

REPLY TO BOOK REVIEW

Larry Stillman's review of my book *Jews and the Left: The Rise and Fall of a Political Alliance in Labour History* (no. 107, November 2014) is a hatchet job from start to finish. He fails to outline or analyse the major theme of the book, which is the stated link between Jewish leftism and historical experiences of class and national oppression. Nor, oddly as an Australian reviewer, does he engage at all with the significant Australian case studies throughout the text (for example, 173–77, 227, 250–51, 264). Instead, Stillman complains that the book does not present his preferred ideological perspective. On at least two occasions, he suggests that the book is "uncritical," but does not explain what criticism he desires. He then contradicts himself by alleging that the book is too critical of certain extreme anti-Zionists such as the Jews against Zionism and Anti-Semitism (JAZA) group, and some feminists. Virtually all these gripes relate to Zionism and Israel, even though these issues cover at most only a quarter of the text. In contrast, the two speakers at the well-attended book launch panel hosted by the Australian Jewish Historical Society at the Jewish Museum in August – Arnold Zable and Bill Rubinstein, who come from vastly different philosophical positions – both praised the book for its balanced and dispassionate tone.

Most of Stillman's comments are pedantic and trivial, with little connection to the key arguments of the book. For example, he complains that I call the Israeli Marxist group Matzpen "obscure." Yet even the pro-Matzpen academic Ran Greenstein notes in his recent book, *Zionism and its Discontents*, that Matzpen was "a tiny organisation that never managed to develop mass support" (197). Stillman complains that I name the late Steve Brook, rather than Sally Black, as the author of an article on JAZA in the *Paths to Peace* journal. Bizarrely, this reference is actually not included in this book. Regardless, Sally Black was Brook's pseudonym, which he used to avoid retaliation from Maoist extremists within radio station 3CR.

Stillman also complains that I discuss Betty Friedan rather than Judith Butler in my section on Jews and feminism. Yet Judith Butler is mentioned on page 280, which Stillman must have missed. Further, he alleges that I provide insufficient evidence that Jews in radical Left organisations have been bullied into conforming to anti-Zionist group-think. Yet on page 81 I quote at length the famous British Jewish Marxist Steve Cohen outlining the contours of this practice, which is to say nothing of the Communist imposition of anti-Zionist orthodoxy in 1929 (101) and 1952–53 (77).

Readers who wish to obtain a more balanced summation of my book should instead turn to University of Warwick scholar Stephen Cullen's forthcoming review in the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*. In contrast to Stillman, Cullen is an acknowledged scholar in this field, having undertaken major research on Jewish Communism in Britain in the 1930s. He understands the key philosophical and scholarly debates. Unlike Stillman, he judges the text on its merits.

Monash University

PHILIP MENDES

REJOINDER

Philip Mendes's response to my review raises several points. First, he argues, quoting Ran Greenstein's words, "that Matzpen was a tiny organisation that never managed to develop mass support" (Greenstein, *Zionism and its Discontents*, 197). Matzpen may have been tiny, but Greenstein, who has a deep knowledge of the Israeli Left, affirms that it was influential: "its members were few in number but its impact was big" (Greenstein, 163). In an email to me Greenstein also added that "all critical perspectives on Israeli society owe a debt to Matzpen's pioneering role." Second, as a riposte to my criticism that he lacks knowledge of contemporary gender or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues on the Jewish Left, Mendes notes that he mentions Judith Butler. However, his reference to her has nothing to do with her work on gender. Third, he quotes Steve Cohen's anecdotal opinion about bullying, but this cannot be used as an axiomatic proof about anti-Semitism. Finally, I apologise for saying the *Paths to Peace* article was cited. The citation was in a chapter about 3CR by Mendes in August Grabski, ed., *Rebels against Zion* (2011). This work was cited in his book and I confused his book and chapter. Thus my slip. I did not make up a reference, as Mendes asserts; the reference was to Mendes's own work. My concerns about the quality of the work remain.

Monash University

LARRY STILLMAN