European Union demands rationing of natural gas to wage war

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The European Union has committed its member states to reduce their natural gas consumption by 15 percent from next month until March next year. The energy ministers of the 27 EU countries adopted an EU Commission proposal on Tuesday.

The way in which the cuts are implemented is up to the individual states and the targeted savings are voluntary. However, if an acute emergency occurs, mandatory savings targets can also be adopted if at least 15 member states representing 65 percent of the population agree. Originally, the EU Commission wanted to reserve the right to declare an energy emergency, but could not enforce this position.

The austerity decision is being sold as an act of "solidarity" because all countries, regardless of how much they are affected by possible supply shortfalls, have to make the same savings. The reduction of demand across the EU is an expression of the "principle of solidarity enshrined in the EU Treaty," the Commission's text states.

In fact, it is a war measure that was enforced by the EU Commission and the German government with brute force. The aim is to enable Europe to continue the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine for months and years, until Russia's military defeat.

Brussels and Berlin fear that resistance to energy scarcity, inflation and horrendous rearmament costs could lead to resistance and that social pressure on governments could jeopardize the EU's cohesion. Therefore, the concentrated power of the EU apparatus is used to push through the austerity measures and to bring all members into line.

Like any war, the war against Russia, driven by the United States and the European powers with billions of dollars in arms, requires unity, discipline, material sacrifice and the suppression of any internal opposition. The massive energy crisis, which has caused the prices of gas and petrol to explode and threatens to lead to a massive energy outage during the coming winter, is a direct result of the war in Ukraine.

Even before the reactionary Russian attack on Ukraine, the commissioning of the completed Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which, with an annual capacity of 55 billion cubic metres, could meet 15 percent of the total European demand, was permanently cancelled. Other pipelines, which have been supplying Russian gas to the EU through Ukraine or Belarus for decades, stopped operating due to the war.

Nord Stream 1, which has the same capacity as Nord Stream 2, currently supplies 40 percent of its capacity and only 20 percent from Thursday. Moscow has justified the supply reduction with the necessary maintenance of turbines, some of which fell victim to Western sanctions, and has denied the intention of wanting to stop operations altogether.

The EU has rejected this as an excuse and accused Russia of deliberately trying to "use gas as a political weapon." German Economics Minister Robert Habeck accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of playing a "perfidious game": he tried to weaken the great support for Ukraine and drive a wedge into German society.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has always been a reliable supporter of Western propaganda, also accused Moscow of "terrorizing" the West by curbing Nord Stream 1 and inciting an "open gas war against united Europe."

These accusations are absurd. They are reminiscent of the burglar who cries "Stop the thief!" to distract the police. In reality, it is the EU that is pursuing the stated goal of driving Russia into ruin through economic sanctions. According to the official decision, the EU no longer wants to import fossil fuels from Russia by 2027

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at the latest. The militaristic tone of the accusations confirms that the EU is not concerned with energy security, but with the instrumentalization of energy policy as a weapon of war.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen used all her authority to oblige all EU members to reduce gas consumption. The Christian Democratic Union politician already played a leading role as German Defense Minister in reviving German militarism. In 2014, the government in which von der Leyen was a member supported the right-wing coup in Kiev, which laid the seeds for today's war.

The von der Leyen gas savings plan is based on the controversial Article 122 of the Treaty on European Union, which allows the EU to intervene deeper than usual in the national sovereignty of the member states in emergencies.

Already during the euro crisis, when the EU helped the banks out of the crisis with billions, and forced countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain to make brutal social cuts, it invoked this article. Likewise, after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, when it again made available hundreds of billions for a "reconstruction fund" in favour of banks and corporations.

This time, however, von der Leyen met with considerable resistance. Countries in the south, which now meet their gas demand from North Africa, were reluctant to agree to a programme that primarily benefits Germany, which is particularly dependent on Russian gas supplies.

The Spanish Minister for the Environment, Teresa Ribera, initially rejected the plan outright. Her country would not make any "disproportionate sacrifices." No Spanish family would have to fear cuts in the gas supply in winter, she said, explaining this was because Spain has done its homework and not lived beyond its means.

Like the German government, the Spanish government fully supports the proxy war against Russia. But the arrogance with which the German government faced more heavily indebted countries during the euro crisis and forced them to take drastic austerity measures has not been forgotten.

On Monday, the diplomats of the 27 EU member states negotiated well into the night, until they finally reached a majority agreement thanks to numerous special arrangements. For example, a number of countries—Cyprus, Malta and Ireland—which are not connected to the gas network of other member states, are excluded from the austerity objectives.

In the end, only Hungary voted against the decision to reduce gas consumption. Viktor Orbán's government, which maintains good relations with Russian President Putin, is now also rejecting economic sanctions against Russia.

But the centrifugal tendencies in the EU are enormous. In Italy, Mario Draghi's government of "national unity" has also broken up over the question of war. While Draghi unreservedly supported NATO's war course, Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing Forza Italia and Lega refused to deliver arms to Ukraine. It is unclear what the government will do after the elections at the end of September.

What welds the ruling class of Europe together is the fear of working class uprisings. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock recently declared that if no more gas came from Russia, "then we as Germany can no longer provide any support at all for Ukraine, because we are then occupied with popular uprisings."

The Baden-Württemberg Prime Minister Winfried Kretschmann, a member of the Greens like Baerbock, also warned against a split in society, commenting, "If we walk into a gas emergency, the centrifugal forces will be great, greater than in the case of the Coronavirus."

The escalation of the war in Ukraine serves not least to direct these internal tensions outward—even if it leads to a third, nuclear world war.

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