



# CRIMEA'S ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

*Posted on October 1, 2022 by Slavisha Batko Milacic*



From August 26 to 30, a group of international journalists had the opportunity to visit Crimea and see what effects the European Union sanctions might be having. I was among that group of international journalists. As a reminder, Crimea again became part of Russia in 2014. In March of that year, a referendum was held in Crimea, where the absolute majority of citizens were in favor of unification with Russia. This is not surprising considering that even while Crimea was part of Ukraine, the majority of citizens were pro-Russian and spoke Russian.

When the legitimate government in Kiev was overthrown during the Maidan revolution, and a new anti-Russian government brought into power with the help of Washington, the local population in Crimea did not accept it. As people in Crimea say: "We have been waiting for a long time to come back to our motherland, Russia." This is exactly how the return of Crimea to Russia began.

However, after the return of Crimea to Russia, the harsh sanctions of the European Union against Crimea immediately followed. In short, these sanctions by the European Union consist of a complete import and investment ban for the area of Crimea and Sevastopol, the Black Sea fleet port.

And this is where we come to the key question—how did the sanctions affect Crimea? Based on everything I've seen, I can safely say that the sanctions have had a positive effect.

Here are some examples:

In Crimea, wine production is increasing every year. A huge amount of money has been invested in new wineries as well as in improving the quality of the wine. Today, Crimean wine is better than most European wines. Sanctions have had a positive effect on wine production, as the large Russian market, plus the Asia Pacific region, were opened up to Crimean wineries. Notable Crimean winemakers today include: Alma Valley', Massandra, Inkerman, Gold Beam, Koktebel, Magarach, Suter, Novyi Svit, and Legend of Crimea.

Apart from wine, which has been produced in Crimea for more than 2000 years, I could see that other areas are rapidly developing in Crimea, primarily agriculture, the results of which are visible to everyone.

Crimea is also developing technologically, so today batteries for electric cars are being produced there. With these batteries, electric cars will be supplied all over Russia, and in the coming years, exports outside of Russia will also begin.

Certainly, tourism has a very important place in the economy of the Russian Republic of Crimea. What can be immediately noticed when arriving in Crimea on the new highway that was built and which is excellent is the huge number of tourists.

Also, there is improvement in infrastructure, such as the building of new roads and repair of old ones which were allowed to badly deteriorate during Ukrainian rule.

### **First Made-in-Russia Turbines**

At the Saki gas combined heat and power plant of the KRYMTETS company, we could see that a two-year experimental period of operation of the gas turbine units, made in Russia for the first time by domestic specialists, specifically for this project, was 100 percent completed and without the use of imported components.

The need to build such a natural gas-fired power station arose eight years ago. After Crimea returned to Russia, Ukraine abruptly cut off the power supply of the peninsula by blowing up the main power lines. Crimea, being 80 percent energy dependent on the mainland, plunged into darkness. The peninsula was urgently provided with mobile power systems and began to actively build new, local generation facilities.



*During a visit to the Saki gas-fired power plant, Crimea. [Photo: Slavisha Batko Milacic].*

A complication during this process was the sanctions which made impossible to bring imported equipment into Crimea, and almost all generation facilities in Russia were built with the use of Siemens and General Electric's equipment. At the time, Russian manufacturers developed and produced exclusive equipment specifically for the Saki gas-fired power plant. Therefore, all the turbines, boilers and other generating equipment of the plant have factory-set serial numbers, starting from the first one.

The Saki power plant, with its total capacity of 120 megawatts (MW), was built in a year—a record-breaking time for such kind of projects. Usually, it takes at least two-and-a-half years. As well, the plant was built without secondary sources of funding. The funding was solely undertaken by the KRYMTETS company.

After the launch of the new gas-fired power plant, all the attention of specialists was riveted on the operation of the equipment—no one knew for sure how it would work when fully operational. But now the pilot project of the first Russian gas-fired power plant based on Russian equipment and Russian software has been completed after a two-year test period, and in conditions of increased loads of the Crimean region, proving that Russian equipment works with high efficiency and has proven itself better than imported know-how. This result means that the turbines used at the Saki plant may be recommended for installation at other natural gas-fired power stations in the Russian Federation; and also, after meeting domestic demand, they will be exported to friendly countries. At the same time, the Saki plant will become training ground and learning center for specialists who will operate this equipment at power plants in other regions and countries.

In addition, this year, the first virtual power plant in Russia was put into commercial operation on the basis of the Saki plant. This is the digital twin of a real power plant and is a prototype of the plant's existing production facilities: turbines, boilers, auxiliary equipment, electrical installations, etc. The digital model helps to change the parameters of the equipment and make improvements much faster and safer than working in manual mode. The created software product is a domestic development as well and was created from scratch by Russian specialists.

And now the management of all the processes at the Saki plant is carried out only with the use of Russian software.

Currently, representatives of the largest Russian energy supply companies regularly visit the Saki plant to get acquainted with the operation of equipment in industrial conditions and prepare for its implementation at their own facilities.

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*Slavisha Batko Milacic is a historian and independent analyst, and writes about the situation in the Balkans*

*and Europe.*

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