

PSOE-Podemos government exhumes Spanish fascist general Gonzalo Queipo de Llano

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On November 3, Church authorities exhumed the remains of one of fascist General Francisco Franco's most savage generals in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano (1875–1951).

Queipo's exhumation took place with full honours. Like the moving of Franco's remains from the Valley of the Fallen mausoleum to Madrid's Mingorrubio cemetery in November 2019, the exhumation turned into a degraded homage paid to a blood-soaked general. Footage showed the body being driven away in a van, as family members shouted: "Long live Queipo!"

The Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government, it must be noted, created the conditions for this ceremony to take place. Cadena Ser claimed: "The exhumation, carried out with great secrecy and discretion to try to avoid public spectacle, were carried out in compliance with the new Democratic Memory Law."

This spectacle is part of a universal legitimisation of fascism by the European ruling class. As workers across Europe move into struggle against the soaring cost of living and the ruling elite's murderous pandemic policy, and as the NATO imperialist powers go to war with Russia over Ukraine, European powers are rapidly moving to rehabilitate fascist war criminals.

In Italy, 77 years after fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was shot by partisans, Mussolini's political heirs are back in power with the election of neofascist Brothers of Italy (FdI). In France, President Emmanuel Macron hailed fascist dictator Philippe Pétain as a great soldier as he organized a mass crackdown against "yellow vest" protests. In Germany, a political campaign is underway, led by extreme-right academics such as Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski, to whitewash the Nazi regime's crimes. Baberowski infamously said, "Hitler was not vicious."

The Church removed Queipo's remains on orders from

the PSOE-Podemos government, which recently passed the Democratic Memory Law to present itself as "antifascist." This is a fraud.

Official events focussing attention on fascist war criminals like Queipo are bound up with the NATO powers' drive to a new world war and police-state rule at home. This drive, rooted in a mortal crisis of capitalism, continues whether right-wing parties or pseudo-left parties like Podemos are in power. This year, the PSOE-Podemos government has sent anti-tank weapons to the neo-Nazi Azov battalion in Ukraine, sent armoured cars against striking metalworkers in Cadiz, and deployed 23,000 police to break a nationwide truckers strike.

The obsessive focus on Franco or Queipo testifies to the morbid fascination with far-right violence in ruling circles as they seek to repress growing popular opposition and class struggles.

Queipo, like Franco, participated in the brutal colonial wars in Morocco (1909–1927). These campaigns saw bloody repression of Moroccans, including with poison gas, rape, and mass murder. Such methods would then be used during the Spanish Civil War against the working class at home.

Queipo played a savage role in the Civil War. Posted at the start of the coup in 1936 in the southern city Seville, known as "red" Seville due to working class militancy there, Queipo played on illusions in "progressive" sections of the army fostered by the Stalinist Communist Party of Spain (PCE) and the social-democratic PSOE. He claimed he was loyal to the Spanish republic, only to betray it and turn on the workers.

He seized the centre of Seville and then took the working class neighbourhoods, bombarding them with artillery. Using women and children as human shields, and an aerial bombing of the Macarena district where Queipo's body remained until last week, his soldiers fought their way into the working class areas. The death

toll of the capture of Seville was at least 3,000.

On July 18, 1936, he issued a decree giving his troops and their civilian sympathizers carte blanche to carry out extrajudicial killings. On the same day, he gave the first of his infamous propaganda radio speeches broadcast every night at 10:30 until February 1, 1938, threatening that loyalists to the Republic would be “hunted down like vermin.”

In one of his most infamous speeches on the radio, he outlined a policy of mass rape Franco’s troops carried out as they advanced into loyalist areas: “Our valiant Legionnaires and Regulares have shown the Red cowards what true men are. And their women as well. This is totally justified because these Communists and anarchists advocate free love. At least now they will know what real men are, not gay militiamen. They will not escape, however much they kick and scream.”

The advance of Queipo’s army in the south led to an estimated 45,000 to 50,000 deaths, mostly extrajudicial murders of workers and members of left-wing parties. Most of his victims remain in over 700 mass graves across the region to this day.

His victims include one of the greatest poets and playwrights of the 20th century, Federico García Lorca (1898–1936). According to Lorca’s biographer, Ian Gibson, Queipo was asked by another officer, “What do we do with Lorca?” The general replied, “Coffee, give him coffee, a lot of coffee,” the coded term for execution.

Queipo also ordered the aerial bombings of a column of 15,000 civilians, chiefly the elderly, women, and children, as they tried to flee the besieged city of Malaga on a highway.

Queipo’s remains stayed at the Macarena Basilica in Seville after the fall of the Francoite regime in 1978, due to the corrupt arrangements between the Stalinists, social democrats and the Francoites during the Transition from the fascist regime to parliamentary rule in Spain.

In the face of mass struggles of the Spanish working class in the 1970s, the Communist Party of Spain (PCE, today part of Unidas Podemos), and the PSOE defended the capitalist regime and set up a blanket amnesty for fascist crimes. After the 1978 Transition to parliamentary rule, this amnesty was enforced by the 1982–1996 free-market PSOE government of Prime Minister Felipe González, who oversaw the promotion of many Francoite judges, police and civil servants to top posts.

Meanwhile, for 41 years, many of the children of Queipo’s victims lived side by side to his de-facto mausoleum in the working class neighbourhood of

Macarena.

Podemos has intervened to claim Queipo’s exhumation is a step forward for Spanish democracy. Ione Belarra tweeted: “Today Queipo de Llano is no longer buried with honors in the Macarena in Seville, paying off a historical debt with Andalusia thanks to the recently approved Democratic Memory Law. This news dignifies the memory of thousands of victims.”

These statements are based on political bad faith. Within the state machine and the armed forces in Spain and across Europe, as it is well known, there is deep support for Francoism. In June 2019, the Supreme Court endorsed Franco’s 1936 coup, declaring him the legitimate head of state from the date he proclaimed himself ruler of Spain on October 1, 1936. In November 2019, Franco’s remains were exhumed with full military honours. And in January 2021, the Constitutional Court ruled that Franco did not commit crimes against humanity during the war or his 40-year dictatorship.

In 2020, in the initial shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of high-ranking former officers sent two letters and a manifesto to King Felipe VI, appealing for him to launch a coup. Certain top officers discussed shooting “26 million” people to imitate Franco’s 1936 coup.

The PSOE-Podemos government downplayed the threats. Then-Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias was sent out to downplay the scandal in a prime-time TV interview, declaring: “What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat.”

Iglesias’ lies were promptly exposed when videos emerged of Spanish soldiers singing fascist and neo-Nazi songs and making the fascist salute; WhatsApp chats revealed active duty officers supporting the tired far-right generals’ appeals to kill 26 million people.

Today as in the 1930s and 1940s, fascism and world war can be fought only by the mobilisation of the working class, independently of national union bureaucracies and their pseudo-left political allies like Podemos, who are integral components to the drive to war and far-right rule.



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