2008

The Kaoboys of R&AW: Down Memory Lane

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group, including the beautiful and mysterious Olga Greenlaw, wife of the AVG’s executive officer.

While correcting some errors and omissions, Ford stands his ground on the most controversial viewpoint expressed in his 1991 edition—that the Flying Tigers’ claimed official record of 296 combat victories (including aircraft destroyed on the ground) was greater than what they actually achieved. Citing comprehensive research into the historical records of all involved, Ford makes a good case that because of the predictable stress, fear, and chaos involved in vicious aerial combat, the AVG’s reported victories were inflated over a true figure likely closer to 115. Ford’s book, then, is not a glorification of the Flying Tigers, but its meticulous examination of their genuine and courageous achievements pays them greater homage than the numbers would, however tallied. Ford closes his book with these words: “More than sixty years ago, in their incandescent youth, they were heroes to a nation that needed heroes. . . . All honor to them.” Indeed, and acclaim to Daniel Ford for his thorough telling of an eventful war in the air, one that should be remembered.

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During the Cold War, views from the “other side” proved endlessly fascinating to students of international affairs. Books such as The Russians, by Hedrick Smith, and the multiple memoirs of Viktor Suvorov provided insights into thought processes and value systems. Most national-security professionals today cannot afford the luxury of focusing on one nation or topic. And as a nation, the United States cannot afford to ignore India.

The Kaoboys of R&AW is B. Raman’s informal (and somewhat unfocused) memoir of his time with India’s external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW).

“Kaoboys” refers to the protégés of R. M. Kao, the first director-general of the organization. Raman was a professional intelligence officer who spent much of his career in operational assignments. He spent twenty-six years in R&AW, retiring as head of the agency’s counterterrorism unit. He later served in the Indian National Security Secretariat and is currently the director of a think tank in Chennai. Reading between the lines, he likely worked in clandestine intelligence collection, liaison, and paramilitary roles. In some cases (such as discussing security shortfalls in protecting Indira Gandhi) he provides many details; however, in many instances details are noticeable only for their absence.

While the book is valuable, most American readers will find it frustrating. It was written for an Indian audience; the reader without a background in Indian politics since the 1950s will frequently find it obscure. Likewise, those unfamiliar with South Asian geography must occasionally stop reading to check an atlas. The writing style is somewhat folksy but different from the Anglo-American equivalent. Also, it is not strictly chronological. Unfortunately, the memoir is not a representative example of Raman’s work; he is a prolific writer on international security issues, his articles are well written and
thoughtful, and his byline bears watching. The astute reader may conclude that Raman was not well served by his publisher.

Despite these obstacles, the book is worth reading. Raman provides an interesting view from India on critical past and current U.S. policies, from our long-term support for Pakistan to relations with China, to the current global conflict on terrorism. He outlines several instances of R&AW working with the CIA to counter Chinese moves, while at the same time claiming that the CIA was working against India—sometimes with Pakistan, sometimes not. While expressing a fondness for the American people, Raman is definitely no fan of the U.S. State Department. Curiously, he displays no animosity for the CIA, despite his claims that the agency engineered a key defection and conducted “psywar” campaigns against India. But perhaps the lack of rancor is explained by a story that Raman could not tell.

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Globalization, as a form of worldwide economic expansion and global interaction, can trace its origins back more than five hundred years to the expansion of Europe and to the first European maritime empire, established by Portugal. From this beginning, the story of globalization is traced through the better-known eras of Spanish, Dutch, French, and British maritime dominance to our present modern phase of more sophisticated global interaction. Although the earlier maritime empires were based on separate, competing maritime economies rather than the current ideal of a single global economy, these earlier examples of development are important to understand in terms of their limitations and successes. Among these maritime empires, the history of Portugal’s contribution has been the least well known to the anglophone world.

Two recent important anniversaries have brought Portugal’s role to wider attention. The first occurred in 1998 to mark the five-hundredth anniversary of Vasco da Gama’s pioneering voyage around the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean in the first European direct sea voyage to India. The second was in 2000, commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the first landing in and subsequent colonization of Brazil by Portugal. In connection with these anniversaries, the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University in Rhode Island became the locus for a major attempt to make available to English-language readers an up-to-date and wide-ranging analysis of Portugal’s early contribution to oceanic expansion. The fruit of that effort may be found in this volume, providing a major update of scholarly interpretations. The chapters in this edited collection cover a wide range of topics. The book’s fourteen chapters, each by a different author, are distributed into four parts. The first part examines economics and society, focusing on such themes as markets, economic networks, costs, and financial trends. The second deals with