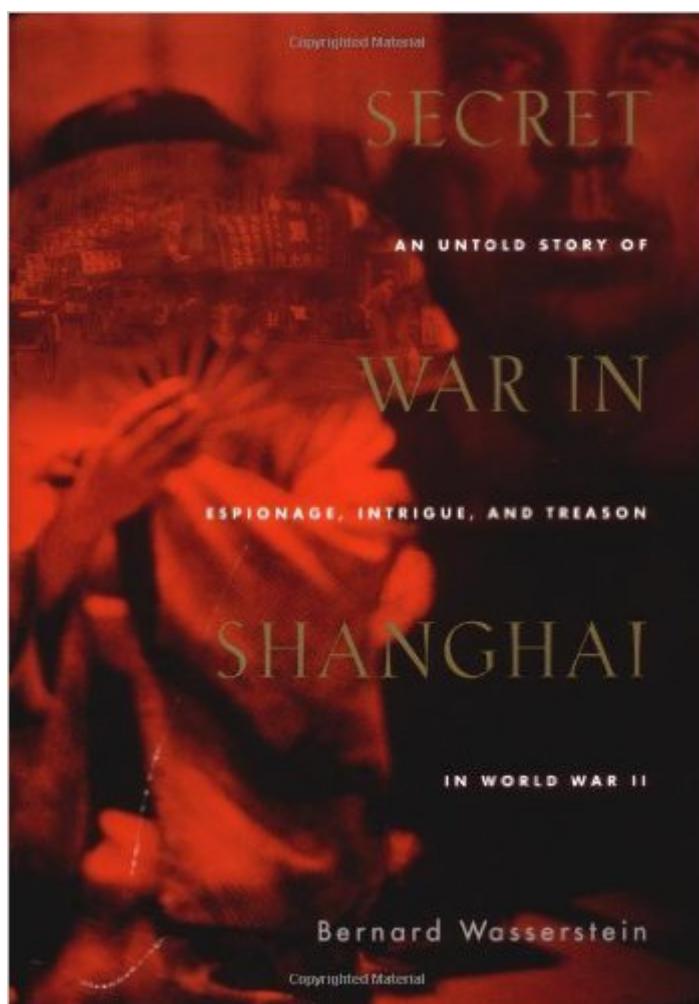


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Secret War In Shanghai: An Untold Story Of Espionage, Intrigue, And Treason In World War II



Synopsis

Shanghai during World War II was a killing field of brutal competition, ideological struggle, and murderous political intrigue. China's largest and most cosmopolitan city, the intelligence capital of the Far East, was a magnet for a corrupt and bizarrely colorful group of men and women drawn to the "Paris of the East" for its seductive promise of high living and easy money. Political and sexual loyalties were for sale to the highest bidder. Allied and Axis agents, criminal gangs, and paramilitary units under various flags waged secret, savage warfare. Espionage, lurid vice, subversion, and crime came together in a lethal concoction. Nowhere on earth was the twilight zone between politics and criminality better exemplified than in this glittering and dangerous place. *Secret War in Shanghai* is the first book-length account of the little-known story of Shanghai in the war years. The widely respected historian Bernard Wasserstein has researched it entirely from original sources and uncovered startling new evidence of collaboration and treason by American, British, and Australian nationals. This remarkable depiction of complicity and betrayal is history at its most exciting and surprising.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bernard Wasserstein's look at the cloak-and-dagger side Shanghai in the 1930s and during World War II casts an even seamier light on pre-Liberation city than is usually seen. *Secret War* exceeds the reader's expectations in several ways. First, the level of spying that was carried out by the various powers in the International Settlement against each other and their own citizens is nothing short of shocking. Sexual habits, personal histories, and suspected involvements were all part of the

records kept by the Shanghai Municipal Police, a largely Anglo-Saxon coalition empowered to keep order in the Settlement. Not a single nation is spared in Secret War. Just when the reader believes that Wasserstein may be favoring the British, he slams them for incompetence or outright treachery. The French, Germans, Americans, and Japanese all come under fire for treating their concessions in Shanghai as their own little fiefdoms. Wasserstein introduces us to an eclectic cast of charlatans, murderers, and thieves. There's Eugene Pick, the Russian-born gangster who collaborates with the Japanese and, when not spending his evenings at the theater, is conspiring to have his rivals bumped off. There's "Count" du Berrier, a bogus aristocrat and genuine arms dealer available to the highest bidder. "Princess" Sumaire, another false member of a royal family, this social-climbing Indian imposter lived the high life and traded sex for influence, first among Western expatriates, and later, the Japanese. After the outbreak of the Pacific War in the late 1930s, intelligence gathering in Shanghai turned from a broad activity aimed at foiling communism and social disruption to top-level spying.

In Asia as in Europe, World War II consigned to the waste bin any number of territorial claims, and reordered the face of the world. Looking back over fifty years later it is easy to be fooled into thinking that the pre-war world was essentially the same as that we inhabit today. Of course that was not the case. Too many forgot, for example, that Shanghai, rather than Hong Kong or Singapore, was the Britain's commercial jewel in the crown in East Asia. In the 1930's Shanghai was the world's sixth largest city, and cleared over half of China's foreign trade. Major British companies like Jardine Matheson, Swires, and the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank were based there, and the government of the International Settlement was firmly in British hands. Shanghai was also a seething pit of human corruption. Crowded with opium godowns, Chinese warlords and gangsters, and White Russian Ã©migrÃ© "taxi-dancers". Such was the venality of the place that it was estimated that one in every thirteen women worked as a prostitute. It was also a place where the intelligence services of half a dozen nations vied for information and influence. It is this world, and what became of it under Japanese occupation, which has been chronicled by Wasserstein in his very interesting book. As Japan flexed its muscles in China in the late 1930's Britain felt itself increasingly powerless to protect its interests in the International Settlement. The collapse of France and Italy's entry into the war in 1940 left it with only the US as a friend in the International Settlement. The city capitulated within days of Japan's entry into the war. The intelligence war had been going on for much longer of course.

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