

Mr Macron, migrants and a tapestry

Mr Macron today comes with a rare gift. He is willing to loan the Bayeux tapestry to the UK. This fine and ancient work of art chronicles the misery and violence of war, showing the deaths of men and horses in battle and the torching of someone's house. It celebrates the victory of Duke William of Normandy over King Harold of England.

I am sure the offer is well meant, and many would like to see this most famous of tapestries which many of us have seen in illustrations many times. I will pass over the unfortunate truth that it depicts an invading French army killing England's King with the deaths of many in the English army, before taking over the government of our kingdom. It was the last time England was defeated in war by a hostile continental invasion, though many more attempts were made at enforced political union with the continent.

Mr Macron comes to talk about the immediate issue of economic migrants, and the longer term issue of Brexit. We read in advance that he wants the UK to take more economic migrants, and that he wants to reduce the migratory pressures in and through France. It is difficult to see how these two aims are compatible, as any indication that we would welcome more economic migrants will presumably just increase the pressures on France as more seek to come. We also read that he wants more UK cash to help with the border arrangements. It makes every sense, as both sides agreed in a Treaty, that the UK border with France is in the French Channel ports, and their border with us resides in the UK Channel ports. Why allow people to make a journey that entails them arriving as illegals in each other's country? Of course the UK must pay its fair share of policing the shared borders.

I trust when he turns to Brexit Mrs May will reaffirm that any deal must be better than No Deal. That means it must secure us control again over our money, our borders and our laws. The principle issue for the EU to resolve is how many new barriers would they like to erect against our mutual trade, as the UK is happy to carry on with no new barriers. The UK should not pay for the privilege of importing more than we export to the rest of the EU, but should not wish to make it more difficult for them to sell things to us unless they wish to impede our exports. The UK needs to set out a strong and clear position and then let the EU consider how to respond.