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HISTORY: Reviews of New Books (ISSN 0361-2759) is published quarterly by Heldref Publications, 1319 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802. Heldref Publications is the educational publishing division of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Jeanie J. Kirkpatrick, president, (202) 296-6267; fax (202) 296-5149. Heldref Publications is the operational division of the foundation, which seeks to fulfill an educational and charitable mission through the publication of educational journals and magazines. Any contributions to the foundation are tax deductible and will go to support the publications.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HISTORY: Reviews of New Books, Heldref Publications, 1319 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.

The annual subscription rate is $172.00 for institutions, $75.00 for individuals. Single copy price is $43.00. Add $14.00 for subscriptions outside the United States. Allow six weeks for shipment of first copy. Foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. currency with checks drawn on U.S. banks. Payment can be charged to VISA/MasterCard. Supply account number, expiration date, and signature. For subscription orders and customer service inquiries only, call 1-800-365-9753. Claims for missing issues made within six months will be serviced free of charge.

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Beginning with volume 11, HISTORY: Reviews of New Books is available in microform edition from Bell and Howell Information and Learning, Serials Acquisition Department, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Reprints (orders of 100 copies or more) of articles in this issue are available through Heldref Publications, Reprint Division.

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out to the Soviet Union which, because of its own imperial ambitions and ideologically charged designs to reshape the third world, happily responded with aid, weapons, and diplomatic support. The third world became a site of great power conflict not by chance, but by design: it was, for both superpowers, the principal stake of the cold war contest.

At first glance, Westad’s book appears to be about the U.S.-Soviet cold war rivalry in the third world, yet it also introduces a subversive concept that cold war historians must confront: that the cold war is more properly understood as a North-South contest rather than an East-West one. Westad sees American and Soviet leaders as “high modernists” (399) who spoke a common language of Western superiority; it was peasant resistance to Western ideologies, of both Americans and Soviets, that fueled peripheral wars, and in turn further enmeshed the superpowers. Westad believes that third world radicals and revolutionaries had as much to do in shaping the course of the cold war as did leaders in Washington and Moscow, and that is why the legacy of the cold war is most sharply felt not in the West but in the roiling and unsettled third world. Here is international history at its best and most controversial.

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Pavia, Peter
The Cuba Project: Castro, Kennedy, and the FBI’s Tamale Squad
New York: Palgrave Macmillan
226 pp., $24.95, ISBN 1-4039-6603-6
Publication Date: March 2006

The Eisenhower administration in March 1960 initiated the Cuba Project. Its goal was to overthrow Fidel Castro after he had established a Communist dictatorship and had sponsored guerrilla expeditions to four Caribbean Basin nations. The covert operation armed and trained the Cuban exiles of Brigade 2506 for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Kennedy’s meddling with the original plan “helped hand Fidel Castro a military victory” and the consequences set the course of U.S.-Cuba relations to the present day.

In 1959, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created the Cuban Squad, composed of ten agents, to suppress the activities of anti-Castro exiles that violated the Neutrality Act. During that cold war era, Miami was called the Casablanca of the Caribbean. The FBI unit, dubbed the Tamale Squad, also monitored pro-Castro espionage. The Tamale Squad doubled in size within a year, and its legacy continues today.

This book is based on personal interviews with two former Tamale Squad agents, CIA agent E. Howard Hunt, and an official from the U.S. Army’s Counter Intelligence Corps. There are some quotations from FBI and CIA memorandums of unknown origins and the rest of the work is mostly based on newspaper articles and secondary sources. The author is a novelist whose first attempt at writing history, with cursory research skills, a lack of Spanish-language comprehension, and a smattering of vulgarity, leaves this book reading like a pulp fiction thriller.

At times, the Tamale Squad stumbled over the CIA’s covert anti-Castro operations while chasing rumors and false leads. Its most renowned case was the arrest and conviction of Castro agent Francisco “The Hook” Molina for the murder of a nine-year-old girl during a fracas with anticommunist exiles in a New York City restaurant in September 1960. Pavia overlooked the fact that in April 1963, Molina and three other Cuban agents had their sentences commuted and were exchanged for twenty-seven Americans jailed in Cuba.

The memories of the interviewees, after nearly half a century, are at times faltering. Cuban espionage chief Manuel Piñeiro is erroneously given “the nom de guerre of Major Fury” (87). Major William Morgan, instead of Fernando Fuentes Cobas, is wrongly blamed for leading an American pilot (Rafael del Pino) into a trap in Cuba (103). The author also neglected thousands of government documents, released under the JFK Act, relating to these operations, which would have given this story a better overview.

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Karsh, Efraim
Islamic Imperialism: A History
New Haven: Yale University Press
276 pp., $30.00, ISBN 0-300-10603-3
Publication Date: April 2006

Efraim Karsh, professor and head of the Mediterranean Studies Programme at the University of London, has written a book destined to become a seminal study on the history of radical Islam. In Islamic Imperialism: A History, Karsh explains that “[t]he House of Islam’s war for world mastery is a traditional, indeed venerable, quest that is far from over” (234).

Pre-Islamic Arabs were influenced by the great empires located to the north of the Arabian peninsula, such as Rome and Sassanian Persia, and the Prophet Muhammad himself set the precedent for a long-lasting, millenarian dream of a universal Islamic empire acquired by means of jihad. Karsh demonstrates that the rhetoric of Osama Bin Laden and other contemporary radical leaders is rooted in the teachings and career of Muhammad (whom he styles the “warrior prophet”), as well as in the historical record of Islamic expansion produced by Muslim historians over fourteen centuries. Karsh, however, challenges the idea that Muslim-Christian wars have ever been civilization conflicts, by emphasizing that the Islamic universalistic rhetoric of leaders such as Saladin and Gamal Abdul Nasser have always been tempered by political, military, and economic pragmatism that acknowledged coexistence with nearby Christian states.

Karsh also challenges many prevailing assumptions about the supposed toleration of medieval and modern Islamic states compared with the West. For example, the Orthodox Caliph Umar (634–44) presaged militant Pan-Arabism when he made “Islam synonomous with Arabism” (26) and established second-class citizenship for non-Arab converts to Islam (the Mawali) and even harsher social and economic measures for Christians and Jews who lived in the caliphate (the dhimmis). Karsh details the importance of the Islamic millenarian dream in many Islamic dynasties, including the Umayyads, Abbasids, Ayyubide, Safavid, and Ottomans. He examines the careers of the important advocates of the millenarian dream in the post-Ottoman world, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Hashemites after World War I, advocates of the Palestinians in the wake of the creation of Israel, Nasser and Pan-Arabism, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian revolutionary model, and Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. He argues that al-Qaeda’s radicalism has little to do with American actions in the Middle East, and that such radicalism has a great deal of mainstream support in the Arab and Islamic world. Richly annotated, this book will interest specialists and the general reader.

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