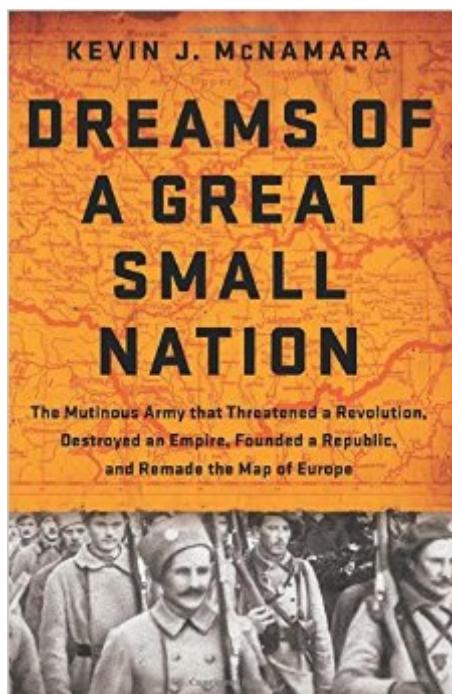


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Dreams Of A Great Small Nation: The Mutinous Army That Threatened A Revolution, Destroyed An Empire, Founded A Republic, And Remade The Map Of Europe



Synopsis

The pages of history recall scarcely any parallel episode at once so romantic in character and so extensive in scale. Winston S. ChurchillIn 1917, two empires that had dominated much of Europe and Asia teetered on the edge of the abyss, exhausted by the ruinous cost in blood and treasure of the First World War. As Imperial Russia and Habsburg-ruled Austria-Hungary began to succumb, a small group of Czech and Slovak combat veterans stranded in Siberia saw an opportunity to realize their long-held dream of independence. While their plan was audacious and complex, and involved moving their 50,000-strong army by land and sea across three-quarters of the earth's expanse, their commitment to fight for the Allies on the Western Front riveted the attention of Allied London, Paris, and Washington. On their journey across Siberia, a brawl erupted at a remote Trans-Siberian rail station that sparked a wholesale rebellion. The marauding Czech-Slovak Legion seized control of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and with it Siberia. In the end, this small band of POWs and deserters, whose strength was seen by Leon Trotsky as the chief threat to Soviet rule, helped destroy the Austro-Hungarian Empire and found Czechoslovakia. British prime minister David Lloyd George called their adventure "one of the greatest epics of history," and former US president Teddy Roosevelt declared that their accomplishments were "unparalleled, so far as I know, in ancient or modern warfare."

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Customer Reviews

This is an excellent book about one of the most fascinating episodes in 20th century history: the travails of the Czech Legion in Russia. The backstory is rather complicated, but ultimately it

reminded me more than anything of Xenophon's *Anabasis*--a small, disciplined army far from home forced to hack its way through the wrack and ruin of a disintegrating empire to reach safety. While I've long been familiar with the general story about the Czech legion, this author does a great job of pulling together accounts from letters, diaries, etc. to paint a first-hand picture of what it was like. It is difficult to imagine the extremely complicated situation that the Czechs found themselves in, in the chaos of 1918 Siberia, where Reds, Whites, Americans, French, Japanese, German and Hungarian POWs all fought for control over the Trans-Siberian railroad, and the Czechs were constantly subject to threats, false promises, and misplaced hopes as their fortunes shifted with those of the overall progress of WWI. But despite it all, the Czechs came out on top...A large part of the book--probably about a third--deals with various diplomatic machinations regarding Czech independence which this reader found to be fairly tedious, but which certainly represents an important part of the story. It was primarily the success of the Czech Legion which inspired US and European leaders to support Czech independence, and thus the end of the Austro-Hungarian empire, after WWI.

This is a fascinating story about events during World War I that led to the foundation of the nation of Czechoslovakia. Using primary sources and a wide range of other scholarship, the author has told the story of a legion of Czech and Slovak soldiers who were caught in the crumbling Russian empire and had to fight their way to safety, which was rescue by Allied ships in Vladivostok. Along the way, they fought off continual attacks by Bolshevik armies. Apparently, there was an effort to hide this story on the part of the Russians and others, but here it is, told in a thorough and engrossing fashion by the author. This is a must-read for European history buffs.

An exciting history of the struggle for Czech/Slovak independence during and immediately after WW I. Long on details of the escape of the Czech/Slovak Legion from Czarist Russia and them from the Bolshevik armies through thousands of miles through Siberia to Vladivostok. A detailed story of the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic.

fascinating piece of history, should be much better known. Well written

Wonderful narrative about a part of history that could have been lost to the Western world, had not McNamara painstakingly collected documents, had them translated, and pieced them together in a book that makes this incredible story come to life. This should definitely be made into a movie. Most

history books feel like homework, inaccessible and boring to the average reader. Not so with this book. McNamara makes it enjoyable and interesting from cover to cover, and the lives and experiences of these people come to life. No historians shelves should be without this book. Great read.

A very nice historical account of the founding of Czechoslovakia, and the little known Czech Legion, and its epic journey through war torn Russia. The efforts of Masaryk, and Benes to form a new Slavic nation out of part of the remains of Austria-Hungary are well described, and documented. All in all a good effort, and worth reading for anyone with an interest in the history of this transformative era.

Those who have read general histories on the Russian Revolution or about World War I will come across glancing references to a mysterious "Czech Legion" that somehow operated in Siberia. This book describes the unorthodox military force that helped dissolve the Austrian-Hungarian Empire while sowing confusion--via mastery of the Trans-Siberian railroad--into an already chaotic revolutionary Russia. Attention is also given to the international political maneuvering in the twilight of the Great War that supported, or was supported by, the Czech Legion. Surprisingly, to me, much of the political backdrop to this adventure occurred in the United States. The past as explained here helps illuminate the present in today's Central Europe. The author liberally cites in his text many capable historians on the period, such as Richard Pipes and George Kennan. Nice footnotes, index, and bibliography are provided.

A story I've been wanting to see told ever since I learned of it some years ago. HOLLYWOOD WHERE ARE YOU? This is a true story that is FAR stranger than fiction! An absolute must read! Get a copy into Hollywoodland. I suppose you'd have to condense it into a pamphlet for them - or write them a script. This BEGS to be made into a blockbuster!

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