
Unwanted Yet (In)dispensable: The Relationship Between Hungarian Football and Jews in the Interwar Period

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Résumé

In May 1939, the "Act for the More Effective Protection of Balance in Social and Economic Life" came into force in Hungary, marking a turning point in the discrimination against Jews within Hungarian society. Although restrictive measures had already been in place – most notably the *numerus clausus* introduced in 1920 – this legislation explicitly barred Jews from holding managerial positions, including in the field of sport. In this sector, the consequences were particularly severe: active since the late nineteenth century in the country's major sports clubs, especially in the capital, Hungarian Jews were excluded both from leadership roles and from the country's leading clubs. This process was carried out with systematic rigor by the new figures of Hungarian sport, often originating from social and geographical contexts peripheral to the capital and characterized by a strong Christian-based nationalism, like, for example, Pál Gidófalvyi in football. The most emblematic act of this policy, was first the dissolution of Hungária, a historic professional football club from Budapest, followed shortly thereafter by the dissolution of MTK, a multisport club that symbolized the Hungarian Jewish elite. Drawing on documentation from the Ministry of the Interior and the Hungarian press, this paper aims to retrace the relationship between Hungarian society and its Jewish population during the interwar period, with particular attention to the divergent positions expressed in the press, as well as to the material interests behind government action in 1939.

Mots-Clés: Hungary / Antisemitism / Football

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