

The Business Plot: The General Who Told Congress

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Smedley Butler told investigators he had been approached about leading a fascist veterans' movement. A congressional inquiry supported significant parts of his account, while the proposed scheme's reach and feasibility remain debated.

STATUS	Documented testimony and corroborated plotting; scope disputed
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	United States
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Secrets & conspiracies
STORY HISTORY	1933-1935

THE ACCOUNT

Retired Marine general Smedley Butler brought Congress a story that sounded like the opening of a coup: he said intermediaries wanted him to lead a veterans' organization that could pressure or displace President Franklin Roosevelt's authority. Butler's reputation would give the movement a powerful public face. Instead of accepting the role described to him, he testified in 1934, turning a private approach into an investigation watched through a divided and often mocking press.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The McCormack-Dickstein committee reported evidence of discussions and planning for a fascist organization and found corroboration for pertinent portions of Butler's account. Gerald MacGuire denied the allegations. A Kansas State University historical study reproduces and analyzes the testimony, committee findings and press response. These establish more than an invented rumor, but do not prove that every person later named in popular retellings backed an operational, inevitable coup.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

The story's tension lies in the proposed figurehead refusing to play his part. It also demands care about scale: conversations, organizational plans and an executable overthrow are different claims. The surviving record is alarming without enlarging it into a fully assembled secret army, or transferring guilt to prominent names through association alone.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

The Business Plot in the American Press

Kansas State University

<https://krex.k-state.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/be72a319-559f-43e5-9cb6-07e29aa3068f/content>

RETURN TO THE STORY

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