

# The English Disease: The British Influence on the Development of European Hooliganism

---

Stojanović, Tomislav

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2020

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:971281>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-03-01**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[FFOS-repository - Repository of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek](#)



Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Tomislav Stojanović

**Engleska bolest: britanski utjecaj na razvoj europskog  
huliganizma**

Završni rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

Osijek, 2020.

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku  
Filozofski fakultet Osijek  
Odjel za engleski jezik i književnost  
Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Tomislav Stojanović

**Engleska bolest: britanski utjecaj na razvoj europskog  
huliganizma**

Završni rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

Osijek, 2020.

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and  
German Language and Literature

Tomislav Stojanović

**The English Disease: British Influence on the Development of  
European Hooliganism**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Jadranka Zlomislić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2020

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of English  
Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and  
German Language and Literature

Tomislav Stojanović

**The English Disease: British Influence on the Development of  
European Hooliganism**

Bachelor's Thesis

Scientific area: humanities

Scientific field: philology

Scientific branch: English studies

Supervisor: Dr. Jadranka Zlomislić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2020

## IZJAVA

Izjavljujem s punom materijalnom i moralnom odgovornošću da sam ovaj rad samostalno izradio te da u njemu nema kopiranih ili prepisanih dijelova teksta tuđih radova, a da nisu označeni kao citati s napisanim izvorom odakle su preneseni.

Svojim vlastoručnim potpisom potvrđujem da sam suglasan da Filozofski fakultet Osijek trajno pohrani i javno objavi ovaj moj rad u internetskoj bazi završnih i diplomskih radova knjižnice Filozofskog fakulteta Osijek, knjižnice Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku i Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu.

U Osijeku, 7.9.2020.



Tomislav Stojanović, OIB 22226858

## **Abstract**

A growing phenomenon of troublesome hooligans who worship the game of football has evolved from a safety hazard to an organized group with its own hierarchy. English firms and hooligans were the first to massively influence fans all over the European continent and spread the infamous “English disease.” Going to a football match and letting off steam soon became the number one activity for young men who were still finding their place in the post-war world. These, now sophisticated organizations, evolved from violent banter that started at British stadiums. Furthermore, their mentality and the way of dress influenced many European countries who found a stronger interest in football and new, popular subcultures. Thanks to the English, an irreversible impact has been made on European football hooliganism and on the entire culture of the sport. Once the clubs were able to travel and play with foreign clubs, the exchange of newfound ways of hooliganism ensued. The club’s colours were proudly worn and were a sign of allegiance to their country, town, and group. Rarely could any match end without a showdown between opposing hooligans out of which the earliest and the most infamous were the Millwall *Bushwackers*, the Chelsea *Headhunters*, the Newcastle *Gremlins*, the Tottenham Hotspurs’ *Yid Army* and the Leeds United’s *Service Crew*.

**Keywords:** football, hooliganism, England, Europe, influence

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
1. Football Hooliganism .....	2
1.1. What is Hooliganism? .....	2
1.2. History .....	3
2. Modern Football Hooliganism .....	4
3. England.....	5
3.1. The Rest of the UK.....	6
4. The English Firm on the European Scene .....	6
5. The Situation in Eastern Europe.....	8
5.1. Russia.....	8
5.2. Poland .....	8
5.3. Ukraine .....	9
6. The State of Affairs in Western Europe .....	10
6.1. Germany .....	10
6.2. The Netherlands.....	10
6.3. Spain .....	11
6.4. France .....	12
7. Former Yugoslavian Countries .....	12
Conclusion.....	15
Works Cited.....	16



## **Introduction**

Football hooliganism has been an enormous problem to deal with since the end of the 19th century, and nowadays it has become a growing concern worldwide. Because this phenomenon, which has been called the “English Disease,” has spread all over the world, the aim of this paper is to research football hooliganism and to explore its origins and development in order to establish that England has had the largest influence on the development of European football hooliganism. Even though it is true that the situation has calmed down in England, in comparison to the 70s, 80s, and 90s, football hooliganism in Europe is still going strong. Over the years, hooligan groups have developed. Before, they were just groups of friends and people that wanted to show allegiance to their beloved club, but nowadays, these groups have their own hierarchy, their own clubhouses, merchandise, and every member has a certain task to carry out. In short, they have developed into sophisticated organizations. They are often connected with the criminal underworld and other illegal activities. The old “English” football firm has slowly developed into something much more criminal and in some of those firms, football hooliganism has become a cover-up for other activities – much more profitable activities. The main source for this research has been Dougie Brimson, a man who practically spent his entire life traveling across the entire UK and the continent of Europe, whether it was due to his military service or with his English football firm. Firstly, this paper defines football hooliganism and gives a brief overview of its development and history. Secondly, it focuses on England and the rest of the UK as the birthplaces of hooliganism and why they became such “powerhouses” in the matter. Thirdly, it shows the development of football hooliganism in Europe and the ways it has been influenced by the English. Lastly, the paper assesses how big of an impact England has actually had on the development of football hooliganism across the European continent.

# 1. Football Hooliganism

## 1.1. What is Hooliganism?

In many dictionaries, the term hooliganism has a similar definition. The Cambridge Dictionary describes it as the “behaviour of a violent person who fights or causes damage in public places” (“hooliganism,” CD) while the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary describes it as “noisy and violent behaviour by a group of people in public” (“hooliganism,” OLD). It is interesting that both dictionaries when giving an example of the usage of the term, use it in a context that is connected with football. Even though any violent behaviour of a group or an individual can be classified as hooliganism, it has become synonymous with the specific unruly behaviour of football fans.

Swiss sociologist Thomas Busset explains the origins of hooliganism by saying “that since the beginning of the 1960s there has been a subculture movement in Europe, which is now world wide, but which had its origin in England. Since then, these movements have spread and are now described as hooliganism” (qtd. in Künzle). Football hooligans have a certain goal in mind while they are causing chaos and destruction – they want to show that their club and their “firm” is better than the opposing one. In that way, they achieve a sense of accomplishment and pride. Most of them do not care about the result on the field, meaning, how their team has played – what counts is the result “off the field.” Most football hooligans are young individuals, who come from troublesome backgrounds and do not have any real or “big” responsibilities in life. This is confirmed to a certain degree by Andy Nicholls, a former football hooligan, who followed Everton for more than 30 years. Nicholls explains that there was nothing else available to him and other “working-class kids” like him by saying: “I looked for trouble and found it by the lorry load, as there were literally thousands of like-minded kids desperate for a weekly dose of it. Like a heroin addict craves for his needle fix, our fix was football violence.” Another important factor for football hooligans is the adrenaline they get from fighting. For some people, the adrenaline works like a dopamine boost for their brain. However, certain people look at it from a much more serious point of view. Misha, a hooligan from Russia, views his football firm as a family. In a video interview, he explains that for him, being a football hooligan is about protecting “your family” – your football firm, and about having each other’s backs. He also mentions the adrenaline overdrive one gets from a hooligan fight (“*Soccer Hooligans in Russia*,” 00:01:45 - 00:01:54).

It is plausible to say that the two key factors of becoming a football hooligan are having the need to satisfy the craving for adrenaline and looking for a sense of unity – in other words, looking for a “family.” This is not a surprise because a large number of football hooligans come

from families that have troublesome backgrounds; hence they are still in search of a group where they can get the sense of being a part of a “true family.” In most cases, they find that “family” in their local hooligan group.

## **1.2. History**

One can say that football hooliganism is as old as the game of football itself. It is very important to mention that violence at sporting events can be traced back to ancient times, especially during chariot races in Ancient Greece. However, that is a completely different topic. In “A History of British Football Hooliganism,” Daryl Worthington explains that the earliest form of football hooliganism can be traced back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of King Edward III. During that time, there was a game similar to modern football, but instead of a ball, the players would be kicking a pig’s bladder. It was mostly played by rival villages and the “goal” of the game was to kick the bladder inside the opposing village’s church. The game was so brutal that it was banned by King Edward III. According to Brimson, “Almost 300 years later, Oliver Cromwell was forced to take a similar step when he banned the game in the Midlands” (*Barmy Army* 44). Ingle and Hodgkinson explain that the first case of football hooliganism as we know it today, can be traced back to 1885, when Preston North End defeated Aston Villa in a friendly exhibition match. They report that shortly after the match, a group called the “howling roughs,” stormed the football field and started causing mayhem which led to serious injuries as both teams were severely beaten. Ingle and Hodgkinson point out that the violence continued, and a year later, Preston North End fans clashed with Queens Park Rangers fans near a railway station, resulting in a massive brawl. The authors highlight that this was the first time that two fan groups clashed at a public place other than a football field and the first-time supporters were tried for hooliganism.

The interesting thing about the 1885 incident is how the goons that caused the mayhem did not only attack the opposing fans, but decided to beat up every person involved, no matter the team they played or cheered for. Even though many scholars believe that this was the event that led to the birth of football hooliganism, there are still some doubts on the subject. These goons started beating up everyone, not only the opposing fans, which shows that they had no allegiance towards any of the clubs or the fans. As a matter of fact, it is very possible that the ruffians involved were just a violent gang whose only motive was to spread chaos and start trouble.

These events show how football hooliganism started to develop. The first incident to depict modern football hooliganism occurred in 1909. It was the biggest football disaster during the pre-World War I era and it occurred when the Glasgow Rangers faced Celtic Glasgow and more than

6000 people took part in the riots that resulted in a large number of police enforcers being injured and massive material damage both to the stadium, Hampden Park, and to the area surrounding it (Worthington).

As a result of the above-mentioned incident, the public slowly began to get familiar with this phenomenon called football hooliganism. Even today, this is one of the most dangerous football derbies in the world. The peculiar thing about this derby is the source which sparks the hatred and violence between the two clubs; it is something that usually “brings peace” to society – religion. Rangers are a team with a Protestant background, while Celtic were always viewed as a Catholic club. In his book, *Barmy Army: The Changing Face of Football Violence*, Dougie Brimson describes those beginnings:

In the period leading right up to World War One, the professional game was widely associated with crowd trouble. Local and often violent rivalries became more common, as did pitch invasions, which were usually designed to stop games where the home team was losing. On a number of occasions, supporters simply walked on to the pitch at halftime and refused to leave, forcing the game to be abandoned. Another problem was the number of attacks on players and referees, something which the FA were becoming increasingly concerned about. (45)

## **2. Modern Football Hooliganism**

According to Brimson, the form of hooliganism we know today started in the 1950s and the 1960s in England with the arrival of the rock-and-roll culture which gave birth to the subculture of the “Teddy Boys” (*Barmy Army* 46 ). Brimson describes the immense influence of the “Teddy Boys” on football and the fans as well as their unruly behaviour that was to blame for the major increase of crowd problems at matches:

Pitch invasions became routine and were often accompanied by confrontations between rival fans. The anarchic attitude of the Teddy Boy movement caused serious problems more generally for the police, who, particularly in London, struggled to cope. No longer would the sight of a single copper be enough to calm a situation; often it would take the involvement of a large number of officers. The wholesale destruction of property also became a serious problem, trains being a particular favourite as the fans began to travel more freely. (*Barmy Army* 46)

Additionally, Brimson mentions that 1963 was an important year for the rise of hooliganism and problems with youth in general as national service ended. The additional freedom and accessible

means of transport resulted in the increase in the numbers of supporters travelling and causing trouble wherever they went (*Barmy Army* 46).

### 3. England

It has already been established that football hooliganism in England can be divided in two eras. One is the pre-World War I era and the other is the era after World War II. During the pre-WWI era, all of the trouble was based locally, meaning no away fans were present, due to the reason that travelling was very exhausting and expensive at that time: “Travel was extremely difficult, even for the players never mind the supporters, and so in most cases there were not many away fans except for games against fairly local clubs.” (*Barmy Army* 44). Everything changed when travelling became much cheaper. Football hooligans were now able to travel the entire country. In those days, football stadiums did not have a fence, so pitch-invading was never a problem. The public slowly started to avoid football grounds and only watched the games on TV, a much safer alternative. Some cities even closed their main squares during matchdays because they were afraid of the chaos that would ensue. The world of football was dealing with a massive problem. Because of the hooligans, many spectators refused to attend the games, so it was no surprise that the visitors only consisted of hooligans who always guaranteed trouble. There were some minor attempts to solve this problem – clubs whose supporters would cause trouble were to be fined. This backfired massively and only caused more riots. Soon, the English Football Association realised that clubs would file for bankruptcy if this persisted, so they decided to drop the measures.

Hooliganism started booming in the 60s as the first football firms were getting established. A football firm is basically an organised group of football hooligans. The targets of those firms are to support their club, to cause mayhem and to fight with other groups as such. The earliest groups were the Millwall *Bushwackers*, the Chelsea *Headhunters*, the Newcastle *Gremlins*, the Tottenham Hotspurs’ *Yid Army* and the Leeds United’s *Service Crew*. Brimson says that every club had their own football firm, but the earliest ones were also the most frightening. The gates were completely open, and it was only a matter of time before English hooligans started to travel and spread their ways across the entire continent of Europe (*Barmy Army* 47). The reason for that was also the establishing of the European Championship (today’s *Champions League* and *Europa League*). This is how the English started to influence other European fans and how the term “English Disease” came into existence.

### **3.1. The Rest of the UK**

Similarly to England, there was a rise in hooliganism in the rest of the United Kingdom as well. However, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales did not experience such a large rise in football hooliganism like England. The overwhelming popularity of rugby over football can be assumed to be the reason. There were some incidents, but they were minor to those in England.

Scotland, on the other hand, is an entirely different topic. It is true that Scotland only had one major incident before the 60s and that was the 1909 incident described in the *History* section of the paper. However, the most severe incident happened during the final of the 1972 European Championship between Dynamo Moscow and Glasgow Rangers:

Soviet fans witnessed a pitch invasion and violence on the part of the Rangers fans, which halted the game and swung the momentum in favour of the Scottish side as Dynamo pressed for an equaliser in the dying moments of the encounter. The club, fans and players never got over the injustice of nearly completing one of the greatest comebacks in European footballing history. (Liebenau)

We can see how hooliganism can directly impact matches and ruin football in that way too. In his article “The behaviour of the Scottish fans was shocking and ugly,” Jonathan Wilson describes the aftermath of the match in the following way:

While Rangers felt the end had been anti-climactic, Dinamo were furious, appealed against the result, and seemed to have most of the world’s press on their side. The Spanish media, not surprisingly, condemned the pitch invasions, but so too did neutral sources. . . . The pitch invasion prevented Dinamo from converting their attacking superiority and so was not a fair result.

In the end, there were no consequences and Rangers kept the title.

## **4. The English Firm on the European Scene**

In 1974, the English hooligans finally stepped onto the European stage. European media was observing what was going on in the UK and it was only a matter of time before the chaos reached the continent. Also, it is notable that the Scottish fans, who are always seen as friendly, had their first outburst two years before the English fans. Everyone knew that it was only a matter of time before England had its first incident on the Continent. As Brimson reports:

the big fear was that sooner or later something bad was going to happen. Inevitably, it did. And in 1974 Tottenham Hotspur supporters gained the dubious honour of being the first English hooligans to become involved in large-scale violence outside the UK.

The occasion was the UEFA Cup final; a two-legged affair against the Dutch side Feyenoord. Following a 2-2 draw at White Hart Lane, the Spurs fans crossed the Channel in their thousands determined to drive the team on in the hope of securing an unexpected victory. For many, it was to be their first trip abroad, and the cheap alcohol, coupled with the arrogance that had already become an inherent part of the English hooligan scene, made for an intimidating atmosphere on the streets of Rotterdam. (*Eurotrashed* 11)

Even more chaos ensued during the match, after Spurs' goal was disallowed. The English tore down the fences and invaded the pitch. All-time Tottenham great, Bill Nicholson, tried to calm down the fans at half-time, but it was to no avail. The news spread across all of Europe. The Dutch were completely in shock, since they had never witnessed something like this. Tottenham hooligans did not only bring shame to their country and team, but also made sure that Europe was trembling because of English hooligans. The UEFA severely punished Tottenham, but the English did not care at all. A year later, Leeds fans destroyed the city centre of Paris before the European Cup final and as a punishment were banned for four years from European competition (*Eurotrashed* 11). After that, almost every single away match involving an English club was pure chaos. There was no stopping them. It was only a matter of time before the locals picked up the ways of their fellow English counterparts, which is discussed in the following sections.

However, none of the incidents come close to what happened on 29 May in 1985. Tom Mullen remembers the tragic event:

Thirty-nine people died and 600 were injured when fans were crushed against a wall that then collapsed during the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus, after crowd trouble culminated in a surge by Liverpool supporters towards the Italian team's fans.

It resulted in all English clubs being banned from Europe for five years and exacerbated English supporters' thuggish reputation at the time.

This day is remembered as the darkest day in both English and European football history. England's reputation was forever ruined. This was the first time that English hooligans were responsible for the loss of lives outside of their country. Mullen states that "the blame for Heysel was initially laid entirely on Liverpool fans, and 14 were later found guilty of manslaughter and jailed. However, an investigation did concede that some culpability lay with the authorities, and the crumbling state of the Heysel stadium." The English authorities came to the conclusion that it

was finally time to put an end to this madness. Soon, much more rigorous punishments for hooliganism were implemented.

## **5. The Situation in Eastern Europe**

### **5.1. Russia**

Due to its historic and political background, Russia had no fan or hooligan culture at all before the 70s. Fans did not show their club colours and did not know how to support their team like people in the rest of Europe. Brimson even explains that the first sign of any fan culture in Russia was a fan that “appeared on the terraces of Spartak Moscow wearing a simple knitted scarf in the team's colours of red and white” (*Eurotrashed* 107). All of this changed after the European Cup final between Dynamo Moscow and Glasgow Rangers – the event described in the previous section. Liebenau mentions that the same year, Avtomobilist, a club from Russia, caused the first hooligan incident in Russian history. It was very obvious what influenced their fans to cause a pitch invasion. Furthermore, Liebenau explains thoroughly who served as a role model to all the new hooligan groups that started to show up out of nowhere:

In their style and intent, the hooligans individually and collectively modelled themselves along British hooligan lines. Kozlov's interviewees attest to their dress being taken from British punk fashion and their chants and paraphernalia deliberately resembling British teams. Like the British hooligans of the 1970s, the Russians created a sense of ‘honour’ associated with their club, which incorporated elements of masculine aggression and veneration of bravery, expressed by violence towards, overwhelmingly, other hooligan gangs. The reasons for this were clear: British football hooligans were the most feared, and therefore respected, hooligans. The Russian fans were acutely aware of the foreign influence on their activities, as many Soviet youth subcultures were, and this placed them in a broader European arena for their actions and style.

This confirms that the English hooliganism scene directly influenced the Russian scene and proves that English influence is responsible for the development of football hooliganism in Russia.

### **5.2. Poland**

Even though Polish hooligans are one of the most dangerous and brutal in Europe, it is hard to say what started hooliganism in Poland. Brimson says that just like in Russia, the first hooligan groups were formed in the 1970s (*Eurotrashed* 118). It is plausible to say that they were influenced



by the 1972 European Cup final, but there is no clear proof. Furthermore, unlike the Russian hooligans, who started following the English “code” for hooligan behaviour, the Polish hooligans decided to ignore it. In Poland, only people that travel to away games are viewed as real hooligans, which is not the case when it comes to England. Brimson furthermore explains the mentality behind this way of thinking when he says:

However, unlike in other countries where gangs were formed to provide support for the teams and to give a degree of protection on away trips, these gangs were almost universally created with another aim in mind. At that time, the police never travelled with supporters on trains and so, often, groups would step onto a platform in another town or city to be met by local fans looking for trouble. This meant that every away game was a potential problem, but rather than stop travelling or lobby the police for protection, the fans decided to go the other way and take up the challenges offered. (*Eurotrashed* 118)

Therefore, it is hard to say if the Polish hooligans were influenced by the English, since their modus operandi is different. However, one aspect they did indeed take from their English counterparts: the structure how the hooligan groups are formed and the organised pitch invasions (*Eurotrashed* 122).

### **5.3. Ukraine**

Just like their Russian neighbours, Ukrainian hooligans were also heavily influenced by the English. Similar to other former Soviet nations, the fan culture in the Ukraine only really started to begin after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There were some incidents before, but nothing too big or serious. Brimson explains the change that followed:

However, since the late 1980s they had regarded England as the home of football violence and now they began to consciously mirror the Casual culture. Suddenly, the terraces were full of lads dressing in various labels including Ben Sherman, Lacoste, Fred Perry and the ubiquitous Stone Island. (*Eurotrashed* 114)

Brimson remarks that not only did the Ukrainians pick up on the clothing style of the English hooligans, but a few years later, they also started to use their tactics and approach. At the beginning of the 2000s the English style of hooliganism began to take a strong grip and the police suddenly found themselves under attack from fans (*Eurotrashed* 114). This goes to show that just like in Russia, the English hooligan culture played a major role in influencing the Ukrainians and their fan culture. It is ironic that even though England was the major influencer of football hooliganism in Eastern Europe, the most violent clashes happen when English teams play in Eastern Europe.

In a sense, it seems like that the hooligan groups from those parts want to show the English hooligans how big and strong they have grown, as if they want to impress them.

## **6. The State of Affairs in Western Europe**

First of all, Italy will not be included in the analysis because it has always had the tradition of having *ultras* instead of regular hooligan groups. This goes back to the 1950s and originates from Southern American influences. The term *ultras* describes groups that focus on creating choreographies and singing during the entire match. They are much more passionate about their team and often show this. Needless to say, they are also much more fanatical than your standard football firm. Of course, there have always been tensions between different *ultras* groups. All in all, Italy was under heavy influence from the countries and fans of South America.

### **6.1. Germany**

Unlike in the rest of Europe, football hooliganism in Germany started to rise sometime later during the mid-80s. It is important to note that the key factor in the development of football hooliganism in Germany was right-wing extremism. While it is true that right-wing extremism is something all of the hooligan groups in Europe share together, it is the most distinguishing factor when it comes to German hooligans. Robert Manz, a German journalist who has long been involved in the German hooligan scene says that during the mid-80s, a number of fans decided to start their own groups of supporters and they looked up to their English idols and decided to name themselves “Hooligans”. A large number of them are part of right-wing groups and political organizations and their main goal was to spread violence and their political ideas (Manz).

It is interesting to note that German hooligans tend to cause much more trouble when their national team is playing, unlike the English who cause the most mayhem when their clubs are playing. Thus, it is not surprising that more trouble happens when Germany faces either the Netherlands or England.

### **6.2. The Netherlands**

Similarly to the Scottish fans, there is a stereotype for the Dutch being very friendly and non-violent, hence being free of hooligans. This is completely wrong. During the early 70s, smaller groups started to appear at the stadium, and they named themselves according to the names of the stadium sections in which they stood. Brimson notes that it was nothing too serious and nobody

really saw the problem until after the match between the Tottenham Hotspurs and Feyenoord Rotterdam, which is described in a previous section (*Eurotrashed* 55). In addition, Brimson says:

The catalyst was the second leg of the UEFA Cup final. Tottenham Hotspur travelled to Feyenoord and left the next day with their fans having rampaged through Rotterdam. With over 70 arrested and almost 200 injured – including a large number who had been stabbed – the Dutch media were outraged, but for the ‘sides’ it was an introduction to a whole new scene. Almost immediately, hooligan groups began appearing at clubs across the country and violence between them was most definitely on the agenda. (*Eurotrashed* 55)

The Netherlands is just another country on the list which has been directly influenced by the English hooligans and the culture surrounding it.

### **6.3. Spain**

Spain has a very unique fan and hooligan scene. Unlike the English, who have a very fierce and bad reputation, the Spanish have such close ties with their clubs, that they are often even given free tickets. This is because there is an “unwritten agreement” between the clubs and the hooligans that all of the trouble stays outside the stadium. According to Brimson, another unique thing about Spanish hooliganism is that it is a mixture of multiple things: “Primarily, this is because they involve a complex mixture of politics, rivalries, nationalist movements, drugs and an infinite number of styles and subcultures. This sometimes-explosive cocktail has been constantly evolving since the early 1980s and at times has put Spanish football in the spotlight for the wrong reasons” (*Eurotrashed* 85).

One of those subcultures has been the Skinhead culture which originated in England. However, the main factor in Spanish hooliganism is nationalism. According to Brimson, groups from provinces such as the Basque county and Barcelona, tend to be much more leaning towards independence, while groups from Madrid and the other parts of the country tend to lean towards a pro-Spanish movement. Brimson emphasises that most radicalones still hold the views of dictator Francisco Franco and it is no surprise that this only adds more fuel to the violence (*Eurotrashed* 83-88).

It is a very complex scene riddled with political and internal conflicts. One could say it goes way beyond being a typical hooligan group. However, there is still English influence among those groups as Brimson explains:

At the same time they began to distance themselves from the Tifosi or Italian style of

support that had been adopted by their Ultra enemies. Instead, little by little these leftist fans began to follow the English style, which concerned itself less with spectacle and merchandising and more with vocal support and alcohol. These days, this style has been adopted by all but two of the largest, most colourful and perhaps less violent groups aligned to the left, Riazor Blues (Deportivo La Coruna) and Biris Norte (Seville FC). (*Eurotrashed* 87)

All in all, the Spanish scene is ridden with political motivations rather than being focused on football itself and local rivalries.

#### **6.4. France**

Even though things are calmer nowadays in France, when it comes to football hooliganism, it was not always like that. During the 70s and 80s, the skinhead culture in France was very dominant causing a large number of violent clashes during football matches. The climax of it all was a violent clash with the English in 1984. Everyone expected football hooliganism to grow from that moment on, but that did not happen. Brimson describes the reasoning behind this as follows:

The reason, in part, was the demise of Skinhead and the growth of Casual. Over a relatively short period, fans of clubs situated in the north of France began to adopt the English style of supporting and this developed into what became known as the Kops Culture. . . . In the south, however, supporters began looking towards Italy and the Ultra. Groups. . . quickly embraced the theatrics of the Italian terraces. (*Eurotrashed* 49)

This actually makes perfect sense because the north is closer to England, while the south is closer to Italy. Violent clashes still occur when teams from the northern and southern side of the country meet. Altogether, English influence is still present among hooligans from the north and their casual style of dressing and supporting is still visible to this day.

### **7. Former Yugoslavian Countries**

When speaking about the Balkans, it is important to note that this is one of the most complex areas in Europe concerning football hooliganism:

Of all the regions of Europe that the hooligan and Ultra situation exists in, the Balkans is probably the most complex. For while rivalry between teams and even firms is one thing, conflict between religions and ethnic groups is something entirely different. Sad to say, in

the Balkans, they met head on and eventually exploded on the terraces of the former Yugoslavia. (*Eurotrashed* 123)

Because of this reason, it is complicated to establish which part of football hooliganism has been established under the influence of English hooliganism and which part under the influence of nationalism. The sole focus is going to be on Croatia and Serbia since the hooliganism movement in the rest of Yugoslavia was very small and insignificant. English influence has always been present among Croatian hooliganism, as was confirmed in a radio interview with Vladimir Vuković, also known as “Buba.” He was one of the most legendary leaders of the Croatian hooligan group “Bad Blue Boys.” In an interview in the late 80s, he explains how things work on the Croatian hooligan scene. “Buba” says that: “In this country, the law of Chelsea (Headhunters) rules. Everything they do – we do too. This is the way how it always was and how it always will be” (qtd. in Omladinski radio). During that time, the Chelsea “Headhunters” were both the most frightening and the most respected hooligan firm, not only in England, but the entire European continent. It was not a secret that numerous younger hooligan groups looked up to them. With the “law of Chelsea,” Buba was referring to the way they dress, the way they act before, during and after a match, but most importantly, the way they fight with other opposing hooligan groups. In the South, however, “Torcida Split” decided to follow the way of the Italian *ultras*. Similarly to the French division of hooligans, the northern part of the country followed the English, while the southern followed the Italian.

On the other hand, Serbia had a completely different situation. While Croatia was under heavy English influence, only a small group in Serbia decided to take up the way of the English hooligans. According to Brimson:

Nowhere was this more evident than on the terraces of Red Star, and from among their number emerged two significant groups of fans: Ultras, who followed the Italian way of supporting their team; and Red Devils who were more ‘English’ in their approach in that their match days revolved around drinking and fighting. (*Eurotrashed* 130)

To conclude this section, football hooliganism in Croatia and Serbia was mostly fuelled by nationalism and chauvinism. Football always comes second when it comes to hooligans from former Yugoslavia. As Brimson points out, a major influence of nationalism on both sides was proven when hate and tensions finally exploded:

However, on 13 May 1990, the situation in the region took a turn for the worse with the first of two incidents which have become infamous in European hooligan history for sparking off an even greater and far more dangerous confrontation.

Red Star Belgrade and its fans arrived in Zagreb and took station in the stadium. Their fans soon launched an attack on the home support but, rather than target the area of the ground where the Bad Blue Boys were situated, they ripped down a fence and attacked normal supporters. The rest of the ground erupted into violence that quickly spilled out into the surrounding street as two sides of the stadium were set on fire, forcing the game to be abandoned. By the time order was restored, scores of policemen and fans were in hospital, while the damage to property was immense. (*Eurotrashed* 126)

The rest of Europe was shocked, and shortly afterwards, the war began. For a large number of people, this is the football match that started the war in Yugoslavia. It is interesting that this was the scenario that Spain was most afraid of since there have always been tensions between Spain and the provinces of Barcelona and the Basque country. In the end, what the Spanish feared happened in Yugoslavia.

## Conclusion

All in all, it seems that the statement that football hooliganism is as old as the game itself is very much true. Historically looking, what started out as a group fight between villages slowly developed into something much more violent and dangerous. It is ironic that while football slowly became a much less violent sport, the effect on the crowd was the complete opposite. There are numerous reasons for such behaviour: poverty, the influence of subcultures, boredom, human nature, etc. However, one thing is certain – football hooliganism is indeed the “English Disease.” After analysing the majority of the European countries that are most known for their hooligans, a conclusion can be drawn that the English played a major role in the development of football hooliganism in European countries. It is true that during the pre-WWI and pre-WW II era, there were occasional troubles during football matches across the entire European continent. However, all of that does not even come close to what the English had started with their behaviour during the late 60s and early 70s. The aim of this paper was to determine that football hooliganism is the “English Disease” and that England was the major influence when it came to the development of football hooliganism in other European countries. Hooliganism has been spreading throughout Europe, by direct impact during away games or by the influence of a subculture. The best examples are Russia and the Netherlands, where there were no hooligan groups at all before the infamous visits of Tottenham Hotspurs and Glasgow Rangers. Other countries have been influenced indirectly due to the “Casuals” subculture, like Ukraine, Germany, Croatia, and Spain. Even though football hooliganism has become a worldwide problem nowadays, it is undeniable that England was both the “patient zero” and “super-spreader” of this disease. Both the actions of English hooligans and their irreparable reputation speak for this. The terms “England” and “football hooliganism” will forever remain close-knit.

## Works Cited

- Brimson, Dougie. *Barmy Army: The Changing Face of Football Violence*. Headline, 2000.
- . Eurotrashed, *The Rise and Rise of Europe's Football Hooligans*. Headline, 2003.
- "Hooliganism." Cambridge Dictionary, *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hooliganism>. Accessed 18 August 2020.
- "Hooliganism." Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/hooliganism?q=hooliganism>. Accessed 18 August 2020.
- Ingle, Sean and Hodgkinson, Mark. "When did football hooliganism start?" *theguardian.com*, 13 December 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2001/dec/13/theknowledge.sport>. Accessed 15 August 2020.
- Komesar, Kruno. "Buba – Zaprudje." Youtube, uploaded by lostways37, 20 April 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtHv66oigp0>. Accessed 18 August 2020.
- Künzle, Alexander. "Interview with Thomas Busset: Getting into the mind of a football hooligan." *Swissinfo.ch*, 8 June 2008, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/getting-into-the-mind-of-a-football-hooligan/986226>. Accessed 18 August 2020.
- Liebenau, Avram. "From Glasgow to Marseille: the story of Russian football hooliganism." *Pushkinhouse.org*, 1 April 2019, <https://www.pushkinhouse.org/blog/2019/4/1/from-glasgow-to-marseille-the-story-of-russian-football-hooliganism>. Accessed 15 August 2020.
- Manz, Robert. "Fankultur in Deutschland." *Planet-wissen.de*, 13 June 2016, <https://www.planet-wissen.de/gesellschaft/sport/fussballgeschichte/pwiefankulturindeutschland100.html>. Accessed 21 August 2020.
- Mullen, Tom. "Heysel disaster: English football's forgotten tragedy?" *BBC.com*, 29 May 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-32898612>. Accessed 18 August 2020.
- Nicholls, Andrew. "I Was a Football Hooligan for 30 Years, and I Loved Every Second of It." *Bleacherreport.com*, 10 March 2015, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2375447-i-was-a-football-hooligan-for-30-years-and-i-loved-every-second-of-it>. Accessed 15 August 2020.
- "Soccer Hooligans In Russia Are Trained, Organized, And Violent: The Most Feared Fans (HBO)." *Youtube*, uploaded by Vice News, 23 February 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRrUeW6dvZM>. Accessed 18 August 2020.



Wilson, Jonathan. "The behaviour of the Scottish fans was shocking and ugly." TheGuardian.com, 13 May 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2008/may/13/thebehaviourofthescottish>. Accessed 15 August 2020.

Worthington, Daryl. "A History of British Football Hooliganism." newhistorian.com, 16 June 2016, <https://www.newhistorian.com/history-british-football-hooliganism/6662/>. Accessed 17 August 2020.