

Title—Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905-1945

Author—Daniel Brückenhaus

Year—2017

Categories: Migration/Movement, Imperialism, Anti-Colonialism, Protest, Surveillance

Place: Western Europe (Britain, Germany, France)

Time: 1905-1945

Argument Synopsis:

Brückenhaus' book tells the story of how European states, especially Britain, Germany, and France, responded to the rise of anti-colonial activity within the continent during the first half of the twentieth century. He contributes to the growing historiography on the sites and spaces of trans-imperial and transnational radical politics in the twentieth century. He builds upon Goebels' *Anti-Imperial Metropolis* that conceptualizes the major cities of the imperial metropole as cosmopolitan hubs of anti-imperialism, with activists and ideas moving between these hubs and out to the colonial sphere. Brückenhaus demonstrates how these transnational movements led to the internationalization of policing and the introduction of autocratic practices by supposedly liberal European states. He provides a better understanding of how practices of anti-colonial activism were shaped by and in turn influenced the evolving practices of policing and surveillance. Through his analysis, Brückenhaus underscores how the imperative to control thought and police movements were not restricted to the colonial spaces. His major contribution to the field is to highlight the centrality of Germany to this history.

The book is divided into six chapters, organized chronologically. Brückenhaus tracks how Britain and France constructed transnational policing practices and institutions in the first half of the twentieth century in order to monitor and combat anti-imperial movements that were also international. One reason for the explosion of anticolonial activity within the European metropole was the realization by colonized people that the repression of their organizing would be less harshly repressed in the metropole. He argues that anti-colonial activism within the metropole was safeguarded by the liberal principles of government. Brückenhaus illustrates how anti-colonialists were able to utilize the political divisions within Europe to find supporters for their anticolonial agenda. The book is organized chronologically and demonstrates how the imperial powers first sent agents abroad to monitor the mobile colonial subject. Brückenhaus insists on the deeply symbiotic character of global anti-colonialism and international policing. He describes the conflict between the anti-colonialists and the police as a “feedback cycle in which both sides caused each other to become more transnational in the scope of their networks and ideologies. Brückenhaus provides a detailed account of the complex relations between German officials and anti-colonial activists. He offers an analysis of how the British, French, and German surveillance agencies and police forces established frameworks for international cooperation through networks of surveillance and cross border structures for information exchange.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Transnational anticolonial movements led to the internationalization of policing
- The increasing surveillance on the national level pushed anti-colonialists to relocate within Europe
- German hostility to the Versailles settlement created new opportunities for anti-colonialists and new challenges for imperial authorities in the 1920-1930s