



Mannerheim, Marshal of Finland

A Life in Geopolitics

By Henrik Meinander

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An award-winning critical biography of Finland's towering leader, charting his statecraft, his political journey and his strategic bravado, carving out independence between Stalin and Hitler.

Field marshal and statesman Gustaf Mannerheim (1867-1951) was the most acclaimed and the most hated Finn of the twentieth century. After three decades of loyal and distinguished service in the Russian Tsarist army, he returned to his homeland in 1917 to defend its new independence. This iconic figure led the Finnish forces as Commander-in-Chief during both World Wars, then ended his career as President of Finland.

This new critical biography sets Mannerheim's entire life's work, and his often nerve-wracking decisions as a Finnish leader on the world stage, against the backdrop of his elite upbringing and lifestyle, his adventurous imperial career, his outspoken anti-communism, and his keen instincts for great power politics. Painful details emerge about Mannerheim's private life, and myths and rumours are scrutinised, as Henrik Meinander charts the complex legacy of this nationalist cosmopolitan who found himself fighting on the same side as Hitler.

Meinander paints his portrait with strong contrasts and bright colours. This is the story of a multicultural Russian empire, a newborn nation-state trading warily between Europe's military titans, a front of the Second World War not easily reduced to moral binaries—and, above all, a shrewd political operator playing many a dangerous game.

About the Author

Henrik Meinander is Professor of History at the University of Helsinki, formerly curator of Helsinki's Mannerheim Museum and head of the Finnish Institute in Stockholm. His many books on Finnish and Nordic history include *A History of Finland*, which has been translated into sixteen languages, and *Mannerheim, Marshal of Finland*, which was award-winning in the Nordic original.