

Was this the undercurrent conversation at the EU dinner?

Prime Minister

It is a pleasure to be here with you today for dinner. I come to renew my friendly proposals about our future relationship. The UK wants a comprehensive and deep partnership with the EU. We will offer you tariff free access to our market with no new barriers. We will continue our substantial contribution to European security and intelligence. We will carry forward joint working on space , science, academic life and much else. We will continue our welcome for all EU citizens legally settled in the UK

Mr Juncker

Thank you for coming. I do hope you have brought your cheque book. You must understand that we cannot keep on meeting like this unless the UK pays the bills for the dinners and much else. The EU is getting cross with the UK for not being realistic, so I hope this evening we can make some progress on the divorce settlement.

PM.

As I have made clear the UK will pay anything it owes, but you have to understand UK Ministers do not have powers to send money to the EU after we have left. We need to look at all the issues together including our future relationship.

Mr Juncker

I dont think you understand. The UK has signed up to a soup course for future meals which is going to cost billions of pounds. Doubtless you want coffee, which does not come cheaply either. I have explained before to you that we decided to order drinks right through to the next decade, so that will be another big bill. The UK cant expect to get away without paying

PM

I can do without the soup course, and coffee late in the evening keeps me awake at night. In the UK we accept we have to pay all the time we remain in the EU but not after we have left. You should cancel the drinks for us for when we have gone and save some of your cash. As to this dinner I thought you had invited me, and I have had the cost and inconvenience of coming to you here in Brussels.

Mr Juncker

You British are so unreasonable. You cant just walk out and leave us short of cash. There is a big bill to pay.

PM So how much is the bill, and what is the legal base for the items you want to charge

Mr Juncker

Theres no need to get legal with us. We want you to make a realistic offer. Its all about European solidarity, about setting the right tone for our future relationship. We dont have an itemised bill backed by a legal base.

PM

When we joined the EEC we did not get a discount or a payment to deal with all the spending commitments the others had decided on before we joined, so why would there be any bill for future spending after we left?

Mr Juncker

You agreed then to join on the terms available. That is different.

PM Are you also saying that if a country left the EU now that gets money out, the EU would go on paying it after it had left?

Mr Juncker

Theres no point in getting clever with the EU. The rest of the EU expects you to pay a large sum. I do hope you understand we cannot possibly talk about trade any time soon given the UKs stubbornness.

PM

That is a pity, as it hugely in the EUs interest to have continued tariff free access to the UK market. We have to go ahead and plan for WTO tariffs on EU food and goods without sensible discussions.

Mr Juncker

The EU has other priorities.

PM

So the EU does not care about all its exporters to the UK?

Mr Juncker

The impact on the EU is containable

PM

May I suggest we talk about something else, like Iran, where we may agree and put out a statement on that?

Mr Juncker

Thats the best we can do