could do much to promote the event"¹ and calling on TVE to devote more time to this type of content. TVE responded in October of that same year by sending a camera crew to Zaragoza to cover bullfights held during the city's "Feria del Pilar", which would be the very first to be broadcast in two Spanish cities simultaneously. The success of these broadcasts, which offered fans in different parts of Spain the possibility to follow bullfights taking place elsewhere in real time, not only brought the action of the events into the homes of spectators, but also became a sensation in the many local bars and cafeterias people flocked to en masse to watch them.

The early 1960s marked the beginning of a period of "definitive shifts within the social structure of Spain" (Pérez, 1996: 254) that would pave the way for a certain return to normality. Economic development picked up dramatically after years of post-war stagnation and Spaniards, whose quality of life and right to exercise basic freedoms continued to pale in comparison with those of the citizens of neighbouring democratic countries, nevertheless had access to consumer goods previously beyond their reach. Although the initial phases of the government's plan to provide nationwide television broadcasting services favoured big cities over rural areas, "teleclubs" began to spring up in certain rural towns (Cantero, 2005; Llorca, 1971). By the end of 1963, TVE's broadcasting signal covered nearly 80% of the country. When, shortly afterwards, the annual licensing fees individuals owning a television set had initially been required to pay were eliminated, advertising became an important source of income for TVE. All these factors contributed substantially to a rise in the number of television sets owned in Spain and watching television gradually became a major family leisure activity.

Programming played a decisive role in the cultural acceptance of television in Spain (Ibáñez, 2001). Like its national public broadcasting counterparts in other countries, Televisión Española devoted much of its schedule to popular content in a bid to attract spectators (Briggs & Burke, 2002). The success of this strategy was confirmed by the very first audience survey conducted in Spain (carried out jointly by TVE's *Servicio de Propaganda y Relaciones Públicas*, the newspaper *Pueblo* and the magazine *Teleradio* in 1961), which revealed that audiences watched football matches and bullfights more often than any other type of programme. Televising football matches and bullfights not only helped teams and promoters expand their audiences; it also gave TVE the opportunity to improve technically and instrumentally. During the early years of television broadcasting, the press often reported the uproar that bullfight broadcasts provoked in cities:

What a lively hubbub wherever there was a television to be found: shops, bars and *casinos*! Every one of them practically packed and humming with impassioned comment. If this kind of atmosphere builds up without any prior announcement, what would happen if people knew in advance that a bullfight was going to broadcast?²

Whenever a televised bullfight was announced in advance, factory workers requested – and usually received – permission to start their shifts two hours earlier so as to be able to finish their day's work in time to watch the event. Newspapers notified their readers about such agreements reached with factory owners, praised these arrangements and even mentioned discounts on drinks and snacks offered by bars that had acquired a television set "as an added amenity for working class clients"³. In those days, Spaniards were passionate about television broadcasts of bullfights and sports matches, which were major events

¹ *El Ruedo*, 19 June 1958, p. 15.

² *El Burladero*, 24 June 1964, p. 28

³ *El Burladero*, 5 May 1965, p. 19.

people really looked forward to. Television manufacturers such as Philips, Telefunken and Askar frequently featured references to bullfighting and football in their advertising. The well-crafted advertising pitch "a lifetime ticket" triggered the sale of 7,000 television sets in the days prior to TVE's live coverage of the bullfights organised for the 1962 Feria de Abril in Seville.⁴

1.2. Sector debates about the economic ramifications of televising bullfights

Whilst television was indisputably the best possible medium for promoting bullfighting from an overall perspective, raised public appreciation for the type of spectacle that it offered and won new fans, it also satisfied "a strong demand for practically cost-free, home-centred leisure activities not covered by other types of social entertainment that had a precedent in the pleasures and gratifications offered by radio" (Palacio, 2001: 54). It was therefore natural that people with financial interests in the world of bullfighting looked askance at television out of fear that fans would soon prefer to watch *corridos* in the comfort of their living rooms rather than in local bullrings. The specialised press, which lost no time in attempting to assuage sector professionals' doubts about the new medium, was armed with an almost endless list of reasons why bullfights should be aired on TV:

Televising is a must. This is the age of television, and beyond all other considerations, new times bring new ways of doing things. TV has a social function: it sparks the interest of potential new fans and strengthens the loyalty of old ones, gives a lot of people who have never been able to attend a bullfight an opportunity to see one and brings the atmosphere of the big festivals to small towns where no one has ever seen anything other than *capeas*⁵ in temporary arenas that consisted of a circle of farm carts; it gets bullfighting into conversations in which it was never mentioned before and for a few brief moments takes the minds of people in sanatoriums off the pain they are suffering and other worries. All of this is of extraordinary importance.⁶

Some promoters refused to allow the bullfights they organised to be televised. One of the most notable to take this position was Pedro Balañá, the owner of Barcelona's La Monumental bullring. Prior to 1967, only one bullfight held in Barcelona had been broadcast on television. The fact that Balañá owned not only the city's largest bullring but also a significant number of its movie theatres as well did nothing to soften his stance on the issue. He was not, however, the only one in the sector out to protect what was then a thriving business. Bullfighters worried that a bad showing on TV could alienate fans. The bullfighting section of the Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo⁷ eventually forced TVE to accept a series of conditions that made it difficult for the broadcaster to please viewers. The first of their three main demands was that no bullfight could be televised if another was scheduled to take place in the same vicinity or on the same date in order to ensure that the broadcast of one would not have a negative impact on attendance of the other. The second was that no bullfight could be televised unless every seat in the bullring for that event had been sold. The third was that once bullfighters had been featured twice on television in a given season they had the right to turn down a third appearance during that period. By the mid-1960s, professional bullfighters had lowered their demands in acknowledgement that public

⁴ *El Ruedo*, 24 May 1962, p. 5.

⁵ *Capeas* are local bullfighting events in which non-professional toreros take on *novillos* (bulls that have not yet reached full maturity).

⁶ *El Ruedo*, 24 May 1962, p. 11.

⁷ A corporation governed by public law created by the Decree of 19 February 1942 that represented workers and promoters in the sector and complied with the "vertical" structure imposed throughout Franco's regime on all labour union organisations.

interest in bullfighting had risen significantly, thanks, at least in part, to "a growing television audience" (Gutiérrez, 2013: 24).

Interest in bullfighting had risen to a peak unknown since the death of the legendary bullfighter "Manolete"⁸ (Abella, 1993; Claramunt, 1992; Luján, 1967). The mastery of bullfighters such as Bienvenida and the ongoing rivalry between Aparicio and "Litri" that marked the 1950s was followed by an era of extraordinary new stars such as Antonio Ordóñez, "Antoñete", Diego Puerta, Paco Camino, Curro Romero and "El Viti". Bullrings were packed to capacity with a mix of veteran fans, younger Spaniards and an ever-growing number of tourists, all of whom were attracted not only by the colour and aesthetics of the events on offer but also by a magnetic young newcomer who was shaking up the world of bullfighting and thrilling Spanish society: Manuel Benítez, known professionally as "El Cordobés" (Gómez, 2001; Laguna 2011; Lapierre & Collins, 2010; Toscano, 2002).

1.3. "El Cordobés", a social and media phenomenon

A decree⁹ issued by the Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism on June 4, 1959 allowed TVE to broadcast sports competitions and other public events of exceptional interest. Nevertheless, it stipulated that any entities, teams and companies responsible for the organisation of such events were to be compensated, fixing the fee to be paid on the value of tickets left unsold. Given the popularity of bullfighting in Spain, *corridos* were automatically considered events of exceptional interest.

Francoist authorities were aware of the social and cultural impact of audiovisual media (Rueda, 2008). As they considered television to be an ideal medium for forging a new middle class inclined to legitimate the regime, television programming in Spain at the time favoured entertainment formats that highlighted "specific symbolic points of reference by which the dictatorship sought to equate Spanish identity with patriotism: football, bullfighting and the *copla*"¹⁰ (Gutiérrez, 2013: 21). As Shaw has observed (1987: 110) the Franco regime made a strategic decision to "systematically pump up the level of the country's football fever".

The press praised television in late 1961 for having revived bullfighting's "primordial essence as a facet of popular culture".¹¹ Not long after, Fraga proudly asserted that bullfighting was "for the very first time a national pastime rather than a minority passion",¹² adding that television's role in its revival had been of "decisive importance".¹³ In fact, once certain initial technical problems had been resolved, TVE, now an important socialising force in Spain, broadcast an increasing number of bullfighting events in an effort bring the "most national entertainment of all" into Spanish homes. The specialist press followed suit by offering new sections meant to serve as ongoing "bullfighting catechisms for novice television spectators".¹⁴

As *corridos* held a special allure for foreign tourists, new bullrings were built at various points along the Mediterranean coast such as Benidorm, San Feliú de Guixols, Marbella and Puerto Banús. An ever-growing number of bullfighting events specifically targeting

⁸ Manuel Rodríguez "Manolete" (1917-1947) was the most outstanding bullfighter in Spain during the 1940s. His untimely death in a bullring in Linares made him a post-war legend in Spain.

⁹ Decree 959/1959 of 4 June on the broadcast of sports and other public events (Boletín Oficial del Estado No. 141, de 13/06/1959, p. 8467)

¹⁰ The *copla* is a Spanish musical genre based on the rhyming scheme of the same name.

¹¹ *Teleradio*, No. 205, 27 November-3 December 1961, p. 19.

¹² *El Burladero*, 19 February 1964, pp. 4-5.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For further information, see the 26 April and 3 May 1962 issues of *El Ruedo*.

foreigners¹⁵ were organised on the official *Día del Turista* ("Tourist Day") to "entice visitors from foreign countries to enter bullrings and experience a spectrum of emotions, which for a minority may only run the gamut from outright horror to bored indifference, but for an increasing number includes a genuine enthusiasm".¹⁶ Tourism surveys published during this period in the *Revista Española de la Opinión Pública* reflect the appeal that traditions, bullfighting, folklore and football had for foreign visitors.¹⁷ Expotour, a travelling, government-sponsored tourism campaign implemented in cities throughout Europe in 1964 also highlighted what it billed as "la fiesta más española". Furthermore, some of the first programmes broadcast by the Worldvision satellite network that year were *corridos*.

This was the era during which Manuel Benítez, a young *matador* from Palma del Río who had made quite a name for himself as a *novillero*, became a national sensation. According to his detractors, the meteoric rise of "El Cordobés" (as Benítez was popularly known) was the result of the clever public relations strategy pursued by his agent Rafael Sánchez "El Pipo". Benítez's 1963 *alternativa*¹⁸ in Córdoba was broadcast on television, and the following year the entire country witnessed his performance in the Las Ventas bullring of Madrid with bated breath via the same media. He was the unsurpassed idol of the bullring throughout the bullfighting seasons of 1965, 1967, 1970 and 1971.¹⁹ Not even the ongoing hostility of professional commentators could diminish what was an unparalleled synergy between a bullfighter and his public. One can be fairly safe in saying that during this period Benítez was, "if not the unrivalled exponent of bullfighting as an artistic discipline, at least its foremost symbol as a public spectacle" (Urrutia, 1974: 93).

In spite of the broad attention he received in other media, it is quite possible that the El Cordobés would not have become a mythic figure without television coverage. His rags-to-riches story was a prime example of the upward social mobility possible in an underdeveloped country in which a career as a bullfighter or *copla* singer or a winning lottery ticket were the only means by which the poor could hope to become rich. It was perhaps due to these social and economic circumstances that he came to embody the subliminal hopes and aspirations of many Spaniards. Benítez came on the scene at a key moment in the development of modern techniques of political propaganda and social control in Spain. The Franco regime actively promoted "Cyclone Benítez", who was aware of his status as a mass phenomenon and understood better than most the potential of television to boost the career of a rising star to an entirely new level. Franco's interest in El Cordobés was a boon to everyone involved in the sector. The *matador's* rise coincided with a relaxation of standards and regulations that occasionally marred the authenticity of a traditional art that was rapidly devolving into a form of mass entertainment directed more towards television audiences rather than to spectators in the bullring.

This trend would continue up to the early 1970s, at which point there was a return to a more classic approach to bullfighting and a more serious attitude regarding its presentation and image. During this period, bullfighting commentary underwent a transition of its own, which television would reflect and to a certain degree be responsible for.

¹⁵ The number of bullfights held in Spain rose from 372 in 1962 to 682 in 1971. This gradual increase can be largely attributed to the construction of new bullrings in the country's major zones of tourism and the custom of holding bullfights on the "Día del Turista" (Tourist Day) throughout Spain.

¹⁶ *El Ruedo*, special end-of-season edition, 1962.

¹⁷ See *Revista española de la opinión pública* No. 5 (July-Sept. 1966), pp. 145-231 and No. 9 (July - Sept. 1967), pp. 229-334.

¹⁸ An *alternativa* is the event that marks the point in a *matador's* career when he moves up from fighting *novillos* (bulls four years old or younger) to taking on full-grown bulls.

¹⁹ El Cordobés set new records for the number of appearances a bullfighter made in the ring in a single season. He participated in 111 *corridos* in 1965, 109 in 1967, 121 in 1970 and 87 in 1971, shortly before he retired.

2. Methodology and sources

The introduction of television broadcasts of bullfights marked a turning point in terms of public perception of such events. Viewers would long remember the first *corridos* they viewed on television (Gutiérrez, 2003, 2006). The lack of prior studies on this subject is therefore somewhat surprising (De Haro, 2011; Gutiérrez, 2013).

The research reported here is meant to fill this gap in the literature and shed light on the programming TVE devoted to this topic from 1956 through 1975, a period during which this and all other type television content was closely aligned with political and social objectives of the Franco regime. Given the lack of original audiovisual material,²⁰ this study has been based on an examination of television schedules published by the Spanish press (the daily newspapers *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* and the magazine *Teleradio*), special sections on bullfighting featured in *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* (1956–1975) and the magazine *Dígame* (1948–1968) and comprehensive archive collections of magazines devoted exclusively to the topic: *El Ruedo* (1944–1975), *Fiesta Española* (1961–1968), *El Burladero* (1964–1968), *Tendido 13* (1967–1969), *El Mundo de los Toros* (1974), *Revista de la Beneficencia* (1968–1975), *Revista de la Corrida de la Prensa* (1960–1971) and *Revista de la Federación Nacional Taurina de España* (1970–1975). These sources were consulted to gain a clearer picture of the presence and nature of bullfighting-related programming in TVE's broadcasting schedule throughout the period in question.

A study of programming schedules facilitated the creation of two preliminary databases. The first of these, which was devoted to broadcasts of bullfights, recorded the dates and hours these events were featured, the channels on which they appeared and the line-ups of toreros and bulls scheduled for each date. The second, which focused on programs related to bullfighting, contained the name of the programmes, the dates and hours they were broadcast, the channel on which they appeared, and the length of the time slot assigned to them. During this period, actual programming did not always square with what had been previously listed in published schedules. Within the category of bullfighting-related content, this was more likely to happen in the case of broadcasts of *corridos*. Broadcasts of bullfights could be suspended for various reasons that included technical problems, the cancellation or the rescheduling of bullfights due to inclement weather and even disagreements between TVE and the *Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo*. It was just as likely for them to be broadcast without any prior notice. Given these circumstances, despite the informational value of advance schedules, we compared the data they contained to other content featured in the bullfighting and other sections of the two newspapers consulted and *Dígame* that could possibly confirm such broadcasts had actually taken place.

We also thoroughly examined every section and all advertising contained in the main magazines of the period devoted specifically to bullfighting as a number of matadors cited in these periodicals took advantage of the media attention they offered to underscore triumphs in the bullring that had been broadcast on television. Although the information gleaned from these sources was by no means exhaustive, the fact that they followed TVE's bullfighting-related programming closely allowed us to verify much of the data contained in published television schedules. By means of this method we were able to identify events published in schedules that had not subsequently been broadcast, detect others that had

²⁰ As TVE did not begin to use video cameras until 1965, before that point it had no ability to archive programmes that had not been recorded on film. Even after video technology had been adopted, copies of material broadcast were not always archived. This may well be related to a cost-reduction policy that required cameramen to use video tapes as many times as possible. Bullfighting-related content in the RTVE archive dating back to the period covered in this study is limited to a small number of tapes of a show called *Revista de Toros* originally broadcast in 1974 and 1975, a half dozen bullfights featured in 1975 and the reels of the documentary series *Tauromaquia*, which had been shot in 16mm.

been aired without prior notice and verify that 91 of the 105 *corridos* listed in programming schedules published in *ABC*, *La Vanguardia* and *Teleradio* had actually been seen by television audiences. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of all the other sources consulted brought the total of verified broadcasts during the period under study to 216. In spite of the strong possibility that the true number of bullfights aired on television could be substantially higher, the figures reported here reflect only those events for which a broadcast date could be verified.

Information provided in specialist publications also helped us to confirm the line-up of toreros and bulls advertised for each event, gain a better understanding of the various technical problems TVE faced during its first few broadcasts of bullfights, identify the personnel who worked on these programmes and learn about the stories behind these productions. A thorough analysis of these magazines also made it possible to reconstruct the structure and content of several programmes devoted to the topic. Material analysed included numerous news items, opinion articles, editorial columns, interviews and even letters to the editor in which fans mentioned bullfights they had watched on television. Thanks to the ample scope of the specialised press examined, it was possible to detect instances in which bullfighting had been addressed or discussed in the context of programming focused on entirely different topics.

Other sources of information consulted include the ample existing literature on the history of television in Spain and the world of bullfighting, the documentary archives of TVE and the personal archives of individuals who played a role in TVE's coverage of bullfighting at one point or another such as those of Antonio García Ramos and Vicente Zabala, both of which are housed in the José M^a de Cossío Library at the Las Ventas bullring in Madrid. Further insight was gained via personal interviews with José Gabriel Jacoste, Antonio Pardo, César Gil, Manuel Molés and Federico Arnás, all of whom worked on the production side of bullfight-related TVE programming during the period examined. These professionals provided invaluable information regarding the staging, content and protagonists of programmes for which scant data and little or no visual documentation exists.

Lastly, although it went beyond the scope of the study contemplated, the initial phase of our research included a search for data contained in the *Revista Española de la Opinión Pública* (1965–1977) that could provide insight into audience opinion regarding early bullfight-related television programming.

3. TVE's bullfighting-related programming 1956–1975

3.1. Four distinct periods of bullfight-related programming at TVE

Since the very initiation of television broadcasting in Spain, bullfighting-related programming has fallen neatly into two distinct categories: live broadcasts of events taking place in bullrings (*corridos de toros/rejones o novilladas*)²¹ and other types of programmes that focused on the world of tauromachy that ranged from studio magazine-format programmes to documentary series. The overall time span examined can also be broken down into four periods, each of which bears the hallmark of a particular group of journalists heavily involved in TVE's programming in this area:

- a) First: October 1956–February 1958. During this period, area director Antonio García Ramos participated in live broadcasts of bullfights from the ring and

²¹ *Corridos de toros* involve fully grown bulls. In *corridos de rejones*, the *torero/rejoneador* fights the bull on horseback. *Novilladas* are events during which *novilleros* (apprentice bullfighters) take on *novillos* (young bulls below the age at which they are officially classified as *toros*).

every other type of related programme that TVE offered in collaboration with presenter Matías Prats, one of the best-known radio and television personalities of the era.

- b) Second: March 1958–October 1968. As head of TVE's "sección taurina", Manuel Lozano Sevilla was in charge of both live broadcasts of bullfights and studio programming related to this topic. Key presenters during this period were Matías Prats and, as of April 1968, Joaquín Jesús Gordillo.
- c) Third: November 1968–1970. Rafael Campos de España was in charge of TVE's programming in this area and Gordillo continued on as the section's main presenter.
- d) Fourth and final: March 1970–December 1975. As head of this area, Joaquín Jesús Gordillo was heavily involved in both categories of bullfighting-related programming and co-presented live broadcasts with commentators such as Matías Prats (and as of July 1974, José Luis Carabias). Finally, Mariví Romero and Manuel Moles joined TVE's bullfighting programming team in 1973.

A glance at the professional profiles of the journalists involved in TVE's bullfighting-related programming throughout the period examined confirms their solid knowledge of the discipline. One immediately notes that in addition to their duties as commentators and presenters for TVE, they also covered the same topic for other media. It is also patently clear that journalism in this area was a strictly masculine occupation until TVE offered a programme featuring Mariví Romero, "the first woman who dared to forge a professional career as a bullfighting commentator" (Forneas, 2002: 182).

Generally speaking, bullfighting-related programming evolved significantly between 1956 and 1975. Enhancements were qualitative rather than quantitative in nature and strongly related to technological innovation: the technical quality of live broadcasts improved and studio programmes offered a greater variety of content. Bullfighting commentary increasingly took on a more strictly informative tone over the course of this period, particularly after Lozano Sevilla was forced to step down in the wake of a controversial *brindis*²² by matador Jaime Ostos in 1968. During a televised bullfight in Marbella in November of that year, Ostos openly accused the commentator of extorting money from toreros in exchange for positive press. Following this revelation, which had "international repercussion" (Pizarroso, 1999: 283) and led to Lozano Sevilla's immediate dismissal, both live broadcasts of *corridos* and bullfighting-related programmes in general adopted a more factual approach to the subject covered. As Adolfo Suárez (then director of RTVE) had previously relieved Lozano Sevilla of his duties as critic, effectively reducing the scope of his activities to commentary and interviews, it is likely he was aware of his ongoing extortion schemes but felt forced to retain him in some capacity due to his close relationship with Franco. Given that Lozano Sevilla was not the only bullfighting critic to have engaged in underhanded practices, this incident triggered a broader turnover of personnel involved in this area of journalism not only in television but in other media as well.

3.2. *Live broadcasts of bullfights*

The expansion of TVE's coverage of *corridos*, which were always presented on the *Primera Cadena* (Channel One), kept pace with the broadcaster's overall growth and development

²² Bullfighters often take a moment to *brindar* (dedicate) their performance and the death of the bull they kill either to the general public in attendance or specific individuals in the audience, to whom they offer their *montera* (the distinctive bicorne hat worn by toreros during a bullfight).

and as of 1958 occupied an ever-increasing proportion of that channel's schedule. Of the various types of bullfighting events held in Spain, *corridos de toros*²³ were the most widely televised (see Table 1). Although a handful of *novilladas*²⁴ were also broadcast, at one point they were abruptly dropped from TVE's schedule for what were described as "technical reasons".²⁵

Table 1. Number of bullfighting events organised in Spain by type and year /number of bullfighting events televised by type and year (1956-1975)

ANO	Nº CORRIDAS*	Nº NOVILLADAS*	Nº TOTAL FESTEJOS*	Nº CORRIDAS TVE	Nº NOVILLADAS TVE	Nº TOTAL FESTEJOS TVE
1956	260	483	743	0	0	0
1957	301	422	723	0	0	0
1958	323	416	739	1	0	1
1959	334	382	716	4	0	4
1960	323	416	739	3	0	3
1961	357	510	867	3	0	3
1962	372	525	897	10	0	10
1963	413	520	933	7	0	7
1964	482	509	991	19	0	19
1965	479	491	970	17	0	17
1966	599	480	1079	14	1	15
1967	619	460	1079	14	0	14
1968	608	406	1014	22	0	22
1969	627	375	1002	9	0	9
1970	654	361	1015	10	0	10
1971	682	344	1026	12	5	17
1972	645	422	1067	7	5	12
1973	653	406	1059	12	5	17
1974	678	452	1130	19	0	19
1975	613	460	1073	17	0	17

Yearly figures for bullfighting events organised in Spain have been taken from records held in the Sotomayor–Muro archives²⁶

Of the 18,864 bullfights held in Spain between 1956 and 1975, 216 (a mere 1.14%) were televised. An average of 11 were broadcast per year during this period. Although 1968 was the only year during which more than 20 bullfights were featured on television, the average number from 1964 onwards was somewhat higher (15–16). Working from the assumption that the average event of this type last two hours, we calculate that TVE devoted 25,920 minutes (432 hours) to live broadcasts of bullfights during the period examined. The bullfighters featured, in the order their total exposure on TVE, were: Paco Camino (44 times), "El Viti" (37), Diego Puerta (34), "El Cordobés" (25), Jaime Ostos (24), Curro Romero and Paquirri (17 times each) Palomo Linares (13) and "Niño de la Capea" (11). The *ganaderías* (breeding farms providing bulls for these events) were in descending order of importance: Atanasio Fernández (13), Carlos Núñez (10), Fermín Bohórquez (9), Benítez Cubero, Galache, Samuel Flores and Torrestrella (8 each) and Buendía and Marqués de Domecq (7 each).

These statistics confirm that TVE made an effort to televise bullfights of interest to television audiences that featured bullfighters at the height of their careers and bulls from highly respected breeding farms. Although due to the dynamics of the discipline, not even stellar line-ups could guarantee that every bullfight televised would be artistically perfect

²³ This category also includes *corridos de rejones*. In *rejoneo*, the bullfighter fights the bull on horseback.

²⁴ As mentioned previously, *novilladas* are events during which *novilleros* (apprentice bullfighters) take on *novillos* (young bulls below the age at which they are officially classified as *toros*).

²⁵ *Dígame*, 3 August 1965, p. 49.

²⁶ José M^a Sotomayor has been president of the Asociación Taurina Internacional de Documentalistas y Estadísticos (ATIDE) since 1991. He was General Secretary of la Federación Nacional Taurina de España (1984–1988) and head of the statistics division of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior's National Consultative Committee of Bullfighting (1996–2004).

from a purist's point of view, TVE programming in this area did offer fans the opportunity to enjoy a number of exceptional events such as the historic 1970 Corrida Extraordinaria de Beneficencia.

3.3. Other types of programmes related to tauromachy

In an era during which millions of Spaniards had an active interest in bullfighting, it is not surprising that TVE produced a number of magazine-format television programmes focusing on this topic. Although programmes such as *Directísimo*, *Panorama de actualidad*, *Buenas tardes* and *Sobre la marcha* occasionally provided a few minutes of news of interest to bullfighting fans, TVE also produced programmes specifically devoted to the world of tauromachy. *Fiesta Brava*, directed by Manuel Lozano Sevilla, was one of the most important shows in this category to be aired during the early years of television broadcasting in Spain. This weekly half-hour programme, which ran from March 1958 to September 1965, offered a roundup of the latest bullfighting news. Whenever time permitted, it also featured a highly popular section called *La figura de la semana* ("The star of the week"), which consisted of an in-depth interview with a well-known personality from the world of tauromachy.²⁷ Other programmes that focused on the same topic included *Cartel de Toros* (aired January–October 1958), *Crónicas taurinas* (January–May 1959), *Así va la feria* (May–July 1959), *Información Taurina* (September 1962), *Graderío* (February–September 1964), *¡A los toros!* (June–August 1964) and *Trofeo TV* (October 1964–September 1965). The last of these was a general sports programme that covered the major events of the bullfighting season in Spain.

The second most important programme during this period was *Ayer Domingo*, which was aired from September 1965 to January 1971. This show mixed information about bullfighting events with more general sports news, a strategy that sparked frequent complaints from fans that coverage of the two was not always equally balanced.²⁸ To remediate the fact that this show did give short shrift to bullfighting news and to meet viewer demand for more coverage in this area,²⁹ TVE launched a series of new programmes that included *Cartel* (October–December 1965), *Tendido 13* (January–September 1966) and *Cartel de Toros* (July–October 1969).

One of the last to be developed was *Revista de Toros*, which was the third most important and enduring programme of its type to be aired during the period in question. *Revista de Toros* was launched in July 1971 under the direction of Joaquín Jesús Gordillo in collaboration with Vicente Zabala and Antonio Díaz Cañabate. At a later point, scriptwriter Manuel Molés and director and presenter Mariví Romero took charge of the show, which remained on the air through the end of December 1983. The greatest contribution of this weekly show, which focused exclusively on the world of tauromachy, was its timely denunciation of fraudulent behaviour within the discipline, the most serious example of which was "horn-shaving", an illegal practice that impedes the ability of a bull to defend itself in the ring.

Bullfighting was also occasionally the subject of documentary programmes offered on TVE's *Segunda Cadena* (Channel Two), a channel referred to popularly at the time as "the UHF" for being the first Spanish channel to broadcast in ultra-high frequency. Thanks to bullfighting's anthropological dimensions as well as a well-crafted synthesis of script and images, a number of programmes devoted to this topic were warmly received by a broad spectrum of television viewers. Among these was an episode of *España siglo XX*³⁰ devoted to

²⁷ See *Dígame*, 26 November 1963, p. 35.

²⁸ See *Fiesta Española*, 12 October 1965, p. 10 and *Dígame*, 12 October 1965, p. 23.

²⁹ See *Dígame*, 12 October 1965, p. 23; *Dígame*, 20 December 1966, p. 23; *Dígame*, 7 February 1967, p. 25;

³⁰ Broadcast 18 June 1975 on TVE 1.

"Joselito" and Belmonte, a special titled *Los toros en la Literatura*³¹ and several episodes of *Conozca Vd. España*, a series that documented fiestas celebrated throughout Spain. The most outstanding documentary series produced during this period however was *Tauromaquia*, which ran on Channel Two from March through June of 1969.³² This series, which was directed by Benito Alazraki and shot in 16mm., was part of programming conceived by Pío Caro Baroja for TVE's Channel Two shortly after the approval of the Fraga Press law, which marked the first relaxation of media censorship since Francisco Franco's rise to power at the end of the Spanish civil war.

Bullfighting-related programming was limited in comparison to other types of programming offered by TVE between 1956 and 1975.³³ Although the broadcaster offered programming related to bullfighting several days of the week during the period examined, most of this content was aired in short slots of fifteen minutes or less and the total time devoted to the topic was seldom greater than an hour per week. Furthermore, some of these were broadcast contiguously. However, despite their brevity and their continually shifting placement within the scheduling of Channel One, they managed to cover the latest news and highlight the protagonists of the what continued to be the second-most revered spectator pastime in Spain after football. The few documentary programmes devoted to bullfighting (which were produced towards the end of the period examined when TVE's had developed the technical capacity required to fully exploit this genre) tended to focus on the history of tauromachy and its particular culture and were broadcast on the less popular Channel Two. In the final analysis, the tenor of complaints published in period sector publications,³⁴ indicates that television coverage of bullfighting was limited and sporadic throughout the entire period.

4. A critical analysis of TVE's bullfighting-related programming between 1956 and 1975

4.1. The bullring as a testing ground for television technology

During the first years of the period examined, it was technological limitations more than anything else that made bullfight programming less viable. Early programmes that focused on bullfighting news were shot on thematically decorated sets and occasionally featured guests such as specialist reporters, bullfighters or breeders. The absence of moving footage of the events they covered made them static and visually unappealing. This situation gradually improved as TVE adopted video technology and other techniques that did much to enliven the format and general presentation of content.

Producing live broadcasts of bullfights was particularly challenging for a media organisation struggling to overcome severe technical limitations. TVE's first broadcasts from bullrings consisted of long-range shots of the event accompanied by a radio-style commentator voiceover – a format that did not offer audiences a close-up view of the action or the subtleties of the *lidia*³⁵. Despite their visual shortcomings, these broadcasts enchanted

³¹ Broadcast 28 June 1967 on TVE 2.

³² The rebroadcasting of *Tauromaquia* on Channel Two on two different occasions (1 August–11 November 1969 and 24 July–16 October 1971) confirms not only TVE's practice of repeating this type of content to amortise its investment in production but also the enduring appeal of this series.

³³ See "Programación y programas de televisión en España antes de la desregulación" (1956–1990), *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 20 (Special issue).

³⁴ See *Fiesta Española*, 12 October 1965, p. 10; *El Burladero*, 24 May 1967, p. 33; *Dígame*, 12 September 1967, p. 20; *El Ruedo*, 5 March 1974, p. 3.

³⁵ The term *lidia* refers to everything that the *matador* does in the ring (with the assistance of a corps of *picadores* and *banderilleros*) to completely subdue a bull.

television viewers, many of whom had never been in a financial position to treat themselves to an afternoon at the bullring.

At the beginning, two cameras were used for cover shots of the ring and a third for close-ups. Although this setup facilitated basic documentation of an event, television audiences gradually became more demanding.³⁶ The process of determining the most adequate points inside a bullring for the positioning of cameras, which initially proved to be the *tendidos*³⁷ and the *callejón*,³⁸ aligned the production qualities of this type of programming more closely to those of the film industry. As more and more cameras were eventually employed, the wider range of shots and angles possible made broadcasts more visually interesting. Camera positions became less fixed and static. The *paseillo*³⁹ of the 1966 Feria de Abril was filmed "from a vehicle that tracked the entire procession".⁴⁰ A month later, for the Feria de San Isidro in Madrid, a camera platform was installed on the roof of the Las Ventas bullring in order to better "capture both the action in the arena and holiday atmosphere in the surrounding city".⁴¹ Like early sports programming (Bonaut, 2008), live broadcasts of bullfights from the arena contributed to the development of the audiovisual language of television. Ramón Díez and Eduardo Casanova were among the many distinguished sector professionals involved in the production of TVE's bullfighting-related programming during this period. The natural breaks that occurred throughout a live event in the arena also accommodated the insertion of advertising spots "that helped offset the costs of production" (Míguez González, 2003: 846).

Live broadcasts of bullfights provided opportunities for testing technology. *Corridos* marked the inauguration of regular broadcast service in Zaragoza in 1958 and Andalucía in 1961. With the expansion of TVE's infrastructure, bullfights began to be broadcast from cities in Spain such as Bilbao (1962), Córdoba and San Sebastián (1963), Pamplona and Valencia (1964), Barcelona and La Coruña (1966), Murcia and Valladolid (1968) and eventually foreign locations such as Bogotá, Colombia (1974).⁴² One of TVE's first colour broadcasts covered a *corrida* that took place in Málaga on 20 October 1974. This event was aired in various countries via Worldvision.

A review of the data compiled for this study reveals that five bullrings in Spain provided the setting for 60% of the *corridos* broadcast during the period in question. These were located in Madrid (55), Seville (31), Pamplona (21), Zaragoza (12) and Bilbao (11). Events in Madrid and Seville received the most continuous coverage. From 1959 on, TVE broadcast at least one bullfight a year from the capital, and events that took place in Seville were featured every year apart from 1959, 1961, 1964, 1969 and 1971. From 1964 on, TVE cameramen were almost always sent to Pamplona to cover the *corridos* organised for the festival of San Fermín. The only exceptions were 1966, 1968 and 1969. This focus on major cities may have had much to do with the comparative ease of reaching agreements with promoters in larger urban areas. The frequency with which bullfights in places such as La Coruña, San Sebastián and Bilbao were broadcast by TVE may have had much to do with Franco's regular

³⁶ See *Fiesta Española*, 15 May 1962, pp. 10–11.

³⁷ The term *tendido* refers to a particular section of spectator seating in a bullring.

³⁸ The *callejón* is a passageway that separates the arena from spectator seating in a bullring. Only toreros and their assistants, service personnel, promoters, the press corps, security and law enforcement personnel and other authorised individuals are allowed to enter this space during a bullfight.

³⁹ The *paseillo* is the ceremonial parade that all the toreros scheduled to fight make around the arena prior to a bullfight.

⁴⁰ *Fiesta Española*, 3 May 1966, p. 25.

⁴¹ *Dígame*, 31 May 1966, p. 21.

⁴² TVE camera crews had filmed bullfights in Cali as early as 1966. However, it was not until eight years later, following a licensing agreement between the two countries, that viewers in Spain were able to watch a broadcast from Colombia. A similar agreement paved the way for broadcasts from that country in 1975.

attendance of events in those cities. It is difficult to determine TVE's incentives and motives for broadcasting *corridos* that Franco personally attended, which logically included the opportunities they offered to place the chief of state in a sumptuous but popular setting, the accommodating attitude of the Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo towards such events or the expectation that promoters would make a special effort on these occasions to present a top-notch line-up of toreros and bulls.

4.2. *The political and social uses and consequences of televising bullfights*

It has often been asserted that broadcasts of bullfights Franco attended helped to shore up his popularity. There is no doubt that TVE made a conscious effort to air these events, which offered unparalleled opportunities to convey the public applause and patriotic homages on the part of toreros that greeted the *caudillo* whenever he entered a bullring to millions of Spanish television viewers eagerly waiting to see the *verónicas*⁴³ of Ordóñez, the *chicuelinas*⁴⁴ of Camino or the crowd-pleasing *saltos de la rana*⁴⁵ of El Cordobés. Nevertheless, would be difficult to defend the thesis that TVE broadcast bullfights the dictator attended with the sole intention of boosting his image.⁴⁶

Televised bullfights were unquestionably effective in reducing the likelihood of demonstrations of political disaffection on dates such as the first of May. This type of selective programming fell in line with the regime's ambition to discourage any form of non-government sanctioned social mobilisation. Recalling that era, Manuel Benítez has openly admitted, "If a public protest was planned, we'd organise a televised bullfight".⁴⁷ TVE programming on and around May 1 frequently included (in addition to a state-sanctioned labour union⁴⁸ rally in Santiago Bernabeu football stadium in Madrid) either a *corrida* or a match involving the Spanish national football team. TVE broadcast afternoon bullfights from Benidorm on April 30 in 1970 and 1971 that featured Diego Puerta, El Viti and El Cordobés. It likewise offered *corridos* broadcast from Alcalá de Henares on the same dates in 1973 and 1974, both of which featured the popular Palomo Linares. On April 30, 1970 it offered a double line-up, starting the afternoon with a broadcast of the first two bullfights of a *corrida* of *rejoneadores* in Jerez de la Frontera that featured the well-known Peralta brothers before presenting a bullfight held in Benidorm. According to the press, twenty million Spaniards watched these televised events.⁴⁹

Given that only four bullfights were broadcast to other countries via Worldvision during the period examined, the contribution of these events to the regime's efforts to promote foreign tourism was somewhat limited.⁵⁰ Domestic broadcasts, on the other hand, did much to stimulate travel and tourism at the national level. At the same time that local

⁴³ A classic two-handed maneuver in bullfighting in which a matador stands with both feet fixed and swings his cape slowly away from a charging bull.

⁴⁴ A maneuver invented by Chicuelo in which the matador pulls his cape close to his body.

⁴⁵ A "leap frog" maneuver invented by El Cordobés that he frequently used when working with a *muleta* (a small red cape used by the matador during the second phase of a bullfight).

⁴⁶ Generally speaking, Franco tended to make an appearance at the annual *Corrida Extraordinaria de Beneficencia* (1961-1975), the *Corrida de la Conmemoración de la Liberación de Bilbao* (1962, 1964, 1967-1970, 1972-1975), one or two bullfights held in Zaragoza as part of the annual local fiesta of the Virgen del Pilar), events held in San Sebastián or La Coruña during his summer holidays as well as a handful of other bullfights organised for charitable purposes.

⁴⁷ See *El Mundo*, 2 September 2006 (Cuadernillo "Memoria Histórica", pp. 8-9).

⁴⁸ Franco outlawed all labour unions that had previously existed in Spain under the Second Spanish Republic and instituted the *Organización Sindical Española*, commonly known as the *Sindicato Vertical* (Vertical Syndicate). This organization, which was closely aligned to the Falangist *Movimiento Nacional*, was disbanded in 1976 during the Spanish transition to democracy.

⁴⁹ *El Ruedo*, 5 Mayo 1970, p. 21.

⁵⁰ Bullfights broadcast were as follows: 2 May 1965 (Barcelona); 22 May 1970 (Las Ventas); 15 July 1972 (Salamanca, Festival Cruz Roja) and 20 October 1974 (Marbella).

authorities along the Costa del Sol and the Mediterranean coast in general were doing their best to ensure that No-Do⁵¹ newsreels highlighting the appeal of their communities were produced and shown at movie houses throughout the country (Paz, Sánchez and Montero, 1999), TVE was broadcasting bullfights from highly attractive tourist destinations in Spain such as Alicante, Benidorm, Marbella and Málaga.

Live broadcasts of bullfights also had an impact on local affairs and social life.⁵² TVE's ongoing coverage of an annual bullfight organised to raise funds for ASPRONA (Asociación para la Atención a Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual y sus Familias de la Provincia de Albacete)⁵³ constitutes a case study of how relations within circles of power determine the ways in which media are used in closed, authoritarian societies. Personal connections between Federico Gallo, the civil governor of Albacete and the head of the Falangist movement in that province, and officials at TVE (for which he had once been a presenter) were sufficient to ensure that this particular *corrida* was broadcast on Spanish television from 1973 through the end of the period studied. The event left no doubt as to the power of the media to mobilise efforts on a local and regional scale. From the very start, it was clear that the broadcast was far more important than the event itself. Local officials authorised the closing of shops and factories the afternoon of the bullfight and the schedules of regional bus lines were expanded to ensure that fans throughout the province were able to attend. The arrival of TVE film crews and equipment caused a sensation. An enthusiastic public flocked in droves to the bullring, "excited by the possibility of simultaneously helping ASPRONA and being seen on television" (Gutiérrez and Sánchez, 1997: 38). Had it not been for the spirit of solidarity that inspired the event, it would have undoubtedly been more difficult to organise a broadcast intended to raise not only money for a good cause but also public consciousness beyond the borders of Albacete concerning an important social issue.

Another dimension of the televising of bullfights in Spain was the inability of sector professionals (in contrast to their counterparts in the world of football) to grasp and exploit television's potential as a vehicle for building and consolidating audience demand, a failure that prevented the expansion of bullfight programming in this medium.

5. Conclusions

The economic development that took place in Spain in the 1960s fostered the growth of a new consumer mentality that the Franco dictatorship was able to exploit as a part of its strategy of discouraging any form of non-authorized political mobilisation. A general rise in living standards meant that average Spaniards increasingly enjoyed more leisure time activities. Television played a key role in the confluence of popular and mass culture. Like public broadcasting services in other European countries, TVE based its programming on popular content and entertainment, the only distinguishing factor being its additional mandate to imbue its audience with the values and ideology embraced by the Franco regime.

Bullfighting was one of a number of facets of Spanish popular culture that television would help transform into products of mass consumption. In addition to conveying the excitement of the action that transpired in bullrings more effectively than any other medium, television proved to be an ideal vehicle for explaining the particular idiosyncrasies of the world of taumachy. In a convenient division of roles, TVE's Channel One kept

⁵¹ Acronym for Noticiarios y Documentales. NO-DO newsreels were projected prior to every feature film presented in Spanish movie theatres during the Franco regime.

⁵² Television broadened people's motives for attending bullfights (and other types of public entertainment), which became occasions not only to see but also to be seen.

⁵³ Association for the Care of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families of the Province of Albacete.

viewers up to date about bullfighting events and their protagonists whilst its Channel Two offered documentary programmes that explored the history and culture of tauromachy.

Whereas it is plausible to assert that authorities within the Franco regime sought to simultaneously exploit television's potential as a propaganda tool and the popularity of bullfighting to serve their purposes, it is more difficult to determine to degree to which they really succeeded. Although televised bullfights, just like televised football matches, were not particularly effective vehicles for delivering the regime's more direct forms of propaganda, as forms of mass entertainment they could have the indirect effect of dissuading broad sections of the population from mobilising. Bullfights and sporting events were routinely broadcast on or near dates on which the government believed political or anti-Francoist union protests would take place. However, one should be cautious in interpreting the effect of this tactic so as not to arrive at the erroneous conclusion that there was practically no oppositional consciousness in Spain at the time. The primary underlying motive for broadcasting *corridos* attended by Franco does not appear to have been to boost his popularity as head of state.

One of the leading lights of the Spanish star system that state television worked hard to promote during the Franco regime was Manuel Benítez (El Cordobés), a highly popular torero who became an authentic social phenomenon. Although Benítez was exceptionally good at using the medium for enhancing his personal and professional image in and out of the bullring, research indicates that TVE live broadcasts of *corridos* during the period examined provided more exposure to several other toreros. However, the government did promote his career as part of its ongoing efforts to project a positive image of Spain, and he, like many other well-known popular musicians and football players of the period, supported the Organic Law Referendum of 1966.⁵⁴

Only 1.14% of the *corridos* organised in Spain during the period were televised and, on the average, less than one hour of air time per week was allotted to programmes devoted to this topic. TVE aired few documentary features focusing on bullfighting and provided scant coverage of bullfighting events during its routine news programmes. Nevertheless, these broadcasts made a strong impression on the viewers that watched them. Several audience surveys conducted during the period attest to a high level of public interest in televised *corridos* and related news⁵⁵. One in particular pointed out that "the fiesta national, of which much has been said regarding its decadence, attracts a greater percentage of total viewers (17%) than sporting events" (14%).⁵⁶

Bullfighting-related programming had a positive impact on the development of broadcasting technology, commerce and professional journalism during the period studied. Live broadcasts of *corridos*, like those of football matches, fostered the incorporation of new broadcasting technologies and techniques and added much to the audiovisual language of Spanish television. Furthermore, the popularity of this type of programming made it financially viable. Domestic and international companies purchased advertising time during these programmes that helped defray production costs. Television also helped launch the careers of a new generation of more professional bullfighting critics and commentators and fostered the gradual abandonment of a number of unethical practices.

⁵⁴ The 1966 referendum on the *Ley Orgánica del Estado*, approved in 1967, enumerated the functions of the country's "Head of State" and created the new position of "Chief of Government". Nevertheless, Franco continued to play both roles until his death in November 1975.

⁵⁵ See "Encuestas sobre medios de comunicación de masas en España", *Revista española de la opinión pública*, No. 1 (May-Aug., 1965), pp. 227-244; "Encuesta Nacional sobre Radio y T. V.", *Revista española de la opinión pública*, No. 4 (Apr.-Jun., 1966), pp. 227-314 and "Análisis de una campaña de cultura popular", *Revista española de la opinión pública*, No. 6 (Oct.-Dec., 1966), pp. 381-400.

⁵⁶ "Encuesta sobre TV", *Revista Española de la Opinión Pública*, No. 8 (Apr.-Jun., 1967), p. 157.

The broadcast of *corridos* to a more international audience via the Worldvision network was a conscious goal, not so much in terms of the legitimisation the Franco regime sought at that time throughout Europe, but rather for their potential to showcase the technological, economic and social progress Spain had recently achieved.

Although television significantly changed public perception of bullfighting, it also did much to establish an enduring link in the popular imagination between tauromachy and the Franco regime and its ideology much like the relationship Spaniards continue to draw between Francoism and the legendary five consecutive European Cup victories of Alfredo Di Stéfano and Real Madrid. Both phenomena illustrate the symbiotic relationship that existed between the Francoism and television from the very introduction of that medium in Spain and the role that various forms of popular mass entertainment have played not only in the acceptance of television as a new means of communication but also in attempts to legitimise the Franco regime.

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