

# May's contempt for Europeans will be the most dangerous..

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The [leaked reports](#) of the discussions between Jean-Claude Juncker and Theresa May last week are of course one sided. And they were, very obviously, leaked for a reason. But they're still profoundly worrying. Those more expert than I am on EU negotiations suggest three things.

The first is that May was poorly briefed.

The second is that her instincts are based on negotiations she had as Home Secretary that do not provide a reliable precedent for what is happening now.

And the third is that her willingness to compromise is limited.

All three are worrying. All three characteristics are present in the general election campaign, meaning that the reports from Juncker are readily believable.

May is making claims on the stump about the time it will take to reach deals that no one with expertise thinks credible.

And her ministerial approach, honed at the Home Office that is so unlike other ministerial office that few successfully survive it (she being the exception that proves the rule), is far from prime ministerial in approach, and narrow in its perception and skill set.

Whilst it is all too obvious that May's primary characteristic is disdain for those who oppose her. I strongly suspect many from the EU will think they are being treated with contempt before any Brexit negotiation comes to a conclusion. It's the worst basis for reaching any deal in any walk of life.

May will, of course, try to play this to advantage. This is what 'strong and stable' government looks like, she will say. It is about 'backs against the wall' and 'fighting on the beaches' with a 'plucky Dunkirk spirit', forgetting all the time that Dunkirk only happened because of a mess of our own making. And through it all a contempt that will poison negotiations, UK political and social life and the fabric of our country will be

apparent.

And what will we get from it? Inevitably a deal that is worse than what we had before. But more importantly, we'll have massively soured relationships. And these will not just be with other nation states. They will also be between people. Because the people really in the firing line here are those from the UK who live and work in the EU and vice versa. Whatever the deal on rights to stay the real issue will become the desire to stay. And what May has revealed is contempt. That's not just for facts, but also for the people involved. And that will be the most dangerous spillover of all.