

Is there really 'a Huguenot invasion?'

Or is Ken simply bad at maths?

When was the last time you encountered a Frenchman in the supermarket check-out or the pub? *euro/acts'* own rich anecdotal experience suggests that if you are a Londoner you are more likely to meet a Pole, a Russian or an Australian.

Why do we raise the question? Because for whatever reason a variety of prominent europhiles and publications have recently suggested that as a result of 'a new Huguenot invasion' there are now between 300,000 and 475,000 mostly young French men and women living in London. If there are that many why don't we bump into them more often?

The figure of 300,000 has been quoted by Ken Livingstone as well as by the *Guardian*. Lord Wallace of Saltaire, the arch-europhile Lib-Dem peer, has suggested that there are 300,000 French "citizens and voters" in London - which when dependents are taken into account would mean a total figure of around 350,000. Mark Leonard of the Centre for European Reform has referred to 300,000 "French workers" - which would mean that there are 450,000 French men, women and children living in the capital. If true there are more French in London than there are in Lyon and London is now the third largest French city in the world (since London is sometimes said to be the third largest ish city in the world one is bound to wonder whether London can still be the largest British city in the world).

Writing in the 4th April edition of the *New Statesman*, Agnes Poirier, a London-based French journalist and author, refers to la generation Londres and estimates that there are a total of 600,000 French citizens in the UK,

with London being the favourite destination for her fellow countrymen. London, she suggests is in fact the seventh biggest French city in the world - which still puts it ahead of Nantes, Bordeaux, Montpellier, and Rennes.

But are any of these figures remotely correct? Is the average Greater London Borough really home to around 10,000 Frenchmen?

An unpublished paper from the think-tank Futurus run by Anthony Scholefield suggests that the 'New Huguenot invasion' is simply a myth and the number of Frenchmen in London is a small fraction of those said to have settled there.

Foreign Nationals

As Scholefield points out, the Labour Force Survey of 2005 found that there were 1.5 million foreign nationals working in the UK, of whom 682,000 were in London. In the whole of the UK the total number of French and German workers is put at 108,000 of whom 70 per cent are thought to be French. Most of these are thought to be young, but if a further fifty per cent is added on to cover dependents this gives a figure of 112,500 for the UK. This would be compatible with a range of other data. Eurostat estimated that there were 59,000 French nationals living in the UK in 1990; allowing for an increase in net inflows along roughly similar lines to the increase of Britain immigration to France you arrive at a roughly similar figure. We also know that in January this year 109,000 French men and women were registered at the French embassy as UK residents and that 60,000 had

registered to vote.

Around 43 per cent of foreign nationals - let's say 50 per cent in the case of the French - settle in London. That would suggest a total of 55,000 to 60,000 Frenchmen living in the UK capital.

The true figure, of course, could be slightly higher - or lower - but it is impossible to justify or even take seriously the figures quoted by the Mayor and Lord Wallace.

Why should europhiles be so keen either to exaggerate the number of French living in London, or simply to accept uncritically figures which look unrealistic as soon as you think about them?

Perhaps it is because they like to believe that London is the cultural cockpit of a multi-national European state in which young Brits and French combine to create a new European consciousness and thus become the first true European citizens. Or could it simply be that they are bad at maths?

Dubious figures about the inflow of French immigrants prompts one other reflection. After the stifling protection of the risk-averse French nanny-state it may well be that many young French men and women do find London-life exciting and challenging. But evidently not all. Every year the French consulate assists those who, in the words of an official, "cannot adjust to the harshness of the Anglo-Saxon life-style", (i.e had run up debts and couldn't afford the fare home). In 2004 the number was 300. But presumably the number assisted by mere and pere after frantic telephone calls home is very much greater than this. *C'est la vie*.

Setting the record straight

In our front-page article "Cameron's EU Speech adds to cloud of unreality" (23rd March) we stated that "a repatriation of powers from the EU can only take place as a result of renegotiation". While the article in

question was intended to draw attention specifically to the deep impracticality of Conservative proposals to repatriate powers that depend on unanimous support from other EU members, taken by itself, this assertion is incorrect. Powers could, of

course, be repatriated by means of a decision by the British parliament to repeal the European Communities Act 1972. This is a very important matter, which is set out in detail on page 5 and if we have mislead readers about this we apologise profusely.