

## Energy independence, energy isolation

On its [Reportéři ČT](#) public-affairs show on Mon., Czech Television quoted Jozef Síkela as boasting in Nov. 2023, when he was still industry minister for STAN, that only the CR had managed so far to end its dependence on Russian natural gas. "And believe me," he said, "everywhere in the world they have a lot of respect for what we've done, and they're starting to lecture about it at Western universities." He added that we will no longer make payments for Russian gas and thereby fund the fighting and killing by the Russian army.

Czech TV's report was mainly about how the CR kept funding the fighting and the killing until the end of last year by buying cheap Russian gas. The emphasis was on the immorality of this and the willingness of politicians and consumers to turn a blind eye to the practices of the traders who buy gas wherever the price is the cheapest.

Risk analyst Vladimír Votápek told ČT that we support Ukraine in the war, but Russia too by buying its gas, and that this doesn't give him a good feeling. We simply should not allow our money to be used by Russia to boost its war effort, he said, even if it increases our own problems. The much greater risk, he said, is that Russia will succeed in Ukraine, take control of that country, and become an immediate geopolitical threat to Europe. Then, he said, there will be immediate security issues that threaten the sovereignty of our country and neighbors. This would be a much bigger problem than how much the oil or gas costs now, he said.

EU Affairs Min. Martin Dvořák of STAN told [TV Nova last Fri. night](#) that we have a moral duty not to buy Russian natural gas, including LNG, and that some people simply have the stomach to buy cheap gas from criminals. "They think that they're going to profit over the long term," he said, "but in

reality these people always finish badly." There is no future in this, he said.

In his 2024 book [Why War?](#), British historian Richard Overy quoted a [cross-cultural survey](#) of 186 societies conducted in the 1990s that found that fear of resource scarcity accounted for an overwhelming majority of conflicts in the past. "Among

non-state, tribal societies, victors took resources in 85% of cases and appropriated land in 77%," the survey found. Overy said that there is much in common between the old tribal conflicts over material gain or loss and the modern resource wars, where weak states can do little to prevent conflicts over their revenue from

goods that have ready international markets. A stronger power can simply take the resources.

The war between Russia and Ukraine wasn't over resources, Overy said, but the widening of the conflict to include surrogate warfare by Nato members opened up a crisis in oil and gas supply from Russia to Europe. Overy

noted that oil is vital as a resource in part because the modern military can't function without it.

Wars are often about acquiring resources, as Overy demonstrated, but the current war in Ukraine is one of the rare examples in history where allies of the attacked country are voluntarily giving up their access to resources. More usual in such a case would be for the allies to step up their efforts to grab the resources of the adversary.

The CR, a landlocked country with few natural resources, is counting on unreliable solar and wind installations and on imports of energy from the West to prosper. It isn't making provision for returning to any form of the pre-war status quo. Instead of increasing its energy diversity, it's limiting it. This might be morally sound but is full of risk over the long term. Any kind of crisis in the USA or EU that threatened steady supplies of resources from Germany could drive the CR into energy isolation.

It's hard to find another example in history of the kind of boast made in Nov. 2023 by Jozef Síkela. Historically, boasts are made about acquiring resources as a result of war, not voluntarily renouncing them.



A PELICAN BOOK

### Why War? Richard Overy

