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Franco's remains greeted with fascist salutes at new resting place

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Chants of “Viva Franco!” and the fascist salute escorted the coffin of former Spanish dictator Gen. Francisco Franco as his remains were exhumed from his grandiose resting place outside of Madrid and taken to a small family crypt.

The late strongman’s descendants, who bitterly opposed the exhumation, gathered at the Basilica of the Valley of the Fallen in San Lorenzo del Escorial on Thursday for the government-ordered operation.

#### SPANISH DICTATOR FRANCISCO FRANCO TO BE EXHUMED THURSDAY

In a bid to guarantee privacy and avoid the actual exhumation operation being recorded and posted on social media, the government banned cameras and cellphones among the 22 family members, government authorities and workers allowed into the mausoleum.

About 500 Franco supporters – some in military regalia – gathered in Mingorrubio, throwing one-armed salutes and chanting “Viva Franco” while waving the Francoist national flag.

They also shouted insults against interim Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who made relocating the remains a priority when he took office earlier this year.

#### BARCELONA MAYOR PLEADS FOR VIOLENCE IN CATALONIA TO STOP AMID PRO-INDEPENDENCE PROTESTS

Sanchez said the exhumation "puts an end to a moral affront that is the exaltation of [a] dictator in a public place," and that it was necessary now to begin the process of identifying the thousands of Franco victims who were also buried in the vainglorious mausoleum.

"Modern Spain is the product of forgiveness, but it can't be the product of forgetfulness," he said in a televised address. "A public tribute to a dictator was more than an anachronism. It was an affront to our democracy."

Meanwhile, Franco's 64-year-old grandson said before the exhumation that it was all a "profanation" and said Sanchez wants to turn it into a rally before a Nov. 10 general election.

"It's an all-out desecration," said Francisco Franco Martínez-Bordiú, accusing Supreme Court judges who ruled in favor of the government – the Catholic Church and center-right Spanish parties who didn't impede the reburial – of being accomplices of Sanchez's Socialists' plan.

The government, he said, "had to hop over several obstacles with the complicity of those people to arrive on time and be able to use the exhumation as part of the electoral campaign."

Spain, he said, "is under the dictatorship of political correctness."

## UN APOLOGIZES TO SPAIN FOR MISCHARACTERIZING BOMBING THAT INSPIRED FAMOUS PICASSO PAINTING

Pablo Simon, a political scientist, told Reuters that the exhumation is "intensely symbolic for Spain because the [Franco] monument has always been connected to those who miss the old regime."

Franco ruled Spain between 1939 and 1975, after he and other officers led a military insurrection against the Spanish democratic government in 1936, a move that started a three-year civil war.

A staunch Catholic, he viewed the war and ensuing dictatorship as something of a religious crusade against anarchist, leftist and secular tendencies in Spain. His authoritarian rule, along with a profoundly conservative Catholic Church, ensured that Spain remained virtually isolated from political, industrial and cultural developments in Europe for nearly four decades.

The country returned to democracy three years after his death but his legacy and his place in Spanish political history still sparks rancor and passion.

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