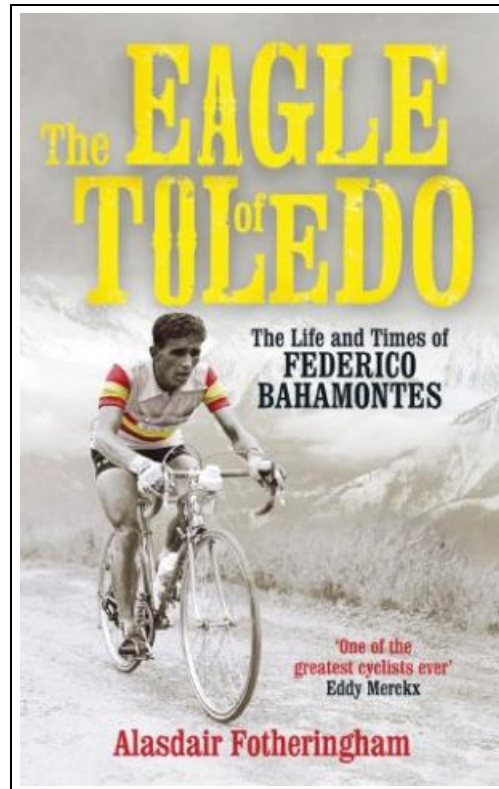


## The Eagle of Toledo: The Life and Times of Federico Bahamontes



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Aurum Press Ltd, United Kingdom, 2014. Paperback. Book Condition: New. PB Reissue. 194 x 128 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. A terrific tale. Accounts of cycle racing's early years invariably contain suffering on a scale unimaginable to the modern professional, but post-Civil War Spain was another level altogether. The maverick climber comes across as a man difficult to like but, once you know the background, impossible not to admire. Rouleur Federico Martin Bahamontes, the Eagle of Toledo, is rated by many as the greatest climber in cycling history. The first Spaniard to win the Tour de France and a six-time champion of the race's gruelling King of the Mountains classification, he became a national hero in a Spain struggling to rebuild after the devastation and atrocities of the Civil War. Indeed, his success owed much to the conflict. When the Nationalist rebellion of General Franco finally overran the democratically elected Republic in 1939, vast swathes of the country were left impoverished and desperate. On the verge of starvation, the young Bahamontes took to cycling as a means of running black market goods, before realising that sport offered a more lucrative future. An impressive amateur career followed, leading to his Tour debut in 1954, when he won the mountains competition on his first attempt. Success and a charismatic, but temperamental, racing style brought him fame at home and abroad - as well as controversy. Today, despite his appropriation by the Franco regime, he remains the godfather of Spanish cycling and a sporting eccentric of phenomenal will power. He is also one of the few living witnesses to cycling's golden age and - as Alasdair Fotheringham discovered when interviewing him for this compelling biography - he's more than ready to tell the tale.



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