

## Energy Crisis Worsening in Finland

Government declares "war economy" due to consequences of unnecessary anti-Russian sanctions.

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*The side effects of anti-Russian sanctions are becoming increasingly unbearable for Western countries. Finland has activated maximum alert levels due to the energy crisis, initiating exceptional measures to manage supply difficulties. The head of government even stated that the country would be experiencing a "war economy", despite the fact that Finland is obviously not at war with any other state. This scenario reveals the disastrous path that the West chose to follow by its own decision.*

On 1 September, Finnish **Prime Minister Sanna Marin** described the economic situation in her country in the midst of the gas supply crisis as a "war economy". Interestingly, in her speech, Marin blamed Russian **President Vladimir Putin** for the crisis, despite the fact that the decision to sanction Moscow was taken unilaterally by Western countries. According to her, the gas crisis is occurring because the Russian government is using energy as a weapon in the current conflict.

"We seem to be living in a war economy. This is not a normal economic situation", she said during a press conference.

She also added that this is the third calamity her country has faced since she took power in 2019:

"The first [crisis] was the pandemic, the second was the tide of war coming in Europe, and the third is the energy crisis, which both Finland and all other European countries in the grip of, due to the war and the fact that Putin is using energy as a weapon against Europe".

Marin did not explain exactly how the gas was being used as a weapon by the Russians. She just blamed Putin in a generic and unjustified way. In fact, her words sounded like a desperate attempt to make a kind of scapegoat for the impending crisis that will damage her country. Marin just tried to evade her responsibility as the Finland's head of

government, pointing to the president of a foreign country as the cause of the problems.

However, it is necessary to emphasize that there is no validity in Marin's rhetoric. Russia initially had no intention of using energy as a strategic point in its international disputes. On the contrary, it was the West itself that imposed a series of sanctions to which Moscow was forced to respond with some measures, such as demanding payment in rubles, controlling prices and even banning sales in some more serious cases.

If the West had not taken the initiative to try to "punish" Russia for starting the special operation in Ukraine, Moscow would certainly have kept the European energy supply intact. All Russian actions arose in response to Western provocations. The problem is that European countries do not seem to have acted with prudence and strategy, they simply adhered to the American plan to sanction Russia even though they are energetically dependent on Russia and lacking alternative sources of gas. Now, Marin tries to "blame" the Russians, but imposing sanctions and even asking for NATO membership was her government's unilateral initiative.

The Finnish case is quite emblematic and sums up well the abyss that Europe has chosen for itself. Before the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict, the Nordic country depended on Moscow for the supply of 70% of its natural gas and 35% of its oil, in addition to 14% of its electricity. Without the partnership with Moscow, Helsinki would simply not have been able to meet the energy demands of the production chains and the population, but even so, the country chose to sanction Russia, ban imports and denied any form of dialogue. There is no way to analyze these facts and conclude that Russian President Vladimir Putin is the one "to blame" for the crisis. The responsibility undoubtedly lies with the Finnish government itself.

On the "war economy" situation, in fact, an unprecedented crisis threatens Helsinki. And the most curious thing is that the government takes measures that will only worsen the situation even more, instead of seeking improvement. Finland was one of the first states to impose restrictions on the entry of Russian tourists, halving the number of visas. Under the recently announced new rules, only 500 visas can be granted per day to Russian citizens, 100 of which are reserved for tourists and 400 for work, study and family trips. It is important to remember that more than 20% of all Finnish tourism income comes from Russian citizens. According to official sources, the country will lose more than 600 million euros with the new visa rules.

In addition, Finland remains firm in its application to join the Western military alliance. In fact, the more the country is affected by tensions with Russia, the more it seems to be willing to worsen these tensions. Moscow at no time showed any sign of threat to Helsinki, but the Nordic country appears to be absolutely influenced by the fallacious Western rhetoric that the operation in Ukraine will "expand" throughout Europe, so it prefers to go into recession and economic crisis instead of simply being diplomatic with Russia.

For now, Marin will certainly continue to try to make Putin the scapegoat for her administration's mistakes. But that won't convince the public for long. The PM has been heavily criticized for both mismanagement and scandals in her private life. Her popularity is likely to drop further as the country sinks into a "war economy" without being at war.

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