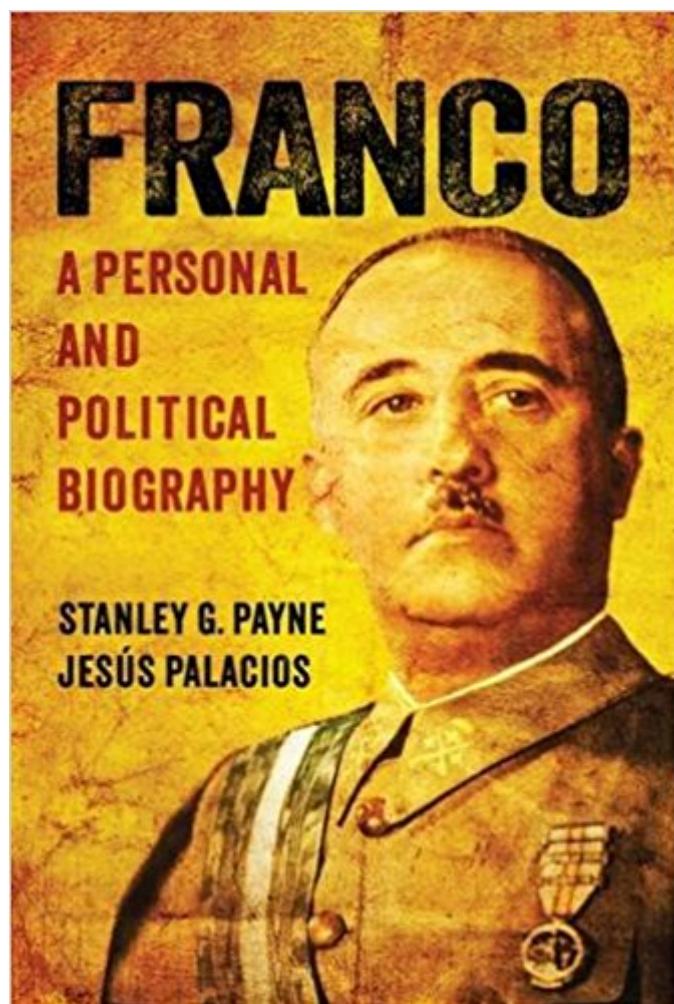


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Franco: A Personal And Political Biography



Synopsis

General Francisco Franco ruled Spain for nearly forty years, as one of the most powerful and controversial leaders in that nation's long history. He has been the subject of many biographies, several of them more than a thousand pages in length, but all the preceding works have tended toward one extreme of interpretation or the other. This is the first comprehensive scholarly biography of Franco in English that is objective and balanced in its coverage, treating all three major aspects of his life—personal, military, and political. The coauthors, both renowned historians of Spain, present a deeply researched account that has made extensive use of the Franco Archive (long inaccessible to historians). They have also conducted in-depth interviews with his only daughter to explain better his family background, personal life, and marital environment, as well as his military and political career. *Franco: A Personal and Political Biography* depicts his early life, explains his career and rise to prominence as an army officer who became Europe's youngest interwar brigadier general in 1926, and then discusses his role in the affairs of the troubled Second Spanish Republic (1931–36). Stanley G. Payne and Jesús Palacios examine in detail how Franco became dictator and how his leadership led to victory in the Spanish Civil War that consolidated his regime. They also explore Franco's role in the great repression that accompanied the Civil War—resulting in tens of thousands of executions—and examine at length his controversial role in World War II. This masterful biography highlights Franco's metamorphoses and adaptations to retain power as politics, culture, and economics shifted in the four decades of his dictatorship. Best Books for General Audiences, selected by the American Association of School Librarians Best Books for General Audiences, selected by the Public Library Reviewers —An important book, destined to elicit a heated academic debate surrounding the man who ruled Spain for forty years and whose figure still casts a long shadow four decades after his death.—*Journal of Modern History*

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Customer Reviews

"An intimate portrait of Franco the man, provoking a lively and necessary debate about the nature of the dictator's regime."Julius Ruiz, author of *Franco's Justice*"Francisco Franco is the only major twentieth-century dictator to die peacefully in his bedafter almost four decades in power. His regime was brutal, despicable, and in many respects ineffectual, yet it did not join the Axis powers in World War II and was a transitional type between traditional military dictatorships and more recent totalitarian regimes. This book, impeccably based on the available sources and displaying sober judgment, could well be the definitive work on the subject."Walter Laqueur, author of *Fascism: Past, Present, Future*"Masterfully combines research on Franco's life and regime with new and unique sources including Franco's private papers and interviews with Franco's only daughter. It will appeal to a broad readership including anyone interested in the history of twentieth-century Spain, the Spanish civil war, and the Franco regime."Joan Maria Thom s, University Rovira-Virgili, Spain"This highly readable and extremely insightful biography situates Franco not only in his Spanish context but also in the global context of 20th-century dictatorships."*Wall Street Journal*"The authors face their daunting task with redoubtable advantages [including] the respect due to their scholarship and erudition. . . . To write fairly about Franco is a largely thankless, albeit perhaps remunerative, task, appealing only to those who have a stomach for a fight or indifference to blows. . . . Stanley Payne and Jes s Palacios deserve admiration for taking the risk of saying what little there is to be said on their subject's behalf. Theirs is a fearless book."*Times Literary Supplement*"Add[s] an intimate glimpse into Franco's personal and family life to the extant historiography of Franco's military career and the political machinations of his regime. . . . The authors successfully take great pains to be objective and balanced as they simultaneously eschew writing a hagiography and situating his seizure of the state within the context of interwar chaos and violence. Recommended, all levels/libraries."*Choice*"Franco is that dread thing,complex. He will frustrate a desire for black-and-whiteness. . . . The new biography by Stanley G. Payne and Jes s Palacios will tell you what to think about Franco. Even better, it will tell you how to think about him. That is a

huge gift to an interested reader. "National Review" "Highly readable, the book is at its heart a biography. . . . The authors do well to demonstrate not only Franco's committed anti-Communism, but his elaborate and exaggerated fear of Freemasons, his reluctance for reform, his growing disillusionment with the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II, and his sheer inability to comprehend economic policy." "American Historical Review

Stanley G. Payne is the Hilldale-Jaume Vicens Vives Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the author of many books, including *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*; *The Franco Regime, 1936-1975*; and *Spain: A Unique History*. JesÃ³s Palacios is a noted historian, investigative journalist, and adjunct professor at the University of Madrid.

Franco was not an image guy. He was a short, pudgy man who was a stickler for rules, a devout Catholic, and devoted to his wife and daughter. He came to power with the help of Hitler and Mussolini, allegedly to stop Spain from being taken over by Communism. One of the most interesting parts was how he managed to keep Spain out of World War II in spite of pressure from both the Axis and the Allies. He continued to rule Spain many years after Hitler and Mussolini were dead. He was indeed a dictator, used violence as all dictators do, and limited freedoms that Americans take for granted. I visited Spain under Franco and Czechoslovakia under Communism a year later. It was kind of creepy in Spain seeing the Guardia Civil walking around town with machine guns, but it was nowhere near as scary and depressing as Czechoslovakia.

A balanced, well-written portrait of one of the 20th century's most controversial figures. Franco remains a difficult personality for modern sensibilities. His desire seemed to be to recreate as much as possible the imperial, Catholic Spain of the 16th Century. He pursued this in a cold, calculating fashion and was totally lacking in human empathy. His economic principles were naively socialistic, but he was flexible enough to give Spain the greatest economic revival in its history. He was personally incorruptible and in the end assured the transfer of power to a liberal Juan Carlos.

There are not that many English language bios out there on this dictator, so it was good to find this one. Four chapters in, it is fascinating. A physically little guy, with grit, luck and pluck, moves up the ladder in military rank and society. Payne shows how many major players on the future Nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War interacted with each other, and how Franco's views were shaped.

Especially interesting were the portions of the book that cover the brutal war in Spanish Morocco, including a military collapse that rivalled any other European colonial war disaster. On campaign, Franco shoots a mutinous soldier in the head, so he's definitely not just a desk murderer. So far the book is giving me what I want - things I did not know. As to bias, that remains to be seen - the jury is still out. I've Read Preston's Civil War, so I thought I would try this book for perspective. So far, I'm glad I did. Update: upon finishing the book, my rating remains the same. As a biography, the book is stronger on Franco's family and personal life than on how his governing decisions affected Spain and its citizens. For example, following the Civil War, political and blood crimes were tried by military tribunals. Franco believed in legality. As an authoritarian, following the rules was important to him. However the trials are not gone into in any depth. There is not much detail on what crimes were prosecuted, and whether there was any fairness in the process. The tribunals could have operated with grudging moderation or been "bloody assizes". Another area was Franco's push to re-establish Catholicism after the war. It is discussed in broad terms, but its impact on the average citizen is not covered in any detail. Rebuilding churches burnt by Republicans, promoting religion in the schools, and concordats are covered, but not whether being a non-practicing Catholic created problems. Persecution of Protestants was an occasional issue, and talked about in general terms - without much detail. The biography covers a lot, but can't cover every aspect of Spain in the Francoist era. It is also limited by the fact that Franco kept his own counsel, and left little in the way of written documents, letters or diaries. There is not a lot of hand-wringing over the cost to the opposition; but rather a cold assessment that while the Civil War and aftermath was bloody, it could have been much worse. Payne and Palacios rate Franco as the most important Spaniard in centuries in regard to his country's development. All in all, the book provides more balance to the large number of pro-republican works available.

I was an expat student who lived in Spain in the last years of Franco's life, and found this book an excellent chronicle of a complex man. To me, as a young student, Franco was merely a remote caricature. However this book shows how he was able to achieve supremacy in a very socially conservative (and reactionary) society in the 20's and 30's, and how he was able to cope with the changes that swept through Spanish society before and during his regime. A fascinating portrait; the book does not sugar-coat his faults and misdeeds, but also doesn't present him as the fascist stooge that many other biographers (with other political agendas) have tried to do.

I like the book it takes you right there. However It has difficulty in getting closer to describing the

more personal side, it tries but I believe fails in doing so. However I enjoyed much of the information brought forth in the book a great read for sure...very well written sufficiently descriptive and not overly verbose.

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