

communism and nothing else (p. 121). The US Chamber of Commerce described its campaign against the *Employee Free Choice Act* as a “firestorm bordering on Armageddon” (p. 276).

Unfortunately, like many an edited volume, this book is a mixed bag. But the volume as a whole, and the extensive bibliographic material it contains, provide a useful account of the varied and successful campaigns that American conservatives have waged to keep unions at bay.

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Philip Mendes, *Jews and the Left: The Rise and Fall of a Political Alliance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). pp. xii, 352. \$134.95 cloth, \$81.15, kindle.

This volume attempts to provide a “systematic historical and political overview of the relationship between the Jews and the Left.” Regrettably, because of its uncritical and panoptical approach, the book is uneven.

The book’s core thesis is that activist Jews, since the emergence of social democratic parties in the nineteenth century, have tended to have an attenuated identity, one more concerned with universalist values and goals than particular Jewish concerns. The explanation given is that there was more common cause with social democratic parties, which were mostly, but not always, in favour of Jewish rights, when Jews were poor. Many Jews were attracted to the liberating possibilities offered by modernity. Thus there was a kind of an informal alliance, with many Jews involved in social democratic parties or trade unions, and a minority were communists. However, despite early sympathy for the state of Israel after 1948, since 1967 this alliance has fallen apart because Left criticism of Israel has gone beyond what the author regards as acceptable boundaries. In addition, the increased affluence of Jews (at least in the West) has led to weaker ties to Left parties, though Jews still tend to be socially liberal rather than conservative.

However, the theory and uncritical approach to secondary source material is problematic, particularly since the work purports to have a Left orientation. The author focuses on the more extreme manifestations of anti-Zionism among some Jews and the Left in order to support his hypothesis that there is a lack of empathy for Israel (and thus Jews) on the Left in general. Thus he states that “recent manifestations of anti-Zionism negatively stereotype Jews as a powerful group involved in oppressing the Palestinians” (p. 96). He outlines a scenario in which “anti-Zionist fundamentalists construct a subjective fantasy world in which Israel is detached from its specifically Jewish roots, and then miraculously destroyed by remote control free of any violence or bloodshed under the banner of anti-racism” (p. 127).

Such an analysis is Manichaean and at times ahistorical, bound by its own essentialist categories, and suffering from a frequent lack of qualification or quantification. The author also follows a particularly severe political line with respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict, concluding that the Left “no longer supports objective Jewish interests” (p. 265), as if there is such a thing as “objective Jewish interests.” Mendes conflates what he calls contemporary Jewish anti-Zionism with earlier Soviet anti-Zionism as “displaying an especially vehement distaste for Jews

and Jewish concerns" (p. 283). Nor is a more critical view of the Israel-Palestine conflict given much credence. Everything outside narrow goal-posts is vacuumed up into the "anti-Israel" basket.

The book makes some sweeping assertions. One example is the claim that "some" Left Jews were pushed and bullied into taking anti-Zionist views in far-Left organisations (p. 274). How many? Which organisations? Where? This criticism equally applies to his frequent use of the strong qualifier "most" when making an assertion. Mendes criticises the "political expedience" of the group called Jews Against Zionism and Racism (JAZA) in Melbourne in 1976. He speaks of "good Jews" (akin to being apologists) who were willing to "place the class struggle ahead of national solidarity [sic] and support the Palestinians" (p. 275). He refers to an article about JAZA by the recently deceased Steve Brook in a Jewish Left journal in 1979. The author of this article – which is highly polemical (and I think in fact satirical in tone) – is not Steve Brook but Sally Black.

Similarly, in his account of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in the feminist movement, Mendes appears to have misconstrued his own research. On page 95, he makes the claim that in Australia "some leading feminist activists stereotyped all Jews as rich and middle class," with further disturbing assertions about Jewish power, citing himself as the authority for this statement. In fact, his original article has *one* author saying that Jews were stereotyped as rich and middle class. One author has now become "some leading feminist activists." And why not discuss Judith Butler's extensive writings on feminism, rather than quoting Betty Freidan (p. 259)? What of younger Jewish feminists, LGBT activists, or theologians? What of the explosion in social media?

Factually, the book has problems. For example, Mendes erroneously characterises the highly significant though small political group Matzpen as "an obscure Trotskyist sect" (p. 117) and makes unsubstantiated assertions about the size of an anti-Jewish riot in Buenos Aires 1919 (pp. 9, 232). The book also appears isolated from contemporary Left Hebrew-language political writing and scholarship.

The author has used translations from sources while citing the original book. This is not an acceptable scholarly practice. Thus Karl Kautsky is cited with the remark that "Zionism was a spoke in the wheel of progress" (p. 97). Mendes references this important quotation (in English) to a particular page in the first 1914 German *Fraktur* edition of the book *Rasse und Judentum*. There is no such page in the original. The statement only emerged in a 1926 English translation of the 1921 edition, but that publication or its translator is not acknowledged (and I found it online). The very rare Hebrew-language anti-Soviet pamphlet by Tsentsiper is quoted in English. Why has such an obscure person been cited and from whose translation? Other statements (for example, in Russian for Stalin and Trotsky) are referenced to the original, but without reference to the translation source. The book should have also had an accurate glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish terms for all readers. The Mishnaic Hebrew word *tamchui* would be more accurately translated as soup-kitchen or a kind of very early meals on wheels, rather than "cup" (p. 12).

In conclusion, the book's assertions are undermined by a weak theory frame and a lack of scholarly rigour in its use of primary and secondary sources.