

A draft letter for Mr Donald Tusk to Angela Merkel

Brussels

April 1st 2017

Dear Angela

I have been holding your line that the UK cannot expect to discuss anything about the future relationship with the EU until they have agreed and settled a large bill for exit. I understand fully Germany's reluctance to put more money in to the next seven year budget framework just because the UK has left and is no longer helping pay the bills, but I cannot accept your view that is all the EU's fault. The member states also played their role in developing policies and attitudes which clearly upset too many people in the UK. The European tradition of showing respect for government, and voting again if a referendum miscarries, is not unfortunately practised in the UK where apparently they accept the result.

I have to say I don't think the current line is going to work. The UK is emboldened by what has happened so far, and they seem to be losing their fear of the consequences as a result. We saw how Project Fear warning them of bad economic consequences did not stop them voting against the EU, and the absence of such negative results so far has strengthened the hand of the Brexit side in the argument. We also need to be aware that there are now pro Brexit Ministers in the government, and advisers who are also of that persuasion. It will be very difficult for us all if at the first meeting we present the bill and the UK simply refuses to accept any liability. They apparently believe there is no legal basis in the Treaties to require them to pay other than their regular contributions up to the date of exit. I am struggling to find a counter to this case.

I am being lobbied by business and farmers from Germany and elsewhere that they want us to keep tariff free trade for cars and to avoid high WTO tariffs on agricultural products, two areas where the EU has a large balance of trade surplus with the UK. I am also being told by other governments that they don't want to anger the UK, and do not wish to lose the valuable intelligence, military co-operation, scientific collaboration and various joint investments and activities. May I suggest we do not have a prolonged wrangle over talks about talks, as this could also fuel Eurosceptic and other hostile opinions in France, Italy and elsewhere where we face elections soon. May I also respectfully suggest that you do not speak out before consulting other states, as there is some private resentment of this.

Perhaps we could get together soon to see what we can salvage from this tricky situation. There is a case for cutting our losses with the UK quickly before it splits the EU and diverts us from our most important task of creating greater unity amongst the remaining 27.

Yours

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