

Spain: Architect of 1936 Franco uprising reinterred with full military honours

Alejandro López
26 April 2017

The remains of one of the chief architects of the 1936 fascist uprising in Spain, General José Sanjurjo (1872-1936), were reinterred with full military honours in the Regular Heroes Cemetery in the North African enclave of Melilla.

It was revealed last week that the reburial, which took place in March, was supervised by the Ministry of Defence of the Popular Party (PP) government and attended by high-level political and military officials.

Sanjurjo, in association with Generals Francisco Franco, Emilio Mola and Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, organised the Nationalist uprising on July 17, 1936, which started the Spanish Civil War. He rose to prominence in Spain's colonial wars in Cuba (1896) and Morocco (1909-1927), which were characterised by brutal repression of the native populations, including the use of mustard gas, rape, pillage and mass killings.

These same methods were used during the Civil War against the Spanish population, making clear the inextricable connection between war abroad and class exploitation at home—between imperialism and capitalism.

Sanjurjo became an expert coup plotter after the Spanish Republic was proclaimed in April 1931. The first failed attempt, popularly labelled “the Sanjurjada,” took place in Seville in 1932.

Forced into exile in Portugal, Sanjurjo once again set about planning a coup to overthrow the democratically elected Popular Front government in 1936. He became one of the coup's chief architects, and his house became the centre for daily meetings with military officials, aristocrats, bankers, fascists and other reactionary forces. Destined to be the leader of the rebel military government after the coup, Sanjurjo died two days after the uprising was launched in an airplane accident.

His remains stayed in Lisbon until the end of the Civil War in 1939, after which they were transferred and placed in the Monument to the Fallen in Pamplona—a mausoleum glorifying the generals and soldiers who died in the fight against the Republic.

Last November, following the decision of the Pamplona local council—controlled by the pseudo-left and pro-Basque separatist party EH Bildu—to abide by the 2007 Law of Historical Memory prohibiting monuments and other public displays glorifying the military uprising, the remains of Sanjurjo and Mola were exhumed from the mausoleum.

Sanjurjo's reburial with military honours only came to light because the little known publication, *Siempre p'adelante* (Always Forward), published by far-right forces in Navarre, included his obituary in its latest bulletin. It stated that his remains “once they left Navarre, on Thursday March 23 2017, received the highest military honours according to his rank and found rest in Melilla.”

The fascist publication concluded, “Sanjurjo continues to be respected, despite everything and the inexplicable silence of the good side.”

Enrique Delgado investigated further and revealed on his blog *El Alminar de Melilla* that Sanjurjo's reinterment was classified as a “state secret” and that his remains “were led and guarded until they reached Melilla by a delegation of high ranking officers of the Ministry of Defence.”

The ceremony was held in the hall of the Regular Heroes Cemetery, “presided over by all the civil and military authorities of Melilla,” and “the city's cultural *nomenclatura*” knew about it.

The affair demonstrates once again that sections of the army and the political establishment have never renounced their fascist past. While the army, the

Church and the PP call on the victims of fascism to forget and move on, they secretly glorify and pay homage to the fascist coup plotters.

The PP has repeatedly claimed there is no money to exhume the 114,000 missing victims of Franco, most of whom lie in the 2,200 mass graves that still exist from the Civil War, a figure that puts Spain second only to Cambodia in terms of victims whose remains have disappeared. Since 2013, the budget for the Law of Historical Memory has been slashed to “zero euros.”

In contrast, the PP government has provided money to repatriate from Russia remains of members of the Blue Division, a unit of Spanish volunteers that served in the German army during Hitler’s extermination campaign on the Eastern Front in the Second World War. It has funded the Spanish Biographical Dictionary published by the Royal History Academy, in which fascist terror is systematically omitted even though it was an established policy of Franco’s forces.

Last year, the Ministry of Defence’s Spanish Centre for National Defence Studies (Centro de Estudios para la Defensa Nacional—CESEDEN) invited historian Stanley Payne to give a lecture to a select audience of military officers, policemen, PP officials, right-wing journalists and historians, in which he legitimised the 1936 coup.

Amid an unprecedented economic and political crisis—mass unemployment, wage cuts and redundancies, and one corruption scandal after another exposing the links between the political establishment and big business—the post-Franco order built upon the premise of forgetting the past is unravelling. The two-party system has collapsed and, after almost a year in which Spain was unable to form a government, the country is ruled by an unstable minority PP government, which relies on the support of the opposition Socialist Party (PSOE) for its continued existence.

In response to the growing social opposition, the PP and the army are intensifying their efforts to rehabilitate Francoism and legitimise its methods. This is a warning that the ruling elite will use the same methods it used in 1936 against the working class to defend capitalist order.

The PSOE has said the military reburial is “intolerable” and announced it will raise “a battery of questions” in parliament. Basque EH-Bildu, which

authorised the reinternment, has requested that Defence Minister Dolores de Cospedal explain in “detail the participation of military authorities” in the ceremony. The pseudo-left Podemos has declared its “indignation, repulsion and condemnation” and called for “truth, justice and reparation for all the victims of 1936, with the conviction that as long as we do not have justice we will never reach full democracy.”

The real concern and aim of these parties is to ensure that anti-military sentiment and political indignation in the population does not erupt as a result of such naked pro-fascist displays. Behind rhetorical declarations of outrage, since its founding in 2014 Podemos has attempted to prove its trustworthiness in matters of defence and security to the ruling elite—creating branches within the army, entering into talks with military associations to hear their demands, and defending Spain’s membership in NATO. Its current shadow minister in parliament is General Julio Rodríguez, who led the Spanish army in the US-led war in Libya in 2011.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact