

Spanish PM Sánchez mooted as possible NATO Secretary General

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The Spanish political establishment is widely discussing the possibility of current Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government becoming NATO's new secretary-general if he loses the general elections on July 23.

These events confirm the warnings made by the WSW. Sánchez has not called these snap elections to renew the PSOE-Podemos coalition government, but to hand power to the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the fascistic Vox party, after the electoral debacle his government suffered in last month's regional elections, in order to escalate the war in Ukraine. Amid mounting class struggles across Europe and growing popular opposition in Spain, he is coordinating imperialist war abroad and class war at home with the PP and Vox.

The decisive issues involved are Spain's participation in NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine, and how to continue repressing working class opposition to the PSOE and Podemos.

Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Sánchez at his official residence in La Moncloa palace just 24 hours after he announced snap elections. This has been presented by the media as a mere "coincidence," as Clinton was supposedly passing by for a conference in Barcelona.

However, coverage of rumors about Sánchez's potential role in NATO became so intense that Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares had to refute the rumors at a NATO press conference in Oslo. He tried to maintain the pretense that Sánchez is still genuinely campaigning to win, saying: "I see Pedro Sánchez as the next Prime Minister for Spain in the next four years."

It is clear, moreover, that Sánchez's NATO ambitions are being closely discussed with the right. According to sources of the right-wing daily *El*

Español, PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo, Sánchez's nominal electoral rival in the July elections, supports his candidature as NATO Secretary General. A PP-Vox government, *El Español* wrote, "could push for its predecessor to occupy one of the most important positions in the international arena."

These reports emerged last Thursday, when the newspaper *20 Minutos* reported that the NATO alliance will wait for the results of Spanish elections to name the successor to incumbent NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, scheduled to end his term in late September. Last May, Stoltenberg said he had no plans to remain as the head of the US-led military alliance.

According to *20 Minutos*, NATO "will wait for the result of the general elections in Spain, called by Sánchez on July 23, to choose Stoltenberg's successor. That name was expected to be announced at the next NATO summit, to be held in Vilnius (Lithuania) on July 11-12, but in the Belgian capital there is already talk that the process is very green and will be postponed until after the summer."

The paper added, "This delay will allow us to know the 'availability' of Sánchez for the position, that is, if he has won the elections of 23 July and continues to be Prime Minister of the Spanish government or if, on the contrary, he leaves Moncloa, leading to the intensification of diplomatic contacts for him to run for this position of great international importance."

NATO's foreign ministers met last week in Oslo to prepare for the Vilnius Summit. The meeting, however, concluded with no news on which new general secretary would replace Stoltenberg.

Stoltenberg started his mandate months after the European Union and Washington toppled the pro-Russian regime in the Ukraine in a far-right led coup in 2014. His time in office has largely been occupied by

goads Russia into attacking Ukraine and, once this happened in February 2022, escalating the shipment of arms and funding to NATO's proxy force, the Ukrainian army. Ukraine is now carrying attacks deep into Russian soil. In the Far East, NATO has opened an office in Japan in preparations for a war against China.

The article of *20 Minutos* sparked a huge media coverage. Right-wing media aligned with Sánchez's nominal rivals in the PP and Vox hailed the news. Antena 3 Noticias reported that up to three sources within NATO had confirmed "that Pedro Sánchez's profile is really liked and some months ago his candidature was heard with interest in some offices of [NATO] Headquarters in Brussels."

El Español ran an article citing support for Sánchez's candidature among Spanish big business circles.

Talk of Sánchez's plans to pack his bags to go to Brussels in close coordination with Washington and the PP, confirms that these elections amount to a political conspiracy involving all the main parties of the Spanish political establishment, from Vox to Podemos, against the Spanish people. Sánchez is not even attempting to give a semblance that he is standing to win. Rather, he is moving aggressively to help the Spanish political establishment escalate the NATO war with Russia.

Last week, he attended the anti-Russia EU forum in Moldova, 20 kilometers from the Ukrainian border. While neo-fascist Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni gave a press interview making clear her thinly veiled support for Vox in Spain, Sánchez did not even bother to refute her. He did have time, however, for a 20-minute meeting with Ukrainian President Zelensky, at Zelensky's request.

On Friday, the PSOE-Podemos government made an official request to the President of the European Parliament to delay the appearance of Sánchez before the EU parliament to present the priorities of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2023. The intervention was scheduled for July 13, ten days before the elections. Sánchez is thus refusing to use this important platform in Europe as an opportunity to strengthen his electoral campaign.

In the meantime, the politically spineless and reactionary Podemos party is, like Sánchez, already making preparations to lose.

Writing an opinion piece in the Catalan daily *Ara* under the title, "You to NATO and I to Moncloa",

former Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias said that if the electoral forecasts showing a PP-Vox victory are right, it is important for Podemos and its split-off Sumar to "justly and reasonably resolve its hunger games of the [political] left" so that "the democrats will be the least weak possible" in the next parliament.

In other words, after the PSOE-Podemos imposed the most urgently necessary attacks on the working class, the PP and fascistic Vox party can rule, while Podemos lawmakers will continue to suppress opposition to the PP and Vox. Its campaign will aim to maintain some sort of opposition in parliament in order to fulfill this role.

The elections unfold after three years of a PSOE-Podemos government that has implemented savage austerity, in the form of pension cuts and labour reforms slashing workers' legal protections. In addition, it passed the largest military spending increase in Spanish history, to over €27 billion per year; and the deployment of tens of thousands of police to break strikes by metalworkers and truck drivers and impose strike-breaking minimum services laws on aircrew and health workers.

The policies enforced by Podemos, in partnership with the trade union bureaucracy, have meant that 26 percent of the population lives in risk of poverty; 4.2 million people live on less than 560 euros a month.



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