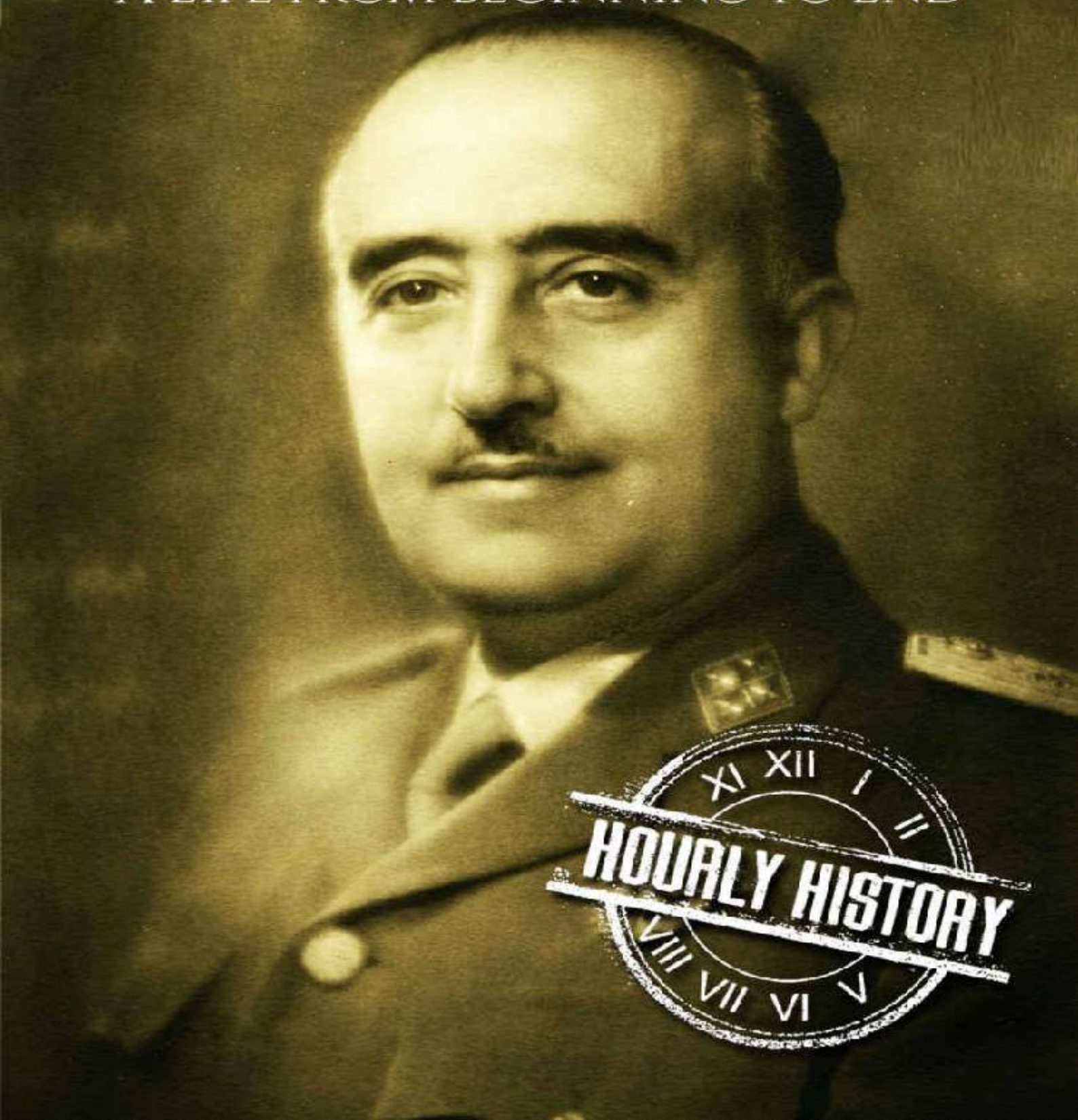


FRANCISCO FRANCO

A LIFE FROM BEGINNING TO END



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Introduction

The man named Francisco Franco was born into this world as a kicking and screaming baby boy on the wintery afternoon of December 4, 1892. His native home was the Spanish maritime city of Ferrol, in the northwest corner of Spain. He was baptized within weeks of his birth and was christened with the full name of Francisco Paulino Hermenegildo Teodulu; several years he would take on the surname of Franco.

Francisco's family had a long history of service, and in particular, service in the Spanish navy. His family could trace their military pedigree all the way back to six previous generations. Francisco wanted to follow in these footsteps, but in the years just prior, the old world power of Spain had come into a devastating direct collision with the newest global power, the United States.

The Spanish-American War was a conflict fought over the U.S. intervention in Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain. All-out war between the powers had broken out in 1898 after an explosion erupted below the decks of the USS *Maine* which had been docked off a pier in Havana. The ship was destroyed and sunk to the bottom of the harbor.

This led to the United States uniformly demanding that the Spanish Empire relinquish its grip on Cuba; it was this ultimatum that led to what would be known as the Spanish-American War. This fight would prove to be a devastating loss for Spain which ended up losing Cuba, along with almost all of its other colonial holdings.

Chastised by the Americans, the Spanish navy was severely reduced and was no longer accepting applications by the time that the young Francisco Franco was ready to enlist in 1907. Unable to join the branch of service that his family had served so well, Francisco opted to enlist into the Spanish army instead. It was from here that he would eventually rise through the ranks of his destiny, as a general and future dictator of Spain.

Chapter One

Franco's Conquest

"I am responsible only to God and history."

—Francisco Franco

Francisco Franco graduated from the infantry academy in 1910, earning himself the rank of lieutenant. By 1912, he had been given his first official line of duty to the then newly established Spanish protectorate of Morocco which was fully engaged in the Riff War, in which a group of local Muslims from the Riff tribe staged intermittent fighting against Spanish colonial officers.

At that point, the Spanish infantry was suffering heavy losses, and their military positions were being pushed back. Even so, for ambitious young men like Franco, all of this fighting and bloodshed only meant one thing: an immediate opportunity to be promoted. In fact, the exact phrase that eager enlisted men had been conditioned to repeat was "la caja o la faja" which translates into English roughly as "a coffin or a sash." The mantra indicated that through the struggle that the soldiers were about to face, they would either be sent home dead in a coffin or would obtain the rank of general since generals wore a special decorative sash on their uniforms to signify their status. Franco was just as enthusiastic as the other enlisted men, and by 1916 at the tender age of 23, he was made into a captain.

However, this triumph would be short-lived, and following his promotion, Franco was shot and badly wounded in the stomach, with the bullet penetrating all the way to the liver. But the new captain was not quite ready for "la caja," and instead of being shipped back home in a coffin, to the amazement of his physicians, he had what seemed to be a miraculous recovery.

Francisco's doctors later attributed his survival to be due to the simple fact that he had sucked in air in the immediate instant before getting shot. This extra cushion of air had apparently saved his intestines and other internal organs from getting damaged. This incident inspired his