Smedley Butler: The Marines, and the Making and Breaking of America's Empire

Smedley Butler was a U.S. Marine Corps general who was awarded the Medal of Honor twice. He was also a outspoken critic of American imperialism, and his writings and speeches helped to shape the antiwar movement in the United States.

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by Jonathan M. Katz

★★★★ 4.6 out of 5

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Butler was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1881. He attended the United States Naval Academy, and graduated in 1903. He served in the Marine Corps for 33 years, and saw action in Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico, and France. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in Veracruz, Mexico, in 1914, and again for his actions in Belleau Wood, France, in 1918.

After the war, Butler became increasingly critical of American imperialism. He believed that the United States was using its military power to exploit other countries, and that this was leading to unnecessary wars. He also believed that the military was becoming too powerful, and that it was a threat to American democracy.

In 1935, Butler published a book called "War Is a Racket." In this book, he argued that war is a racket that is used by the rich and powerful to make money. He also argued that the United States should stay out of foreign wars, and that it should focus on solving its own problems.

Butler's book was a bestseller, and it helped to shape the anti-war movement in the United States. He became a popular speaker, and he gave speeches all over the country. He also testified before Congress on several occasions, and he urged the United States to stay out of World War II.

Butler died in 1940, at the age of 58. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He is considered one of the most important figures in the anti-war movement, and his writings and speeches continue to inspire people today.

Legacy

Smedley Butler's legacy is complex and controversial. He was a decorated war hero, but he was also a outspoken critic of American imperialism. He believed that the United States was using its military power to exploit other countries, and that this was leading to unnecessary wars. He also believed that the military was becoming too powerful, and that it was a threat to American democracy.

Butler's writings and speeches helped to shape the anti-war movement in the United States. He is considered one of the most important figures in the movement, and his work continues to inspire people today.

However, Butler's legacy is also controversial. Some people believe that he was a traitor who wanted to undermine the United States. Others believe that he was a visionary who saw the dangers of American imperialism.

Ultimately, Butler's legacy is up to each individual to decide. He was a complex and controversial figure, but he was also a man of courage and conviction. He believed that war was a racket, and he dedicated his life to fighting against it.

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