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HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

cc BT

29th July 1985

Prime Minister.

Dear Prime Minister

For information. We are proving the  
CCTV part on availability of equipment  
we will put a note in your w/e box.  
MEA 1/8

FOOTBALL VIOLENCE

When we saw the video of the Huddersfield/Leeds match you asked me to pursue a number of points. These are set out in your minute to Leon of 10th July. I will deal with each in turn.

- (i) The Secretary of the Inquiry is making arrangements for the video to be shown to Mr. Justice Popplewell and his assessors. The Lord Chancellor's Department (which is responsible for the training of magistrates) is pursuing the suggestion that it be shown to the Magistrates Association. mt
- (ii) Giving the police power to impose conditions on those they release on bail would require an amendment to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. We are consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers about this suggestion and I will let you know the outcome.
- (iii) Similarly we are consulting the police about the suggestion that the time limit for bringing a prosecution for threatening behaviour should be extended.
- (iv) Our legal advice is that it would probably be ultra vires for a local authority to make possession of CCTV a condition for issue of a safety certificate. We could of course introduce legislation, possibly in the Public Order Bill, to place the legal position beyond doubt. But all the indications are that the vast majority of League clubs want and support CCTV. I understand that 58 clubs in the English and Scottish Leagues have made applications to the Football Trust. I suggest that we should keep the matter under review, and if clubs do prove reluctant to introduce CCTV, legislation could be introduced; but, as I say, there is no indication of any reluctance at present.
- (v) We have now received a list of problem fixtures from the FA, and this is being sent to the police forces concerned. Neil Macfarlane has sent you a copy. In addition to those clubs which already have CCTV, Tottenham and Sheffield Wednesday have installed new systems, all of which will be ready for the beginning of the season. A system is also being installed at Huddersfield, but this may not be operational until after the beginning of the season. The Trust has also given authority for new systems at West Ham, Everton, Liverpool and Glasgow Rangers. It is hoped that these systems will also be installed for the beginning of the season. Further approvals will be announced by the Trust in early August.

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/In addition

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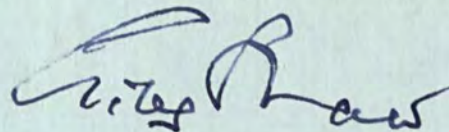
In addition the Home Office will have available for the new season three of the photographic vehicles (known as "hoolivans") and two prototype high definition evidential cameras. We are inviting chief officers of police to ask for the use of one of these vehicles or cameras, so that they can be deployed to maximum advantage.

Finally, I should refer to Neil Macfarlane's letter of 19th July, in which he suggests that the Huddersfield v Leeds video should be made available to BBC and ITV. I see the advantage of giving the video wide public circulation, if this can be done in a structured way, but we need to bear in mind that media coverage of football violence is generally accepted as contributing to further disorders. There is a strong copy cat element, which media coverage feeds, in the violence perpetrated by the gangs who "support" football clubs. As an example of that, you may be interested in the attached article which appeared in New Society a couple of months ago. This brings out not only the mindless violence of some of these groups, but also the extent to which, awful though it seems, there is actually an element of competition to outdo the records of other clubs' "supporters" in wreaking havoc.

The conclusion I draw is that we must be very careful in further stimulation of media interest in football violence. If this could be done so as to bring out the chances of increased detection through the use of CCTV then it could have a deterrent effect. But programmes which re-emphasise the bad record of some clubs would not be helpful and could be positively harmful.

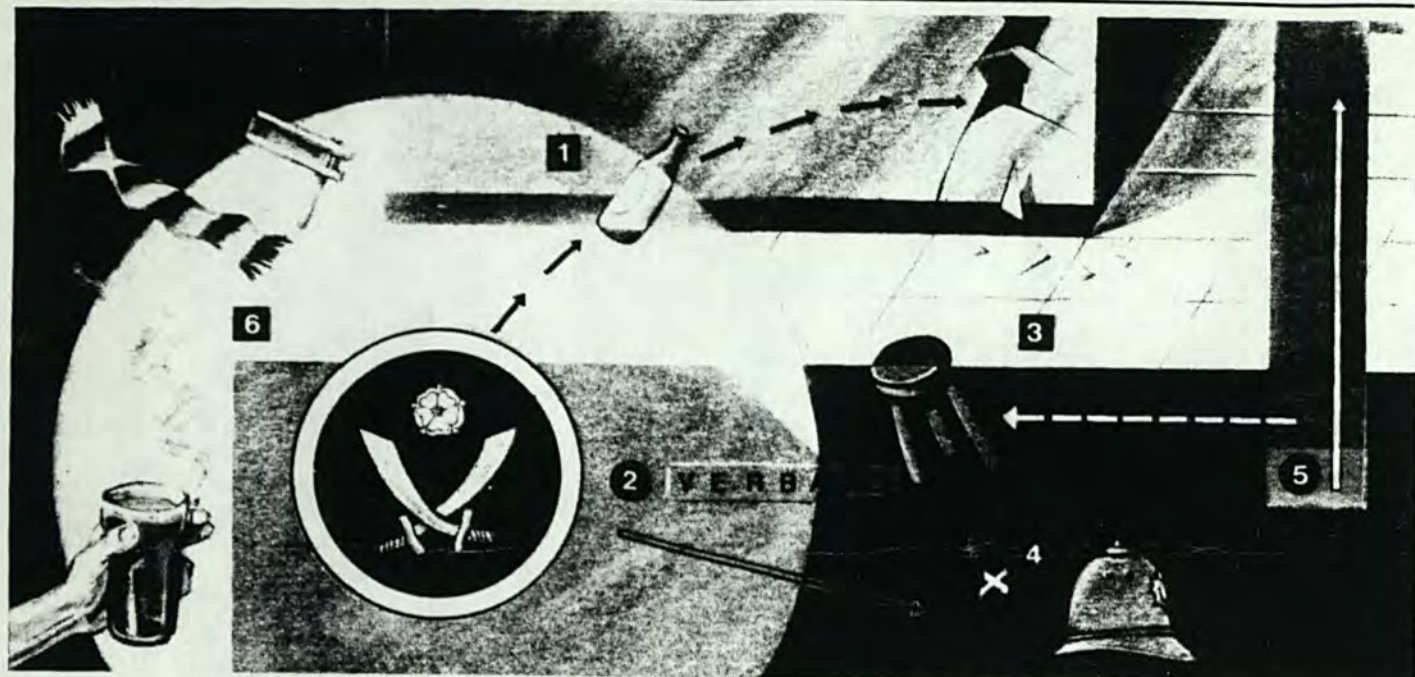
I am copying this to Leon, Quintin Hailsham, Patrick Jenkin and Neil Macfarlane.

Yours  
Giles Shaw



(GILES SHAW)

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This week League football finishes—and so will stories of soccer hooliganism. We bid farewell with a reasearcher's account of the Sheffield supporters he's been studying.

United hadn't played at Middlesbrough for nine years. The last time they met both were in the first division. Today, however, both teams were struggling to avoid relegation from the second division. For the Blades (the name by which Sheffield United fans call themselves and each other, taken from the club's nickname), it would be a two-hour journey for a rather mundane match. Still, as football fans will tell you, what else do you do on a Saturday?

As usual the meeting place and pick-up point was the swimming baths near the bus station. This has been the practice all season, and anyone who wants to travel goes down there for these "early coaches," known to others as the "daft coaches." We left at 9.30 am. The occupants of the coach were all male, aged between 18 and 30, from different districts of Sheffield, with about ten from a pit village just outside. Included in this party were two West Indians and two "half-castes." Not everyone knew each other. Most were familiar with everyone else's face. But all were Blades and that's all that matters.

To pass the two-hour journey, some played cards, others just chatted or read newspapers. The *Daily Star* showed United top of the second division for the good behaviour of their supporters. This wasn't good news. Such publicity means a lot to football fans. Most Blades realise the league is probably an invention of some journalist's imagination. "It's a load of shit, that" summed up the general attitude.

The Blades chatted about Millwall's performance at Luton a few days before. "They

## BLADES' DAY

GARY ARMSTRONG

did the business" was about the highest praise you could get from fellow football hooligans. "Even the fuckin' police dogs run." Millwall's show would be a hard act to follow, and would be for years, and it added an edge to this trip. The Blades were aware of the total hysteria generated by events at Luton, and said that anyone arrested today would get "the backlash" of a huge fine or "sent down." There was a genuine worry; but when the opportunity for action came, it didn't appear to be on anyone's mind.

We arrived in Middlesbrough town centre at 11.30 am. The two other early coaches were nowhere about. At this moment and for the rest of the day, the 60 Blades were on their own. Walking down the main pedestrian shopping precinct, they all knew it was only a matter of time before word got around that Sheffield were in town and a reception party would be organised to greet them—after all, this was the duty of the home team. Little was said while they were walking around the town centre. Every Blade was looking around, waiting for the challenge or a shout of "come on"—the signal that a battle is about to begin. But it never came. There was no chanting and the only colours shown were by one of the Blades who had a red and white ski-hat (the Sheffield colours). A pub was spotted; the Blades decided to have a drink.

The pub had only one room, and two

entrances onto the main street—a fact which just about every Blade had noticed instinctively. The windows allowed a view of the outside street. One Blade had it totally sussed. The room had a slightly raised back part, with four-foot panels on two sides, and windows and toilets on the other two. He pointed out to the other Blades that, if they were attacked, "We all get on this platform and let 'em come."

The Blades chatted and mingled. It was considered wise to stay here. There was a video-jukebox, the beer was okay, and everyone was together. "If we start wandering and getting split up, that's how we'll get picked off." A younger Blade told me, with a smile, "We're gonna get a right raggin'" (short for *rag-dolling*, a term to describe a good kicking).

A youth walked in at 12.15 pm, who looked like a football fan—leather jacket, Burberry scarf, jeans, training shoes. He was on his own, so no one challenged him. He was a Boro fan and got chatting to various Blades, telling of what Boro fans had been up to this season. The Blades were pleased to hear that he knew about the leaflets going around Sheffield in preparation for the Leeds match next Saturday. The news of their organisation—and, consequently, their reputation—was travelling. Leeds weren't "all that hard," and Boro had "given them a hiding," the Boro man said. This was greeted silently by disbelief and more vociferously during the match later when, seeing what Boro had to offer, the Blades realised there was no way that Boro could have "done" Leeds.

About 20 minutes later another Boro fan joined him. He had come from a nearby pub, and told us that Boro fans "know you're in town" and "what pub you're in." He didn't mention any action proposed. The answer to

## OUT OF THE WAY

this came from the Blades themselves. About half a dozen had spent the last hour standing outside, watching for any movement from Boro. Some Blades said that all these look-outs were doing was making it obvious where we were.

Progress reports filtered through from them to the rest. Half a dozen Boro fans walked by on the opposite side of the road. The Blades smiled, one gestured to them to "come on." Boro left the scene. The report came through as "Six of theirs have just gone past, but they were only kids."

Fifteen minutes later, about 20 Boro gathered on a nearby corner. One Blade scattered them in all directions by the infamous gesture of pointing his left arm at them, and putting his right hand on the wrist of the left... the way to fire a distress flare (a new weapon used this year, available "from scuba diving shops"—anyone can buy them). Boro ran, the Blades were delighted.

It was only a matter of time before Boro would come "mob handed" and "have a go." This was expected. "It's their job to come and find us." Ten minutes later, two youths came into the pub, walked towards the toilets, past them, and out through the fire escape, leaving it open. This would have allowed Boro to come in by a quiet side street, thus avoiding the two main entrances which they couldn't possibly come in by without resistance. One Blade sussed this out straightaway, followed them, and locked the fire escape.

It all went bang at 1.15 pm. Boro came towards the pub from both directions, about 50 in all. From both doors resounded, "They're here, c'mon Blades. Get 'em." Every single Blade went out onto the street; as did two pub stools, half a dozen glasses and three bottles. Boro backed off, a flare was fired, the missiles were thrown. None connected with anyone but a bank window across the road was smashed. Then the "dancing about" and "verbals" began. In such confrontations, fans invite each other to "come on then," "when you're ready." Some bounce up and down on the balls of their feet, others stand relatively still. All the Blades make a series of "Ooh! Ooh!" noises like the warriors in the film, *Zulu*.

Boro were moving back slowly, but the starting gun for the attack came when a young, half-caste Boro fan threw one of the bar stools back at the Blades. It missed, the missiles were now exhausted, and to a unified shout of "Get the bastards," the Blades ran at Boro, who ran away in different directions.

A police Transit van arrived. Eight policemen climbed out, and bundled the nearest two football supporters (both Blades) into the back of the van. When the police arrived, most Blades ran back into the pub. The police action of "grabbing anybody about" is well known. The two who got arrested were unlucky. One of the Blades was later charged with threatening behaviour and possessing an offensive weapon. The other one, a West Indian who pleaded his innocence whilst

being dragged into the van, was back in the pub ten minutes later. They let him go, although "I had to plead with them." He was under orders that, if seen at the match, he would be arrested. He simply swapped jackets with another Blade.

The pub landlady locked the doors, but three Blades were still outside. They had chased some Boro fans down a street and managed to "chin one of 'em." The fire escape was opened, everybody was back in by 1.20 pm. The business had been done. Blades had run Boro on their own ground.

Would Boro return with more?... The first people through the door were, in fact, the police. The landlady told a Chief Inspector, "These lads were no trouble... them outside started it." He left, to the Blades' relief (who wondered if he'd come to arrest people). The landlady then said, "I hope you appreciate what I did for you." The Blades did and agreed to stay here and walk towards the ground at 2.30 pm, after they'd had a few more drinks. The Chief Inspector asked one of the bar staff if he wanted "this lot" out. Apologetically, the barman said to one of the



Blades, "You're going to have to go, lads." Every Blade was ordered out, or "be arrested for refusing to leave licensed premises." Everyone joined the escort.

The escort consisted of two mounted police, one dog handler, two Transit vans and 20 police constables on foot. To accommodate a smooth start, the city centre traffic was stopped. As it was later told: "Shoppers and bus passengers were all watching the Blades wandering around an opponent's town centre, and Boro were nowhere about." No Blade chanted or gestured, just chatted to each other and to the police escorting them. The walk took 15 minutes. It was the ultimate pose. The Blades loved it.

Whilst the Blades bought tickets to go into the stand, a mob of Boro fans assembled across the road. At the front of the mob was the Boro fan who had been in the pub. The Blades pointed him out to each other, "The snidey cunt." Both groups could only gesture at each other, there being so many police around. By 2.45 the Blades were all sitting

together at the back of the stand. Some middle-aged Boro fans were nearby but were seen as no threat.

Ten minutes into the match, four Boro fans—"some of their boys"—who were sitting nearby started chanting, and looking towards the Blades. To a shout of, "Get them bastards out of here," the Blades clambered over the seats towards them. Three out of the four ran away down the stairs of the exit, getting spat on as they did so. The one who stayed behind, "acting tough," was "whacked" a few times by a Blade.

United lost the game 1-0. It was a very poor attendance on a very cold day. There wasn't much chanting or singing. Whenever the Boro fans sang anything, they received the devastating "Run at home" chant repeated eleven times. "Worst support we've ever seen" was also sung to them. Then there was the chant repeated at every away match when the team has played at Sheffield already, "Where were you at Bramall Lane?" (United's home ground). Topically, "We all hate Leeds" was chanted three times during the game and, for those who didn't know:

Sheffield is wonderful, Sheffield is wonderful,

It's full of tits, fanny, and United.

Oh! Sheffield is wonderful!

—sung to the tune of *When the Saints*.

On the final whistle Boro fans climbed over the fences and ran across the pitch towards the Blades. The Blades moved down towards them; 10p pieces and a cigarette lighter were thrown at the Blades; and five Boro fans climbed up a wall into the stand. The Blades ran at them. Four jumped back over the wall. One stood, got nussed and kicked and thumped back over the wall by four Blades. There were 500 Blades in the visitors' enclosure on the opposite side of the ground. Dozens of them tried to scale fences and join in, but were prevented by police. The police then moved the Boro fans out of the ground. The action was over for today.

The dozen coaches from Sheffield were parked together outside the ground. Blades from other coaches were delighted to hear that "the business" had been done in the town centre. The coaches left in convoy at 5 pm, arriving back in Sheffield at 6.40. A card school played all the way back home, half the coach fell asleep. Bert Millichip, the FA secretary, spoke on the radio about the football hooligan problem. Nobody seemed bothered about anything he said. Some were going to go "straight into town" for a night out, and others would be doing the same after going home to change and "have some tea." Yet others were going to meet wives or girlfriends. Later, in town, three Blades from another coach told me that they'd heard about today's events and the publicity it had achieved. There was a paragraph in the *Green 'Un* sports paper and a mention on BBC that afternoon.

This was great publicity... especially as it was the Leeds match next Saturday!