



# **Franco: Soldier, Commander, Dictator (Military Profiles)**

*Geoffrey Jensen*

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Before becoming one of the longest-ruling dictators of the twentieth century, Francisco Franco commanded troops in the kinds of wars that have since become all too familiar. He not only waged vicious counterinsurgency campaigns against Muslim warlords and defiant tribes in Morocco, but he also led a multinational force to victory in Europe's "dress rehearsal" for World War II—the Spanish Civil War.

Born into a military family in 1892, Francisco Franco first made a name for himself leading attacks against rebellious Moroccan warlords and tribesmen and by 1926 was promoted to brigadier general. His role in the ruthless suppression of the 1934 revolution by coal miners in Asturias sealed his reputation for brutality, although Franco saw it as simply carrying out an order in the most efficient manner possible. In 1936, as head of Spain's formidable Army of Africa, Franco joined a military revolt against the Popular Front government of the republic. He quickly secured the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, touching off more than two years of bloody civil war. Within months of the wars outbreak he became generalissimo and head of state of the rebel camp, and in 1939 Britain and France recognized him as the legitimate ruler of Spain.

He then outlasted fellow dictators Hitler and Stalin by decades, dying in 1975 at the helm of the same regime he had established in Spain before the Second World War. In this engaging and concise introduction to the generalissimo's life on and off the battlefield, Geoffrey Jensen makes clear how Franco's military experiences helped shape the character of his dictatorship and its repressive policies.

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