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Russia attacks 'poisoned' Johnson over comparison with Hitler

Catherine Philp
Diplomatic Correspondent
Francis Elliott Political Editor

Russia claimed that Boris Johnson was "poisoned with hate and boorishness" last night after he compared President Putin hosting the World Cup to Adolf Hitler staging the Olympics.

The foreign secretary said that it was

"an emetic prospect to think of Putin glorying in this sporting event" but stopped short of advocating a boycott.

He warned Russia that it would be held responsible for ensuring the safety of British fans. The diplomat responsible for their protection is among 23 due to be expelled by Saturday.

Hitler used Berlin's hosting of the summer games in 1936 as propaganda

for the Nazi regime. Under his rule German athletics organisations had an "Aryan-only" policy, which caused outrage around the world. Despite threats of boycotts, the Games went ahead.

At a Commons committee hearing yesterday, the Labour MP Ian Austin said: "The idea of Putin handing over the World Cup to the captain of the winning team, the idea of Putin using

this as a PR exercise to gloss over the brutal, corrupt regime for which he is responsible — it fills me with horror." Mr Johnson could be heard saying: "I'm afraid that's completely right."

The comparison prompted an angry reaction from Moscow and further raised tensions after the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter with a nerve agent in Salisbury on

March 4. Theresa May and Britain's allies blame Russia for the attack.

Maria Zakharova, the Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, said that Mr Johnson was "poisoned with venom of hate, unprofessionalism and boorishness". "It's scary to remember that this person represents the political leadership of a nuclear power," she said.

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Advertisers threaten to pull out of Facebook

Zuckerberg admits mistakes in data scandal

Mark Bridge Technology Correspondent
James Dean, Billy Kenber

Advertisers threatened to abandon Facebook last night as Mark Zuckerberg admitted that the company had made mistakes over the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Mr Zuckerberg, co-founder and chief executive of the US technology giant, broke his silence to head off a revolt among users and financial backers.

ISBA, a British group of advertisers that spend hundreds of millions of pounds a year on Facebook, demanded answers. It is understood that some of its 3,000 brands, which include those of the consumer goods companies Unilever and P&G, will not tolerate association with Facebook if it emerges that users' data has found its way into the hands of brokers and political campaigners without authorisation. Sources close to the trade body said that if the company's answers were not satisfactory, advertisers might spend their money elsewhere. ISBA will meet Facebook executives this week.

The row centres on claims that Cambridge Analytica, the British company embroiled in allegations of election meddling, obtained the personal data of 50 million Americans without consent. Facebook's lax terms allowed app developers to access the data of users and their network of friends with no checks to prevent it being sold on, it is claimed.

Several financial groups said that

they would stop buying Facebook shares for their ethical investment funds or were reviewing their holdings. Nordea, the largest bank in the Nordic region, which manages about £283 billion, said that it had put some of its Facebook investments in "quarantine" while it assessed the scandal. Union Investment, a German group that manages about £255 billion, said that it was reviewing its holding of Facebook shares.

Investors are also suing Facebook, claiming that it made "false and misleading statements" about policies that failed to prevent Cambridge Analytica from obtaining data intended for use by a Cambridge University researcher, Aleksandr Kogan.

A Maryland woman who said that she was "frequently targeted with political ads while using Facebook" during the 2016 US election filed a separate suit against Facebook and Cambridge Analytica, alleging that the companies had treated her personal data with "absolute disregard". Cambridge Analytica denies that it used Facebook data to "microtarget" political adverts when it worked for the Trump campaign.

Brian Acton, the co-founder of WhatsApp, led calls to delete Facebook, which trended on Twitter. Mr Acton, whose company was bought by Facebook for £16 billion three years ago, wrote: "It is time. #deletefacebook". It received 10,000 "likes". Facebook shares closed up 0.7 per cent at \$169.39, halting

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Corruption charge Nicolas Sarkozy, the former French president, leaving a police station on the outskirts of Paris last night after he was charged with accepting €50 million in campaign funding from Colonel Gaddafi in 2007

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Back pain treatment is useless, experts warn

Chris Smyth Health Editor

Millions of patients with back pain are being given pointless drugs, surgery and injections, with a third prescribed dangerous opioids, experts say.

Doctors prefer to offer useless and often harmful treatments rather than tell patients there is nothing to be done except stay active, an international group of scientists has found.

Exercise and psychological therapy are the only things that work for most cases of chronic back pain but too many people wrongly believe the myth that rest is best for the condition, they add.

Job satisfaction and a positive attitude are among the strongest indicators of whether back pain will turn into serious disability but their report, published today, says doctors are reluctant to discuss social and psychological approaches, preferring needless scans.

Back pain is the world's leading cause

of disability, with up to nine million estimated to suffer from it in Britain and half a billion worldwide, but a series in *The Lancet* says that it is routinely badly treated. In Britain one in seven GP appointments is for muscle and nerve problems, mostly back pain.

NHS guidelines recommend mainly exercise and therapy but Martin Underwood of the University of Warwick, one of the series' authors, says they are often ignored. "In this country it affects a huge number of people," he said. "It's something that we're not very well equipped to deal with. Patients understandably look for solutions and a cure but the reality is we don't have a cure. We don't understand what causes the vast majority of back pain."

Steroid injections are increasing, as are scans that often lead to surgery, a fifth of which actually makes the problem worse, Professor Underwood said. "The evidence underpinning these

invasive treatments is very weak indeed. And they have harms."

He pointed to studies showing that a third of British patients with back pain are given opioids such as tramadol, codeine and morphine but said: "If anything the evidence is that [opioids] can end up making your pain worse."

About 24 million opioid prescriptions are written by GPs each year, double the figure a decade ago. Ministers have launched a review into concerns that patients are becoming hooked and suffering dangerous side-effects.

Past studies have found that pills like paracetamol and ibuprofen barely help with back pain. Psychological techniques to help cope with pain can stop it leading to permanent disability, however. "Your belief system and psychological state are important predictors of whether you're going to end up disabled. It's a difficult message to get across," Professor Underwood said.

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