defend the virtues of old-fashioned nationalism—a way to blunt the return of tribalism.

The story begins bleakly and grows progressively more optimistic. In the end, I found it hard to be too hostile toward globalization. For all its many faults, it has brought soccer to the far corners of the world and into my life.

1

How Soccer Explains the Gangster's Paradise

I.

Red Star Belgrade is the most beloved, most successful soccer team in Serbia. Like nearly every club in Europe and Latin America, it has a following of unruly fans capable of terrific violence. But at Red Star the violent fans occupy a place of honor, and more than that. They meet with club officials to streamline the organizational flow chart of their gangs. Their leaders receive stipends. And as part of this package, they have access to office space in the team's headquarters in the upper-middle-class neighborhood of Topcider.

The gangs have influence, in large measure, because they've won it with intimidation. A few months before I arrived in Belgrade to learn about the club's complicity in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, Red Star fan clubs had burst into the team's training session. With bats, bars, and other bludgeons, they beat three of

Jews emerged as the nationalist politicians' scapegoat of choice. These politicians, and their newspapers, homed in on MTK as a potent symbol of the perniciousness of the Jew. They ascribed the crudest anti-Semitic stereotypes to the club—money grubbing, rootless mercenaries, dirty players. In the forties, these nationalists came to power and aligned themselves with the Nazis. They shuttered MTK entirely because of its ethnic affiliation. After World War II swept out these Iron Cross fascists, the communists reopened MTK for business. The party handed control of the club to a succession of patrons from the trade unions and secret police.

But no matter the patron, the club's identity has never changed. Despite the many efforts of supporters and management, the perception of Jewishness could never be scrubbed from MTK. Even now, in the democratic era, as Hungary enters the European Union, very few gentiles support MTK. It still means crossing a social barrier that even the most liberal, open-minded Hungarians don't often traverse. To them, wearing an MTK jersey is akin to wearing a yarmulke. The result is that one of the two best teams in Hungary has become a ghetto in the oldest European sense of the word, a distillation of the European Jewish condition, the bittersweet mingling of the greatest success and lonely misery.

4

How Soccer Explains the Sentimental Hooligan

I.

To my knowledge, there is only one example of the converse of Tottenham's Yid Army: a Jewish soccer fan who proudly taunts opposing teams with anti-Semitic insults. I know him by his nom de guerre, Alan Garrison.

His surname is an alias that he adopted almost thirty years ago to complicate dealings with the police. Since the age of five, Alan has supported Tottenham's West London rivals, Chelsea. He deserves his own page in the history book, and not just as an oddity. By the mid-nineteen-sixties, he was a commander in one of the first organized crews of English soccer hooligans. He practically invented the genre. Under his leadership—that is until he spent much of the seventies and eighties in prison—Chelsea began to emerge as the most storied band of soccer thugs on the planet, the group with the greatest capacity for hate and destruction.

But before describing this contribution to European civilization, I must qualify my characterization of Alan as a Jew. And I admit that this is not a small qualification. Alan Garrison's German father served as a lieutenant in Hitler's SS. The Allies charged him with war crimes committed in the Russian campaign, although they never prosecuted the case. When British troops in the south of France shot him in the stomach and legs, everything in his life suddenly and strangely inverted. The Allies captured his riddled body and mercifully sent it to heal in an Edinburgh military infirmary. As he lay sprawled in his medical dress and entirely dependent on the goodness of his adversary, he fell madly in love with his Scottish-Jewish nurse, and she with him. In 1946, they had Alan, the first of their three Aryan-Jewish children. It was a match made to inflame. Both the mother's family and community ferociously shunned them. When this shame and stigma became too great to bear, they fled with their baby to a new, less fraught, more anonymous life in London.

From the looks of Alan's adult visage—doughy face, droopy eyes, English teeth, big glasses, feathery gray hair—he would have had a hard time on the playground no matter what his pedigree. His mixed parentage didn't help his case on the asphalt. "Dumb kike," the heartless kids would call out one day, kicking and bullying him. "Fuckin' Nazi Hun," they would yell the next, reenacting their anti-Semitic pogrom as a heroic advance against Hitler's bunker.

Alan's identity became a drag. When his mother wanted him to become a Bar Mitzvah, he flatly refused. He told her, poor lady, that he had given up on the Jew-

ish religion all together. From that day forward, he would practice paganism and worship the goddess Isis, part of a faith his art teacher had explained in a course on ancient civilization. Alan made other resolutions to himself. He would become strong. He would take up boxing and use his combinations against any fool who dared insult him. He would do whatever he could to ingratiate himself with the crowd of tough lads. By befriending them, he would be surrounding himself in a protective bubble that could repel all attackers.

On Alan's fifth birthday, his father, now an accountant, gave him a break from the pummeling. He took him to watch their local club, Chelsea, play in the Stamford Bridge stadium. West London in those days didn't yet have sushi restaurants or latte bars. Chelsea, both the neighborhood and the club, had hardly a hint of the glamour or cosmopolitanism that so define it now. On weekdays, dogs would race on the track that wrapped around the soccer field. In the Shed, like large parts of English soccer stadiums before the 1990s, there was no place to sit, just terraces of concrete. You could cram a seemingly unending amount of humanity into these terraces, and the ticket-takers were never really inclined to cut off the flow. The stadium, so filled with passion and camaraderie, overwhelmed Alan. This, too, he wanted in his life. As he got a bit older, he began going to games on his own and grew chummy with the other kids who haunted the Shed. They loved the football, to be sure, but they also liked to behave badly.

They set a new standard for their naughtiness during a 1963 match against a club from the industrial north called Burnley. A few hundred Burnley fans sat in

the North Stand of Stamford Bridge, opposite the Shed. Alan and his friends fumed over this presence of so many outsiders. They decided that they would pay a surprise visit to the North Stand and teach Burnley a lesson about the etiquette of visiting Chelsea. Because Alan wasn't even sixteen—and many of his mates were even younger—their attack was easily repelled by a bunch of thirty-year-old men, whose jobs in mechanic shops and factory floors had bequeathed them imposing biceps. "It was a right kicking," Alan recalled to me many years later. Within minutes after he launched the attack, Alan was sent tumbling down several flights of terraces. The young men needed many pints of lager to make the pain go away.

But even the alcohol couldn't erase the humiliation. From that evening in the pub, Alan and his mates began planning a visit to Burnley the next season. Stealth tactics would guide them. They would melt into the Burnley crowd, and only then mount their attack. It worked masterfully. Nobody can be sure how many men of Burnley were sent to the hospital that day. But enough fell that the newspapers took notice. The English press wrote about a menace it called football hooliganism.

II.

When I first met Alan in a pub, he looked like a man who spends a significant amount of time straddling a Harley Davidson. He wore a black satin Oakland Raiders jacket. His hair was short on the sides and

thick on the top, a half-mullet. A Wiccan amulet—an inverted pentacle—dangled from his neck on a piece of string. Upon seeing his middle-aged physique, I thought, if worst comes to worst, at least I'll be able to outrun him.

Alan had arrived for our interview twenty minutes late and greeted me brusquely. "All right," he said, shaking my hand, failing to acknowledge his tardiness. I guided him to a table in the corner.

"Let me get you a drink," I offered.

"A Coke. I don't drink," he replied. "I learned the hard way that it disadvantages you in a fight."

Very quickly in our conversation, he ostentatiously advertised his bona fides. "The police have nicked me twenty-one times. . . . I'm addicted to violence. . . . I've tried to stop, but I can't." He showed me battle scars, a bump on his wrist from a shattered bone that healed funny; an arm that folds around in a direction that would defy a healthy network of joints and tendons. But in making this presentation, he began to undermine the image he intended. Alan is a compulsive talker, with endless opinions on an endless number of subjects. My pen struggled to match the pace of his pontifications on the deficiencies of authoritarian governments, the morality of the Anglo-American war against Iraq, the genius of Alexander the Great, and the earnest temperament of Californians.

This profusion only came to a stop when he arrived at the subject of his beloved club, Chelsea. "This is a good place for you to visit," he said, motioning toward the bar, "because of its symbolism." The bar takes its name from the old, notorious Shed that once housed

the Chelsea toughs. In fact, the bar stands on that very spot. Only now the Shed can be entered from the lobby of a plush hotel—part of a massive upmarket development on the stadium grounds. Around the corner from the pub, it is possible to order lobster at the King's Brasserie. Inside the Shed, professionals in suits laugh over pints. A plasma TV flashes an advertisement for massages and other treatments at the Chelsea Club and Spa on the other side of the stadium.

More than any club in the world, Chelsea has been transformed by globalization and gentrification. It went from the club most closely identified with hooliganism in the eighties to the club most identified with cosmopolitanism in the nineties. The real estate development of Stamford Bridge was only a piece of this. Gentrification could be seen on the pitch, too. Chelsea hired a string of Italian and Dutch eminences to coach the team and leave their flashy foreign imprints. Under their stewardship, Chelsea earned the distinction of becoming the first club in England to field a squad that contained not a single Englishman. Their new panache exacerbated the trend toward the cosmopolitan, attracting a boatload of foreign investment. The Middle Eastern airline Air Emirates began advertising on its jersey. In 2003, the second richest man in Russia, a Jewish oil magnate called Roman Abramovich, bought a majority stake in the club and began to spend his fortune constructing a championship-caliber team.

To many, Alan included, these improvements felt like a nasty swipe at the club's working-class base, as if the team had dropped its most loyal fans for the ephemeral affiliations of the trend-conscious effete. Of

the many changes, there was a single moment that hurt most. In 1983, Chelsea's chairman Ken Bates proposed encasing fans in a 12-volt electrical fence that would shock them if they ever attempted to escape their pen. "They would have treated us as badly as animals," Alan says. Only intervention by the local government prevented this plan from going into action. But the public-relations damage had been done.

Until the 1990s, much of England's social elite treated the game with snobbish disdain. Before Rupert Murdoch tried to acquire Manchester United, his paper the *Sunday Times* famously branded soccer "a slum sport played by slum people." Britain's prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the leading proponent of middle-class values soi-disant, exhibited this haughtiness as much as anyone. The Iron Lady's good friend Kenneth Clark said that she "regarded football supporters as the enemy within." For much of her tenure, she spoke aloud of her desire to declare war on hooliganism. And in 1989, her government had the ideal pretext for taking action. At the Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, ninety-five fans watching Liverpool play Nottingham Forest were asphyxiated against the fences in the overcrowded terraces that held them. In response to this carnage, a government commission demanded that stadiums turn their standing-only terraces into proper seats, like the ones you might find at a theater. Policing at stadiums would finally become a serious business, with video cameras documenting every fight and song.

The new requirements transformed the game's economics. To finance the reconstruction of their stadiums, the old owners, mostly small self-made businessmen,

imported loads of new capital. Much of it came from slick city investors, who understood that soccer held a giant captive market and massive untapped profit centers. The new stands included plush executive suites that they leased to corporations. They floated shares of their clubs on the stock exchange, raised ticket prices, and sold the league's television rights to Rupert Murdoch's satellite service. Their plan worked to perfection. A new, wealthier fan began attending games in the safer, more comfortable stadiums. For the first time, women were plentiful in the stands.

But these changes came at a cost. The new clientele eroded the old, boisterous working-class ambience. As Alan explained this transformation, he invoked a time when "ten thousand would come to the stadium. Six thousand of them would be up for a fight. The rest came to watch a fight. Yeah, they'd say they were disgusted. But you'd ask them in the pub afterwards, 'Did you watch the fight or the football?' " He leans back and imitates a prig's voice, " 'Oh, the fight, of course.' " He laughs at his own observation. "Now, people just want to go to the game so that they can say"—he reverts to the prig persona—" 'Look, I'm cool. I go to Chelsea.' When I get up to sing, they say, 'Sit down.' "

Unwittingly, Alan boiled down the essential cultural argument against globalization made by *No Logo* author Naomi Klein, the McDonald's-smashing French farmer José Bove, and countless others: multinational capitalism strips local institutions of their localness, it homogenizes, destroys traditions, and deprives indigenous proletariats and peasants of the things they love most. It's easy to understand how this argument would apply

to English soccer in general and Chelsea in particular. When I attended a game at the Stamford Bridge, I went with an American investment banker and his Latin American girlfriend. We sat in part of the stadium that Alan Garrison had once ruled with his band of rowdies. But in comparison to the taunting songsters of Glasgow, Chelsea looked like the audience at a symphony, with only a few beefy guys muttering incendiary obscenities under their breaths. They studiously kept their vulgarities to themselves, so that police scanning the crowd with handheld cameras would see nothing and have no basis for depriving them of their tickets. (Alan has lost his three times.)

But it's possible to overstate the change and the case against change. For starters, the game hasn't gone completely yuppie. Sure, ticket prices may be high at Chelsea—about $50 for a seat—but they're not prohibitively expensive. Even in posh West London, perhaps the most yuppie stretch in the whole of Britain, Chelsea still manages to draw a largely working-class crowd. The main difference is that it's an integrated crowd, labor and management, street cleaner and advertising executive together. In the course of English history, this may be an earth-shattering development.

In response to the rise of corporate power, there's a natural inclination to believe that self-interest hadn't always ruled the market. Soccer writers in England often portray the old club owners as far more beneficent, public-minded citizens doing good for their old working-class friends. But this is nostalgia for a social market that never existed. Before the nineties, there was so little money in the game that owners let

their stadiums decay into reprehensible safety traps. In effect, owners treated their fans as if their lives were expendable. Their negligence resulted in a complete breakdown, the broken-windows theory of social decay in microcosm. Fans began to think of life as expendable, too. They would beat the crap out of one another each weekend. To be sorrowful about the disappearance of this old culture requires grossly sentimentalizing the traditions and atmosphere that have passed. Indeed, this is an important characteristic of the globalization debate: the tendency toward glorifying all things indigenous, even when they deserve to be left in the past. So, in a way, a hooligan's nostalgia for his youth is the most honest kind of nostalgia.

III.

Before I met Alan Garrison, I had dipped into his writings. Surfing Chelsea Web sites, I had stumbled upon a page maintained by Alan plugging excerpts from *We're the North Stand*, an unpublished novelized memoir of his early days as a hooligan. It is a picaresque work about a circle of friends who travel England and Europe picking fights. In the manuscript, he refers to himself as Alan Merrill—a nom de plume which separates him further from his nom de guerre which separates him from any self-incriminating admissions.

Garrison writes with surprising clarity and panache. But as a novelist, he has a few shortcomings. The Merrill character has an unbelievable streak of heroic self-sacrificing interventions that remove innocent

bystanders from harm. He wins fights like a superhero disposing of common criminals. ("One [hooligan] throws a desperate punch back towards Merrill, who ducks it easily before grabbing hold of the extended wrist. He then quickly pulls the youth around, using himself as the pivot-point, sending the helpless body crashing into the gate's upright.") Still, in many ways, it's an astonishing bit of self-sociology. Garrison doesn't try to elevate his friends into rebels pursuing a higher cause or monsters acting out the pathologies of poverty. They are simply average guys stuck in a world of violence from which they don't have any particular desire to escape.

Garrison is the thinking man's hooligan, a careful reader of military history and newspapers and a devoted Hellenist, who spends his free time poring over works on Alexander the Great. He doesn't admit it, but it must have irked him that he hadn't thought of writing a memoir earlier. By the time he put pen to paper, three of his friends had already sent off manuscripts to publishers. Steve "Hickey" Hickmont, who assumed Alan's place in the Chelsea hierarchy during his prison years, had published *Armed for the Match*. His buddy Chris "Chubby" Henderson wrote another memoir. Yet another comrade called Martin King hit the shelves with *Hoolifan*, a different perspective on the same tale. Convinced that he had his own crackling version to tell, Garrison sent his manuscript to his friends' publishers. Where his friends had worked with co-authors, Garrison wrote his by himself. Perhaps he hoped that the authenticity of his unadulterated voice would provide his competitive advantage. It didn't. He

received polite rejections—the only way really to reject a hooligan. "They told me that the book was too violent and right-wing."

If they were honest, however, the publishers would have given him another explanation. The market simply couldn't sustain another memoir about hooliganism—or at least it shouldn't. Aside from the Chelsea books, hooligans from West Ham's Inter City Firm, Cardiff City's Soul Crew, Portsmouth's 657 Crew, and virtually every other major and minor club have produced their own tediously repetitious memoirs, with such titles as *Want Some Aggro?* and *City Psychos*. These days, the sports section at corner London bookshops largely consists of this hooligan lit. The genre goes far beyond these first-person tales. Two brothers called Dougie and Eddy Brimson, whose dust jacket shows them with appropriately shaved heads and comically attempting menacing gazes, have made a franchise of publishing pop anthropological studies of soccer violence. Their books quote heavily from hooligans and have names like *Eurotrashed* and *Capital Punishment: London's Violent Football Following*. A novelist called John King has added a shelf full of hooligan fiction, mostly about Chelsea. Another shelf includes books on hooligan fashion and the underground hooligan economy, as well as tomes by academics hoping to cash in on their sexy specialization.

On a smaller scale, the English hooligan has become like the gangsta rapper or the Mafioso, a glamorized, commodified criminal. When the BBC finds itself in need of a ratings boost, it airs one of its many hooligan documentaries. Every month, it seems, one of

the British men's magazines rolls out a piece documenting some new wrinkle of domestic hooliganism or its foreign offspring. The full breadth of this phenomenon hadn't struck me until I went to see Chelsea in person. Walking down Fulham Road, I came across a vendor laying out tables with a collection of hats and pins bearing the skull-and-bones symbol of the infamous Headhunters gang. In the stands, I saw one teen with spiky hair wearing a blue Headhunters T-shirt. Stadium security must have felt comfortable letting him through the gates, knowing that no true hooligan would be dumb enough to flash them such an advertisement.

This hooligan industry only started in the late nineties, when the gentrification of the English game was already in full swing, at a point when hooliganism had ceased to flourish in its traditional form. Of course, hooligans still fought, just not inside the stadium. As Alan explained the mechanics of fighting to me, "You call up the leader of the other firm and say, 'Right, meet you at Trafalgar Square at two.' And then you hope that the police don't get there before it goes off. Sometimes it goes off. Sometimes you see the coppers and walk away." For Alan, this new mode of appointment hooliganism trampled the pleasure of pure art. It was far more exhilarating when fights took place in narrow corridors of stadiums or in the stands. And with all the prearrangement, "fighting has lost it spontaneity." He poses the existential question of the modern soccer hooligan: "If football violence doesn't take place in the stadium, is it even football violence?" Even though it pains him to admit it, he believes that hooliganism has

been domesticated, or domesticated enough to become an object of fascination and adoration.

You can understand why the market might have an appetite for the hooligan. On the most basic level, he's a romantic rebel, willing to risk bodily harm and battle police. He's not just a nihilist. He fights for the colors of the club, the same colors that the average peace-abiding fan loves. Because the hooligan is so similar, he is so fascinating. Why would some fans—guys who are part of liberal, peaceful England—take full leave of conventional morality and become thugs?

The hooligan literature doesn't try to answer this question analytically. The mode is confessional and it aims to shock. (To quote at random from Alan's work, "The body fall[s] face downward on the platform, blood gushing from a deep cut in the back of the skull.") Nevertheless, the authors feel the need to justify their violent behavior. They may have left conventional morality, but they still live near it. The hooligans typically describe themselves as practicing a virtuous violence: They never assault innocent bystanders, and they never use weapons. Too often, the desire to self-exculpate combines with the narrative imperative to shock to produce comic book writing, all bams and splats.

Garrison, like all the rest, sanitizes the story, omitting some of the most interesting biographical details. That's too bad, because it's quite a story. From his early days as a Chelsea hooligan, he had become a self-admitted addict of the violence and the adrenaline that precedes it. "Fear is a drug," he says, "There's a very thin line between being hero and coward. It's better than sex. It lasts longer as well." He decided that he

wanted a career that would deliver the rush in regular doses. After school, with London in full swinging sixties mode, he bucked the emerging hippie zeitgeist and enlisted in the army. More specifically, he volunteered for a unit in the elite special services that would give him the most opportunities to practice his beloved craft of violence.

Alan began living a strange double life. During the week, and for long stretches of the year, he would serve his country. At times, this would involve taking part in secret missions to fight and train armies whose identity he's reluctant to divulge. On weekends, he returned to his teenage football fighting. He reckons that the army knew about his double life—how could they not, with such a long sheet of crimes?—but didn't much care about any weekend havoc so long as he performed his weekday duties. As part of this double life, he began acquiring the trappings of conventionality. He married and had a daughter. Although his wife would plead with him to cut out the violence, she had no leverage to push her case. By the time they first met, "she'd heard about me from a friend who'd worked with her. We met at an office Christmas party. I introduced myself to her and she said, 'I don't want to know you. You're a fucking hooligan.' " She could never accuse Alan of selling her a false bill of goods.

His two lives fed off one another. "I was trained to fight and I couldn't turn it off," he says. His other comrades didn't want to turn it off either. Garrison says eight fellow soldiers joined him in the hooligan ranks. They brought a measure of professionalism to the fight. On a trip to the States, Garrison smuggled back CB

radios, then illegal in Britain, and used them to coordinate assaults. The hooligan soldiers would carefully map out stadiums and their surroundings. Alan would stand back from the fray and track proceedings using binoculars and radio reports. "We were the fire brigade. When someone got into trouble, needed some help, we would come in and sort things out."

But there was tension between his existences, and in 1977, they ceased to be compatible. Chelsea traveled to the southwest of the country for a match at Plymouth. As the game ended, Garrison and his friends began bullying their way into the section holding Plymouth fans. Garrison had settled into combat with an opponent when, without his ever seeing it coming, an iron pipe made solid, shattering contact with the back of his skull. The furtive attacker struck him on the hand, too. Unfortunately for the attacker, he failed to knock the consciousness out of Garrison, who rose to his feet, seized the pipe, and began extracting vengeance. A blow to the face knocked his adversary's eye from the socket. "It was hanging by a string," he admits. It was Garrison's ill fortune that a police officer entered the scene at this moment, with the eye and pipe weighing heavily against Alan's protestations of innocence.

When he came to trial, Garrison supplied the court with x-rays of his broken hand and fractured skull to prove that he had acted in self-defense. This evidence, however, couldn't overcome the eyewitness account of a cop. A judge sent Garrison away for attempted murder. He left his family to spend nearly five years in Dartmoor prison.

IV.

On my next trip to London, Garrison met me at the Finchley Road tube stop near his home. We walked down the street for a drink at Weatherspoon's Pub. When I took out my wallet to buy drinks, he pushed it away.

"I'm Jewish, but not that Jewish. You bought last time."

Alan wore a T-shirt with air-brushed scorpions that he had purchased at a market near San Francisco a few years ago. He told me, "Bought it for seventy-five dollars off the artist. I later found out that was quite a good deal."

Conversations with Garrison invariably lead back to the Bay Area. In the eighties, after his release from prison, he fell into a career as a graphics designer, with a specialty in video games. When one of his friends landed in Silicon Valley, just in time for the dot-com boom of the nineties, Alan followed him to California. Miraculously, the Immigration and Naturalization Service overlooked his convictions and granted Alan a work visa. He bought himself a house in the San Francisco suburbs.

"So what was the dot-com boom like?" I asked.

He paused uncharacteristically to think it over and then responded with a non sequitur. "Jesus Christ, but the women out there are sharks. Sitting at a bar, they're around you like flies to shit. One day I was chatting with one bird and she says, 'Are you coming back to my place?' Then she got into her purse and pulled out this thing. 'This is my AIDS certificate. I've been tested.'

And I'm like what? She says, 'I've been tested.' I said, 'When was that?' She said, 'Three weeks ago.' And I said, 'How many blokes have you been with since then? Fuck off.' " He waved his hand, laughing at his story. "Women out there are like sharks, especially around English accents."

In his book, he constantly flashes to scenes from his life in California and juxtaposes them with life in England. It makes for quite a contrast. But Alan also credits himself with bridging cultural gaps. The first time we met, he wore an Oakland Raiders jacket. It was an entirely appropriate outfit. Of all American football clubs, the Raiders have a reputation for surly, working-class fans that most closely approximate English soccer hooligans. During his years as an American, Garrison supported the Raiders as fervently as he could support any organization that wasn't Chelsea. "We tried to teach them how to behave like proper hooligans," told me. At a game in San Diego, he organized Raiders fans to make "a run" through the parking lot, throwing punches and asserting dominance over the home crowd that stood turning hot dogs on their portable grills. "They didn't know what hit them."

Liberal northern California is hardly a place fit for a Chelsea hooligan. More than any club, Chelsea has been associated with the neo-Nazi right. I had just seen a BBC documentary that showed how many of the Chelsea hooligans—people that Alan knows—travel to concentration camps on tourist trips so that they can admire Hitler's accomplishments. They deliver *sieg heil* salutes to the tourists and confiscate artifacts for their

personal collections of concentration camp paraphernalia. Back in London, they've provided protection for Holocaust denier David Irving.

This history of English hooliganism can best be told as a distorted version of mainstream youth culture. At first, in Alan's heyday, hooliganism imitated the early "I Want to Hold Your Hand" Beatles' nonpolitical rebellion. It was all a good laugh, just for fun. Then, in the seventies, hooliganism began to dabble in radical politics. Only, as practitioners of hate and violence, they couldn't credibly join with the peace-love-dope crowd. They went in the opposite direction, becoming the vanguard of the proto-fascist British nationalist movement. And just as the youth movement veered toward mindlessness, nihilism, and punk, the Chelsea movement became even more mindless, nihilist, and punk. During Alan's imprisonment, admiration for the Nazis became a virtue.

As their numbers grew, Chelsea hooligans began subdividing into groups called "firms." The most famous of the groups called themselves the Chelsea Headhunters. After their assaults, they would leave a calling card with their skull-and-bones logo that read, "You have been nominated and dealt with by the Chelsea Headhunters." In addition to linking up with the far right, the Headhunters joined with criminal elements. They began peddling drugs and used other criminal rackets to become quite rich. Like the Bloods and Crips of L.A. street gang fame, they spent their money on fancy cars and designer clothes.

Another group formed a coalition of hooligans across teams called Combat 18. It derived its moniker

from a numerological breakdown of Adolf Hitler's name, with the A yielding the 1 and H being the eighth letter of the alphabet. Originally, the group began as a security force for the racialist British National Party, which had some horrifying luck exploiting xenophobia for electoral gain. But in the early nineties Combat 18 grew disillusioned with the softness of the BNP, even though the party unabashedly admired the Nazis. Combat 18 had no patience with the BNP's reformist embrace of electoral politics. They wanted White Revolution and they exploded nail bombs in immigrant neighborhoods, instigated race riots in Oldham, and plotted to kidnap the left-wing actress Vanessa Redgrave.

Although Alan identified himself as a right winger, he also presented his own politics as reasonably mainstream. Most of his judgments could have been issued by any conservative pundit on a TV chat show. But he also obviously hailed from the Combat 18 milieu. Many of the hard core from the terrorist right shared his demographic profile precisely. A slew of these thugs had even served in the special services, like Alan, before the police caught up with them. So I asked, "What about Combat 18?"

Occasionally, on these sensitive subjects, Alan would tell me to turn off my tape recorder and put down my pen. But, this time, he didn't. He shifted his glass of Coke to the side. "First, this whole racist thing is bullshit. They're nationalists. There are blacks in Combat 18. . . . That's what I mean about this whole racist thing: It's bullshit. If someone comes here [to England] like Kojak," a black Chelsea hooligan, "he considers himself English. He talks with an English accent. He says, 'I'm brought up here. I'm English. I don't give a toss if my parents came from the West Indies.' He'll fight for anything English. And he's in Combat 18, which is right wing. It's not racist right wing. It's nationalist right wing." He was adamant about this point.

"And what about the Jews? What about the Yids at Tottenham? Does that bother you?"

"Nobody bothers me. They make jokes, but I joke about being Jewish myself."

While he spoke, I thought of the documentary I had seen the night before: the image of Chelsea hooligans sending postcards from Auschwitz to an anti-fascist activist back in England: "Wish you were here so that you could see me pissing on your mother's bones."

V.

The new economy may not have survived the nineties, but it left behind a new profession: the consultant. Every industry has them. Why should hooliganism be any different? While Alan doesn't fight regularly, he and the other semiretired Chelsea hooligans advise and mentor a group of teens that calls itself the Youth Firm. "We help them plan. And when it goes off, we stay back with a map and mobile phone." The old hooligans keep a hand in the youngsters' operation, because they're loath to give up all the pleasures of battle—and filled with nostalgia for their own youths. They also feel a sense of obligation to the institution that has nurtured

them for so long. "We feel a certain responsibility to the young guys," Alan told me. "We want them to succeed. They're Chelsea. And we have experience that can be helpful to them."

Like a college alumni association, the semiretired hooligans make a point of sticking together. They stay in touch through a message board, where they discuss the Youth Firm, exchange war stories and opinions about their beloved club. Not surprisingly, for a group that longs for the past, a large number of their posts concern their portrayal in the memoirs published by their fellow hooligans. They're especially sensitive to the depictions of Chelsea in the books written by gangs from rival clubs. Responding to a memoir by a Hull City hooligan, a fellow with the handle "monkeyhanger" dismisses the bravura of the book's authors: "[B]unch ov shity arse we took over there town, they stayed in there little pub the silver cod where were they were safe . . . as for the book we'll say no more. toilet paper springs to mind." After reading a West Ham United memoir, one respondent inveighs, "Pure Fiction! The Only Way They'll Be Doin Chelsea."

When the Russian-Jewish oil baron Roman Abramovich bought Chelsea, I jumped online to gauge reactions on their message board—and to see if Garrison would weigh in. The board makes a point of declaring, "Welcome to the Chelsea Hooligan Message Board, This Board is Not Here for the Purpose of Organizing Violence or Racist Comment." Needless to say, this warning doesn't exactly deter the anti-Semitism. Almost immediately after the Abramovich purchase, a

guy named West Ken Ken moaned, "I like the money but the star of david will be flying down the [Stamford] bridge soon." The title of his post is, "Not much said about Roman being a yid." A few scattered comments endorsed West Ken Ken's sentiments. Considering some of the attacks on Tottenham that come from his mouth, it is somewhat surprising that Garrison should be sensitive to West Ken Ken's burst of Jew hating. But he is. Garrison appeared on the board and presented West Ken Ken with a stern, pedantic reprimand: "Being a Yeed means you support that shit from [Tottenham]. Totally different form [*sic*] being a Jew, you know the ones that kick the shit out of Muslims." It's a brilliant response. He invokes the idea of *Muskeljudentum*, of the ass-kicking Israeli, to defend his people on a hooligan's own terms. And the only reply to Garrison that can be mustered is, "Yes, I forgot you are one of the chosen race."

How much violence does Alan still cause? Alan says he has launched a second career as a soldier of fortune, working for a German company that hires out mercenaries. He mentioned his work in Croatia and Kosovo. On his last trip to the Balkans, he had told his wife that he was just going to train soldiers, not to fight. "She thought I was too old and out of shape to be doing this anymore." But when he returned, he and his wife were sitting at home, flipping channels. They came across a documentary on the Kosovo war. The opening scene showed Alan in mid-battle. "She wasn't too pleased with me that evening."

Those days of fighting are probably all in the past now. But Alan claims that he hasn't fully retired from hooliganism. About four times a year, usually after games against Tottenham, he says that he goes out and throws a few punches. I wasn't sure whether to believe him. The best way to judge, I thought, would be to watch him in his natural habitat. I wanted to see how close he was to the active hooligans.

On game day, I found Alan and his friends at a bar in the second story of a shopping mall not far from Stamford Bridge. Alan drank a Coke and hovered over a table. He introduced me to his best friend Angus, and reminded me of his appearances in his book. Angus had brought along his twenty-something daughter. The three of them laughed at dirty jokes that Angus received via text message on his cell phone. To the side, there was a table filled with Alan's other friends. Only Angus's daughter wore a jersey. "We prefer not to identify ourselves. We like to be able to mix with the crowd," Alan said.

But, based on their behavior and looks, these characters didn't appear to be active goons. In fact, they didn't seem like they had often risen from their couches, let alone recently kneed violent sociopaths in the testicles.

I told Alan that I had spotted fans of Manchester City, that weekend's opposing club, at a pub down the street. "They were just sitting outside drinking. Are they allowed to do that? Will nobody give them a hard time?" I described the facade of the pub to Alan.

"That's a Chelsea pub," he told me.

He turned away and told one of his friends, "Frank

says that there were City fans down the street. They were in a Chelsea pub. That's not right." His tone was outrage.

His friend looked up from his table at me. He had been collecting cash from friends to rent a van that would travel to Liverpool for next week's game. "Alan would still have a go. If Tottenham were here, he might even throw a punch." He rolled his eyes. Besides, even if they weren't too old to do it, they still wouldn't be crazy enough to put themselves in that kind of situation, fighting so close to the stadium. That style of battle is a distant memory. Too many police hover outside the pubs.

Alan and I walked across the room to Angus and his daughter. Angus was now a bit drunk and the bar's bouncer was trying to steer him into a seat, where he wouldn't stumble into the path of waiters.

Angus began telling a story about traveling to Nottingham Forest, "It was just the two of us and two of them. The police saw us coming up against one another. And they thought it was funny. They were laughing their fuckin' asses off. They just let us have a go at one another. Of course, this guy here," he pointed to Alan. "He got to go against the little twat. I took this enormous bloke." He mimed a man flexing his muscles. "I jumped on 'im and bit his ear off."

He turned to his daughter, doubled over in laughter, and then finished telling his tale.

"Them were the days," Alan said. And so they went on, rendering each story with manic intensity and scenes of incredible drama.

A few minutes later we began to walk to the game

with the crowd. As we went down an escalator, Alan pulled up his pants leg to reveal a cowboy boot with a steel tip. "Good for giving a kicking."

As he disembarked, sloppy drunk Angus leaned over to me and whispered, "But when was the last time they were used for kicking?"

5

How Soccer Explains the Survival of the Top Hats

I.

When players score goals at Rio's São Januário stadium, they have visions of the crucifixion. Less than twenty yards behind the goalkeeper's net, a dark wooden cross bulges forth from the stained glass of a mid-century-modernist chapel, Our Lady of Victories. A few yards to the left, in the sight line of corner kicks, a small garden is filled with pedestals displaying concrete statuettes of the Madonna and other icons. This is how the world expects the game to be played in Brazil, the cradle of soccer civilization: transcendently.

São Januário belongs to the club Vasco da Gama, and the stadium is itself a shrine to Brazilian soccer. Throughout the club's storied history, its players have perfectly embodied Rio de Janeiro's Dionysian temperament—like Romario, the star of the 1994 World Cup. He compensates for his undisguised distaste for running