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London.—British prime minister Theresa May defended her offer to let millions of EU citizens stay in Britain after Brexit as fellow EU leaders responded coolly yesterday to her opening move in negotiations on Britain's withdrawal.

A year to the day after Britons voted narrowly for Brexit, May admitted differences at the Brussels summit over guarantees to the 3 million EU expatriates in Britain, but said they would be addressed in negotiations begun this week.

German chancellor Angela Mer-

kel said it was a "good start" but "not a breakthrough, to say the least". Summit chair Donald Tusk, a former Polish premier, found it "below expectations" and said it could leave people, including 800,000 Poles, worse off.

"It's obvious that this is about reducing the citizens' rights," Tusk told reporters of his "first impression" of May's offer. "Our role in negotiations is to reduce this risk."

May, facing the first European test of her authority after an election backfire cost her a parliamen-

tary majority, pushed back, calling her proposal a "fair and serious offer". "Those citizens from EU countries that have come to the United Kingdom and who've made their lives and homes in the United Kingdom will be able to stay, and we will guarantee their rights in the United Kingdom," she said.

"There are some differences between that and the proposals of the European Commission, but the matter will now go into the negotiations."

See Inside



Theresa May with Spanish PM Rajoy.

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