

# Farewell, Great Britain

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## *The British lost more than the European Union case leave the block, as Cameron may propose*

Prime Minister David Cameron announced that he intends to renegotiate the terms of Great Britain's adherence to the European Union, and should he win 2015 elections, he will propose to call a referendum on his country's membership of the European Union. European leaders have been polite in their answers, but they made it clear that they will not make concessions to the old Albion for it to remain in Europe. They have been too delicate. Deep in their souls they must be saying: "let it go".

The European Union is the most remarkable work of political engineering that I know of. The fact that it is now in crisis for having taken a false step – the premature creation of the euro – does not absolutely change the incredible political achievement of associating and promoting solidarity among countries that for centuries have fought against each other.

Great Britain joined late the European Union, in 1973, and since its entrance it became for Europe rather a liability than an asset. De Gaulle knew it would be so, and has always opposed it. Britain became a liability because the purpose of the founders of the European Union has always been to gradually constitute a State, but Britain, together with the United States, has always opposed all the big steps the European Union tried to take in that direction.

At the same time, along with the United States, it has always advocated its expansion through the admission of increasingly more members, because it knew that it would thus become more difficult to give to the whole political system the necessary social cohesion to turn it into a State. Its decision of not joining the euro when it was created was correct, but it also expressed this country's general attitude regarding the European project. In 2005, when a referendum in France and another one in the Netherlands refused to approve the new Constitution, the magazine *The Economist* literally expressed its joy in its *Charlemagne* section, by saying that this refusal had been a victory for its country. Recently the Cameron administration opposed the new banking regulation system adopted by the European Union.

Now, in view of the European crisis, and of the decreased support for the European project triggered by this crisis, the British Prime Minister adopts an electoral strategy, and engages to conduct a referendum after the elections. And, in his speech, he talked about the "public frustration" with the European Union,

and about people's "living standards being slashed" because of decisions taken "further and further away from them".

I believe he is making a serious mistake. Britain will lose more than the European Union by leaving it. *The Economist* has no doubt about it. In its December 8 issue, it stated that this would be a mistake, that "the gains would be greatly outweighed by the costs of a British exit". Nearly 50% of the country's exports go to the rest of the European Union, and these exports will certainly be affected by the "slow-motion disaster" of this exiting process.

Plunged into its crisis – in the euro crisis that keeps it stagnant – Europe requires the union of its members. David Cameron goes in the opposite direction; he profits from the crisis, instead of contributing to its solution. So be it. Lacking solidarity, Britain is of no interest to the European Union.