

PSOE-Podemos government exhumes remains of Spanish fascist Primo de Rivera

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Yesterday, Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government removed the remains of José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903-1936), the Spanish fascist ideologue and founder of The Falange party, from the Valley of the Fallen. This huge fascist monument is dedicated to those fallen in General Francisco Franco's "Glorious Crusade" against Marxism during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

The son of former far-right military dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera, who ruled Spain from 1923-1930, Primo de Rivera founded the Falange to install a fascist regime in Spain in lines of Mussolini's Italy. At the founding congress of The Falange in 1933, he said:

"Who has said, when they say, 'Every available means except violence,' that the supreme hierarchy of moral values resides in kindness? Who has said that when our feelings are insulted, rather than react like men, we are called upon to reply amiably? Dialogue as a first step of communication is well and good. But there is no option left except fists and guns when someone offends the precepts of justice or the fatherland."

The Falange played a decisive role during the Second Republic (1931-1939), creating the political climate for General Francisco Franco's July 1936 military-fascist coup. Its "Blue Shirts" carried out political assassinations of left-wing and socialist politicians, attacked workers and students, and served as hired thugs of the bourgeoisie and landowners to attacks strikers.

Amid the Civil War, its membership swelled to over 250,000; more than 150,000 Falangists served in Franco's army. The war cost half a million dead and leveled cities and towns across Spain. Another 700,000 to a million people passed through nearly 300 fascist concentration camps built during the war and in the 1940s. Beaten and humiliated on a daily basis, many died of malnutrition and starvation. Another half-million fled Spain as political refugees.

In November 1936, Primo de Rivera, who was in jail before the coup over his links to assassinations, was executed after being found guilty of conspiring against the Spanish Republic and complicity in the coup.

After Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War, the Falange was merged with other far-right groups in the National Movement, but the Falange continued to serve as the capitalist regime's main ideological prop for four decades. Primo de Rivera's image was idealized and honored as a martyr. The Francoite regime only fell amid mass protests and strikes in the 1970s.

Primo de Rivera's remains stayed in the Valley of the Fallen next to those of Franco during the Transition to parliamentary rule negotiated in 1978 between the Francoites, the PSOE and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE, today part of Unidas Podemos). This was part of the broader policy of blanket amnesty for fascist crimes agreed by the PSOE and Podemos. On this basis, the free-market PSOE government of 1982-1996 promoted many Francoite judges, police, military officials and civil servants to top posts.

Last October, Primo de Rivera's family requested the remains be removed. Since then, the PSOE-Podemos government has been in close discussions with the family—something they have refused to do with the families of the thousands of left-wing Republican fighters interred in the Valley of the Fallen on Franco's orders.

"The personalized attention of the Government to Primo de Rivera's family does not exist in the case of the disappeared republicans," objected the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH) that works to excavate the bodies of Republicans executed in mass graves.

After the PSOE-Podemos government exhumed Franco in 2019, Primo de Rivera's exhumation once again turned into a degraded homage paid to a bloodstained fascist criminal. The PSOE-Podemos government chose Monday, the 120th anniversary of his birth, for the event.

Outside San Isidro cemetery, where his remains were re-interred next to those of his fascist siblings and relatives, hundreds of fascists, some of them in the Falange's blue uniforms and including Falange leader Manuel Andrino, made the Roman fascist salute, and sang or shouted Francoite or Falangist slogans. Even though public

glorification of Francoism is illegal, the police did nothing. Only when some fascists tried to break the police cordon did the police arrest three, accusing them of public disorder.

The bourgeois press provided full coverage of the event, portraying Primo de Rivera as a victim of the Civil War and his ideology as little more than conservative Catholicism.

The pro-PSOE daily *El País* refused to call him a fascist, calling him a “victim of the Spanish Civil War,” of an alleged mistrial by Republican authorities, and of Franco, who refused to carry a prisoner swap for him. It blandly referred to fascists outside the cemetery hailing Primo de Rivera as “the nostalgic ones.”

It wrote, “On November 16, 1936, a court questioned him about his connections with the rebels and the preparation of the coup. Primo de Rivera denied his participation in the events. On November 18, the magistrates accepted the prosecutor’s request for the death penalty, and on November 20, at the age of 33, he was shot.”

It was silent on his preparations of the military coup and the fact that, while in jail, he remained in intermittent contact with the Falange leadership and, several times, with blood-stained General Emilio Mola, the leading architect of the coup.

These events constitute a political exposure of the reactionary politics and historical perspective of Podemos, a pseudo-left party that is continuing without interruption the Spanish bourgeoisie’s promotion of fascist war criminals. Other architects of the 1936 fascist uprising, generals José Sanjurjo (1872-1936) and Queipo de Llano (1875–1951) were re-interred with full military honours, in 2017 and 2023, respectively. In 2019, Franco’s remains were exhumed in what the WSWS called “a degraded spectacle paying homage to one of the bloodiest dictators of the 20th century.”

The PSOE-Podemos government sent acting Justice Minister Dolores Delgado, who dressed in black to show her respect for Franco and the mourners. The coffin, covered with a banner with the Laureate Cross of San Fernando—the highest military decoration awarded in Spain—was carried out of the basilica on family members’ shoulders. When the coffin arrived in the El Pardo-Mingorrubio cemetery, hundreds of fascists made the fascist salute, sang Francoist songs and carried the Francoite flag.

The rehabilitation of fascism in Spain is part of a legitimisation of fascism by the entire European ruling class. In Germany, right-wing extremist Professor Jörg Baberowski is paraded across German universities to blame the USSR for Nazi crimes and publicly rehabilitate Hitler as “not vicious.” In Ukraine, fascists like Stepan Bandera are today glorified by the Kiev regime and its NATO backers. In France, President Emmanuel Macron has hailed Nazi-

collaborationist dictator Philippe Pétain as a “great soldier.”

This is the ruling classes’ response as workers across Europe moving into struggle against the soaring cost of living and as the NATO imperialist powers wage war on Russia in Ukraine, as millions of workers are striking in Canada, the US, Germany, the UK and other countries across the globe.

Opposing the ruling class’s rehabilitation of fascism requires mobilizing the working class in political struggle, independently of the reactionary pseudo-left forces in the affluent middle class which capitalist media falsely promote as the “left.” Podemos passed the Democratic Memory Law to posture as “anti-fascist,” while presiding over the growth of fascistic tendencies in the police, military and judiciary.

In June 2019, the Supreme Court endorsed Franco’s 1936 coup, and in 2021, the Constitutional Court ruled that Franco did not commit crimes against humanity during the war or his 40-year dictatorship. In 2020, amid a strike wave against official inaction at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of high-ranking former officers sent two letters and a manifesto to King Felipe VI, calling for a coup. Calls circulated among top officers boasting of their fascist sympathies and calling to shoot “26 million” people to imitate Franco’s 1936 coup.

The PSOE-Podemos government responded by downplaying these threats.

Mobilizing deep, historically rooted opposition to fascism and war in the Spanish and international working class requires building a political movement in the working class. It underscores the urgency to build sections of the ICFI in Spain and around the world, and to link the growth of workers’ struggles to a socialist, internationalist and anti-imperialist political movement aimed at transferring state power to the working class.



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