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**The Long Death of Francisco Franco**

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**Lead: In the early 1970s the hopes of conservative Spaniards to resist social and political change were dependent upon the continued survival of Francisco Franco. Their hopes and his prospects were increasingly bleak.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Sensing his own mortality and the increasing liberalism of large segments of Spanish society, Francisco Franco, in the 1960s began to cast about for a way to perpetuate**

his rule. He chose to restore the Bourbon monarchy. This institution had been supplanted in the 1930s with the coming of the Spanish Republic. With the republic's 1939 defeat in the Civil War Franco ruled Spain himself. His choice as successor was Juan Carlos, the son of Franco's bitter enemy, Don Juan, the rightful heir to the throne, living in Italian exile. Yet, despite a military education in Spain, supervised by Franco himself, young Juan Carlos, early on began exhibiting a careful, but serious flirtation with liberal ideas and policies.

Seeing this and aware of the pressure for change within Spanish society the men and women

surrounding Franco dug in their heels. Their desperate fight against progress led to their being known as the *bunker* after the image of Adolf Hitler and his cronies in the last days of the Third Reich. The *bunker* included hard-line Falangists of an older generation, right-wing military officers, several of Franco's physicians and members of the Caudillo's immediate family led by Dona Carmen, Franco's wife. They believed if they could just keep him alive by medication and manipulate the transition they could maintain control. They were wrong.

Gradually during the early 1970s Spaniards, began to sense, some with fear, most with joy that Franco was

**dying. Heavily medicated following the onset of Parkinson's disease, he was losing weight, spent most of his time watching television. He would fall asleep during important meetings and conversations. His decisions were erratic and easily manipulated. Finally, in 1975 his body began to self-destruct despite heroic artificial efforts to keep him alive. Occasionally he would awake and mutter, "how hard it is to die." Franco passed away on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Official cause of death: endotoxic shock brought about by acute bacterial peritonitis, renal failure, bronchopneumonia, cardiac arrest, stomach ulcers, thrombophlebitis, and Parkinson's disease. With his demise, the much more liberal Juan Carlos led Spain in**

**consolidating its move into the  
modern world.**

**At the University of Richmond,  
this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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