



Cologne attacks put spotlight on North African Migrants

Oscar Parkman

Among the tourists and commuters in the German city of Cologne there is a frequent fluorescent flash of 'Polizei'. Officers patrol the streets and security is tight - all as a result of the events here on New Year's Eve, in which more than 100 women and girls came forward with reports of sexual assault and robbery by gangs of men.

Police haven't yet charged anyone over the attacks, but it has been understood that the attackers were of North African descent. This has caused alarm in Germany because of the influx of more than a million migrants and refugees in the past year.

The state prosecutor says they now have 12 suspects, five of whom are in custody. They describe the suspects as also originating from North-Africa. In the past few days, officers have been more specific, saying that many of the men are of Algerian or Moroccan background. One senior officer has explained that the authorities are relying on mobile phone footage taken that night to identify the perpetrators. But Ralf Jaeger, the interior minister for the region, has gone further, saying the perpetrators are "almost exclusively" migrants. Mr Jaeger added that there are likely to have been asylum seekers among their number.

All of this is fuel to the fire for those who believe Chancellor Angela Merkel's open door refugee policy has not only failed but has also put German citizens, particularly women, at risk. According to official government estimates, 1.1 million people arrived in Germany last year seeking asylum. Last time round, Mrs Merkel had only just managed to reassure critics with-

in her own party that Germany could manage such high numbers of people flowing into the country. Now, she is under pressure again from those in her Bavarian sister party, who are demanding a cap on migrants.

So her response to the attacks matters. Her government has announced its first practical reaction - ministers have agreed a new law (which must now be approved by the German parliament) to make it easier to deport asylum seekers who commit crimes on German soil.

As a re-invigorated national debate about immigration rages on, there are fears about retaliations against the thousands of refugees who live in the city. For now though, the people of Cologne continue to grieve as they walk past flowers left for the victims of a spate of attacks which may have profound consequences for this country.



David Bowie Dies

Jeffrey Stanley

After an "18-month battle with cancer", as said by a statement issued on David Bowie's social media accounts, the singer has been declared dead just two days after the release of what was to be his final album, Blackstar.

Bowie's son Duncan Jones - a Bafta-winning film director - confirmed the death of his father on Twitter, saying he was "very sorry and sad to say it's true". According to the statement on social media Bowie was "surrounded by his family" and died on his 69th birthday. Tributes have been paid to him internationally and perhaps will continue to be for many months to come. Fans gathered and mourned at a mural painted by Australian street painter Jimmy C in Brixton, South London - where he was born. A guitar was brought to the site and the crowd sang hits including Ziggy Stardust, Changes and Starman.

Not surprisingly, hashtags paying tribute to Bowie on Twitter skyrocketed, peaking at around 20,000 tweets per minute in the hour following his death at 7:00 GMT. The most hash-tagged of his songs was #Heroes, the name of one of his Berlin Trilogy songs.

It is a great loss to the music industry and David Bowie has undoubtedly made his mark; Madonna made an obituary on her Facebook page, saying how he "changed the course of [her] life forever".

Bowie was almost famously ambiguous about his sexuality, which was very daring in the 1970s, as people who weren't heterosexual were treated with little to no respect, and homosexual actions were actually illegal until 1967. Only five years after the legalisation, Bowie said on Melody Maker that he was gay, or at least bisexual, which was still a dangerous move in the game of the music industry. This perhaps resulted in a "revolution" of sorts, with gay men and women now braver in what they express in a relationship.





An Adversarial Agincourt Society?

Huw Paulson

On Friday the 8th January, 50 young historians from both Monmouth School and HMSG converged on the William Jones Room to spectate a fascinating debate between sides on one of the most widely criticised aspects of our political system: adversarial politics. The motion: 'This house believes that adversarial politics is at the root of political disaffection', was one that aroused some intrigue among the gathering masses, even drawing the attention of our local Member of Parliament, Mr David Davies. With Mr Davies chairing the debate, the showdown between the proposition team from HMSG, made from Annabel Talco and Isobel Lewis-Jarvis, and the opposition of Rhys Williams, Tomos Haines-Jones and Joe Norris of Monmouth School, was set to be a fierce but good-mannered battle.

Initially, the team from HMSG set out with conviction with their proposition, levelling an excellent set of statistics and examples, with German being the most prevalent, at the opposition with considerable aplomb. These points meant the boys' team had to draw deep into their speeches to extract some crucial points: something which they managed to do excellently with their captivating argument. However, the real test of the mettle of both sides would come in the next section of the debate: the questions from the floor. If there were any possible flaws in either argument, they were well and truly ground out by the baying audience. Along with the challenging questions directed towards both sides, there were also some questions for the one person in the room who could provide an insider's view into Parliament: MP David Davies. Mr Davies provided a fascinating insight into the dynamics of the political chambers, raising an interesting point that most of the bad-blood

between politicians is within their own parties rather than the adversarial competition that fills our screens and papers. Under some fierce scrutiny from teachers and students alike, Mr Davies continued to provide a further look inside the murky world of Westminster with his understandable chastising of the redundancy of Prime Minister's Questions, with the shouting and chaos that surrounds this supposedly insightful practice, opening the audience up to an opinion straight from the front-line of politics.

Finally, after much deliberation between both teams and the audience over the true purpose of our adversarial political system and whether it belongs in a modern political climate, the floor reached a decision. Eventually, a split vote was drawn and therefore allowing both teams to fulfil a sense of satisfaction at the strength of their argument; a fair result in hindsight. Most importantly, I must on both schools' behalf thank both sets of teachers for putting on such an intriguing debate, the respective teams for their enlightening viewpoints and especially Mr David Davies for sparing a moment out of his schedule, which is greatly appreciated by all who attended the debate, in order to chair such a relevant debate in our current political state.

The UK Floods

Oscar Parkman

As the UK entered 2016, millions of people celebrated the New Year in the homes of their friends and families. Many others, however, did not. These people happened to be victims to, arguably, one of the worst flooding crises the country has ever seen.

Thousands of residents, particularly across northern England, were left without homes and electricity after Storms Desmond, Eva and Frank all hit the nation during the wettest December of the century, according to the Environment Secretary Elizabeth Truss.

The prime minister has stated that the flood defences were "overwhelmed" by recent record rainfall will be fixed and bolstered in a £40m package of spending for Yorkshire, which comes on top of a £50m fund to help local authorities respond to the floods.

Mr Cameron said, "We are already spending £280m over the next six years to protect thousands of houses from flooding in Yorkshire as part of our £2.3bn investment to protect 300,000 houses across the country. But now more than £40m will be spent to fix those defences overwhelmed by the record rainfall we've seen in recent weeks and to make them more resilient."

However, Tim Farron, the Liberal Democrat leader, has accused David Cameron of providing only a "short-term fix" for the problem. He explained, "This money wouldn't be needed now if he had followed through with so many previous commitments to truly protect homes threatened with flooding."

The leader of Leeds City Council, Judith Blake, also made her opinion known, saying the funding was a "first step" in tackling the issue but was not going to be enough to repair all vital the infrastructure.





Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Freddie Price

Late in 2012 Disney bought the rights to Lucasfilm, shortly after announcing that three new Star Wars films would be made from 2015-8, provoking many to scoff; would the new Star Wars feature Mickey Mouse? Would it be even more childish than the likes of Episode I? But as it was announced that the cast of the original trilogy would return, as well as seasoned director JJ Abrams, and as trailer upon trailer was released the sceptics quietened down and the hype-train went into hyper-speed, leading to the film becoming the most anticipated of all time.

The film has already broken numerous records in the economic department, most noticeably overtaking Avatar as the highest grossing film of all time in the USA (taking in \$760 million at time of writing), and it's shown no signs of stopping. In hindsight, it wouldn't have taken a lot to look at Disney's recent track record of handling franchises to see that the film would be successful financially; their Marvel Cinematic Universe has been a gold mine, of course with Iron Man being an initial key to success, and The Avengers being their highest earner, raking in over \$1.5 billion globally. There is also the additional factor that the Star Wars faithful (of which there are a lot) would go to watch paint dry for three hours if it had a Star Wars label on it.

But a film cannot be judged a true success solely based on its performance at the box office; there is the crucial point of whether it is actually a good film. Across the board the film seems to be pretty well received. Of course there are criticisms, as always, there can never be a perfect film after all (except maybe for some of Adam Sandler's recent classics such as 'Grown Ups 2' or 'Jack and Jill'), including many noting the significant similarity in plot particularly to Episode IV: A New Hope, and Kylo Ren's character being criticised on behalf of his brooding, emo-like nature. However, overall the film has been viewed how in my opinion it was intended; as the start of a new era, paying homage to its predecessors without treading the line into plagiarism. There

truly are some fantastic scenes in The Force Awakens, including Kylo Ren's introduction, where in a moment worthy of Vader he stops a laser beam mid-air, or Rey and Finn's escape from Jakku on the majestic Millennium Falcon.

The special effects are magnificent, with a return to a more wholesome use of practical effects instead of a lazy dependence on CGI characterisation. The script is above average, it is certainly a far cry from the cringe worthy dialogue in the prequels ("I hate sand", anyone?) The score by veteran John Williams's just about meets the lofty expectations providing a substantial backing to the changing mood of the film.

9/10 I would watch this film again despite the lack of Jar Jar Binks.



Interview with a Gangster

Alex Sidorowicz

Recent details have surfaced about Oscar-Winning actor, Sean Penn's interview with the infamous Mexican drug lord, El Chapo. The article was released in 'Rolling Stones Magazine', on the same day that El Chapo was arrested by the Mexican authorities, although the interview was conducted last October.

The interview itself consists of El Chapo answering questions Sean Penn emailed to him. He reads his responses aloud to a video camera held by one of his associates. It opens with a question about his childhood, and then asks how he got into the drug business.

The interview was handled with care but despite this, many are questioning the legality of the interview due to El Chapo being on the run from Mexican authorities since his escape from prison in 2015.

El Chapo, whose wealth was once estimated to be over \$1 billion, was arrested in a raid in his home state of Sinaloa, six months after he staged his second ever prison break out from Mexico's most secure penitentiary.

'Rolling Stone Magazine' released a short extract of the interview along with some information about the interview itself, saying, 'Ultimately, it proved impossible to do the interview in-person, but Penn sent questions by BBM device and Chapo agreed to record his responses on videotape. Without being present, Penn could neither control the questioning, nor prod for elaborations into his responses.'

The interview starts with some vague personal questions about El Chapo's childhood, with his associated asking Penn's questions:

'How was your childhood?'

He responded with, 'I remember from the time I was six until now, my parents... a very humble family, very poor. I remember how my mom made bread to support the family, I would sell it, I sold oranges, I sold soft drinks, and I sold candy. My mum was a very hard worker, she worked a lot. We grew corn, beans.'

The interview continued with El Chapo talking more about his life and his gateway into the drug business at the age of 15 while living on a ranch called La Tuna in the Municipality of Badiraguato.

'In that area and up until today there are no job opportunities,' he said. 'The way to have... to be able to buy food, to survive, is to grow poppy and marijuana. From there, from my ranch, I started leaving at 18 to Culiacan then after to Guadalajara but I never stopped visiting the ranch, even now, because my mother, thank God, is still alive and lives out there on the ranch, La Tuna.'

Days after the interview was released, Penn talked with Charlie Rose about his experiences:

'Let me be clear. My article has failed. There is this myth about the visit my colleagues and I made to El Chapo, that it was – as the attorney general of Mexico is quoted [as saying] – 'essential' to his capture. We had met with him many weeks earlier ... on 2 October, in a place nowhere near where he was captured. We're going to put all our focus, all our energy, all our billions of dollars on the 'bad guy', and what happens? You get another death the next day, the same way.'

Through Penn's interview he showed his many regrets about his article and interview with El Chapo as well as showing his clear point of view about the subject of drugs.

'I have a terrible regret...that the entire discussion about this article ignores its purpose, which was to try to contribute to this discussion about the policy to the war on drugs. Let's go to the big picture of what we all want. We all want this drug problem to stop. We all want the killings in Chicago to stop. We are the consumer. Whether you agree with Sean Penn or not, there is complicity there. And if you are in the moral right, or on the far left, just as many of your children are doing these drugs.'



NFL: Divisional Playoffs

Lucas Wagner

Welcome back after the break, I hope that you have all been keeping up with what has been an intense couple of weeks. Now, currently the Superbowl is undertaking the divisional playoffs, which are separated within two conferences, AFC and NFC. As you would expect, the winners of these divisional playoffs, play in the divisional championship. Then we come to the last, most intense match, where both winners of the divisional championships will meet in the Superbowl 50.

This year the AFC divisional playoff matches are played by teams: Kansas City Chiefs Vs New England Patriots, who were the winners of last year's Superbowl, while the Pittsburgh Steelers will play the Denver Broncos at home.

As for the NFC, the Carolina Panthers will play the Seahawks and the Arizona Cardinals will be playing against the Green bay Packers. It's obvious these matches will be tightly contested but I have a slight feeling that the Kansas City Chiefs will take the win, due to their past performances and with their quarterback, Smith, anything is possible. In accordance to 'anything is possible,' there is still a chance that the Carolina Panthers, although ranked #1, might lose this match to the experienced squad of the Seahawks.



Powerball Pandemonium

Huw Paulson

America has long been known for its financial superiority and stability in a world of ever-changing economic climates. However, on the 13th January, the United States reached a new level of the financially absurd when a \$1.6 billion (yes you are reading that correctly) jackpot became available for any lucky punters who chanced their hand at one of life's biggest gambles. The enormity of this sum is truly realised when one considers that Samoa, a small Pacific Island Nation, has a GDP of roughly \$800,000,000 which is half of the prize money that was available in last Wednesday's lottery. Naturally, a fever gripped the nation when the scale of the prize became known to its full extent: mile-long queues forming outside of shops selling possibly the 'golden ticket' and sales of tickets coming in at \$787,000 per minute on the day of the draw. The hysteria reached such a heightened level that Powerball's website had to release a statement saying: 'Swinging a live chicken above your head whilst wishing for the future numbers does NOT work'. However, the chance of winning must be put into perspective. Firstly, someone who bought a ticket had a 1 in 292 million chance of winning and buyers are four times more likely to be killed by an asteroid this year than win the jackpot. Despite this, the craze still kept on rising and soon the whole world became fixed on the outcome of this lottery.

However, whilst the sum available may seem ridiculous as it appears the American government are liberally giving away more money than a portion of countries could ever dream of accumulating; there are reasons behind posting such enormous lotteries. Firstly, the probability of winning is so low that the government usually makes money on it in order to fund state budgets and also fund good causes. Therefore, this leads to question of whether spending money on a lottery ticket is

supporting a greedy government or whether in fact we are actually helping our economy. Another problem that may arise from such a vast amount of money being at the fingertips, or so they believe, of many impoverished people is the belief that one ticket can indefinitely change their life for the better. This belief seems to grasp the masses, shown by the ridiculous ticket sales, and convinces them to 'waste' their money on tickets; with their increasing demand supposedly only feeding government revenue whilst their dream continually slips away. But is it wasted money? Winners from California, Florida and Tennessee would disagree now they are approximately \$350 million richer. The first of these winners to be named publicly are Lisa and Jon Robinson of Munford, Tennessee, who plan on spending their money to pay off their mortgage and their daughter's student loans. Such humility is commendable but it brings to the forefront of what any of us would do with such a sum, and whether it's morally acceptable to deprive a majority of the world's population of a vital resource.