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The CIA's Secret War in Tibet (review)

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wives after World War II, but one made vastly more difficult by the extremes of cultural diversity involved. The stories of these courageous women, in dealing with everything from the harsh realities of learning the English language to the difficulties of locating familiar food, provides us both joy and heartbreak for they are eloquent examples of both failure and success.

While we can never really comprehend the circumstances, we must nevertheless acknowledge with compassion the fact that for most of the women involved it was necessary "for the sake of the family and the marriage" (p. 138) to suppress their Korean identity and the essence of their culture. But despite this feeling, we learn through the author's widespread interviews, there was some subtle multiculturalism involved as well. Not only did Korean brides learn of America and American ways but also the brides themselves served as ambassadors for a new and vastly altered American attitude. It is summed up best perhaps in this quote "[I] only thought of war when [I] thought of Korea. Now . . . [I] can think of beautiful silk dresses and fine art work" (p. 217).

Those seeking to understand war and its implications will find this work well researched, beautifully written, and highly informative. But more than that, it is a compassionate look at a significant period in American history, and in American and Asian relationships. For those who plan further inquiry the book contains an excellent bibliography of sources in English.

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The CIA's Secret War in Tibet. By Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002. ISBN 0-7006-1159-2. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Index. Pp. x, 301. $34.95.

The modern doctrine of subversive warfare was developed and refined by the British during the first desperate years of the Second World War. Adopted due to conventional military weakness and the mistaken notion that "fifth column" support had facilitated Germany's victory in France, special operations became one of Britain's principal means of striking against the Nazis before Pearl Harbor. Over time, however, even the most committed supporters of unconventional warfare realized that it was impossible to defeat the Wehrmacht solely through clandestine *coups de main*. By the summer of 1940, Hugh Dalton, the Minister responsible for the Special Operations Executive (SOE), had concluded that "subversion . . . is an essential element in any large-scale offensive action: *per contra,* it is of little or no value when the main strategy is defensive" (W. J. M. Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE* [London: St. Ermin's, 2000], 84). The notion that guerrilla activity could only succeed as part of a larger, conventional, military campaign later became axiomatic at the American Office of Strategic Services—the wartime precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

During the Cold War, however, the strategic imperatives changed. The modified "containment" doctrine that the United States employed against the Communist bloc was inherently defensive, designed to preclude direct superpower confrontation. Unlimited military intervention was out of the question. This left the CIA in the unenviable position of nurturing clandestine movements that would ultimately be left to wither on the vine. The story of one such tragic case is expertly told by Kenneth Conboy and the late James Morrison in *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet.*

The narrative encompasses the entire history of U.S. efforts to support armed Tibetan opposition to Chinese rule: from the seizure of Lhasa in August 1951 and subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama, to the rout of the last Tibetan guerrilla redoubt by the Royal Nepalese Army in 1974. It is a record of almost unmitigated failure. Despite nearly a quarter century of attempts and a deep resentment of the Chinese presence within the country, the CIA never succeeded in establishing even a rudimentary permanent intelligence network within the country.

Conboy and Morrison suggest several reasons for the Tibet program's shortcomings. Short-term planning at Langley, domestic U.S. political considerations, and ridiculous bureaucratic sniping between the Agency's Near East and Far East Divisions all had a deleterious influence. Cultural factors also came into play. Tibetan agents who had been raised to conduct life in harmony with the rhythm of the seasons had to be taught novel western concepts like the 24-hour clock. The greatest impediment, however, was the often-lukewarm diplomatic and logistical support provided by neighboring powers—particularly India.

Effectively locating the CIA's clandestine struggle in Tibet within the context of the shifting axis of Indian-U.S.-Chinese relations is *Secret War*'s greatest accomplishment. Conboy and Morrison show how even as Indian public opinion took a decidedly anti-American turn during the 1950s and 1960s, Nehru secretly aligned his country with the United States on the Tibetan issue. Revealing these subtle undercurrents in international relations is the *raison d'être* of intelligence history.

The CIA's Secret War in Tibet is a solid, meticulously researched contribution to our understanding of U.S. clandestine policy and international relations in South Asia. Like M. R. D. Foot's *SOE in France,* Conboy and Morrison's work is a superb case study on intelligence that will stand the test of time.

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The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Edited by Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002. ISBN 0-393-32259-9. Notes. Index. Pp. lvi, 514. $17.95.

In a recent Hollywood movie, the head of a New York law firm interviews