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Soccer and Identity: A Case Study.
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(Part II)

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PART TWO: SOCCER AND RELIGIOUS,
REGIONAL AND NATIONAL
IDENTITY IN SCOTLAND.

Religious Identity and the Celtic-Rangers Rivalry.

1. The Domination of the Old Firm.

Queen's Park may have been the major Scottish soccer club of the nineteenth century, both nurturing and dominating the game during its infancy; but with the advent of the league system and professionalism, two other clubs rose to prominence and enjoyed a near-hegemony over the game's trophies and honours from the start of the twentieth century onwards. Indeed, to many outsiders — and, it should be said, to many Scots themselves — Scottish soccer has often seemed to be nothing more than an arena in which two, evenly-matched giants fight for a thin margin of supremacy, year after year.

Glasgow Rangers had won the league championship 40 times by 1990, when the Scottish League celebrated its 100th anniversary. During the same period, Glasgow Celtic could boast an only-slightly-less spectacular tally of 35 championships. Rangers and Celtic — or to

use their collective nickname, 'the Old Firm' — have built formidable reputations for themselves beyond Scotland's borders as well, Celtic winning the European Cup competition in 1967, Rangers lifting the European Cup-Winners Cup in 1972. Such has been the fame and ability of these two Glaswegian teams that, for much of this century, the other clubs which populate Scotland's footballing world have been dwarfed.

Although the past decade has seen the emergence of other clubs with the financial resources and footballing talent to rival Celtic and Rangers, the notion lingers on that the Scottish game consists of the Old Firm and an inconsequential sprinkling of small-fry. Scotland's media, based largely in Glasgow, where of course both clubs have their greatest concentrations of support, helps to perpetuate the myth of Old Firm dominance. For example, during the 1993/1994 soccer season, which saw Celtic stricken by a disastrous loss of playing form and rumours of administrative turmoil, the club was able nonetheless to command huge amounts of newspaper, television and radio coverage. The editor of one footballing magazine, 'The Absolute Game', was prompted to write, "Even by the normal standards set by the Scottish media in their pathological obsession with all things green and blue... the feeding frenzy we've just witnessed over the Celtic boardroom struggle has been staggering, ridiculous and depressing... Win, lose or draw it seems the Old Firm cannot fail to monopolise the attention of the blessed scribes and broadcasters of this nation."

2. The Religious Cultures of the Old Firm.

However, the ambivalence many Scots feel about their two most illustrious clubs doesn't only come from the fact that other teams are deprived of publicity. Rangers and Celtic form the cores of two

directly-opposed, bitterly-competitive cultures, where the followers are often fervent in their loyalties and the tribal paraphernalia — flags, symbols, colours, anthems, figureheads — is legion. And what many Scots find especially unsavoury about the Rangers-Celtic rivalry is that it is fueled by religious differences; by the antagonism between Protestants and Roman Catholics that has historically bred a great deal of suspicion, distrust and bigotry in Scotland, and that has sustained a conflict (at least, until the recent ceasefire) in Northern Ireland for a quarter of a century.

While researching a book about British soccer hooliganism, the American writer Bill Buford attended a Scottish Cup final between the two clubs and experienced the full force of this rivalry. He observed, “It was early days — I had not been to many matches — and I had no way of measuring what I was seeing. I knew that this spectacle — the stadium full of sectarian intensity, sixty-six thousand supporters, half in blue, half in green — was unlike any sporting event I had ever attended. With hindsight, I can see that I did not appreciate the weight, the gravitas of the occasion: Rangers and Celtic; Protestant and Catholic; the Cup Final.” Not only does this gravitas surprise outsiders, but it is something many people would prefer to see entirely divorced from sport

The idea that soccer is a ritual with a near-religious quality is not new. The social anthropologist Desmond Morris, for instance, has written that “The grass that grows on the soccer pitch is often referred to as ‘the sacred turf’, and the stadium is called ‘the shrine’. Star players are ‘worshipped’ by their adoring fans... Superstitions and magical practises are rife and, on the terraces, the crowded ranks of so-called hooligans sing songs in unison which, despite their often obscene words, sound for all the world like the hymns of massed

choirboys.” However, in the case of Glasgow’s Old Firm, religion is not simply a metaphor for footballing culture: the tribalism which engulfs Rangers and Celtic manages to use symbols of genuine religion. It is a phenomenon where the team a fan supports is the starkest sign of his religious identity, his Catholicism or Protestantism. On the terraces of the Celtic and Rangers stadiums, the Pope and Queen Elizabeth II — heads of the Catholic and England’s Protestant churches respectively — are regarded by the supporters as sacred figureheads.

On top of that a great deal of baggage is borrowed from the religious (and political) traditions of Ireland. This leads to one of the biggest paradoxes in world soccer: Rangers and Celtic, by far and away the most famous teams in Scottish soccer, have inherited so much of their identities from another country that they are probably the least ‘Scottish’ of Scotland’s teams.

From the Reformation until the twentieth century, a period when both countries were gradually amalgamated into the British super-state, Ireland and Scotland have not enjoyed the happiest of relationships. The majority of Scots were English-speakers and Protestants and, though often resentful of the English, did not view them as members of a wholly-alien culture. Their liason with England could be seen as a partnership — by no means a fair one, but a partnership nonetheless according to the terms of the Act of Union — rather than domination from outside. The English role in Ireland’s affairs was altogether less welcome. Kept apart by their Catholicism and, often, a Gaelic tongue, and experiencing few of the benefits of British imperialism, the Irish were understandably less enthusiastic about their status as British citizens.

With these conflicting outlooks, mass contact between Scots and

Irish was never easy. In the early seventeenth century, James I (of England; in Scotland he was James VI) tried to exert more influence over Ireland by transporting large numbers of settlers from mainland Britain — mostly from Scotland — to the north of the island, giving them land and authority over the native Catholic Irish. Resentment from those natives, and prejudice on the part of newcomers, meant that there was little assimilation between the two communities — indeed, the tense environment bred only extremism, such as the appearance of the Orange Order, a popular organisation dedicated to the propagation of Protestant values and the destruction of Popery (Catholicism). The violence that persists between Protestants, the descendants of those Scottish settlers, and Catholics in Northern Ireland today is largely a legacy of James' policies nearly 400 years ago.

By the nineteenth century, the trend had been reversed. Irish immigrants were pouring into Scotland, especially into Glasgow, where emergent industries were offering new employment. A census in 1841 put the number of Irish-born residents in Scotland at 125,000. By the time of Ireland's potato famine, in 1841, as many as 1000 Irish were coming to Glasgow every week. Obviously, the arrival of this new, unskilled labour from across the Irish Sea was not welcomed by Scotland's working class, which regarded it as an influx of job-snatchers and blacklegs.

Also, the pragmatic, no-nonsense mentality bred by Scottish Presbyterianism can't have created the most receptive of environments for these Catholic newcomers who, according to the historian T.C. Smout, "were distrusted, despised, treated as inherently comic, drunken and superstitious." One only has to look at a tract written by Chalmers I. Paton, a leading figure in Scotland's wing of the Orange Order in the nineteenth century, to recognise those assumptions of Protestant

superiority and corresponding disdain for Catholics. Comparing the two creeds and their points of dissimilarity, Paton wrote:

“These differences have great effects not only on the whole religious life of those who receive them, but extending beyond it and appearing even to the intellectual development of those subject to their influences; Protestant communities being characterised by general intelligence, pursuit of knowledge, activity, industry and enterprise, Popery by apathy, indolence and supineness, so that while Protestant communities are genuinely flourishing, the condition of Popish communities is generally the reverse. The Protestant doctrine of the right of personal judgement facilitates the mind to activity, whilst the Popish doctrine lays an arrest on the very exercise of the intellect faculties and reduces man to a state where something of a mental torpor locks securely chains which bind the soul.”

It is worth noting that some of the arrivals from Ireland were Protestants; but with Scottish ancestry and, often, Scottish surnames, these immigrants had an easier time in gaining acceptance from their new Scottish neighbours. Indeed, as they were assimilated, their more stridently Protestant, anti-Papist views probably coloured the attitudes of the local populace and increased resentment against the Catholic Irish.

It was in this context that Glasgow Celtic Football Club came into being in 1887. Even the club's formation reflected the hardships that beset many of Scotland's Irish Catholics during that era. The founders were a group of Catholics in Glasgow's east end, most notably a priest called Brother Walfred, who hoped the club would help to raise funds to take care of needy Catholic children in that part of the city. This was not the only instance of a soccer club in Scotland having Irish Catholic origins. Among the clubs in other parts of the country which

could boast similar roots were Harp in the city of Dundee and, most influentially for Celtic, Hibernian Football Club in Edinburgh. Indeed, Hibernian had already experienced prejudice in soccer circles, for it had been denied membership of the Scottish Football Association until 1876 on the grounds that “the Association was founded for Scotchmen.”

From all accounts, Celtic established itself in Scottish soccer with an innovative zeal that overcame any obstacles imposed by its humble origins. In 1893 the club pioneered the use of goal-nets in Scotland; it followed this by introducing gas-powered floodlights at its ground and by 1900 could boast a stadium with a capacity for 70,000 spectators that was the largest in the world. At the same time, the club used a training programme to nurture its own, local talent — rather than acquire players from other clubs — which was ultimately to have outstanding results on the field. Celtic became Scottish League champions for six successive seasons between 1904 and 1910. The effect of this on the self-confidence of Scotland’s Irish Catholic community is not difficult to imagine. In his analysis of the Rangers-Celtic phenomenon, “The Old Firm — Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland”, Bill Murray explains that:

“If the Irish in Ireland were oppressed by the English, the Irish in Scotland suffered from the arrogance, if not the bigotry of the Scots, and this drew them together in a community where common religion and nationality often transcended economic ills or class grievances. Celtic in those early days, and for a long time thereafter, were the proud symbol of what appeared to be a close-knit community. They entered the sporting scene at the same time as many Catholics were making their presence felt in Scottish society, in business, in some of the professions and in local politics. Part of the surge of optimism that carried Catholics forward at this time was the success of their football

team, where every victory was notched up against their detractors, where every cup or flag won was a slap in the face of the Scottish establishment.”

During this time, however, Glasgow Rangers Football Club was evolving as an unofficial champion of the Protestant establishment, as a counterweight against Celtic. Founded in 1873, the club’s image was not explicitly anti-Catholic from the beginning, though it had a geographical link with Glasgow’s shipbuilding industry, whose workforce had a tradition of staunch Protestantism: this was especially true of the Harland and Wolff shipbuilding company, which in 1912 established itself in the Govan area of Glasgow, already home to the Rangers stadium.

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw another wave of arrivals from Ireland, many of them Protestants this time, with connections with the Orange Order, which created a climate favourable to a more hardline anti-Catholic philosophy in the club. The process was completed by the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Employers now had the luxury of being able to choose workers from a large pool of unemployed labour, both Catholic and Protestant. However, as Protestants had traditionally held the more privileged positions in Scottish industry, few of the foremen and managers responsible for hiring new workers were Catholics. As so often happens among communities in times of hardship, the Protestant community felt obliged to look after the interests of its own members first, and those hirers gave preference to whom they saw as ‘true’ Scots — those bearing Scottish surnames and following the Protestant creed — rather than to the still-not-fully assimilated descendents of Irish Catholics.

Glasgow Rangers’ policy towards the hiring of new players during

the depression years showed the same clannishness and its reputation as an exclusively-Protestant organisation was cemented. In Murray's words, "From that time on any mention of Catholics in connection with the Rangers Football Club was either accidental or based on hearsay."

One factor more should be mentioned in connection with the religious nature of the Old Firm rivalry. Rangers and Celtic, like all professional soccer clubs, were businesses as much as they were sporting institutions, and this unique rivalry, though it could and did have unpleasant side-effects, was a lucrative phenomenon. The fact that both clubs could portray themselves as the great sporting champions of the people on either side of Scotland's religious divide won them much support and, consequently, gate revenue. The money-men in the board-rooms had little incentive to keep sport divorced from religion.

3. Violence at Old Firm Games.

Thus, there appeared two soccer institutions that were inextricably bound with the identities of the two main religious communities in Glasgow and, indeed, in much of Scotland. According to the Glaswegian writer Clifford Hanley, "It wasn't two football teams, it was two living symbols of that cleft in Glasgow's consciousness, the grand canyon separating Prod from Pape." Obviously, that cleft was especially wide for the players who carried the communities' aspirations out onto the field. The former Celtic player Tommy Burns has described the situation with the memorable words, "Half the fans hate you and the other half think they own you."

Inevitably, that cleft has resulted in some bitter, physical conflict from time to time. The first encounter between the two teams in 1888 was from all accounts a civilised affair, with the two sets of supporters mingling afterwards in a local hall to chat and drink tea together. By

the Scottish Cup Final of 1909, however, newspapers were reporting a two-hour riot which broke out after the final whistle. On this occasion, interestingly, the Rangers and Celtic supporters did not fight each other but, in a rare display of unity, showed their displeasure at a decision not to play extra time after the game had ended in a draw. They embarked on a violent rampage and, according to the Scotsman newspaper, the goalposts were smashed, the stadium's payboxes were set alight, the barricading around the pitch was broken up and turned into a bonfire — the contents of several bottles of whisky being used to “aid its quicker ignition” — and assaults were made on the police and later on the firemen who were called in to tend to the blaze: “They beat man and horse most unmercifully.”

Theorising about crowd violence at soccer games, the sports writer Nick Hornby suggests that “bad teams attract an ugly following... That, I think, is what happened with Chelsea and Millwall in the late 70s and early 80s; it is also what happened with England between elimination from the World Cup in 1974 and qualification for Italy in 1990. For most of that time they were a desperate side, and they attracted a pretty desperate crowd.” The history of Old Firm hooliganism seems to support his theory.

During the 1920s and 1930s, when Celtic won the league championship on only four occasions — compared to 15 championships for Rangers — Celtic fans had a fearsome reputation for violence. The situation was reversed in the 1960s and 1970s when, under the brilliant management of Jock Stein, Celtic enjoyed what was probably their most successful era. Among the most notorious instances of misbehavior by Rangers supporters during this period was the disruption of a minute's silence at a game in 1963 in honour of the assassinated US president, John F. Kennedy (Kennedy had had an Irish Catholic ancestry

and thus was no favourite among the Rangers faithful); and a rampage through the streets of Barcelona in 1972 when fans took on the might of General Franco's police force and left Barcelona Cathedral splattered with abusive anti-Catholic graffiti.

The nadir of Old Firm violence occurred at a Scottish Cup final meeting between the teams in May 1980. The game ended with a Celtic victory, which prompted some of its supporters to leave the terraces and spill onto the field, to congratulate the players. The response from the other end of the ground was a pitch-invasion by disgruntled Rangers supporters, and the two groups clashed in front of TV cameras which a few minutes earlier had been filming the game. Embarrassed by these scenes of mayhem, which soon found their way onto TV news broadcasts all over Europe, the Scottish Football Association had new legislation passed which banned alcohol from Scotland's soccer grounds. Since alcohol had fueled the country's hooliganism in the past, the ban eradicated a lot of soccer-related violence and gave Scottish fans a better image in the world's media. As we will see later, this was to greatly boost Scottish self-esteem in the 1980s.

4. The Old Firm and Ireland.

Rangers and Celtic supporters may be better-behaved these days, but sharing a terrace with them can still be a harrowing experience for the uninitiated. Many find it disturbing that the two sets of supporters should assert their group identity so emotionally by borrowing symbols from the religious communities in Ireland — from the Republic of Ireland in the south of the island, now independent of British rule and with a sizeable Catholic majority among its population; and from Northern Ireland, still British-run and largely Protestant-dominated,

where a low-key but bloody conflict has been in progress between the two religions since 1969.

The traditional colours of Celtic — worn by both fans and players — are green and white, also colours of militant Irish nationalism. The followers of Rangers wrap themselves in blue, suggestive of the British monarchy and thus favoured by Northern Ireland's pro-British Protestants. Celtic fans sing about 1916 and the Easter rebellion in Dublin, which heralded the end of British rule in southern Ireland. Rangers fans venerate 1690 and King William of Orange, the date and the victor of the Battle of the Boyne, which crippled Catholic Irish resistance to British rule in Ireland for the next two centuries.

Factions in both groups of fans cultivate links with soccer clubs in Northern Ireland which have strong Protestant or Catholic images of their own, such as Linfield or Cliftonville. Literature for Protestant paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland like the Ulster Defence Association or the Ulster Volunteer Force are hawked off around the Rangers terraces: Celtic fans have been known to turn up at games in black berets and dark glasses, the traditional uniform for members of that bastion of Irish Catholic terrorism, the Irish Republican Army. Even the genuine IRA has made its presence felt in the Old Firm rivalry. In 1975, shortly before Rangers were scheduled to play a European Cup game in Dublin, the organisation reputedly issued a warning that 'strong action' would be taken against any Rangers fans caught misbehaving in the southern Irish capital.

Unsurprisingly, the Irish tricolour — the flag of the Republic of Ireland and of Irish Catholic nationalism — is much in evidence when Celtic fans gather at a soccer match. The Rangers fans' choice of flags has been more problematic. To bear a Scottish flag — predominantly Protestant though Scotland is — would exclude the Northern

Irish element which has so influenced the club. Thus, as Northern Ireland has remained under the jurisdiction of Great Britain, the Rangers flag has traditionally been the British Union Jack, a symbol of unity between the mainly-Protestant cultures of Scotland, Northern Ireland and England.

Hence, with differences drawn sharply along these lines, there seems little room in the terrace cultures of Rangers and Celtic for the purely Scottish. One maintains a relationship with Ireland, the other embraces the larger political entity that is Great Britain. The irony of the situation is illustrated by the flags and colours used by the teams when they toured North America in the early 1930s. In the summer of 1930 Rangers played their American games under the Union Jack, while the following year Celtic played in Irish colours. Uninformed spectators would have had little way of knowing they were watching the two most important teams in Scotland.

5. Old Firm Attitudes towards Protestant and Catholic Recruitment.

However, the situation is yet more complex. For all the virulently anti-Protestant abuse that has emanated from its support from time to time, Celtic has not been afraid to sign Protestant players. Indeed, four men of that denomination were fielded in the team that lifted the European Cup in 1967 and the goalkeeper, Ronnie Simpson, was even the son of a former Rangers player. Furthermore, this most illustrious moment in the club's history was achieved under the management of Jock Stein, himself a Presbyterian from an area of Scotland where Catholicism had been unpopular.

Stein was in fact the first Protestant to hold this senior position at Celtic Football Club and he may well have helped — to some extent — to bridge the sectarian gulf which had divided Glasgow's working

class since the nineteenth century; something which, of course, did no harm to Stein's 'romantic proletarian' myth. Hugh McIlvanney described him as a "living, eloquent rebuke of the generations of bigotry surrounding the Rangers-Celtic rivalry."

The winning of the European Cup itself must have earned Celtic acceptance in the eyes of many Scots, keen to interpret the victory as an achievement for Scotland rather than for a dislocated group of Catholic Irishmen. Stein himself had commented before the final that "We don't just want to win this cup. We want to win by playing good football, to make neutrals glad we won it." In the aftermath of the victory, wrote Bill Murray, Celtic were "increasingly seen for what they were: a Scottish club of Irish and Catholic origin."

Rangers have projected a much less compromising image. Obviously, in a country like Scotland where the majority of the population is Protestant, there are many other soccer clubs where only a few of the players, board members, administrative staff and supporters are Catholic: but Rangers has been unique in that it has actively sought to avoid recruiting Catholics into its organisation. For most of its history, it has been an exclusively-Protestant enterprise with a following that is often, actively, anti-Catholic. The most visible effect of this policy is that from the first world war until 1989 Rangers did not knowingly sign a Catholic player. Indeed, in the case of Danny McGrain — a Protestant who was to enjoy a long and brilliant career in Scottish soccer both domestically and internationally — Rangers passed over a chance to sign him because his name sounded Catholic.

As time went on, as Scotland's Catholic community became more integrated into society as a whole, as the Presbyterian church became less belligerently Protestant, and as developments in Northern Ireland provided a chilling lesson in what religious bigotry and sectarianism

could lead to, Rangers found its stance increasingly difficult to justify. Ian Archer summed up the indignation of many when he penned a scathing article in the Glasgow Herald newspaper in 1975, stating:

“As a Scottish football club, (Rangers) are a permanent embarrassment and an occasional disgrace. This country would be a better place if they did not exist.

“They are a permanent embarrassment because they are the only club in the world which insists that every member of the team is of the one religion. They are an occasional disgrace because some of their fans, fueled by bigotry, behave like animals.”

It wasn't until 1989 that Rangers — under the dynamic, aggressive management of Graeme Souness, a newcomer to soccer administration with little patience for the entrenched prejudices of Rangers tradition — signed a Catholic player called Maurice Johnson, who had already spent a period playing for Glasgow Celtic. The outcry among the more diehard sections of the Rangers support was extraordinary. Fans who'd followed the club for their entire lives burnt their team scarves and vowed never to attend another game. A wreath was delivered to the Rangers stadium with the message, “116 years of tradition ended.”

Meanwhile, the extremists in the Celtic support were scarcely any less enraged: Johnson had in their eyes betrayed his community by daring to associate with the hated Rangers. By the time of Johnson's first Old Firm game in Rangers colours, a month after his signing, rumours were circulating in Glasgow that the police had arrested two Celtic fans and were questioning them about a planned attempt on Johnson's life.

The rumpus had taken place in the wake of the Salman Rushdie affair, when the unfortunate writer of ‘The Satanic Verses’ had had an

Islamic 'fatwah' — death sentence — issued against him by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. In Scotland's media, ironic parallels were soon being drawn between Rushdie and Maurice Johnson; except by blaspheming against the unspoken laws of the Old Firm rivalry, Johnson had earned himself the hatred of two groups of fanatics.

6. Rangers, Masonry, and the Catholic Distrust of the Establishment.

It is arguable whether the signing of Johnson — courageous though it was — was a genuine attempt to right a wrong, or simply an admission that a club of Rangers' size and ambition couldn't hope to survive in the modern sporting world with a recruitment policy that was medieval in its bigotry. On his part, Souness claimed that Johnson had been signed for his footballing ability, rather than as a gesture to signal a change in the club's attitudes: "We bought him to make Rangers a better team."

However, it is undoubtedly the case that many of Scotland's Catholics still see Glasgow Rangers as an organisation hostile to their community and culture; and moreover, despite the Britishness of many of the club's emblems, some believe it is merely the most visible face of a Scottish establishment that is inherently anti-Catholic, that silently discriminates against Catholics and ensures that they remain underdogs in Scottish society.

Many of these suspicions are inspired by the shadowy presence of Freemasonry in Scotland. Often — but inaccurately — identified with the more aggressively-Protestant Orange Order, the Brotherhood of Freemasons is not officially an anti-Catholic organisation, but it has been sufficiently condemned by the Pope to have earned itself a reputation as such. Rooted in the medieval craft guild of the English stonemasons, the Brotherhood widened its membership during the seven-

teenth century and now recruits mainly middle-class men from a variety of professions. This exclusive membership, and the secrecy in which it conducts its activities, have encouraged many sinister rumours about its influence on society.

Masonry is supposed to be rife among Scotland's business community and in the Rangers boardroom, and it isn't difficult to see how many Catholics have made a connection between the real discrimination practised by the soccer club and the discrimination — real or imagined — that has sometimes denied them employment or promotion in Scottish society as a whole. That Rangers has plenty of official links with local companies and can usually boast a healthy bank-balance only adds to this paranoia.

(Celtic, on the other hand, has always been the less wealthy of the Old Firm clubs; a fact which has a special significance for its Catholic followers, themselves traditionally on the less wealthy side of Scotland's religious divide. The newspaper columnist Patrick Kane, a second-generation Irish Glaswegian, has spoken of a "consoling modern myth" whereby Celtic is "intimately connected to an Irish Catholic immigrant community's struggle to gain acceptability in Scotland" and is "therefore almost quasi-socialist by comparison to a Protestant, Establishment Rangers." Celtic is in fact "the People's Team", whose motto could be "We'll do it even if we're poor.")

Even the members of Scottish soccer's officialdom, the match referees and linesmen, have been suspected of masonic involvement by the more paranoid Celtic supporters, convinced that their team comes off worst in decisions made on the field. In 1990, a group of fans even went to the length of hiring a private detective to investigate the background and associates of a referee called Jim McCluskey, who was scheduled to officiate at an upcoming Old Firm game.

As a result of this distrust of the Scottish establishment — which, despite some near-farcical extremes of paranoia, has genuine historical justification — the Catholic community in Scotland has traditionally shown less enthusiasm for the idea of Scottish home-rule than it has for Irish home-rule. In the 1970s, when the Scottish National Party was enjoying its greatest electoral successes, and Britain's Labour government was proposing the creation of a devolved, Scottish assembly, many Scots of Catholic Irish extraction were clearly nervous about the prospect of London distancing itself from Scotland and leaving the administration of the country to its Protestant establishment. One fear was that in a semi-independent Scotland they'd be treated as shabbily as Catholics were in Northern Ireland, which for the five decades before its present period of conflict had had its own Protestant-dominated administration within the United Kingdom.

Patrick Kane recalls from the 1970s devolution debate “a cloudy exchange with my father about ‘the Kirk ruling Scotland’, ‘putting us back to the bad old days’.” Those fears of a renewed Protestant ascendancy in Scotland eventually prompted Kane senior and many other Irish-Scots to vote ‘no’ in a referendum that the Labour government held in 1979, to decide the future of its Scottish devolution proposals.

However, that Patrick Kane himself is one of the best-known and most vociferous advocates of independence in modern Scotland is an indication that times may have changed since then. (Several young Members of Parliament in Scotland's Labour party, who are not wholly unsympathetic to the Scottish nationalist cause, have similar Irish Catholic backgrounds.) With the arrival of each new generation, the descendants of those Irish Catholic immigrants may be regarding Scotland less as a hostile territory where Glasgow Rangers is the

Protestant establishment's footballing mascot.

7. Rangers, Conservatism and British Nationalism.

Catholic Scots have mistrusted Glasgow Rangers for its — inferred — links with Freemasonry. In the 1980s its perceived intimacy with another organisation, the ruling Conservative party of Great Britain, annoyed larger numbers of Scots.

As we have seen, Margaret Thatcher had been determined to transform the thinking and operation of British society, promoting such virtues as initiative, ambition, self-interest, self-improvement and private enterprise. Though southern England was quick to adapt to the Thatcherite creed, it enjoyed conspicuously less popularity in the peripheral areas of Great Britain, the traditional strongholds of the Labour party, where it was regarded more as an endorsement of individual selfishness. In Scotland the Conservatives were unable to command much more than a quarter of the vote, and it wasn't difficult for many Scots, conditioned by their myths — of Scottish egalitarianism and fairness, of their hard-pressed but principled and sharing working-class communities, and inevitably, of their age-old distrust of the English — to conclude that Scottish integrity was withstanding an onslaught of English avarice.

In the case of Glasgow Rangers, however, Margaret Thatcher found some natural adherents to her creed. The arrival of Graeme Souness as manager and, more importantly, a steel and property tycoon called David Murray as the club's director, introduced a new, entrepreneurial, finance-orientated style to soccer administration in Scotland. More than ever, soccer seemed less a sport than a business, requiring the hard-headed philosophies that Mrs Thatcher had been advocating.

Among the slew of new signings that the Murray-Souness partnership brought to Rangers were several English players, which only compounded the facile assumption among many Scots that the club was embracing everything that was Conservative, English and thus un-Scottish: Murray and Souness even signed the then-skipper of the national English soccer team, Terry Butcher, a celebrity who had made no secret of his admiration for Margaret Thatcher and the changes she had wrought in 1980s Britain.

The Thatcher government had also tried to foster a new, British patriotism, especially in the aftermath of the 1982 Falklands War. For many Scots, however, this 'British' patriotism seemed indistinguishable from the 'English' variety, partly because its figurehead — Mrs Thatcher — seemed the quintessence of bullying, condescending Englishness that had haunted the Scottish imagination since the Act of Union. Thus, appeals to Scots' pride in being 'British' usually left them unmoved. Some of Scotland's Conservatives may have felt there was more mileage to be made by promoting a Scottish, rather than British, patriotism, even if that would have implied disloyalty to the British Conservative party as a whole. As Michael Fry, a right-wing English journalist living in Scotland, observed in 1989:

"Scottish Conservatives have got themselves into an extraordinary position where national (SCOTTISH) sentiment actually works against us, something that would be inconceivable in any other land. Alone among the Conservative parties of the world, the Scottish one tells its country (SCOTLAND) that nationhood counts for nothing. Can we still then define ourselves as a Conservative party? Is not an unpatriotic Conservative party a meaningless abstraction?"

Meanwhile, this national sentiment seemed to be aiding the other political parties in Scotland. Support for the long-dormant Scottish

National Party was gradually creeping upwards again and the other two main opposition parties, the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats, had committed themselves to the creation of a Scottish assembly (one with more powers than that which the Labour government had proposed in the 1970s). Only the Conservatives, ruling Scotland with the support of a quarter of its population, favoured the continuation of direct rule from London.

According to an opinion poll conducted by the Scotsman newspaper in 1991, 40% of Scots considered their nationality to be Scottish and not British at all, while a further 29% thought themselves to be more Scottish than British: only 21% felt 'equally' Scottish and British. Clearly, ignoring the Scottish dimension and telling the Scots they should feel glad to be British, as the Conservative government was doing, was not helping its already-shaky standing north of the border.

This put Glasgow Rangers, whose culture had attached such importance to being British, out of step with popular opinion in Scotland. The Union Jacks which have bedecked the Rangers terraces are a good illustration of the club's problematic stance: though strictly speaking the Union Jack is the flag of the whole United Kingdom, of Wales, Northern Ireland, England and Scotland, English supporters now happily wave it at international soccer fixtures as if it were England's own; and it is rarely, if ever, seen when fans gather to cheer on the national Scottish team.

In reaction to this, some Rangers supporters have grown more belligerent in their sense of Britishness. For example, a writer in a Rangers magazine called 'Follow, Follow' recently confessed that his "lethargy towards Scotland is so great it is better described as complete indifference... In the club-versus-country situation it has never been a contest... my pride in being British and belief in the Union means that

I see Scotland as part of a nation but not as one.” Rangers fans at matches have taken to singing such anthems celebrating British imperialism as ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ and ‘Rule Britannia’, while rival supporters taunt them with songs like ‘Flower of Scotland’, invoking Bannockburn and the ancient myths of Scottish patriotism.

When Glasgow Rangers enjoyed a successful run in the 1992/1993 European Cup competition, one sports commentator asserted that all of Scotland’s population would be “getting behind Rangers” irrespective of their normal footballing loyalties. Immediately, there were derisive chuckles from the fans of Scotland’s other teams. What, get behind a club that was Scottish by definition only, that was more interested in toadying to the British state?

In recent years, the ‘Rangers revolution’ undertaken by David Murray and Graeme Souness has brought the club both success in European competitions and near-domination of the domestic league and its competitions. Rumours have circulated that the club is contemplating entry into the English soccer league or even into a ‘super-league’ containing the best of Europe’s teams, having now grown ‘too big’ for Scotland. If this were to come about, it would, for many, be merely the natural conclusion to a process whereby Glasgow Rangers has gradually distanced itself from Scottish culture — if it had ever shared much common ground with that culture in the first place.

And yet, it would be wrong to confuse symbolic identity with genuine identity. The Protestant supporters of Glasgow Rangers may gladly align themselves with a pro-British, Conservative institution every Saturday afternoon, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that for most of the time they are fairly typical of working-class Scottish voters. In her study of the Orange Order in Scotland — an obvious haven for hardline Rangers fans — the researcher Elaine

MacFarland has written that “Links with the Conservatives have considerably weakened... It has been suggested that the majority of Orangemen are now Labour voters, though a number may have been attracted to the Scottish National Party from the 1970s.” The city of Glasgow, despite its large concentrations of Rangers supporters, is now devoid of Conservative party representation in the London parliament. In fact, the constituency of Govan — the very heartland of the club — has been won by the SNP in by-elections in 1973 and 1989.

The use of Mrs Thatcher’s beloved Union Jack on the Glasgow Rangers terraces may indicate the existence of a ‘pick ‘n mix’ identity indeed.

Regional Identity and the Aberdeen/Dundee United Ascendancy.

1. Cultural Divisions, Regionalism and the North-East of Scotland.

We have already seen how cultural differences have ensured that a gulf exists between cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh — what could be very roughly described as the administrative, urbanised ‘centre’ of Scotland — and the country’s rural areas, which are mostly in the south and north. There is, for example, a contrast between the pastoral settings and mood of the Conservative, nineteenth century tradition of kailyard and the urban, industrialised world of more robust, left-wing Clydesidism.

And we have heard the complaints of Cairns Craig that “the industrial death throes of industrial west-central Scotland have become the touchstone of authenticity for our culture.” It isn’t only writers, poets, musicians and dramatists who have imposed these values of Clydesidism and general Glaswegian-ism on Scottish culture as a whole. Because many of the country’s broadcasters and journalists are based

in Glasgow, the city has had a heavy influence on Scotland's media culture too. The result has been an assumption that 'Glasgow' and 'Scotland' are interchangeable. It is not uncommon, for instance, to find people elsewhere in Great Britain who believe that all Scots speak with Glaswegian accents.

Of course, Glasgow and its urban environment do not enjoy a monopoly over popular notions of the Scottish identity. As I explained in my earlier account of tartanry, the north-western Highlands of Scotland have long supported a population of Gaelic-speaking Scots, distinct from the English-speaking Scots in the south and east, whose cultural trappings were commandeered by Sir Walter Scott and the embryonic Scottish tourist industry in the nineteenth century and used to represent Scotland as a whole.

This misconception that Scotland is a nation of Highlanders has been sold so thoroughly to tourists that, according to the historian T. C. Smout, "the very trappings of the despised Highland minority — the kilt and tartan, the bagpipes and the bonnets, the eagle's feather and the dried sprig of heather" have "blended into a kitsch everyone around the world can recognise." Indeed, the eagerness with which outsiders have accepted this image of Scotland was initially galling for many English-speaking Scots, accustomed to viewing their northern countrymen as lazy, simple-minded primitives.

Though the division between Gaelic Highlanders and English-speaking 'Lowlanders' has diminished to the point today where, says Smout, "It is certainly not any longer the most obvious or important division, ethnically and culturally, among the Scottish people as a whole," it is still indicative — along with kailyard and Clydesidism — of a fundamental gulf in the Scottish psyche: between countryside and city, the industrial and the pastoral, the north and south, the outlying

regions and the centre. Scottish soccer has a faultline which roughly equates to all of this: between Glasgow and the rest of the country or, more accurately, between the Old Firm and the other clubs.

Between them, Rangers and Celtic have traditionally been able to command the largest crowds of supporters and thus the lion's share of the profits in Scottish soccer. In turn, they have been able to buy the best players from smaller clubs who, because of economics, can scarcely say no to the large sums of money Rangers and Celtic are offering them. And inevitably, with the largest crowds and best players, and all other opposition effectively stunted by the continuing sale of talent, the Old Firm have been the main focus of Scotland's sports media; the publicity from which fuels the Old Firm juggernaut even further.

The fans of the two Glasgow teams can be equally dismissive. In the issue of the Rangers magazine 'Follow Follow' from which I quoted earlier, for instance, there is much scathing criticism of Celtic and its supporters; but the non-Glasgow teams are mentioned only briefly with a few derisive jibes about 'hicks' and 'sheep'.

Nevertheless, the Glaswegian domination has given rise to a stubborn, defiant pride in those neglected provinces — provinces which in the fascistic geography of Scottish soccer, begin at the very edge of Glasgow. In his essay 'The Saints Came Marching In', William Hunter provides some valuable insight into the provincial sense of identity spawned by Scottish soccer and its Old Firm supremacy. Writing about the relationship between his home town, Paisley, and the local soccer team, St Mirren, Hunter remarks: "To look like a separate place on the map Paisley lies too near Glasgow, only seven miles east... To remain their own people, Paisley folk, the Buddies, had to fend off Glasgow. Big brother had to be kept at arm's length, fists clenched. Despite geography, Buddies retained their independence... There has

been a price to pay for staying separate. We are, yes, gritty, and, maybe, aggressive.” And obviously, the grit and aggression of the Paisley identity received its sternest tests each time St Mirren had to take on Rangers or Celtic, the representatives of ‘big brother’, Glasgow.

Regrettably little attention has been paid to the role soccer plays in affirming regional identity, that is, in the parts of the country outside its footballing heartland of Glasgow. However, I feel this topic is worth mentioning briefly, especially with regard to the regions of Grampian and Tayside on the north-eastern coast of Scotland which, for the sake of simplicity, I will refer to here as the ‘north-east’.

The area is unique in Scotland in that it manages to defy some of the categorisation I have just been describing. It is home to Aberdeen and Dundee, Scotland’s third and fourth largest cities respectively, so there is certainly an urban, industrialised aspect to the north-east’s character. However, the rural and pastoral never seem far away. The area is, for example, the setting of Lewis Grassie Gibbon’s trilogy of novels collectively titled ‘A Scots Quair’, regarded as one of the crowning achievements of twentieth century Scottish literature — but which has obvious roots in the maligned kailyard tradition of the previous century. Even one of the most notorious purveyors of modern kailyard, the Sunday Post newspaper, is published by a company based in Dundee.

In his social and political history of the Scottish vernacular, ‘Scots — the Mither Tongue’, the broadcaster Billy Kay wrote, “More than any other Scottish city, Aberdeen maintains close personal and cultural ties to its hinterland, and its language and culture... there is little of the notion of two cultures - the urban versus rural conflict.” Indeed, because of its local dialect, Aberdeen presents something of an anomaly when we attempt to divide Scotland into areas of Highlanders and

Lowlanders. ‘Doric’, the vernacular of Aberdeen and its environs, is strikingly different in its intonation and vocabulary (and in an increasingly-standardised world, in its continuing popularity) from other forms of Scottish English; and it has sired its own healthy sub-genre of Scottish literature. If they are not as alien to other Lowlanders as some of the Gaels might appear, the people of Aberdeen and thereabouts can certainly boast a strong regional distinctiveness.

And in terms of recent economic history, Aberdeen has been a law unto itself. The discovery of oil in the North Sea, off Scotland’s northern and north-eastern shores, and the establishment of more than 30 oilfields there in the 1970s and 1980s, meant that the city and its hinterland enjoyed a surge of prosperity at a time when traditional industries and economies were ailing badly elsewhere in Scotland. Though those halcyon days of oil production are now in the past, the city continues to flourish. One journalist wrote poetically that “The latest UK recession passed Aberdeen by like a ship in the night.”

Defying cultural divisions and social trends common to Scotland as a whole, it seems fitting that in the 1980s the north-east should also have broken the unspoken law of Scottish soccer; that Rangers and Celtic are the unchallenged champions of the game. Between them, Aberdeen and Dundee United Football Clubs won the Premier League Championship four times during that decade; Dundee United won the Scottish League Cup twice and was runner-up twice as well, while Aberdeen was runner-up on three occasions before lifting the trophy in 1990. Aberdeen also won the European Cup-Winners Cup in 1983 and the European ‘Super-Cup’ the following year, while Dundee United has also enjoyed honourable runs in European competitions.

The success of the north-eastern teams created genuine excitement in Scottish soccer, where Old Firm supremacy had given the game a

reputation both of wearying predictability and unsavoury sectarian bitterness. Writing about Aberdeen's winning of the Scottish League championship in 1980, the sports writer and academic Clive Leatherdale pointed out that:

"...the traditional fear of the Old Firm had been exorcised. Rangers faced Aberdeen in all competitions. And beat them once. Celtic played the Dons six times. And beat them once. Together with Dundee United's success in the League Cup, there was talk of a 'New Firm' rising to challenge the geographical balance of power in Scottish football."

Indeed, a hitherto-unthinkable thing happened in the autumn of 1983. Following a resignation by the previous incumbent, Glasgow Rangers Football Club found itself searching for a new manager. The position was offered to the Aberdeen manager, Alex Ferguson, and then to Dundee United's Jim MacLean. Both men declined (even though MacLean claimed to have been offered "a 100,000 pound house in the west of Scotland" and "double the basic salary I had with United".) In other words, management of an Old Firm team was no longer seen as the pinnacle of achievement in Scottish soccer. An age-old maxim had been broken.

2. The New Firm and Resourcefulness.

However, the appeal of Aberdeen and Dundee United hasn't just resided in the fact that they have presented an uncommonly strong threat to the Old Firm. They have also presented that threat without having the huge resources and support of the Glasgow clubs. The idea of achieving a great deal with limited materials is one which appeals greatly to the north-easterners' sense of identity. The writer John R. Allan, a resident of the county of Buchan in north-east Scotland,

describes the area's development as "an idea imposed on nature at great expense of labour and endurance, of weariness and suffering." His sentiments are echoed by the journalist Julie Davidson, who writes that the north-east "most physically and visibly exemplifies that which is most dogged and determined (and perhaps dour) in the Scottish character; and that which best knows how to exploit its assets."

If such stubbornness and canniness are indeed north-eastern traits, then the ascendancy of Aberdeen and Dundee United in the 1980s was guided by two appropriate managers, in the austere, no-nonsense figures of Alex Ferguson and Jim MacLean. MacLean, a teetotal disciplinarian who has been described as "the kind of manager who thinks players should be dropped for wearing aftershave", readily admitted that his first action every morning after arriving at Dundee United's stadium was to go around switching off lights to save electricity: "This club has survived and prospered because it was built on solid foundations. Good housekeeping is the secret. Good housekeeping meant that we balanced the books. Good housekeeping meant that we did not pay lavish salaries to players when the club could not afford to do that."

Both clubs have pursued vigorous youth-training programmes, recruiting and developing local talent rather than purchasing large numbers of players from elsewhere in the manner of Rangers and Celtic. That the New Firm's philosophy brought them such handsome results in the 1980s is seen as a vindication of north-eastern ingenuity, a victory of good sense and resourcefulness over wasteful extravagance.

3. The New Firm and Modernity.

Nonetheless, the arrival of oil money in the local economy did aid the emergence of Aberdeen and, to a lesser extent, Dundee United. (It

should be noted, however, that the city of Aberdeen has received most of the benefits of oil, while until recently Dundee has had to endure a reputation for ugliness and deprivation that was almost as bad as Glasgow's.) This prosperity has emphasised the 'newness' of the New Firm while the Old Firm has seemed doubly obsolete in comparison; declining in sporting importance and belonging to an environment — central-west Scotland — that is also declining economically.

Furthermore, many New Firm fans have wanted to extend this charge of obsolescence to the religious cultures that Rangers and Celtic are associated with. New Firm supporters' magazines often contain articles mocking the Old Firm for their entrenched Protestant and Catholic traditions, for what one writer has described abusively as the "rotting shamrock of sectarianism". All this, it is implied, belongs to the past and has no place in the dynamic, forward-looking cultures of the New Firm clubs.

Regrettably, a small section of Aberdeen's support chose to assert this sense of 'newness', of 'modernity', in a more aggressive manner. 1980/1981 saw the emergence of a new phenomenon in Scottish soccer that was pioneered by some of the club's younger fans — a type of hooliganism called 'Casual' violence, which differed from the haphazard, alcohol-fueled mob violence of Old Firm games in that its attacks were better planned and more ruthlessly executed.

The practitioners looked different from the traditional soccer lout as well. Norman Bonney, a sociology professor at Aberdeen University, observed that "The Aberdeen Soccer Casuals, as the gang became known, contributed to a new style in football hooliganism distinguished not by skinhead fashions but by the wearing of expensive and trendy sportswear accompanied by a heightened level of violence." It is easy to see how this enthusiasm for costly clothes was a warped reflection

of the prosperity now associated with the hooligans' city.

Coming at a time when anti-alcohol legislation by the Scottish Football Association had eliminated much of the violence elsewhere in Scotland and improved the country's footballing image, the Casual phenomenon was an accute embarrassment to Aberdeen Football Club. It wasn't until 1986, when a determined crackdown by Aberdeen's police force resulted in numerous arrests, that their menace receded somewhat.

At their height, recalled Jay Allen — one of the gang's ringleaders — Aberdeen's Casuals were "by far the oldest, biggest and best-organised" of any hooligan group in Scottish soccer. Their superiority was "a known fact" and their ranks contained "well over 1000 Casuals with a hard core of 200." Allen has also made an interesting comment about Glaswegians — against whom he had often fought at Aberdeen-Rangers and Aberdeen-Celtic matches: "Most of the English are terrified by the Glaswegian accent, but although there are a lot of hard areas and hard men in Glasgow, the same could be said of every big city in Britain. Their reputation is definitely exaggerated." This echoes the lack of fear Aberdeen and Dundee United have shown for the Old Firm on the soccer field.

4. New Firm Attitudes towards the Glasgow Establishment.

Obviously, to enhance the 'moral superiority' of the New Firm, it is necessary for north-easterners to portray the Old Firm as being absurdly advantaged; yet failing to subdue Aberdeen or Dundee United despite this. What makes the New Firm remarkable in the eyes of their communities is that they have succeeded even though the odds are stacked against them. They can beat Rangers and Celtic on occasion, despite the Glasgow teams having the greater finances and the bulk of

the crowd behind them.

The attitude extends to the media as well. As I have said, many of Scotland's newspapers and much of its broadcasting originates in Glasgow and so there is an understandable paranoia among New Firm fans that the establishment — Glaswegian — is biased against them and their teams. Thus, unlike the unease felt by Celtic supporters and their community, convinced of being underdogs in a religious situation, the New Firm's unease comes from a sense of being a region neglected by a powerful centre.

This paranoia has occasionally surfaced among the staff of the New Firm clubs themselves. In a profile in the Independent newspaper, Alex Ferguson's days as Aberdeen manager were associated with a strong mistrust of "the snide metropolitans of Glasgow" and one Scottish sports reporter was quoted as saying, "He used to keep a log of how many times we Glasgow-based journalists would come to watch his side and harangue us if it wasn't enough." Soccer officialdom was similarly mistrusted. "He was certain that every referee was against him, too. When his team played he reckoned they took on far more than the opposition. They took on the entire world."

More extravagant conspiracy theories still have surfaced in the supporters' publications. In the November 1993 issue of the Aberdeen magazine 'Paper Tiger', for instance, one writer accused Scotland's TV producers of manipulating the sound and visuals of televised matches between Aberdeen and the Old Firm teams, to create an impression of Old Firm supremacy: "Notice whenever an inaccurate shot hits the advertising hoardings behind the goal, at the end populated by the Old Firm fans, that it rebounds back with a sound not dissimilar to a nuclear explosion... Now compare this to a similar situation at the other end, where silence is indeed golden... The idea here is to try and

convince one and all that a) we are all better off supporting the Old Firm; and that, b) if we don't, then (WE SHOULD) prepare to be buried by sheer weight of numbers..."

It is not difficult to see this as being indicative of the suspicions that exist in general between the less-populated regions of Scotland and the urban centres represented by Glasgow (and/or Edinburgh) described at the beginning of this section. A good political example of these suspicions can be found in the 1979 referendum in Scotland about the establishment of a devolved assembly. Not only Tayside and Grampian — the 'north-east' region talked about here — but other provinces like Dumfries and Galloway, the Borders and Orkney and Shetland voted against its establishment, to some extent reflecting fears that such a body would be preoccupied with the interests of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and neglectful of the periphery.

The Liberal Democrat politician, Charles Kennedy, whose constituency, Ross, Cromarty and Skye, lies in that periphery, observed that "In Orkney and Shetland the 'anti' vote was emphatic, over 70% in both cases. Highland Region recorded only the narrowest of 'yes' margins (51% to 49%). Hardly a ringing endorsement, even allowing for the failings of the scheme on offer at the time. (Remember also that the Act did not grant the proposed Assembly any tax-raising powers — which in these regions under the political and financial climate prevailing then could have been a source of still greater anxiety, and so opposition.)"

The people of the north-east have derived enormous pride from their local soccer teams but, ultimately, the relationship between the New Firm and their communities has not been conditioned by the intense historical, religious and social pressures which have shaped the equivalent relationships in Glasgow. Aberdeen and Dundee United

have served as powerful symbols for their communities, but they aren't the overwhelming, defining symbols that Rangers and Celtic have become elsewhere. As the Glaswegian journalist Ian Archer has said accurately about Aberdeen — and not without a touch of envy — soccer there is “put in its context, not unimportant but certainly not a matter of life and death.”

National Identity and the National Scottish Soccer Team.

1. Soccer's Relationship with History and Nationalism.

At the beginning of this paper we heard George Orwell's assertion that soccer is hopelessly entwined with nationalism, which he defined as “the lunatic modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige.” Some commentators who have experienced soccer crowds at their most rabidly nationalistic might prefer some words Renan made on the topic: “Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation”.

Consider, for example, this account of an English soccer hooligan in Bill Bruford's book, ‘Among the Thugs’. Meeting the hooligan — whom he pseudonymously called ‘Grimsby’ — at an international England-Holland match held in Germany in the late 1980s, Bruford marvelled at how Grimsby “believed that he needed to prove his cultural superiority to every foreigner he met... and being in Germany made him vigorously nationalistic. There was also the war: the one ‘we’ won. Although he was only twenty years old... his talk was exclusively about World War Two: it provided him with the images and the history to attach his nationalism to. He wanted to fight the war all over again. The viciousness of the Germans, the spinelessness of the Dutch, the bulldog bravery of the English: these were tenets of a

fundamental belief, and Grimsby would be an unhappy man if he couldn't go into a battle of some kind to illustrate that they were more — that they were in fact incontestable verities of national character.”

Obviously, many international clashes on the soccer field invoke the spectre of history, and do so extremely crudely. When Argentina met England in the 1986 World Cup finals, for instance, the contest became a continuation of 1982's Falklands War in the minds of many English and Argentinian supporters; and among the latter group, their country's victory on the soccer field (and England's subsequent departure from the competition) was seen as revenge for a military defeat.

However, this commandeering of history as a way of asserting national distinctiveness and national pride on the soccer terraces is problematic for Scottish fans because, as the historical outline in the first part of this paper makes clear, Scottish history becomes a nebulous and ill-defined concept after the Union of Parliaments in 1707 — when to the outside world (though not necessarily in terms of internal structures) the Scottish identity was effectively submerged within a larger British identity.

Admittedly, for the young lout described by Bruford, there was no difficulty in interpreting what was, strictly speaking, a wartime achievement by the United Kingdom (that is, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) as purely a victory for “the bulldog bravery for the English”. Considering that England constitutes most of the United Kingdom's population and area — and perhaps more importantly, political power in the United Kingdom is centred in England — it isn't difficult to see how the lout could substitute ‘England’ for the ‘United Kingdom’ and use the latter's history as the vehicle for his English nationalism. However, this is not usually a luxury that is available to Scots who want to assert themselves in purely Scottish terms. Quite

simply, most of the United Kingdom is not Scotland. Little of Britain's history is Scottish history, nor is much of its culture Scottish culture.

Indeed, soccer provides Scots with a rare rallying-point in a national culture that in many ways exists in a vacuum: Scotland is a nation that isn't an autonomous state, the city of Edinburgh is a capital that lacks a parliament, the Scots are a people with no distinctively Scottish government. In this environment, soccer is given a significance that it lacks in, say, an independent European country like Greece or Austria. In the words of the writer and sports journalist Roddy Forsyth, "We Scots load so much onto football because it is the main arena in which Scots see themselves playing a role in international affairs. If Scotland were independent, football could just be about football. As it is, it carries the main burden of Scottish identity."

It isn't only in a political sense that the Scottish identity is lacking. David McCrone has pointed out that "Unlike many forms of nationalism, the cultural content of the Scottish variety is relatively weak. Compared to Welsh, Irish, Catalan, Breton or Quebec nationalism, it is less ready to call up the ancient ghosts of the nation, its symbols and motifs, in its quest for independence." Since the 1960s, says McCrone, Scottish nationalists have felt more comfortable to use the Scandinavian countries as models for a future independent Scotland, rather than the (perhaps more obvious) example of Ireland.

This lack of faith in cultural phenomena as a focus for national (and nationalist) sentiment has many reasons, which we have already touched upon many times in this discussion. We have seen the questionable authenticity of cultural myths like tartanry and kailyard. To talk of 'one' people is difficult when there are divisions between, say, Highlanders and Lowlanders, or Catholics and Protestants. Linguistically, the Scottish vernacular has had little success in withstanding

the influence of its more socially-acceptable, more widespread and pervasive, standardised cousin from south of the border; and Scottish Gaelic enjoys only minority status, spoken by less than 2% of Scotland's population. Religion is hardly a convincing criteria for asserting Scottish distinctiveness when the traditional Scottish church is merely a variation of Protestantism, the larger creed most Scots share with the English. In other words, international soccer is one of the very few activities which can unite most Scots and give them an authentic and honourable sense of distinctiveness.

2. The Soccer World Cup and Scottish Nationalism in the 1970s.

It is at the most important tier of international soccer — the World Cup finals held every four years — that I would first like to examine this phenomenon. Scottish soccer's earliest forays into this tournament were staggering catalogues of bungling and ineptitude. Prior to the 1950 World Cup finals in Brazil, the English and Scottish national teams had both been invited to compete as respective winner and runner-up in the British Championship competition (played with Wales and Northern Ireland). The Scottish Football Association declined the invitation, explaining haughtily that its team would only participate in the finals as British champion, not as runner-up; surely the only instance in soccer history of a country knocking itself out of the World Cup.

For the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland, Scotland made it to the finals in a manner deemed satisfactory by the SFA, but the farcical manner of ensuing events meant that, to quote the journalist Stuart Cosgrove, "Scotland's 1954 World Cup team will go down in history as the most disastrous and ill-prepared rabble that has ever represented the country abroad." The SFA was permitted to send a squad of 22

players, but for some reason dispatched only 13, who were scarcely representative of the cream of the country's footballing talent. The squad arrived at the finals without even a common training kit, so that they had to wear a bizarre, multi-coloured assortment of shirts belonging to domestic clubs or borrowed from friends. The disillusioned Scottish manager announced his resignation just before his team's second (and final) game, in which the multi-coloured Scots were hammered 7-0 by Uruguay.

By the 1970s, however, the World Cup finals had acquired such international popularity and significance that the Scottish Football Association could never again treat them with such cavalier disregard. According to Nick Hornby, the 1970 World Cup finals in Mexico "introduced a whole new phase in the consumption of football. It had always been a global game in the sense that the whole world watched it and the whole world played it; but in '62, when Brazil retained the World Cup, television was still a luxury rather than a necessity... and in '66 the South Americans had performed poorly... In effect, 1970 was the first major confrontation between Europe and South America that the world had the opportunity to witness."

The political circumstances of Scotland had also changed from the 1950s. In 1967, Harold Wilson's British Labour government had been jolted by a by-election in the Scottish constituency of Hamilton, which saw a 16,000 Labour majority overturned by the Scottish National Party, who snatched victory with 1,799 votes. The SNP repeated the same feat six years later, this time during the Conservative administration of Edward Heath, and captured the Govan constituency in Glasgow. Then, more spectacularly still, in the October general election of 1974, the party secured 30% of Scotland's votes and eleven of its seats in the London parliament.

By this time, the nationalistic surge in Scotland had prompted both Heath and Wilson to establish committees in their parties examining the feasibility — and possible forms — of limited home rule for Scotland, of devolving enough power northwards to satisfy Scottish aspirations for autonomy without letting the country secede from the United Kingdom. Under the Labour government which arrived in power in 1974, two Devolution bills inched their way through London's House of Commons, and with these — admittedly cautious — attempts at legislation, and the continuing high profile of the SNP, it seemed that Scots could look forward to a greater degree of autonomy before the end of the decade.

There was an important economic development too, which I have mentioned already in my account of north-eastern Scotland. Sizeable oil reserves had been found under the sea-bed off Scotland's coast, starting with the discovery of the Forties oil-field in 1970. By now, some Scots were questioning the right of a London government to lay claim to these resources. Was it 'British' oil that was coming ashore, or was it something that 'Scotland' had exclusive rights to? The SNP, of course, had no doubts. In the autumn of 1972 the party launched a new campaign with the slogan 'It's Scotland's Oil' and, crudely partisan though the message was, it managed to strike a chord with many Scottish voters.

Increased nationalist sentiment, apparent progress towards home rule, the appearance of oil as a potential savior for the country's economy: the mid-1970s were heady times indeed for Scottish society. However, by the end of the decade, such aspirations had come to nothing. By late 1979, the SNP had been reduced to only two parliamentary seats, the prospect of a devolved Scottish assembly had been killed off in a referendum where Scots had voted apathetically, an

adamantly anti-Scottish home rule prime minister — Margaret Thatcher — had come to power, and whatever benefits oil was having on the British economy as a whole, it seemed to be doing nothing to halt the decline of Scotland's traditional industries.

It seems unlikely that the fortunes of Scotland's national soccer team had more than a slight effect on the rise and subsequent crash of this national self-confidence; but there are bizarre parallels between the two and, in describing the period, commentators have been happy to substitute the language of politics for the language of soccer, fusing the two things into a common national myth of hope and disillusionment.

Consider the finals of the 1974 World Cup, in which Scotland made its first appearance since 1958. In his account of the 1974 campaign, Ian Archer underlined that dilemma of national identity Scots feel when their country participates in international sport, without properly being a country in a political sense:

“Brazil... were backed by millions of government money and acted like kings on the throne. Holland had brought Cruyff and thousands were waiting to cross the border in orange support. West Germany's footballers could not go to the toilet off-the-record and there were smashing photographs of Mr Beckenbauer at home, clean and pressed, surrounded by his family, a man of substance, part of an economic miracle. And who were we?

“In that waiting week, Scots came to think of themselves as just a bunch of scrubbers. So we're not a country, we haven't got our own stamps, they won't accept our own anthem. Who cares?”

In fact, the little-fancied Scots acquitted themselves very well in the 1974 finals, beating Brazil and managing respectable draws in matches with Yugoslavia — an ironic encounter between a nation belonging to a larger state and a state composed of smaller nations —

and with Brazil. Archer recounted how after one game, about 200 Scottish fans gathered around the team's coach and "started singing, not the supporters' songs, but the songs of a people who want to be a nation, 'Flower of Scotland', 'The Road and the Miles to Bonnie Dundee', 'The Star of Rabbie Burns'." Meanwhile, back home, "The Scottish National Party claimed that if an election was due the following week, they would win in a landslide and if custom posts were needed at Carlisle, there would have been no shortage of volunteers."

Yet one wonders if the fervour shown for the team really was an indication of a deeper sense of national pride and identity. There are undoubtedly many Scots who are happy to unleash their patriotism on the terraces of a soccer or rugby stadium without extending that patriotism any further, without desiring the slightest degree of home rule for their country or wishing to change the apparatus by which they are governed from London. In an interview after the 1992 British general election that had seen him lose his parliamentary seat and had effectively ended his political career, a leading Scottish nationalist politician called Jim Sillars made a memorable tirade against 'ninety-minute patriots' who would shout and sing their hearts out for their country while it was competing in a sports contest, yet who — in his eyes — lacked the gumption to assert their patriotism politically.

We can see a particularly absurd example of this paradox in the behavior of the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party in 1974, while it was discussing proposals for the creation of a devolved Scottish assembly — which had already been given the green light by the party's leader, prime minister Harold Wilson, in London. Though the executive was expected to follow the Wilson line, at a meeting on June 22nd to debate the proposals only eleven of its 29 members turned up; and among the eleven attendees, the anti-devolution faction had a

majority of one. The result was that the Scottish Executive voted against the schemes for Scottish home rule which had been put before them; something that was an embarrassing (though not fatal) setback to Wilson's devolution plans.

And why hadn't the other 18 members of the Executive come to that meeting; when, after all, affairs were being discussed which could potentially have a profound impact on their country's future? There was a more pressing demand on their Scottish patriotism. They had chosen to stay at home and watch television, for June 22nd was the day that Scotland faced Yugoslavia in the World Cup finals.

However, it wasn't until March 1st, 1979, when the matter was placed directly before the Scottish public in a national referendum, that the Scottish devolution movement met its final nemesis. A majority of those who voted did so in favour of the creation of an assembly, but not in sufficiently-large numbers to impress the Labour government, which had stipulated that at least 40% of the Scottish electorate should approve the proposals for them to become legislative reality. For many members of Scotland's intellectual community — who were either SNP supporters, or Labour Party supporters with 'soft' nationalist sympathies — the result was a severe blow to their pride, a perceived loss-of-nerve among the Scots, who had failed to take responsibility for their own destiny. Eerily, this time of political trauma coincided with another Scottish trauma, once again one that had occurred on the soccer field.

The Scottish team had again qualified for the World Cup finals, this time in Argentina in the summer of 1978. It had done so under the management of a man called Ally MacLeod, a loquacious character who — though his managerial skills were ultimately shown to be lacking — was certainly a genius at public relations. In the months

prior to the finals, MacLeod exuded confidence and made glowing predictions about Scotland's prospects which a wiser soccer head would have had difficulty justifying. If MacLeod had known the irrational euphoria his comments were going to unleash in Scotland, he might have kept quiet.

A large section of the Scottish public seemed only too willing to believe his words, and behaved as if Scotland had already lifted the World Cup trophy before a ball had even been kicked. Writing in the 1980s, from a viewpoint of ironic hindsight, William McIlvanney captured the hysteria of 1978 in a short story called 'Waving':

"For weeks he had been aware of the terrible grip the disease had been taking on Scotland, like a mental Bubonic. Everybody wanted to go to Argentina. Men were apparently standing up suddenly in perfectly peaceful houses and announcing to their families, as if seized by strange messages from the air, 'I want to go to Argentina'. More than that, some of them had been trying to fulfil the urge. Every other day, in newspapers or on television, new stories came of wild plans being hatched about how to get there. Rowing boats had been mentioned. Two men from Tarbert, Loch Fine, were rumoured to be cycling. A bookmaker from the east was said to be hiring a submarine. Since the Scottish football team had qualified for the World Cup finals to be held in Argentina, a one-directional wanderlust had become the national insanity."

The climax of this insanity came on the night MacLeod and his squad were scheduled to fly to Argentina. Beforehand, they made an appearance at the national Scottish stadium, Hampden Park, where 30,000 fans had assembled with flags, banners, streamers and acres of tartan to give them a tumultuous send-off. This outpouring of ecstatic — not to say jingoistic — sentiment was something that

happened in a purely Scottish context. When Scots had celebrated in such numbers in the past, it had usually been as British citizens, during a coronation, for instance, or on VE Day at the end of World War Two. Here, for perhaps the first time in living memory, was a great national pageant of Scottishness, and soccer was the chosen medium.

In his memoirs MacLeod recalls the evening with mixed feelings: "Instead of simply saluting our achievement in reaching the finals, when so many other, great nations had failed, I suspect that the majority of the fans felt we were making some kind of promise, celebrating in fact before we had really kicked a ball.

"...I have never felt more proud to be Scottish when we boarded that plane, or more keenly aware of the responsibility I carried not just to football, or to sport in general, but to the entire Scottish nation."

In fact, MacLeod and his players were experiencing the inevitable results of being athletes in a country with a profound sense of itself, but with more sporting than political or cultural outlets for its aspirations.

The team's subsequent performance in the 1978 World Cup finals has been described as the 'absolute nadir' of Scottish soccer — a series of disasters that included a 3-1 defeat at the hands of an underrated Peruvian team, an abysmal showing against Iran in which the Scots somehow managed to scrape a draw, and a drug-taking scandal involving the Scottish player Willie Johnston who was sent home in disgrace. Those Scottish fans who had made the lengthy journey to Argentina ended up stoning their players' bus. The Daily Record, Scotland's best-selling tabloid, printed a front-page editorial lamenting that "Today there is only emptiness and anger," while the London-based Times commented acidly that "Scotland came here to compare themselves with the best, and could not even run with the weakest."

Far from being the man who brought the World Cup trophy back

to Scotland, Ally MacLeod created a niche for himself in modern Scottish mythology as a symbol of folly, disgrace and failure, not dissimilar to that occupied by General Custer or Richard Nixon in the American psyche.

Some commentators have tried to identify the 1978 World Cup experience as a major reason for the apathy shown in the devolution referendum the following spring. While a sporting fiasco of such proportions in front of the world's media hardly did much for Scottish self-esteem, it seems far more likely that political and economic considerations were the main influences on how people voted (or in the case of 36% of the Scottish electorate, why they didn't vote at all.) The campaign in favour of an assembly can't have inspired confidence because it was hopelessly stricken by party differences, particularly between activists in the Labour Party and SNP. In many minds too, the proposals were associated with a beleaguered Labour government that by the end of the 1970s seemed to be buffeted by one crisis after another.

As the political journalist Andrew Marr has written of the episode, "In 1979 devolution carried the stigma of failing government. It had been imposed on a doubtful party by a London leadership for purely electoral reasons. It had been legislated for in a fog of internal dissent and confusion. It was campaigned for by divided parties at a time of economic chaos. In some ways it is surprising that so many Scots voted for it."

Interestingly, the Conservative Party of Margaret Thatcher, then in opposition, had dropped hints that a future Conservative government would deliver a 'better' devolution package. However, when her party arrived in power after a general election later that year, the SNP had experienced a disastrous slump in support and lost nine of its Members

of Parliament, and there was no longer any perceived need to pander to nationalist sentiment in Scotland. For the Conservatives, Scottish home rule was a dead issue.

The footballing and political experiences of Scotland in the 1970s had many parallels then, but it is doubtful if there was any real interaction between the two. The parallels continued into the 1980s. Scotland qualified for three more World Cup finals under the management of Jock Stein, Alex Ferguson and Andy Roxburgh, but the team conducted themselves with a marked lack of hyperbole. Compared with the giddy days of 1978, their public relations machine was low-key indeed.

Meanwhile, home rule activists in the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties adopted a more patient, methodical agenda, favouring cross-party cooperation and involving public groups like the churches, trade unions, environmentalists and other, non-political bodies. The SNP, while demanding more radical moves towards self-government, replaced the partisan, selfish sloganising of 'It's Scotland's Oil' with a policy more suggestive of tolerance and international citizenship: 'Scotland in Europe'. As in Scottish soccer, the ballyhoo had disappeared. Now was a time for sobriety.

In the popular imagination, however, the fiascoes of Argentina and the devolution referendum have become inextricably entwined so that, today, plenty of Scots will muse that if the world's most prestigious sporting trophy had indeed ended up on Scottish soil in 1978, their country would have been fully independent by now. In the fanciful but unforgiving world of Scottish myth, the hapless Ally MacLeod has a lot to answer for.

3. Scottish Attitudes towards England.

For Scots, no international sporting contest has such an emotional charge as when their country plays against England. “It could be tiddlywinks or sheep-dog trials or a pathetic little playground challenge on who can spit the furthest,” writes the sports journalist Derek Douglas. “It doesn’t matter. Scotland versus England has that special edge. It’s the Big Brother versus the Little Brother. It’s an opportunity for the Little Man to have a poke at the Big Man next door. Revenge. It’s the opportunity for us downtrodden Scots to get our own back for 600 years of slights, real and imagined.”

These ‘slights’ have already been mentioned — from the aggression of the two Edwards, through the Union of Parliaments, to the installment in 1979 of a government that seemed (north of the border) hostile and anti-Scottish, with a belligerently English leader whom, according to Christopher Harvie, “Scots regarded... with dislike, occasionally with loathing.”

I should mention a further source of resentment. The British media is largely based in London and, to other regions of the United Kingdom, often seems biased towards the south-east while being neglectful of the periphery (just as complaints about the Glasgow-orientation of the Scottish media have been made elsewhere in Scotland.) Whether in the realm of political and cultural reporting, or in that of sports coverage, Scottish viewers of British television or Scottish readers of British newspapers will too often find English voices talking about English issues, while matters pertinent to Scotland get only a belated mention.

All these ideas are touched upon by Douglas’s use of the terms ‘Little Brother’ and ‘the Little Man’ to describe the (perceived) Scottish experience, that of being oppressed by a big-shot with whom, for better

or for worse, one has to share a neighbourhood. For a century, soccer has served as the principle way of redressing that injustice. One can understand the delight of Scots attending those first Scotland-England matches of the 1870s and 1880s when they realised that, with soccer, they had an arena in which they could take on the big-shot on equal terms and even, occasionally, humble him.

However, many Scots have become quite obsessed with the business of beating England, to an extent that sporting, political and social commentators have found ridiculous, or even disturbingly xenophobic. In an essay called 'A Dream of Perfection', the Scottish writer Alan Sharp gives an account of this obsession that many of his countrymen would recognise: "For a long time before, throughout and after I have the feeling that my personal worth is bound up with Scotland's success or failure... I know that at Scotland-England games I've kissed people I wouldn't normally shake hands with."

Furthermore, the Scots' attitude towards the English in soccer goes beyond that of mere rivalry when their national team plays against them. Often, any country meeting the English on the soccer field receives enthusiastic Scottish support. In the Italian World Cup finals of 1990, for example, when the German team defeated the English in a semi-final game and ejected them from the competition, some gloating Scottish soccer fans defaced a statue of England's patron saint, St George, in Glasgow. To celebrate of the English defeat, they painted the statue in the colours of the German team. Elsewhere that day, many Scottish bars reported a surge in the consumption of German beers.

With such intensity of feelings, it's hardly surprising that the Scotland-England soccer fixture has often been marred by violence. The journalist Gerry McNee recalls going to one such match at

Wembley Stadium, in London, and seeing a crowd of Scottish fans smashing in shop windows; “one kilted warrior pulling a chair out from the shattered glass and embedding it in the roof of a gleaming Rover motor car.” His post-match experiences proved to be no better when he caught a train back to Scotland: “At Carlisle the carriages were awash with urine. A few of the troops spotted a huge roll of carpet on the platform, complete with delivery tag... Minutes later, it was aboard and heading for Glasgow — NOT its intended destination.” McNee’s use of words like ‘warrior’ and ‘troops’ gives his account the tone of a military dispatch from the Scotland-England battles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Such carnage was not the sole responsibility of Scottish fans, however, and by the 1980s, English supporters — whose reputation for misbehavior had become the worst in Europe — were making similar forays into Glasgow. Largely because of these tensions, the English and Scottish Football Associations decided the annual fixture between their countries was more trouble than it was worth and abandoned it after 1989.

In fact, the loss of soccer as their principal means to compete against the English hardly dampened Scottish passions. They merely re-attached themselves, to the international rugby match that is played annually between Scotland and England as part of the Five Nations Rugby Championship (also involving France, Ireland and Wales.) This might be surprising at first glance. Rugby is in most parts of the British Isles a middle-class or upper-class pursuit where the fire of nationalism seems to be subordinate to more aristocratic notions of sportsmanship. The best, Protestant rugby footballers of Northern Ireland, for instance, willingly compete alongside their southern, Catholic counterparts in an all-Ireland rugby team, something that would be

unthinkable in Northern Irish soccer, where backgrounds are more working-class and old animosities are more entrenched.

Yet by 1990, the Scotland-England rugby fixture seemed to have inherited many of the nationalistic trappings from its defunct soccer equivalent. As I said earlier, the traditionally-conservative Scottish Rugby Union took to playing 'Flower of Scotland', with its references to the Battle of Bannockburn, before kick-offs as a way of igniting the patriotic spirits of its players. From that same year, Roddy Forsyth speaks of seeing "genteel ladies" in the most upmarket, most exclusive of Edinburgh's department stores "punching the air with their umbrellas" each time a Scottish rugby score against the English was announced over the public address system.

Less ecstatic were the English rugby players who found themselves on the receiving end of such Scottish jingoism. The English rugby skipper Will Carling recalled how in 1990 "there was more noise, more patriotism — more hatred — than I have ever experienced... You could hear the crowd all the time, they were going mad. It felt incredibly claustrophobic in that stadium, it was like being under siege... You are on the field losing, and you have 60,000 Scotsmen loving it, absolutely loving it..."

In actual fact, the spread of such sentiments to Scotland's rugby scene might not be so surprising. According to opinion polls in the late 1980s, there had been a steady increase in support for the idea of Scottish independence among the country's middle classes, traditionally more in favour of continued union with England for fear of what would happen to their financial situation if that union ended. Though the aggressively-materialistic creed of Thatcherism had enjoyed support south of the border among the wealthy, the Scottish middle classes had been sufficiently conditioned by the egalitarian values embodied in

Scotland's educational, religious and legal systems to feel suspicious. Furthermore, the Thatcher government's attempts to impose its agenda on Scottish society had been seen as an attack on those three institutions which the middle classes seemed to hold so dear.

Returning to the comment by David McCrone I quoted earlier, about Scottish nationalism's reluctance to "call up the ancient ghosts of the nation, its symbols and motifs, in its quest for independence," it is interesting to see just how thickly those items cluster around Scottish sport, while making very few appearances in modern Scottish politics. The Scottish Rugby Union's use of the 'Flower of Scotland' anthem is but one example of an arsenal of cultural weapons, plugging spectators and players alike into the communal race-consciousness of Bannockburn, Bruce, Wallace and so on. The soccer or rugby stadium is also where one is likely to be greeted by the sight of kilts, bonnets and tartan, the wailing of bagpipes, the waving of Scottish flags like the Saltire and St Andrew's Cross.

By way of contrast, the politicians of the modern Scottish National Party seem almost mundane in their sobriety. Its present leader, Alex Salmond, has a background in economics and rarely alludes to any cultural form of nationalism. Andrew Marr describes him as "a hard-headed man of numbers... an economist who understands figures, dressed like a well-doing businessman."

One good reason for the SNP's avoidance of cultural nationalism is that, in Scotland's case, so much of it has been created by an antagonistic relationship with England; and a relationship that too often has been resolved on the battlefield. Its songs are suffused with hawkish, anti-English sentiments, its costumes recall military uniforms, its musical instruments produce tunes that stir the blood and often sound like a call-to-arms. Unsurprisingly, such a culture is not something

that a modern, forward-looking, supposedly-tolerant political party wishes to utilise; especially as opponents have always been quick to portray Scottish nationalism as an English-bashing brand of fascism, polluting Scottish politics with the grudges of past centuries.

(In fact, if the SNP has been tainted by fascism, it was by an early flirtation with anti-Catholicism and anti-Irishness in the 1930s.)

Thus, there is something a little frightening and disreputable about those 'ghosts', 'symbols' and 'motifs' which linger on from Scotland's past, to haunt the Scottish consciousness of today. With so many of those ghosts originating on bloody, medieval battlefields where the same enemy has been engaged again and again — and with the Balkans providing a tragic example of what can happen when such nationalistic passions run amok — it's little wonder that many Scots feel the sports stadium, and not politics, is the safest place for them.

4. A Postscript: Scotland in Europe.

One final thing should be remarked upon regarding Scotland's position in Britain and, more generally, in Europe. The late Scottish Labour politician John P. Mackintosh once said some influential words about about the sense of dual nationality that applies politically — if not always culturally or subjectively — to Scots:

"With dual nationality, there is a simple alternative if the pride in being British wanes; just be Scottish. It is an 'opt out' solution which allows each person to imagine the kind alternative to the disappointment of being British which he or she wants."

We have already heard about the opinion poll survey of 1991, which had 69% of the population describing themselves as purely or mostly Scottish, as opposed to British; and heard many reasons for an apparent 'disappointment in being British' in the twentieth century,

such as the loss of the Empire, of international standing and influence, and severe industrial decline; and heard too about the Scottish distrust of Thatcherism, which promoted a 'British' patriotism that too often seemed indistinguishable from the 'English' variety. By the late 1980s, a further factor was adding pressure to the old concept of dual, Scottish-British nationality: Europe.

Mrs Thatcher had directed much of her British patriotism towards the European Community, resisting integration and fearing an eventual loss of British sovereignty. Her stance gave the SNP valuable propaganda. Now promoting a policy of 'Independence in Europe' for Scotland, they said they hoped for an independent Scotland, yes, but one which would be an active, enthusiastic and cooperative member of the European Community. This allowed the party's members to portray themselves as a group of aspiring Europeans, rather than as a group of isolationists like, they alleged, the Thatcher government.

In other words, compared to the cantankerous British nationalism being peddled by Conservative politicians, the SNP could argue that their Scottish brand of nationalism was now a humane, internationally-minded creature, eager to make friends with other countries rather than to antagonise them.

In a typically Scottish twist-of-fate, however, the most visible manifestation of this new pro-European philosophy seemed to be happening on the soccer field. Although the new phenomenon of Casual violence had appeared, primarily in Aberdeen, and there were continuing skirmishes at Scotland-England games, the Scottish Football Association's ban on alcohol after 1980 had generally resulted in better-behaved crowds at soccer matches. When those fans set off for foreign shores to cheer on their national team or domestic clubs participating in European competitions, they brought a better standard of behav-

ior with them.

Conversely, the reputation of English soccer fans abroad had plummeted during the 1980s, its nadir coming in 1985 with the Heysel Stadium disaster in Brussels, when a stampede by unruly Liverpool supporters resulted in the deaths of 39, mostly Italian fans. As a punishment, the European soccer authorities imposed a lengthy ban on English clubs and their supporters, shutting them out of the European competitions. Despite their shared Britishness, however, this ban did not apply to the more reputable Scottish soccer fans, whose teams continued to be allowed into Europe. To assert one's Scottishness now was, in Mackintosh's words, "a kind alternative to the disappointment of being British." In fact, the Heysel disaster had made "being British" an utter ignominy. As Roddy Forsyth has commented, "Scottish teams and Scottish supporters acquired a clearly different identity. Their fans were well behaved."

Thus, while the political pages of Scotland's newspapers were discussing the new, pro-European agenda of the nationalists, Scottish soccer had yet again beaten Scottish politics in putting it into practice. "The first meaning of 'Independence in Europe' was not political," says Forsyth. "It was football."

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