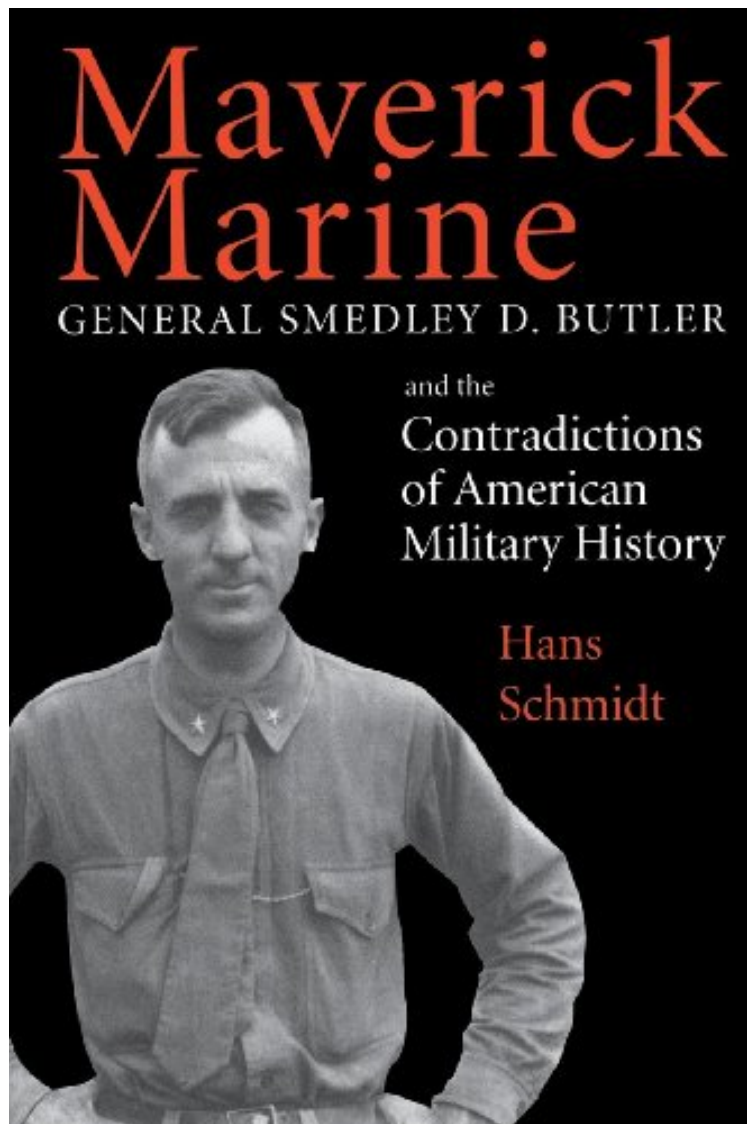


(Mobile ebook) Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History

## Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History

*Von Hans Schmidt*

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**Von Hans Schmidt : Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History:

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Be

Careful; There is More to "Old Gimlet Eye" Von Capt Keith Kopets, USMC Most Marines know that Major General Smedley Darlington Butler was the only officer in the Corps to win two Medals of Honor. Most non-Marines, like Dr. Hans Schmidt, identify Butler with his 1935 diatribe of Wall Street and Big Business: "I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long.... Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three city districts. We Marines operated on three CONTINENTS" [p. 231]. Dr. Schmidt is a fan of Butler--the "patriotic warrior hero whose courage, physical command presence, and vernacular coarseness epitomized the popular ideal of a soldier's general" (p. 1). This is easily understandable; Butler's distinguished combat record and blunt, extroverted style of leadership endeared him to the mass media and earned him a legion of followers. Schmidt became a Butler disciple after writing the UNITED STATES OCCUPATION OF HAITI, 1915-1934 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1971). MAVERICK MARINE uses sixteen chapters to interweave two subjects: (1) The life and times of Smedley Butler and (2) The Marine Corps's role as the strong arm of American foreign policy in the early twentieth century. Schmidt's coverage of the former is nonpareil; his treatment of the latter, however, does not hold up as well under scrutiny. Butler's career in the Marine Corps began in 1898 at age sixteen. During the war with Spain, Second Lieutenant Butler deployed with the 1st Marine Battalion to the Caribbean. There, he found his niche in life fighting along side the men of the "Old Corps"; after the war, Butler opted to align himself with the "uneducated, roughneck tendencies within the marines" (p. 10) rather than return to civilian life and school. During the next thirty years, Butler battled bandits and insurrectionists around the globe in a series of armed interventions. He served under Major Littleton W. T. "Tony" Waller during the Philippine Insurrection of 1899 and came to idolize the racist, bombastic, hard-nosed campaigner--calling Waller "the greatest soldier" he ever knew (p. 12). Waller, incidentally, earned the nickname "Butcher of Samar" for his exploits in the Philippines. Years later, in 1910 and 1914, Waller was in line for the commandancy; and Butler, of course, was one of his most vociferous supporters. Unfortunately, Waller's alleged atrocities in the Philippines tarnished his reputation; both times, he failed to rise to Corps's top position. Both times, Butler grew incensed at the "highbrow professionalism and Annapolis elitism" he perceived to be responsible for Waller's slighting (p. 121). In 1900, Smedley marched on Tientsin and Peking to relieve the Legation Quarter during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. After distinguishing himself in China (and being wounded), Butler transferred to Panama to command one of the companies in the newly formed Advance Base Force battalion. Butler won both his Medals of Honor serving in subsequent expeditions to Nicaragua (1910-1912), Veracruz (1914), and Haiti (1915-1917). It was during Nicaragua, Schmidt asserts, that Butler "clearly established his preeminence in the tactics of colonial warfare--bold imperious leadership of small units so as to bluff the natives into submission, thereby avoiding the escalating costs, perils, and embitterments attendant to massive violence" (p. 47). Towards the end of his Marine career, Butler led a brigade to Shanghai in response to the Nanking Incident of March 1927. His most successful and least controversial mission, Butler returned from China in 1929 to his formerly held position as commander of Quantico. Now one of the ranking generals in the Corps, he was in line for the commandancy--but it was not to be. After Commandant Wendell C. Neville died in office, the low-key Ben Fuller ascended to the Corps's top post over Butler. In 1931, Butler retired from the Corps after an off-color anecdote about Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini landed him a court-martial (later reduced to a reprimand; see pp. 208-212). Butler made one last appearance in Marine Corps circles four years after retirement. In 1935, he contested General John Russell's confirmation as Commandant. Russell stood for everything Butler opposed: He was an intellectual, graduating the Naval Academy and War College; he embraced reform; and he saw little combat during his career, serving a long stint in Haiti--where, while on a diplomatic mission for the State Department, he befriended Franklin D. Roosevelt. Schmidt clearly sides with Butler by calling the occasion "a last hurrah for warrior standards that were diminishing in importance at marine headquarters and as a factor in congressional politics" (p. 214). Yet, Russell was able to reform officer promotions, create the Fleet Marine Force (still the backbone of the operating forces today), and nurture the development of amphibious doctrine--the mission that would elevate the Marine Corps to elite status in the Pacific during World War II. This begs the question: If Butler had his way, would the Marines ever have grown from international policemen to the six-division amphibious assault force of the Pacific during the 1940s? Sadly, this question is beyond Schmidt's grasp. Simply put, Butler was an anachronism. In sum, approach this book with caution. As simply a chronicle of Butler's life, Schmidt succeeds. However, MAVERICK MARINE has limited utility as an operational history of the "Colonial Infantry" Marine Corps. Although amply footnoted and richly illustrated, MAVERICK MARINE lacks depth and perspective. For example, there are no maps. How can you write of campaigns in half a dozen countries without one map? Likewise, there is a difference between a marine and a Marine; pedantic, to be sure, but irritating for the educated reader. Although I enjoyed the book and highly recommend it, it is not the final word on Smedley Butler. As a counterbalance to MAVERICK MARINE, I recommend reading Bartlett's "Old Gimlet Eye." The truth lies somewhere in between.

Kurzbeschreibung Smedley Butler's life and career epitomize the contradictory nature of American military policy through the first part of this century. Butler won renown as a Marine battlefield hero, campaigning in most of America's foreign military expeditions from 1898 to the late 1920s. He became the leading national advocate for paramilitary police reform. Upon his retirement, however, he renounced war and imperialism and devoted his energy and prestige to various dissident and leftist political causes. Pressestimmen "As pure biography, Maverick Marine is a colorful story about a swashbuckling establishment-shaker. Schmidt's book is particularly valuable, however, for the insights it provides into Yankee imperialism and its racist undertones." -- "Publishers

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