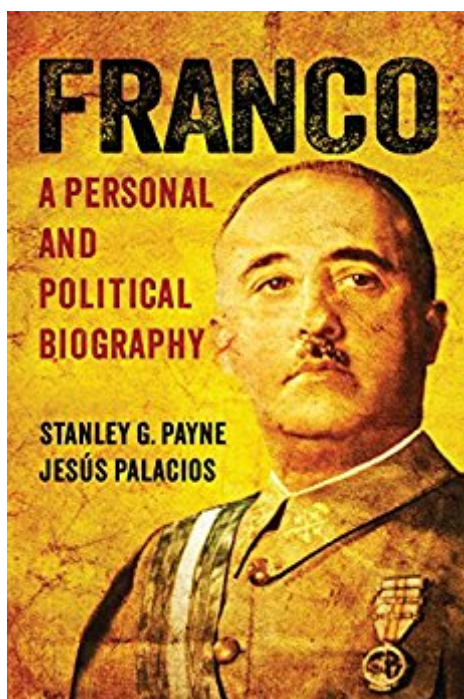


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Franco: A Personal And Political Biography



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.

Francisco: 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.

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Customer Reviews

In reviewing this book, co-written by Stanley Payne and Jesús Palacios, I will attempt to answer two basic questions that I think most people want the answers to: 1) should a student of the history of Spain in the 20th century read this book and place it in his library? And 2) why or why not? The answer to the first question is a resounding yes! Franco marks the culmination of the brilliant career of Stanley Payne, the dean of English speaking historians of modern Spain. This is an indispensable work. Now, why? Firstly, because it needed doing. Paul Preston, in his ponderous, tedious, and ill-mannered biography of Franco, simply did not get the job done. Writing about Franco in a way that adds something useful to the conversation about him requires hard work, patience, and thoughtful analysis, the sort of qualities all great scholars have. It says something that Preston's bloated and crammed work merits a mere single mention in Payne's notes, and a courtesy one at that (chapter 3, note 10). Before I continue, I think it important to point out that Payne, at least in his English-language books, is the sole author. We will have to take Palacios at his word (i.e., his name as co-author) that he agrees with Payne's conclusions. Still, I will refer to Payne only, as this work represents several decades of thought, reflection, and analysis on Franco. No disrespect is intended toward Palacios. Secondly, the sources marshaled include personal interviews Payne conducted in 1958 and 1959, as well as interviews with Franco's daughter in 2008. And this is one of the key elements of this book. Franco was a very private, stoic man, and Payne's interviews provide real, even raw, insight into Franco the man.

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