Documents confirm fascists murdered Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca

Alejandro López
30 April 2015

Two police reports published for the first time by *Cadena Ser* radio station show that one of the greatest poets and playwrights of the twentieth century, Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936), was executed by right-wing fascist forces in the summer of 1936.

The report, written in 1965 by the Regional Brigade of Social Investigation of the Police Headquarters of Granada, directed to the civil governor of the province, is the first official admission that fascist forces murdered Lorca, whose remains have yet to be found. It describes Lorca as a "socialist," a friend of the Socialist Party leader Fernando de los Rios, and a "freemason belonging to the Alhambra lodge" who engaged in "homosexualist [sic] and abnormal practices."

The report details how, in late August 1936, four weeks after Franco's fascist army rebelled against the democratically-elected Popular Front government, the "Glorious National Movement surprised [Lorca] in the capital [of the province] where he had arrived days before from Madrid (where he had his regular residence)". After his house was registered, "feeling fear, he hid in the house of his friends, the Rosales brothers, Falaganist members […] where he stayed until the moment of his arrest".

"From that moment onwards," continues the report, "the information that we were able to collect is very confusing and the only thing that we have been able to clarify is that the detainee was taken away from the Civil Government [where he was under arrest] by forces which depended on the latter and was taken by car to Viznar (Granada) […] together with another detainee whose personal circumstances are unknown, executed after having confessed, and buried in that location, in a very shallow grave, in a ravine." Hours before, his brother-in-law, Manuel Fernández-Montesinos, the Socialist Party mayor of Granada, was shot.

The document was written at the request of the French Hispanist and friend of Lorca, Marcelle Auclair, who addressed the Spanish Embassy in Paris in June 1965 to request information. The embassy then passed it on to the Foreign Minister Fernando María Castiella, in favour of responding to the request. Information and Tourism Minister Manuel Fraga, future founder of the right-wing Popular Party (PP), currently Spain's ruling party, was also informed of the facts.

Another document released by *Cadena Ser* is a letter from Castiella to interior chief Camilo Alonso Vega. It states that Fraga had said that it was "extremely advisable to look over the matter and find out whether we can or cannot open our archives about the García Lorca episode". However, Auclair never herself received any response, probably because the document exposed the false claims made by Franco himself, who said that "The writer died while mixing with the rebels, these are natural accidents of war."

Ian Gibson—an authoritative biographer of Lorca, who led an unofficial investigation into his death in the 1970s under Franco and has written multiple books on Lorca's murder—told the daily *El País*: "It demonstrates that it was not a street killing, that he was taken out by the civil government to be murdered. They themselves say it."

The police report published by *Cadena Ser* is a rarity in modern Spain. Historians still do not have full access to documents from the army, the church and the public administration that would help establish the number of victims of fascist murder during the Spanish Civil War, and the identity of those responsible for the killings.

The ruling class is determined to cut workers off from historical knowledge of the working class revolutionary struggles against capitalism in the 20th century. Amid

© World Socialist Web Site

mass unemployment and escalating social crisis, the entire political establishment—the Stalinists, social-democrats and the PP—defend the bankrupt arrangements underlying the transition from the Francoist regime to parliamentary democracy in Spain in 1977. The fascists received an amnesty and a tacit "pact of forgetting" about their crimes.

The PP, whose origins lie in Franco's National Movement, cut the budget for the Law of Historical Memory, forcing organizations dedicated to recovering the remains of victims of the Civil War to rely on donations. Together with the Socialist Party (PSOE), the PP has refused to extradite to Argentina former Franco officials responsible for crimes against humanity. They rejected UN recommendations to ensure that families of the disappeared receive official help in locating their relatives' remains.

At the same time, the Ministry of Defence continues to repatriate the remains of the Spanish volunteers of the Blue Division that fought in the German Army's war of annihilation against the USSR during the Second World War.

The revelations of Lorca's murder cut across this reactionary rewriting of history aimed at downplaying the crimes of fascism. The killing of this great artist was part of a systematic terror campaign by the fascists against the organized working class and anyone suspected of opposition.

In May 1936, General Mola, one of the leaders of the coup two months later, gave the following instructions to military bases: "The action must be extremely violent as soon as possible to reduce the enemy, which is strong and well-organised. Of course, we will arrest all the leaders of the political parties, associations or unions that are not affiliated with the [National] movement, applying exemplary punishment to those individuals in order to strangle rebel movements or strikes."

On July 17, 1936, Franco led a military uprising from Spanish Morocco to overturn the Popular Front government, calling on all military garrisons to rise up against the Republic. Workers responded by forming rank-and-file antifascist militias. In the areas they seized, the fascists enforced a policy of systematic mass murder of political opponents.

Granada, where García Lorca was captured, was one of the first to fall. According to the historians Rafael Gil Bracero and Maribel Brenes, around 4,000 people from Granada alone where executed, including "red intellectuals" whom the fascists hated for "predicating Marxism and democracy".

José María Bérriz, a lawyer and sympathiser of the fascists, hailed the repression in Granada in a letter to right-wing bankers on holiday in Portugal: "The army wants to extirpate from the root the bad plants that were destroying Spain. I think they will achieve this. The army courts work day and night and the sentences are very severe. The executions of trade unionists, teachers and doctors continue; they fall in the dozens. The city is happy."

It is estimated that approximately 10,000 bodies are still buried in 57 mass graves around the province.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site