

palm-leaf histories continued (347), simultaneously undoing those narratives. Though this is steadfastly imperial history, *Waves across the South* is Sivasundaram's contribution to the often unknown, smaller—and interconnected—stories that compose and fracture the empire. After traveling the world to learn and try to understand them, in the end he realizes that most of all, we are local and we are islanders.

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VLAD SOLOMON. *State Surveillance, Political Policing and Counter-Terrorism in Britain, 1880–1914*. History of British Intelligence. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2021. Pp. 360. \$115.00 (cloth).

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Vlad Solomon's extensively researched and incisively written *State Surveillance, Political Policing and Counter-Terrorism in Britain, 1880–1914* debunks the entrenched myth of a predominant British liberal response in the face of the challenges posed by radical movements—from Fenianism and anarchism to Hindu nationalist and suffrage activism—in the run up to the First World War. The influential works of Bernard Porter and limited archival access have done much to enshrine the claim that secret political policing was kept at a bare minimum until the pre-First World War spy fever, upholding the mid-century liberalism that was dear to the British public, amid self-assured indifference to the revolutionary movements that caused such concern for continental powers and populations and resulted in open and often brutal repression. Instead, using a great wealth of primary sources, including the press, government documents, private correspondences, and memoirs, Solomon reveals extensive governmental and public support for secret policing, and the widespread use of covert intelligence gathering and extra-legality (that is, informers, double agents, and provocateurs) from the early 1880s. The relatively brief period under consideration, Solomon argues, was pivotal, witnessing an important shift from alleged laissez faire and an official rejection of political policing, to the collective acceptance of its inevitability and far greater implication of the Home Secretary in Scotland Yard's work. Focusing on high policing, he stresses the importance of the individual personalities, visions, ambitions, financial aspirations of high-ranking bureaucrats and officials in the constant wrangles that informed Britain's exceptionalist rhetoric regarding political policing. Through meticulous research, Solomon conjures up a gallery of vivid protagonists; the staffing and institutional intricacies of the British surveillance system; and the complex and often fraught collaboration between the government, Home Office, and Scotland Yard, with the dual merit of offering stimulating interpretations and an up-to-date and comprehensive history of secret political policing, which, in a less pricey format, may prove appealing to wider audiences. One might argue that public opinion, which is mainly documented here through the all-important proxy of the press and the assumptions of politicians and the police, seems to be a little left out of the narrative until the conclusion, although this does not really undermine the argument, given that this is a political rather than a social history of policing.

In his narrative, Solomon follows a well-established chronology, beginning in 1881, with the newly appointed Liberal home secretary William Harcourt setting up the Irish Branch of Scotland Yard in response to Fenian activism, and laying the foundations for the country's first political police. Over short and sharp chapters, Solomon follows the terror scares and episodes of unrest leading to the gradual expansion of surveillance strategies and their very

cautious public articulation. Most of the episodes examined are already established as landmark moments in the history of British and, often, international policing; the book's strength lies in the way Solomon revisits them through new sources and unpacking the different levels of secrecy at play within the government, the Metropolitan Police and in public discourse, often with a sharp eye for portraits and the many parameters informing decision making, be it self-serving politicking, personal antagonisms, or geopolitical considerations.

Solomon shines a crude light on the myth of British *laissez faire* in the face of homegrown and exilic revolutionaries, pointing to the “active surveillance” (101) exerted upon them, in particular the Marxist-inspired Social Democratic Federation, from the mid-1880s onward. While he somehow overstates the novelty of his uncovering of secret policing—a theme that features quite prominently in the recent scholarship on international anarchism, at the very least—Solomon's investigation is novel in its framing and nuanced assessment of Britain's changing stance toward political policing and extra-legality, extensive source backing, and the remarkable level of detail in retelling the countless terrorist and episodes of unrest of which the history of secret policing is made. For instance, the alleged Irish plot during the queen's 1887 Jubilee involves a detour via Paris and then New York. Solomon similarly reconsiders many other well-known episodes, among them the 1892 Walsall anarchist bomb plots, the 1894 Greenwich explosion and its aftermath, the assassination of Curzon Wylie, the Tonypandy Riots, the 1911 Siege of Sidney Street, and the suffragettes' agitation. Whereas a movement-specific focus has tended to prevail in much of the existing scholarship, Solomon instead charts the responses to a broad spectrum of radical movements, with a long-term approach emphasizing gradual evolutions.

This more integrated, government-centered perspective is certainly fruitful. In addition to several striking passages exposing the actual extent of British policing (not least under the aegis of spymaster Edward Jenkinson and Special Branch head William Melville), Solomon offers many interesting insights. Thus, Solomon convincingly shows that while Conservative politicians may have pleaded for a more aggressive handling of revolutionary protests, the political police was not the offspring of a reactionary/Conservative moment, but very much embedded in the liberal/Liberal tradition. Moreover, having explored why the British government repeatedly refused to join the transnational policing protocols signed at the turn of the century, Solomon concludes that such isolationism was effective, in eschewing highly repressive and essentially authoritarian approaches while allowing Britain's extra-legal policing to continue. In short, *State Surveillance, Political Policing and Counter-Terrorism in Britain, 1880–1914* is a thought-provoking and timely read.

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