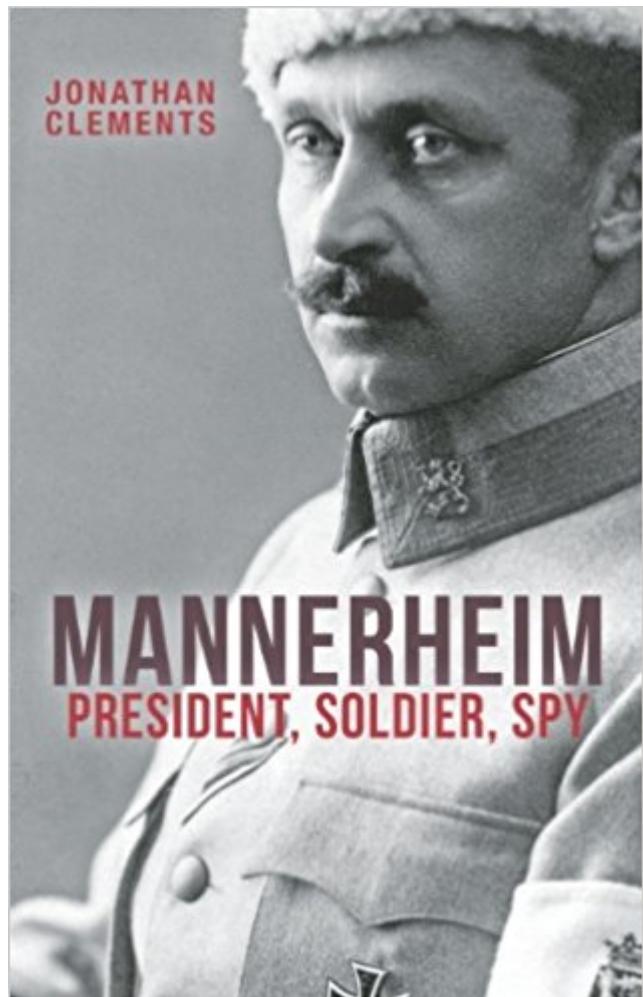


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Mannerheim: President, Soldier, Spy



Synopsis

Baron Gustaf Mannerheim was one of the greatest figures of the twentieth century, and the only man to be decorated by both sides in the Second World War. As a Finnish officer in Russian service, he witnessed the coronation of the last Tsar, and was both reprimanded for foolhardiness and decorated for bravery in the Russo-Japanese War. He spent two years undercover in Asia as an agent in the 'Great Game', posing as a Swedish anthropologist. He crossed China on horseback, stopping en route to teach the 13th Dalai Lama how to shoot with a pistol, and spying on the Japanese navy on his way home. He escaped the Bolsheviks by the skin of his teeth in 1917, arriving in the newly independent Finland just in time to lead the anti-Russian forces in the local revolt and civil war. During Finland's darkest hour, he lead the defence of his country against the impossible odds of the Winter War. This major new life of Gustaf Mannerheim, the first to be published for over a decade, includes new historical material on Mannerheim's time in China.

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Customer Reviews

OK, I have to admit Finland's Marshal Mannerheim is a historical personage I find truly fascinating. I own and have read a number of biographies, including Stig Axel Fridolf JÃ¤gerskiÃ¶ld's Mannerheim, Marshal of Finland (Nordic Series), J E O Screen's Mannerheim: The Years of Preparation and Mannerheim: The Finnish Years as well as Oliver Warner's Marshal Mannerheim and the Finns. Mannerheim was a truly great man, an able Officer and then a General in the service of the Russian Tsar prior to and during WW1, the leader of the White Finn's who fought (and

won) in the Finnish Civil War between the Whites and the Reds which followed Finland's gaining of independance from Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. He became Regent of Finland for a short period after the Civil War, then returned to prominence as the Military Commander of the Finnish Armed Forces in the 1939-40 Winter War where the Soviet Union attacked Finland.

Probably no leader was more improbable than Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim. He was part of the old line Swedish nobility that to this day still make up a tenth of the population of Finland. Though he was fluent in Swedish, Russian, and French for most of his life, he only learned Finnish in his 50s and then when he was the chief military leader of Finland. He was cavalry officer in time in which horses were becoming obsolete in modern warfare. He was an aristocrat in a time in which democratic and totalitarian processes were seeping into the political firmament (much to confusion of Mannerheim). This multi-faceted life is given the full treatment in Jonathan Clements' biography, Mannerheim: "President, Soldier and Spy." Mannerheim's career as a soldier began in the imperial Russian army. This career narrowly came off. He was expelled as a cadet from an institution that now features his picture on the wall of every classroom. Mannerheim embodied the high living Chevalier Guards lifestyle in the Russian capital. If one looks closely at pictures of Tsar Nicholas II's coronation, there is Mannerheim standing to his right. Mannerheim did not have a problem as a Finn serving in the Imperial Army. In his home in Helsinki, which operates as a public museum, there are autographed pictures of the Romanovs on the piano and elsewhere. Had the 1917 revolution not taken place, Mannerheim could have lived out his life as a member of the Russian military. Clements' biography largely follows the traditional narrative of other biographies of Mannerheim and relies in some sections on secondary sources. However the section that sets this book apart is the one that deals with Mannerheim's career as a spy in China.

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