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The Putsch That Failed Told in 'Bitter End'

By FRANK McVEY

HANS GISEVIUS, a member of the Beck-Goerdeler clique, has written a fat tome purporting to tell the "inside story" of their

TO THE BITTER END, by Hans Bernd Gisevius. Houghton Mifflin Co., 632 pp.

conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. It has been translated into English with an introduction by Allen Dulles, now on the board of the Schroeder bank. Despite the tortuous length of the book, Gisevius, who started with the Gestapo and later joined the Abwehr, the counter-intelligence division, says not a word in his *To The Bitter End*, about the anti-Soviet considerations which motivated the conspirators.

Instead, he tries to give the impression that the "movement" extended over a long period of years and embraced a wide corps of anti-Nazi supporters, bound together solely by their hatred for Hitler's dictatorship.

When Gisevius discusses the Reichstag fire, the Rohm massacre, or Hitler's method of breaking top generals, his evidence is concrete and often convincing. But when he tries to give plausibility to the claim that over a long period of years the anti-Hitler conspirators carried on an underground struggle (at top levels) the evidence becomes airy and unreal.

Yet it was "proof" such as this which Gisevius and his sponsors introduced at the Nurnberg trial to exculpate Hjalmar Schacht, whose financial services had won him a gold medal from the Fuehrer.

Not until after the Red Army had smashed the Wehrmacht and was heading for Berlin did the Beck-Goerdeler group begin to consider any action. Then, they asked Dulles to arrange a deal—but, of course, neither Dulles nor Gisevius mention any conversations about industries in the Ruhr or the fate of bigwig monopolists. As told by Gisevius, they were thinking only of saving the German people from further bloodshed, and, as told by Dulles, they sought to restore Christianity and keep out the Bolsheviks.

In any case, the conspirators fixed July 15, 1944, as the date to explode a bomb at Hitler's feet, but at the last minute Col. Stauff-

enberg got cold feet. He left the meeting of the general staff and telephoned his cohorts to ask whether he should really go through with the plot. By the time he got their reassurances and returned to the meeting, Hitler had gone.

Five days later, Stauffenberg finally got up courage enough to kick his brief case and start the ticking mechanism, but Hitler escaped serious injury owing to a last-minute shift in plans by which the meeting was moved from an underground vault to a filmsy barrackroom.

So hurriedly did Stauffenberg flee from the scene that he did not even wait to find out whether or not Hitler had been killed. The incidents that followed during the next few hours were indeed ludicrous and make it plain that, as Gisevius admits at one point, the plotters sought to accomplish their purposes merely by changing around a few top officials.

After locking a few generals in their offices and serving refreshments to their captives, they sat around and waited to be shot—not even attempting to capture Goering and Goebbels. Gisevius escaped because he did not sit around to wait for the outcome of the half-hearted putsch.

Though Dulles is careful to



HANS GISEVIUS

claim that, while in Switzerland, he acted in strict accordance with the Big Three policy of "unconditional surrender," it is apparent that he did not relish this policy.

In his book, he even goes out of his way to avoid any direct mention of President Roosevelt and, in his introduction to Gisevius' book, he bewails the fact that the conspirators received so little "encouragement."

If they had been successful, Dulles says that Germany would have been spared the loss of "men who are sorely needed now in the task of German reconstruction."