

# Hooligan Wars

Causes and Effects of  
Football Violence

Mark Perryman



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Causes and Effects of Football Violence

Edited by Mark Perryman



EDINBURGH AND LONDON

## **CONTENTS**

Title Page

Acknowledgements

### **THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL GAME**

Mark Perryman – Hooligan Wars

### **THE BIG PICTURE: REACTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND FOOTBALL VIOLENCE**

John Williams – Who You Calling a Hooligan?

Dorothy Rowe – Keeping with the Enemy

Beatrix Campbell and Adam L. Dawson – Indecent Exposures, Men, Masculinity and Violence

Vivek Chaudhary – Black, Brown, Blue and White Army

### **THE USUAL SUSPECTS: STADIA, MEDIA AND XENOPHOBIA**

Simon Inglis – All Gone Quiet Over Here

John Sugden – We are Leeds!

Nick Lowles – Far Out with the Far Right

Emma Poulton – Tears, Tantrums and Tattoos, Framing the Hooligan

### **THE ENGLISH DISEASE? NATIONAL IDENTITY AND FAN CULTURES**

Richard Giulianotti – A Different Kind of Carnival

David Winner – The Orange Party

Patrick Mignon – Le Francais Feel-Good Factor

René Martens – Here to Stay with St Pauli

### **WAR IS OVER: BEYOND QUICK-FIX SOLUTIONS**

Patrick Barclay - England, A Suitable Case for Treatment

Dougie Brimson - Fans for a Change

David Shayler - Boro's Number 007

Alan Tomlinson - Golden Goals to Gold Medals, Football's  
Olympian Lessons

**AFTERWORD: WORLD CUP 2002**

Mark Perryman - From the Land of the Rising Sun

**RESOURCES OF HOPE**

Reading, Contacts Campaigns

Notes on Contributors

Copyright

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Hooligan Wars* presents a range of answers to what causes football violence and seeks to account for its effects. The writers don't all agree and it isn't the point of this collection to offer one single explanation or solution, because there almost certainly isn't such a thing. Most of the authors are active football fans, but not all of them, because one of the problems with much of what passes for considered comment on this subject is a refusal to put football hooliganism into a broader context.

In developing this book I've been lucky enough to test out the ideas on a sometimes unsuspecting public. I am grateful to Ian Woods at BSkyB, Jonathan Wills at Carlton TV's *London Tonight*, Michel Peremans of VRT TV in Belgium, Pete Stevens at BBC Radio London Live, and Adam Gilchrist at British Forces Broadcasting Service in particular for providing me with TV and radio opportunities to put across a fan's point of view when 'Ingerland comes to town'. Michael Gove at *The Times* and David Leigh at *The Guardian*; Andy Lyons, Editor of *When Saturday Comes*, Gary Tipp, Editor of *Total Football* and Jason Cowley, Literary Editor of the *New Statesman* have all been more than generous with their word counts when my articles on this subject have had a tendency to spill over the agreed limit. In February 2001 I was appointed Research Fellow at The Chelsea School, Brighton University, where staff and students have been extraordinarily forthcoming in helping to challenge, develop and more often than not change how I approached the subject of this book. Stephen Parrott at Birkbeck College

continues to invite me to lecture on his 'Football, Culture and Society' summer extra-mural course, where an unrivalled mix of opinions is always guaranteed to lift me from the muddle my word-processor can get me into.

In 1994 I co-founded the self-styled 'sporting outfitters of intellectual distinction', *Philosophy Football* with Hugh Tisdale. Sometimes described as a 'fanzine for the chest' the footballing thoughts of Camus, Guevara, Cruyff and others are emblazoned across a 100 per cent cotton top in Hugh's stunning designs. Our partnership and friendship has helped me through many a season, not to mention two European Championships and one World Cup. It never ceases to amaze me how a day spent stuffing our T-shirts into bio-degradable plastic envelopes can help stimulate the thought bugs, but somehow it does. One of our ventures which has nothing to do with T-shirts but a lot to do with a patriotism without the prejudice is 'Raise the Flag'. Now acknowledged as an England fans' tradition it was my idea and Hugh's planning that turned thousands of red and white cards into a fans' St George Cross flag whenever England play. Thanks are due to Peta Dee of the FA Commercial Department, the Nationwide Building Society, the England Team Sponsor and Adam Stebbing of Forrest Press for helping to make it happen. The volunteers who lay the cards out on all those seats include Tony Dekanski, Geraldine Ford, Ken Jackson, Nicola Everatt, Paul Jonson as well as many more.

As an active member of *englandfans*, the official England Supporters Club, I have learnt a lot from the process of seeking to develop a supporters' organisation that could make a significant contribution towards a positive England. Fans with whom I have sometimes agreed, sometimes disagreed but always enjoyed the discussion with include Dave Tomlinson, Karen Hutton, Duncan White, Pete Ryan, Mark Dodd, Alan Lee, Mark Raven, Laura Allen, Craig Brewin, Daniel Buckingham, and others too many to mention. Many

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In 2000 the Home Office set up a Working Group on Football Disorder. Having complained bitterly that no England fan representative had been invited to join the Working Group's discussions I was pleasantly surprised not only to be asked to join in but also to see that at least some of the fans' input did make a difference. I am grateful to David Bohanan, Kevin Parker and Lord Bassam from the Home Office for the invite, and in particular to the thoughtful contributions that I heard from Billy Bragg, Kevin Miles, Cathy Long, Andy Walsh, Piara Powar, Adam Brown, Tim Crabbe, Ron Hogg and Clifford Stott. I am also grateful to Glyn Ford MEP and Chris Heaton-Harris MEP for asking me to take part in an EU hearing on the problem of football violence.

Dan Murrell played about with a computer and helped to turn Tony Davis's great photograph of a football I'd mysteriously asked him to paint black into an amazing image. At Mainstream Publishing Tina Hudson turned all of this into a tremendous cover while Jess Thompson, Alison Provan and Clive Hewat did a grand job on the editorial production side, and Bill Campbell stumped up the advance. Thanks for showing faith Bill, again. Stefan Howald helped me out of my pig-ignorant hole when one author expected me to be able to read German. Andy Smith helped me track down David Shayler's account of being a Boro fan on the run in the fanzine *Middlesbrough Supporters South*.

The greatest debt of all is to what I like to think of still as the 'beautiful game'. My club team Spurs has been a source of constant, well I can't say joy, not yet anyway, but at least

inspiration. And as for England, well the away trips have never been far short of enjoyable, even if the results haven't always been all we dreamt of. Philip Cornwall has on more than one occasion proved to be a great travelling companion. At Euro 2000 I was lucky enough to be put up by hosts including Harry Zevenbergen, The Thuburns, Thierry and Helene Lacasse, Peter Slabbynck and Luc Maton, while through the World Cup 2002 qualifying campaign the hospitality of Paavo, Liisa, Heini and Janne Löppönen in Helsinki, Bujar Bashar in Tirana and Claus Melchior in Munich, made football and travel the kind of ideal mix I would wish it to be for everyone - a mix that has been made so much more pleasurable for me thanks to the love of Anne Coddington, home and away. Her endless energetic exploration of far-flung markets and shops can sometimes tire me out on matchdays when all I can think of is who will be in the team and when kick-off is, but that scarcely matters, not really. Following England not to mention my entire world (plus or minus the football) just wouldn't be the same without her.

None of the aforementioned can be blamed for what follows. That's down to me, and the individual contributors. But perhaps out of this untidy combination of conversations, arguments, study, politicking, activism, cheering and despairing a fan culture we can all be proud of will emerge. And you never know it might just coincide with Sven-Goran leading us to some silverware. England dreaming? Yes please.

# **THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL GAME**

# HOOLIGAN WARS

*Mark Perryman*

One observer compared the atmosphere surrounding the England support for the recent match against France as being akin to 'watching a football match during a Nuremburg rally'.

*Home Office Working Group on  
Football Disorder Discussion Paper,  
October 2000*

Travelling to watch England can on occasion be an unpleasant experience, few would deny that. But to compare sitting in the stands at the Stade de France in September 2000 for France versus England to one of Adolf Hitler's choreographed party pieces seems just a tad over the top. But this is how the Home Office Working Group on Football Disorder chose to open its first published deliberations, though thankfully by the time the group's final report was published in March 2001 this particular description of the atmosphere fans generate at an England game had been removed.

The mood in the Stade de France was much like it always is when following England. The sightlines were better than Wembley's where it is near-impossible to watch a game without standing up. At a stroke a major cause for tension was removed. But a laddish crowd of latecomers filled up the gangway and, refusing to budge, obscured others' views. They were all Stone Island jackets, baseball caps pulled down tight over the eyes, and expensive-looking designer jeans, and from the look of them it would be a brave fan to ask them to move aside. 'Le Marsellaise' received a lusty booing, and 'God Save the Queen' was

bawled out. As bad as it gets as good it gets with England abroad.

When the French team paraded their two trophies a fair smattering in the England end respectfully cheered them on; the love of football for some crosses borders. The England end itself had a better representation of women than usual, and children too. The location and date were ideal for this: a weekend game, in sunny Paris, just a stop or two down the line thanks to Eurostar, and at the tail end of the summer holidays. After the team had earned a creditable draw against the World and European champions the fans streamed back to central Paris. Around the Gare de Nord the lads continued their drinking, turning the square into their own patch of little England as they waited for the dawn train back home. The scene was intimidating, menacing even, but if you chose to avoid it the rest of Paris was a hugely pleasurable place to be, for the French and their English visitors alike.

The French Riot Police, the CRS, know all about trouble, they've got a gruesome pedigree going back to Paris May 1968. They were certainly up for a confrontation with any English lads who fancied their chances. Outside the stadium the CRS were held back in reserve while the tension rose with more than the odd England fan becoming abusively louder and louder as he (invariably it was a he) vented his anger at having to queue on the young, brightly jacketed stewards. You didn't have to speak French to be able to read their faces: 'C'mon its only a game, just wait your turn like everyone else, don't make my life a misery, *s'il vous plaît*'... And when the abuse didn't stop, not unreasonably the offenders were removed. But as the kick-off approached larger and larger numbers of impatient England fans were building up the pressure on the hard-pressed turnstile operators. Maybe they should have had the sense to arrive early but navigating the Metro in good order isn't such an easy task and with the huge stadium a near sell-out and the

temptation to see the odd sight before heading off to the match, kick-off time can catch up on you before you know it. With the scene starting to turn frantic the CRS waded in, batons drawn and flailing. Not a pretty sight.

The picture could be the same at almost any England game – home and more especially away. If a trip on the wild side is what takes your fancy it's easy enough to find the spaces and places where things have a habit of turning nasty. If you're more of a voyeur, a thrill-seeker who wants to come home with the sniff of tear gas in your clothes but not the scars of a bruising encounter or three, then stand on the edge of the crowd and escape any serious retribution. Though, if the police have a habit of sweeping entire areas free of anyone looking remotely like an England fan, the chances of getting away with it are significantly reduced. For those whose preference is a milder slice of life, the sights, the restaurants and bars off the soon to be beaten-up track are easy enough to locate with a *Rough Guide* to hand, and after taking a few sensible precautions – like avoiding large squares with bars all around the perimeter, getting to the game early, and knowing where you're going after the game (preferably in a taxi you've already booked) – the likelihood of seeing trouble is probably less than chucking-out time in any large English town or city.

A month or so after the trip to France, England took on Germany at Wembley. The match would mark the end of an era for the Twin Towers, though few sitting under them for what they thought would be the last time could have dreamt they'd still be standing twelve months later. And as for the opposition, they'd taken a 2-4 hammering in Wembley's greatest-ever moment and after 34 years of subsequent hurt, in June we'd finally triumphed over them again. A repeat performance however wasn't to be. Losing 0-1 on a freezing cold October Saturday with near constant rain put paid to any celebrations. Worse than that, against a poor German side our team looked disorganised and clueless.

Dreams of World Cup qualification had taken a knock and Wembley's final game would go down in memory as a day of drizzle and defeat. The afternoon had begun brightly enough. The opening bars of 'God Save the Queen' were the cue for some 60,000 red-and-white cards all around the stadium to be held up by the fans. Creating four huge St George Cross flags it was a great moment - our national flag transformed into a fans' flag. And uniquely the hundred or so England supporters who had laid these cards out on the seats to be occupied by the home fans had also gone to the trouble to lay out cards in the colours of the German flag with a welcome in German, in the away section too: fan ambassadorship of which we should be proud. No, it didn't stop the booing of the German national anthem, but like Rome, the new Jerusalem won't be built in a day, or 90 minutes come to that. It would have been nice if somebody, somewhere, might have picked up on this fan-led initiative, though of course Keegan's resignation in the end overshadowed everything connected with that fateful Saturday afternoon. But even in the more measured Monday comment pieces the occasion was used to engage in yet another bout of overblown national self-hatred, 'That bunch of cretins in *News of the World* plastic bowler hats, the dark underbelly of Euroscepticism' was how Richard Williams described a large portion of the crowd in *The Guardian*. Williams had been horrified by the number of England fans who had taunted the Germans by singing 'Stand Up if You Won the War'. An encore of the Dam Busters' March, with accompanying aeroplane gestures'. His estimation that this involved a significant proportion of the crowd was undoubtedly correct, though of course it would take a crack squad of mass observationists to account for those many silent voices who didn't join in. But that's by the statistical by. Nevertheless the widespread singing of such ditties can surely be connected to a more widespread europhobia, which, lashed together with imperial decline, footballing lack

of success, and Seaman's failure to hold on to Dietmar Hamann's soft-touch free kick doesn't excuse a bit of oral mischief-making but at least helps to contextualise it. Meanwhile another England, passionate but positive, once again gets sidelined. The German fans, ironically, seemed more aware than many of our own of this side of English fan culture - the commitment, the wit and the banter - for which we are rightly renowned. On going 1-0 up they stunned the England fans hemmed in on both sides of them with a perfectly executed rendition of 'You're Not Singing Any More' in English. Who says the Germans don't have a sense of humour?

The curious bi-polarity of England fans' culture is rarely commented on. They are huge in number, highly committed, yet contain within their ranks a brand of thuggery that few other national teams' support can match. During Euro 2000 *The Observer* sports section printed an editorial on precisely this phenomenon, and it is well worth quoting at length precisely because of its rarity value:

There's no doubt about it: England has the worst football fans in the world ... Gary Lineker called for passport confiscation on a grand scale. Were such a scheme put into operation it would have rid the Championship of its *best* supporters, The English ... Passionate, knowledgeable, peaceful supporters happy to sit and talk with anyone and everyone ... Stop off for a beer or a coffee in Tilburg, or Breda, or Antwerp, or Ghent and you'll bump into friendly, knowledgeable English fans who will help with tickets, and advice on restaurants and accommodation ... But this is no surprise. The English watch football, and love watching football, like no other nation ... Yes, England has the worst football fans in the world. But it also has the best.

For some random evidence of the depth of commitment of our fans, take Saturday, 24 March 2001. Across Europe national teams were battling their way through the World Cup 2002 qualifying groups. England attracted a sell-out crowd of 44,262 to Anfield for their encounter with Finland. Sweden had 22,106 at their game: Turkey 25,000; Scotland 37,480; Spain 35,000 and Hungary 20,000. Germany could

only attract a lowly 22,500 for their match with Albania. England's game with Albania in September 2001 had *already* sold out St James' Park's 51,000 capacity. The previous October 30,155 had turned out for England's Under-21 game against Germany, while in May 2001 30,000 were at St James' Park for a European Championship Under-16 semi-final, England versus France - crowds few other countries in Europe could match even for a Senior International!

Before we turn up the volume on the national tub-thumper a look down the attendance charts for 24 March does reveal that the Ukraine versus Belarus crowd numbered a staggering 75,000. However unless the Ukraine economy is about to go into overdrive the Ukrainian travelling support will remain a tiny fraction of this impressive home support. Here is the other crucial difference between us and our continental footballing neighbours. Certainly since the early 1980s the size of England's away following has been large, expanding, and for key matches at easy-to-reach locations likely to dwarf any other country's. The mix of two extremes; friendly passion and nasty disorder make for not such an unlikely pairing under such conditions.

But the conditions should not be allowed to excuse away a 'victim culture' that sees the buck flying by so fast when it comes to accounting for football violence. There is a pervasive tendency to blame everybody else. The usual suspects are, and remain: the media, the police, the football authorities and the opposing fans. In almost every case some, if not all, of this lot will have at least some bearing on the events that surround the mayhem associated with England coming to town. But what about ourselves as England fans taking our fair share of the responsibility? If, as is so often claimed, those who have nothing to do with the violence are in a majority why are we so apparently incapable of having any effect on what happens? The position, rightly put by fans, is that we are part of the

solution; then we have to make ourselves part of it while at the same time marginalising the minority who are so obviously a part of the problem. Without that clear and unquestionable distinction criminalisation of us all will be the consequence. The organisations and agencies which seek to control the situation almost always hanker after criminalisation as their tactic. We have to convince them by any means necessary that their emphasis is all wrong, that the stick is no good without the carrot.

Creating the context where an anti-violence culture emerges around England fans requires a recognition of three related factors. The first of these is the need to recognise that relatively small numbers are involved in the actuality of violence. On the day of England versus Germany in Charleroi estimates of the numbers of England fans in the town circled around the 15,000 mark. The number involved in the town square confrontation, even at its peak, scarcely topped the 1,000, and far fewer than that actually chucked a chair or threw a punch.

Charlie Whelan wrote an impassioned piece in *The Guardian* denouncing the way that the trouble in Charleroi had been blown out of all proportion. Whelan has made himself somewhat notorious for describing, in his own inimitable words, England fans as 'racist scum, plankton and pond life' so his view can hardly be described as supporter partisan, rather he was writing as a BBC Radio 5 Live presenter shocked by the recklessness of media colleagues:

Waiting in the main square were the world's media. I counted at least 50 TV cameras ready to witness the inevitable. On the radio, our team reported the events from 6 a.m. No chairs had been cleared, strong beer was readily available and the police let gangs of Germans into the square. They obligingly tipped the TV crews that they were going in to arrest some Germans and the rest is history. Gordon Farquhar, the experienced 5 Live sports news reporter, scored the level of violence as three out of ten, but who cared about the radio? The incident with the water cannon actually lasted no more than ten minutes, while 15,000 England fans enjoying themselves with Germans in the hundreds of bars

around the square received no coverage. ITN reported the water cannon scenes as effective policing, so effective that their reporter Bill Neely got hit in the face by a fan. Those nutters in the square loved every minute of it and even cheered when the water cannon returned.

After the game few England fans stayed the night in Charleroi. Those who did remain might have been surprised to flick the TV on the next morning to hear the French-speaking Mayor of Charleroi calmly assert that the previous day had 'hardly been World War Three' and that the damage amounting to a 'handful of broken windows' was less than the town centre was used to putting up with after most Saturday nights. Even more perplexing for those who harbour a hard-bitten belief that all England fans leave behind them is ill-will, debris and a wish never to return, is the theme tune RCS Charleroi played each time they scored a goal in the 2000-2001 season - 'The Great Escape'. Not quite the legacy that you'd expect if England coming to town is the most unpleasant memory you can imagine, is it?

But the smallish numbers involved and mainly modest collateral impact of the damage caused must be measured against a second factor. The events feed off a set of attitudes and accompanying mood that in large measure legitimise the actions. The violent minority is precisely that, small in number compared to the huge travelling support. The anti-violent minority is equally small in number and quite possibly less well-organised. For the majority violence simply isn't an issue. There is little or no sense of the menace or the intimidation that large voiciferous crowds might pose, rather this is offered as a natural form of solidarity; togetherness in a foreign culture. Of course this is precisely the attraction of being a fan, that sense of community, so simply denouncing all this as 'the other' is singularly inappropriate. But with little or no articulation from within the fan culture associated with England of an anti-racist and anti-violence voice, it is no surprise that the togetherness of the unruly crowd can so easily transgress

and transform into a baying mob egging on others to smash, fight and abuse.

England is not an easy pole of attraction for those who distinguish pride from prejudice. Though if *The Sun* can paint a picture of England in a 2001 St George's Day editorial as 'a country of tolerance - peopled largely by gentle, good-natured men and women' then maybe it's not such an impossible task as some too often suggest. The same editorial offered a tour through the usual martial history, offering up England, and generously the USA too, as the countries that 'defeated the great threat of our time, totalitarian communism'. But the editorial also listed 'creativity, humour, culture' as other national attributes along with 'Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson'. These are the resources of hope around which a positive Englishness can be built. For every Jim Davidson there's a Lenny Henry or Meera Syal; for every 'Rule Britannia' there's homegrown reggae, soul, garage or jungle and it doesn't take a genius to guess which is the more popular. For all the incidents of lager-loutery on the Costa del Sol there's a youth culture that generated a transcontinental book like Alex Garland's *The Beach* or turned Ibiza into the anglicised dance capital of Europe. Engaging with the network of attitudes that the violence feeds off by posing a great variety of alternative ways of celebrating our Englishness should be at the core of any strategy to isolate the violent minority.

Hackett, the upmarket clothing company that unwittingly dressed many of those who made the front pages and filled the TV cameras as they charged towards police lines or opposing fans came to a very clear commercial conclusion. According to Chief Executive Sven Gaede, the St George Cross symbol is to be phased out from their fashion range following events at Euro 2000. For Hackett it's easy enough to drop what for them is just another logo; for a national culture that's no option at all. Turn St George into meaning

something quite different, soften its hard edges, rob it of its unwanted associations and another identity for England fans will soon be in the making. A failure to take a softened patriotism as our starting point would be flying in the face of reality, to ditch the English question that refuses to go away. Of course football culture cannot on its own conjure up a new national identity, and it's not a cosmetic make-over that we want in any case but something much more deep-rooted. But it is at an England game that more St George Cross flags are flown than on any other occasion, including our national day. The shirt that has come to symbolise England is a football shirt, now complete in the latest design with a subliminal St George Cross.

The broader network of largely uncontested negative values associated with following England away help to explain the significance of a violence relatively few are involved in. But the small numbers do not equate with the third factor, the huge impact of what is perceived virtually as a national trait, 'football hooliganism'. One England fan reports a conversation from when he was in Italy for a game and was visiting a bank to change some travellers' cheques for Lira. The cashier received his passport and spotting the nationality and knowing a game was on, cheerily suggested 'Ah English ... football hooligan?' To which the fan instantly retorted 'Ah Italian ... Mafiosi?' The ludicrousness of each other's stereotype was hopefully not lost in the translation. But this representation of what it means to be English is extraordinarily common. A British Council November 2000 report *Through Other Eyes 2: How The World Sees the United Kingdom* specified that 'Britons' (the report's description, though the text makes it obvious enough we're talking about the English) are perceived by young people in other countries as 'arrogant, xenophobic and frequently drunk.' David Green, the British Council Director explained he was concerned: 'by the high proportion of young people who associate us British (*sic*) with an arrogant and

condescending view of other countries. Anyone who watched, for instance, the scenes at Charleroi during Euro 2000 can understand how these perceptions arise.' And the perception (whether it's true or false is immaterial), isn't only held by those overseas. A poll in the *The Observer* of 18 March 2001 revealed that the feature that most made Britons embarrassed of Britain was hooligans or lager louts, scoring 33 per cent, three times higher than the runner-up in the embarrassment stakes, litter at 11 per cent. The images that the violence sets in place have an impact on FIFA, UEFA, future host nations and cities with attendant media and police forces, our own government, the FA, and the general population, home and abroad. This isn't simply the product of hyped-up media coverage and an ingrained reputation for causing trouble, it is also because of the sport the violence has become associated with. In terms of global appeal nothing comes even close to football and so anything connected to it has, in its wake, a tendency to become similarly overblown. Football hooliganism is regarded by these continental youngsters as a negative of Englishness, yet ironically football is also used by the British Tourist Authority to promote tourism. At opposite ends of the spectrum, the effect is the same. Football is becoming more, not less, integral to our national bank of symbols.

The fourth factor is the key to unlocking the entire problem. Currently there is a lack of a travelling fan culture associated with England. With this emerging we would begin to witness the marginalisation and isolation of the violent minority and attendant attitudes while being able to identify with the positive majority. Friday night in Derby, 25 May 2001, England versus Mexico. The word on some fans' electronic grapevines is that there will be trouble between Derby supporters and their hated rivals from Nottingham Forest in town for the England game. Outside the city centre pubs there's a heavy police presence in anticipation of fighting while on the road to the game there are snatches of

'No Surrender' to be heard. But this is the side show. All around are kids with painted faces, mums, dads and lads are queuing up to be kitted out in Sombreros courtesy of *The Sun*, there are pictures to be had with the Mexican band strumming their guitars outside the stadium. The mood is friendly, celebratory, and with a dash of sunshine it might not even be stretching things too far even to describe it as 'carnavalesque'. Inside the ground as England take a 3-0, and finally a 4-0 lead it's the England stands that initiate round after round of the 'Mexican Wave' and barely a body in the place fails to jump up and join in joyfully. Away, almost entirely the opposite is true. The mood of impending trouble affects us all, even those who have absolutely no intention of getting caught up in it. Security and personal safety are major concerns, the support is much, much narrower than at home, the celebration is largely left on the shores of good old blighty. England expects? To get home safely, we hope. Until all of this is reversed the actuality of the violence will persist, the initiatives focussed on control will fail and the consequences of this failure will magnify.

To travel away following England should be an adventure we can all at some stage in our career of fandom look forward to. Sun, sights to see, unfamiliar food and drink to savour, and a football match that will have the nation talking for perhaps decades to come - this is what we might be able reasonably to expect. What spoils much of this for many of us, and deters so many more from travelling, is the expectation that there will also be trouble. Of course there are exceptions, but the England games where there's no football violence rarely get remembered for the fans, though the cultural capital gained each time the widely-predicted trouble fails to break out perhaps shouldn't be underestimated. The Helsinki tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* splashed across its front page the day after the 11 October 2000 Finland versus England game 'WHAT DID WE HAVE TO FEAR -

ENGLAND FANS ARE LAMBS' backed up by the incontrovertible evidence: 11 arrests, of which 10 were Finns. And notions of an exclusively 'English disease' look less conclusive after a French policeman is put into a coma by a pack of German fans in Lens during France '98. Sometimes the focus on England is simply a force of certain circumstances being drawn against us. Suppose Holland had ended up playing Germany on that fateful Saturday in Euro 2000 while we had to settle with, say, Belgium. Would England fans have gone home then as the sole culprits? Almost certainly not.

But no championship organising committee plan or qualifying group draw should have to be made simply to sanitise the English risk. So what we have to prepare for instead are the consequences of the self-fulfilling prophecy. If it is widely predicted that England away is a mad, bad and dangerous place to be is it any wonder that the mad, the bad and the dangerous turn up for precisely those reasons while countless others choose not to go? Of course we're not sheep, but the absence of almost any positive messages, images or information to encourage a more balanced sense of what travelling with England is like will inevitably narrow the away support. The potential breadth of England's away support is obvious at any England home game. Lots of families, plenty of women, fans of all ages - though still few black and Asian supporters. Yes, away support is almost always more 'hard core' than the home support, in lots of ways that is its defining characteristic. But England's away support is significantly more hard core compared to how the away support of a club side or another country relates to its corresponding home support. Bringing our home and away support closer together must involve unpicking the self-fulfilling prophecy of England abroad. When *The Observer* with their 'Hooligans Link up on the Net to Plot Mayhem at Euro 2000' headline and accompanying full-page feature, or *The Independent* with 'Euro 2000

Braced for the Wired-Up Hooligan', complete with maps and diagrams - are the more cool, calm and collected end of the pre-match build up then it is hardly any surprise that those looking for trouble made their way in large numbers to Charleroi and Brussels during Euro 2000. Meanwhile many of those who had enjoyed England's home qualifiers but feared for their safety having read these reports thought twice and didn't bother travelling. And then, when the championships are over, you've missed all the trouble, had a great time and you travel home only to be greeted by Steven Howard in *The Sun* as: 'the fans who had once again brought disgrace to the oldest footballing nation in the world and contempt to the lips of everyone else' and read of 'the base, sordid behaviour of the pond-life that accompanies England everywhere they travel.' Not exactly the words to encourage anyone to sign up for England's away trips are they? Until we start reading some words that actively encourage the kind of away support all England fans can be proud of then Steven Howard will be left with the excuse to write the same nauseating copy after every major championship that England has the good fortune to qualify for.

Is all this concern about football violence just a case of middle-class morality being imposed on a working-class culture? Alistair Macsporrán had a neat answer in the Scottish fanzine *The Absolute Game* writing a review of two of the latest offerings in 'hoolie-lit', *Down the Copland Road* by Ronnie Esplin and *Hearts are Here* by C. S. Ferguson:

Some pretended intellectual justification is painted on this loathsome project by suggesting that this is a valid part of 'working class culture' which is being swamped by the new culture of plastic seats and replica strips. Now, I'm with them when they feel threatened by the current over-commercialised direction in which football has been travelling for some years. But violent troublemakers are not, and never have been, a valid or admirable part of working class culture, and to suggest otherwise is quite contemptible.

*Socialist Worker* meanwhile found a different explanation for England's football violence. Under a banner headline 'Winding Up Frankenstein' Martin Smith commented on the trouble at Euro 2000:

English football thugs hammered anyone they could get their hands on ... The fighting by English fans is a direct result of the frenzy of nationalism whipped up by politicians and the media... The nationalism and the racism of the English hooligans is the mirror image of the racism being whipped up by Tory thugs like William Hague and Ann Widdecombe ... Tony Blair condemns the football violence, claiming it brings 'shame on England'. But new Labour does nothing to counter nationalism ... It has been more than happy to drape itself in the English flag.

The Left writing off all who follow England as racist thugs spurred on by a violent nationalism is just as inappropriate as 'hoolie-lit' writers romanticising crowd violence as a heritage trail through working-class culture. It could be argued that what is required is to disentangle the football from the flag. That is an admirable enough viewpoint, and in other countries the national stakes are clearly not nearly as high as when England plays. But for a sizeable chunk of both our population and our media it is as if the entire national past, present and future depends on eleven blokes squeezing a spherical bit of leather between three sticks of wood. However we rationalise it, football *is* an inextricably huge part of our national identity. In fact currently there's precious little else. The Scots have their own parliament, the Welsh and Northern Irish an assembly, which leaves England as the one country in any World Cup or European Championship without this most obvious symbol of statehood. None of this mattered while Britishness could be easily transposed for Englishness, though in every single instance this has always been executed at the expense of the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish. Devolution has changed all that, forever. Throw in resurgent and modernised celtic cultures in the shape of Travis and *Trainspotting*, Catatonia and *Human Traffic* plus *The Fleadh* music festivals and all

things Irish and it is not hard to see how the English seem like a little nation lost. This is the rich irony of English nationalism. We lorded it over the rest as Great Britain for such a long time we've forgotten how to calibrate, let alone celebrate, our own nationhood. All we're left with is the odd beer promotion. In 2001 Bombardier beer pulled out all the creative stops with their advert declaring 'Once more unto the Office, dear Friends' adding the explanation 'Because St. George's Day still isn't a national holiday' just in case anyone missed the point of the advert, the national day passes by unnoticed. Which leaves Peter Dobbie in the *Daily Mail* to bemoan the fact, 'Tomorrow in England St George will be ignored instead of celebrated in the same way that the Irish, Scots and Welsh value and trumpet their own icons and identity'. And thus football is left, almost alone, to bear more than its fair share of our emotional investment in national identity and flag-waving. In an era of globalisation local identities are becoming more, not less, important. Shunning our own while filling ourselves up with an unhealthy dose of national self-hatred and do-nothingness in the face of what we sometimes allow Englishness to become adds nothing to the solution and a whole lot more to the problem.

Diktat - do this, don't do that - won't deliver the changes required. It ignores why we go to football in the first place. In large part it is to escape from regulations, instructions, serving on committees and the like. We all want to get out of control, be unruly, shout words and behave in a way unacceptable at work or at home. This doesn't have to involve intimidation, offence or violence, and for the vast majority of us it never does. Consideration for others isn't such a rare virtue in a football crowd. But escape from the everyday is a vital part of football's appeal. J. B. Priestley summed this up brilliantly in his 1929 account of English life *The Good Companions*. His language is a touch antiquated, gender roles have changed a lot (though in football still not

enough) since Priestley's day, but his point remains a powerful one:

For a shilling the Bruddersford United AFC offered you conflict and art; it turned you into a critic, happy in your judgement of fine points, ready in a second to estimate the worth of a well-judged pass, a run down the touch line, a lightning shot, a clearance kick by back or goalkeeper; it turned you into a partisan, holding your breath when the ball came sailing into your own goalmouth, ecstatic when your forwards raced away towards the opposite goal, elated, downcast, bitter, triumphant by turns at the fortunes of your side, watching a ball shape Illiads and Odysseys for you; and what is more, it turned you into a member of a new community, all brothers together for an hour and a half, for not only had you escaped from the clanking machinery of this lesser life, from work, wages, rent, dole, sick pay, insurance cards, nagging wives, ailing children, bad bosses, idle workmen, but you had escaped with most of your mates and neighbours, with half the town, and there you were, cheering together, thumping one another on the shoulders, swapping judgements like lords of the earth, having pushed your way through a turnstile into another and altogether more splendid kind of life, hurtling with conflict and yet passionate and beautiful in its art.

Nick Hornby couldn't, and hasn't, put it better. Strong leadership from the football authorities against football violence, while welcome, will only be effective if it is conducted in partnership with the fans who still seek this escape that Priestley so vividly portrays, but buy into this escape being inclusive, not exclusive by virtue of either violence or the attitudes it feeds off.

The initiatives concerned with football violence since Euro 2000 have been largely concerned with control, mixed with a dose of demonisation. In July 2000 *The Guardian* front page headline announced 'Straw to Rush Through Hooligan Crackdown'. And when the legislation was passed later that same month the emphasis was clear enough: to identify known troublemakers in advance of a tournament or high-profile game and prevent them from travelling. Sounds great in theory, but what about the practice? If the bans are limited to those with a conviction in the preceding five years for a football-related, or indeed other, violent offence the numbers are probably manageable enough to detect and

detain under a banning order. But of course, as has been pointed out time and time again, many, if not most, of those who end up caught causing violence abroad have no previous convictions. So control becomes focused more and more on either suspicion or distribution of tickets through official channels. 'Innocent until proven guilty' should be the kind of tradition that makes up our national fabric so how far are we willing to go in tearing it up? If a group of lads turns up at the Waterloo Eurostar terminal and start singing 'I'd rather be a Paki than a Turk' then the police have perfectly legitimate grounds to prevent them from travelling under a number of current laws. If, however, they just happen to have shaven heads, are covered in tattoos, and have a liking for expensive designer gear, is that legitimate cause to stop them from leaving the country? Hopefully not. Nobody in their right minds would argue with effective forms of deterrence but the evidence of the past 20 years and more is that these control solutions on their own simply will not work and end up being used to justify increasingly draconian measures. The events on Mayday 2001 in Oxford Circus have been the most high-profile use of legislation in this way. To prevent the day's anti-capitalist demonstration taking place, section 60 of the 1994 Criminal Justice Act was used. This allows:

Where a police officer of or above the rank of superintendent reasonably believes that incidents involving serious violence may take place in any locality in his area and it is expedient to do so to prevent their occurrence he may give an authorisation that the powers to stop and search persons and vehicles conferred by this section shall be exercisable at any place within that locality for a period not exceeding twenty four hours.

The build-up to the Mayday protest was remarkably similar to that for any high-profile game involving England. The same self-fulfilling prophecy: Oxford Street was set to be a risky place for shoppers and shopkeepers alike, the need for a heavy police presence was promoted, well-organised mayhem was predicted, anybody who joined the protest

would only have themselves to blame for the consequences. Demonisation spilled over into widespread criminalisation. Over 2,500 hemmed in by row after row of riot police for eight hours plus. And *The Mirror's* headline the next day? 'One Nil to the Bill', it doesn't take a semiotician to read the signs does it? On the inside pages of the same paper Paul Routledge, *The Mirror's* Chief Political Commentator denounced the consequences of overkill police tactics: 'Democracy survived in London yesterday. Not in the hands of baton-wielding police, but in the hearts of kids in anoraks taking on the system. Yesterday's real heroes were not the fat blue line, but the anonymous brats of democracy.' Routledge's view ran starkly counter to the *The Mirror* editorial in the same day's paper: 'The May Day 2001 Battle of London was another proud day for the British police'. While the *Daily Mail* splashed across their front page an enormous photo of a policeman hitting a protester on the head with his truncheon accompanied by the banner headline, 'The Day The Law Fought Back.' The previous day Tony Blair added to the criminalisation of the protests in a speech to the London Press Club: 'It is not protest - it is crime pure and simple.'

What has all this to do with football? Demonisation and criminalisation of the majority because of the actions of the minority, that's what. Some would say that draconian policing is a price they are willing to pay to eliminate football violence, many would beg to differ while others will counter that it doesn't work anyway - never has, never will. Section 21 of the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 provides summary detention measures for police constables who have: 'reasonable grounds to believe that making a banning order would help to prevent violence or disorder at or in connection with regulated football matches'. This allows for four hours detention, extended to six hours with the approval of a policeman with the rank of Inspector or above. This period however can go on longer if further information

is required. These measures surely can only be expected to work if they are extended ever more widely. That is their logic - treat as suspicious, vet and detain for questioning every person travelling to a country where England is due to play, throw in adjoining countries too, for say a week beforehand, that should just about do it, or not. Having demonised England football fans, we'll throw in foreign travellers too. The expense and impact of such an operation would be huge. So the air of suspicion settles, and the demonisation takes on an ugly edge. Fashion sense, haircut, accent, age and tattoos all become signs of trouble. Meanwhile with all this talk of security sweeps, body searches and covert surveillance, how many fans who've already read that mayhem is ensured when they arrive anyway will once again think twice about travelling? Demonisation leads to criminalisation which produces another form of exclusion every time it is practised. And when it fails to prevent outbreaks of trouble the inexorable logic is for more and more police powers with wider and wider application.

Alongside sweeping legislation and extensive police powers the principal target for action has been the official supporters organisation of the England national team, the England Members Club (EMC). At the October 2000 launch of the Home Office Working Group on Football Disorder, Home Office Minister Lord Bassam singled out the EMC: 'There's a lot of unpleasant racism within that quarter of the crowd. It does greatly disturb us, it's something we want to root out.' He described the EMC as 'a profoundly white, 20-40 year olds supporters' club.' Yet the EMC; now *englandfans*, remains the best hope the government and football authorities have for a meaningful dialogue with the active England fans who detest and abhor the violent reputation others have saddled them with. Demonising all England fans, and the EMC in particular is a big mistake and fails to contribute to dialogue with supporters. (The launch

of the working group was reported in the *Daily Mail* with the headline 'Racist Core at Official England Soccer Fan Club'.) This doesn't mean going soft on racism and xenophobia, ignoring the violence of some of our own - anything but. What it does mean though is actively listening to, engaging with, and providing an effective platform for the majority of fans who suffer most from the negatives associated with supporting England.

Parallel to the Home Office initiatives aimed at the EMC, the FA themselves had already committed to wholesale restructuring of the club. Since its formation in time for Italia '90 as the 'England Travel Club' the organisation had effectively functioned as a ticket distribution agency, controlling the official allocation of tickets for England away games and providing priority booking for home games. With qualification for World Cup '98 the first ventures towards a broader role began, taking in the need to improve relations with England fans and cleaning up their reputation abroad. It started slowly, cautiously, conservatively at first but nevertheless with an admirable degree of commitment from the fans and officials involved. Charlie Whelan however was one of those not impressed, writing in *The Observer* four months before Euro 2000 opened: 'This year we are told that England fans are to go on a charm offensive. Are they trying to insult our intelligence?' And he certainly didn't warm to the *England Fans Travel Guide* produced by the EMC for the championships: 'The fans going to Euro 2000 will be given a guide to restaurants, museums and other cultural attractions. This, we are told, will encourage them to sample life in the towns and cities they visit. Who are they kidding?' Whelan denounced the entire initiative as 'utterly offensive', a non-starter before it even had the chance to begin. Of course he was right if the test of its success was the wholesale prevention of any outbreaks of trouble associated with England's support. But alongside the events in Charleroi and around La Bourse in Brussels