

Spanish Premier Sánchez travels to Kyiv to support NATO's war against Russia for “as long as it takes”

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3 July 2023

On Saturday, Spain's acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez began Madrid's six-month presidency of the European Union with a bellicose visit to Kiev to underline the bloc's commitment to NATO's war against Russia in the Ukraine.

Sánchez's third visit to Kiev since the war began in February 2022 takes place a week after the failed coup in Russia and as the US and European powers move toward sending more and more escalatory weapons to Ukraine. It is part of a campaign to massively intensify their involvement in the conflict, the main focus of the upcoming July 11-12 NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

During the meeting with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, Sánchez made clear that the EU was fully aligned on NATO plans for a staggering escalation against Russia. Sánchez promised the EU's support for Ukraine “as long as it takes” and “regardless of the price that has to be paid”, laying out a programme leading to total war with Russia, a major nuclear-armed state.

The warmongering statement was followed by Sánchez's promises to support Ukraine's bid to become a NATO member. “Spain supports the strengthening of Ukraine's political participation through the creation of a NATO-Ukraine Council, where Ukraine will no longer be an invited party, but a full member. We are also in favor of strengthening practical cooperation, continuing the adaptation of your defense sector to NATO standards,” said Sánchez.

If NATO admitted Ukraine, Kiev could then invoke Article 5 of the NATO treaty to demand that all the NATO countries—including Spain—go to war with Russia. Such a war between the world's leading nuclear powers, and waged by the NATO powers as a war to dismember and demilitarize Russia, would lead inexorably, unless stopped by the independent intervention of the working class, to the use of nuclear weapons.

Sánchez also reiterated his “support for Ukraine's candidacy to join the EU, which will be among the priorities of its presidency.” The European Commission, said Sánchez, had recently issued an interim update on the status of Ukraine's candidacy which showed “significant progress” in

implementing the recommendations ahead of membership talks. A written report would be released in the autumn which would outline “the basis for further steps and decisions”.

Ukraine applied for EU membership five days after Russia's invasion and received candidacy status several months later on June 23 last year.

The integration of Ukraine into the EU would make a mockery of the EU's claim that only states with “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities” can be members.

Over the past 16 months of the war, Ukraine has ever more evolved into far-right regime. Zelensky has banned 11 political parties on allegations of having “links with Russia”; strengthened the Secret Service of Ukraine, the SBU, an organisation that is notorious for its close ties to Ukraine's neo-Nazi scene; the use of torture and rape as methods of “interrogation”; passed labor laws which allow companies to set wages and conditions, impose longer hours, bar strikes and protests and give companies the power to fire workers without notice; and destroyed what remained of an independent judiciary. “Minority rights” don't even exist on paper, and laws have been passed to erase the Russian language and culture from Ukrainian society.

The further integration of Ukraine into the EU is not only exploding the official propaganda about European values and democracy. It would be seized by the European ruling classes to further implement the far-right policies that Kiev is already implementing against the Ukrainian working class, to suppress mounting mass strikes, protests and riots that are erupting across Europe against soaring prices, low wages and police violence.

In Kyiv, Sánchez also made clear that peace would only come under NATO's conditions, which means Moscow's total capitulation, including renouncing Crimea, now held by Russian forces against the pro-NATO regime in Kiev for nearly a decade.

In an unveiled attack on China's peace proposal, Sánchez “thanked” those countries that are proposing a “just and lasting

peace”, but stressed that these proposals cannot be accepted because this is an “aggressive war with an aggressor and a victim” and “illegal and unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine.”

This is the usual pro-NATO mantra repeated incessantly since the beginning of the war. In fact, it is the imperialist powers, not Moscow, who are the main aggressors in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. With its systematic military encirclement of Russia, NATO deliberately provoked the reactionary intervention of the Putin regime. Since then, it has continued to fuel the conflict.

Sánchez also spoke of the much-vaunted counteroffensive and committed more military aid. “Today, Ukraine is in the middle of a counteroffensive against Russia, an enemy that is showing signs of weakness,” said Sánchez, referring to the failed coup attempt by the Wagner Group leader Evgeny Prigozhin against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The truth is that Ukraine’s vaunted counteroffensive continues to falter as tens of thousands of soldiers are sent to their death despite billions of dollars in weapons and training. Estimates indicate that well over 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers have already been slaughtered in the past three weeks during the counter-offensive to retake slightly over 110 square kilometers of territory. These deaths come on top of 200,000 Ukrainians, who were estimated to have been killed so far.

The EU leaders are committed to fuel the bloodbath in order to defeat Russia militarily. At the EU summit last week German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for a long-term “strategy on how to support Ukraine” and boasted: “Germany, as you all know, is Ukraine’s second-largest supporter after the US. And we will continue to do that (...) and that ties in with what I can report from talking to them (the US) and the British Prime Minister, the French President, also from talking to the Polish Prime Minister.”

Last week the German government announced plans to increase howitzer ammunition production for Ukraine and to station 4,000 combat troops permanently in Lithuania. Spain will provide Ukraine with an additional aid package worth 55 million euros. Madrid will also send four more Leopard tanks, in addition to the six already sent two months ago, and armoured personnel carriers and a portable field hospital with surgical equipment.

Within Spain, it is yet to be seen, however, whether Sánchez will remain in power to lead the EU’s presidency after he called snap elections for July 23 following his electoral debacle in the local and regional elections in May.

As the WSWs has explained, the PSOE and Podemos are terrified of massive working class opposition to war, austerity and police-state repression erupting uncontrollably on its left flank. To pre-empt this development, it has called these elections to hand over power to the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the fascistic Vox party, to escalate war abroad and at home, as strikes erupt across Spain and mass protests in France

following the police murder of a 17-year-old youth.

Revealing the unanimity within the ruling class for the war policy, the PP has already announced it agrees with Sánchez’s EU priorities, which, besides Ukraine, includes advanced plans for EU’s remilitarization and attacks on the working class.

Spain will seek to bolster cooperation with Latin America, an area that was brutally colonized and plundered by that country for centuries. Madrid wants to turn Latin America into a strategic partner of the EU. EU powers are concerned they have lost ground to the US and China in recent years and are seeking the region to supply it with strategic raw materials, such as coal, copper, natural gas, oil, uranium and lithium.

The new EU presidency will also oversee savage austerity against the working class to pay for the war. Under EU rules, states are required to keep budget deficits under 3 percent of annual GDP. This was temporarily suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, and was later extended until 2024 following the breakout of the war in the Ukraine. Now, Brussels is demanding that EU states cut at least €45 billion next year, with exceptions to be made for defence spending.

Madrid will also preside over savage attacks on migrants. The EU will finalize its draconian Migration and Asylum Pact, which was approved earlier this month. Under its terms, the EU has effectively abandoned the right of asylum for refugees. Refugees are to be interned in detention camps at the EU’s external borders in the future, their asylum applications to be decided in a fast-track procedure and then deported to almost any third country.

Sánchez has already shown his readiness to implement this brutal policy. Two weeks ago, the PSOE-Podemos government allowed a boat with 61 migrants to sink off the coast of the Canary Islands, claiming 37 lives. This happened just weeks after the Greek Coast Guard capsized a fishing boat with 750 refugees aboard, of which only 104 were found alive.



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