

ANDREW E. KRAMER

French Leader Urges End to Sanctions Against Russia Over Ukraine

Лідер Франції закликає зняти з Росії санкції викликані ситуацією в Україні

«Західним країнам слід припинити погрожувати Росії новими санкціями і, навпаки, запропонувати послабити існуючі обмеження в обмін на зрушення в процесі мирного врегулювання ситуації в Україні», – заявив в інтерв'ю президент Франції Франсуа Олланд. «Я виступаю не за політику досягнення цілей шляхом погіршення ситуації, – заявив Олланд. – Я вважаю, що санкції потрібно скасувати зараз».

«Путін не хоче анексувати Східну Україну, я в цьому впевнений, він мені так сказав, – зазначив французький президент. – Чого він хоче, так це зберегти свій вплив. Путін хоче, щоб Україна не стала членом НАТО. Ідея Путіна полягає в тому, щоб біля російських кордонів не було армії». У Німеччині віце-канцлер Зігмар Габріель також висловив побоювання з приводу впливу санкцій на стабільність в Росії. «Мета ніколи не полягала в тому, щоб увергнути Росію в політичний і економічний хаос», – заявив Габріель в інтерв'ю газети Bild am Sonntag.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/06/world/europe/francois-hollande-says-destabilizing-sanctions-on-russia-must-stop-now.html>

Western nations should stop threatening Russia with new sanctions and instead offer to ease off on existing restrictions in exchange for progress in the peace process in Ukraine, President François Hollande of France said in an interview on Monday.

Backing President Vladimir V. Putin into a corner will not work, he said, giving a high-level voice to what is seen as mounting sanctions fatigue among European politicians, as the Ukraine crisis lurches into a second year.

“I’m not for the policy of attaining goals by making things worse,” Mr. Hollande said in the interview on France Inter radio. “I think that sanctions must stop now.”

Russia’s position is misunderstood, he suggested. “Mr. Putin does not want to annex eastern Ukraine, I am sure — he told me so,” Mr. Hollande said. “What he wants is to remain influential. What Mr. Putin wants is that Ukraine not become a member of NATO. The idea of Mr. Putin is to not have an army at Russia’s borders.”

In Germany, the vice chancellor, Sigmar Gabriel, also signaled concerns about the effect of sanctions on Russia’s stability.

“The goal was never to push Russia politically and economically into chaos,” Mr. Gabriel told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

Germany is the most influential European voice on the sanctions issue, and it is widely assumed that little will happen without the approval of its chancellor, Angela Merkel. A spokesman for Ms. Merkel, Steffen Seibert, clarified to Reuters that “we have a very clear idea of what constitutes real progress” before Germany will consider lifting existing sanctions.

Peace talks between the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany are scheduled for Jan. 15, but Ms. Merkel will not attend unless a new agreement seems likely, Mr. Seibert said.

Whatever Mr. Putin’s assurances to Mr. Hollande, in eastern Ukraine over the weekend an ataman, or Cossack leader, posted a video calling Mr. Putin “our emperor.”

Nikolai Kozitsyn, who leads a Don Cossack group based in the town of Antracit that was never more than loosely affiliated with the main rebel organization in that area, the Luhansk

People's Republic, posted a video asserting that his territory was now part of the "Russian empire."

"We won't declare a Don Republic, that's just a utopia," Mr. Kozitsyn said in the video. "We say, 'We are part of the Russian empire. And today, we consider Putin our emperor.'"

Violence in the east that had been waning picked up in recent days, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported Monday, particularly around the city of Donetsk, the monitoring group said.

In the other separatist region, Luhansk, lethal infighting has broken out among armed separatist groups.

The Luhansk People's Republic reported on its website that security officials had killed the commander of a pro-Russian militia known as the Batman Battalion, Alekandr Bednov, as he resisted arrest on extortion and murder charges. Mr. Bednov's supporters, though, posted a video saying his car had been sprayed with bullets in an ambush, and that he was never offered the chance to surrender.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, other, murkier violence is plaguing even cities far from the front lines. Bombers and assassins are targeting the many volunteer groups organizing donations of everything from food to body armor for the financially pressed Ukrainian military.

Overnight, a bomb exploded at the entry to a site in Odessa, knocking out windows in nearby apartment buildings, and an incendiary device set alight the door to another site in Khernes, east of Odessa. Nobody was harmed. The Ukrainian police called the Odessa bombing a terrorist act.

In recent months, bombs have exploded in many eastern Ukrainian cities, targeting sites like a bar frequented by pro-Ukrainian activists in the city of Kharkiv. In another instance, an assassin operating a remote-controlled gun set up in a parked car killed the leader of another volunteer group.

Correction: January 6, 2015

An earlier version of this article referred incorrectly to Sigmar Gabriel. He is Germany's vice chancellor, not "a" vice chancellor of the country. (It has only one.)