

# You can never trust an emigré

I was going to write this column a couple of weeks ago, but I was unable to find the correct source for the quote that serves as the title. I still haven't been able to track the quote down properly, so you will have to take this as an unsourced anecdote instead. But one of immediate and urgent relevance to our current state of relations with the European Union.

In the autumn of 1813, Wellington was poised to cross the Pyrenees and invade southern France. He was faced by the decision of where to strike. At this point a group of French Royalist emigrés appeared with inside information that had, they said, come from their contacts inside France. Bordeaux was in a state of turmoil. Royalists had armed themselves and were just waiting for a chance to rise up against the hated Bonapartists. If Wellington attacked towards Bordeaux, the emigrés claimed, he would have a warm welcome and an easy victory.

It was at this point that Lt Colonel Colquhoun Grant , Wellington's chief intelligence officer, stepped in to say "You can never trust an emigré". He suspected, rightly, that these emigrés wanted Wellington to do their dirty work for them, defeat the French forces around Bordeaux and so allow them to move in and exact their own brand of revenge on personal enemies. Wellington listened to Grant, and advanced toward Toulouse instead.

It is, indeed, a truism that you cannot trust those with ulterior motives. Particularly emigrés.

From 1998 to 2002 the American intelligence agencies spent a lot of time speaking to Iraqi emigrés. These exiles poured out a host of stories about how unpopular Saddam Hussein was, how Saddam had vast stocks of weapons of mass destruction and how

Saddam was a dangerously unstable dictator who was just itching to invade neighbouring states. The only solution, the emigrés said, was for the USA to invade Iraq and remove Saddam from power.

The US intelligence services did not heed Grant's advice. They believed the emigrés and only later realised that it was all a pack of lies designed to get the Americans to remove Saddam from power. We all know how well that ended.

And so we come to today. In the Referendum last year, those who wish to leave the EU gained a majority. Since then most of those who voted "remain" have accepted the decision. But a small number of die-hard Europhiles have not. They fondly believe that they are right, that a growing number of British people agree with them and that the referendum decision can be overturned. For the most part they are harmless, but some are not.

Some are men and women who have high level contacts in Brussels, Berlin or Paris. Like the emigrés of old, they are saying what their audience want to hear. "The British people are changing their minds"; "The British economy is in trouble"; "We can stop Brexit with legal challenges"; "Parliament will never agree to go with WTO rules" and so on and so forth.

This is dangerous stuff. If the EU negotiators believe these emigrés – and from what I have heard some are inclined to do so – then they will seek to impose a punishment deal on the UK in the belief that this will cause the UK to change its mind and stay within the EU.

So those well-connected big beasts with their contacts within the EU machinery are working against the interests of their own country. Like the emigrés of old, they are wanting the EU to do their bidding for their own reasons. They are potentially dangerous, they are certainly wrong. The EU should

heed Grant's advice and "never trust an emigré".

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