

Klassen does her best with these scattered bits of information, but there are many historical gaps in the author's narrative of Jakob and Mary.

So how does the author fill these gaps? In some cases, she relies on the historical experiences of other Mennonites, as well as her imagination, to provide readers with what the author speculates were the experiences of Jakob and Mary. Chapter 5, for example, is replete with conjectured accounts about what Mary and Jakob "would have," "could have," or "might have" experienced as newlyweds in the Crimea, Petrograd and Riga, and later with their young son in Moscow in the early 1920s. The author also fills in gaps by interspersing her recollections of volunteer service that she and her husband undertook in Russia while working for MCC and Logos Canada in the 1990s and early 2000s, and in Ukraine when they worked for the Friends of the Mennonite Centre of Ukraine in the early 2000s. The recollections detail the experiences of Russian Mennonites and non-Mennonites who suffered during the Soviet period and had to establish new lives in post-Soviet Russia and the former republics. While the author's recollections provide valuable insights into the challenges that these victims experienced, they also interrupt and sometimes detract from the narrative of Jakob and Mary.

This raises another concern with this book. While Klassen's descriptions of her main characters are always charitable, they periodically read like hagiography, especially those passages concerning C. F. and Mary. This is understandable, given the author's close relationship with them, but this also raises questions about the author's objectivity in her analysis and whether she deliberately or unwittingly excluded unflattering information about the main characters in her book in order to preserve their heroic status.

Well-written and engaging, *It Happened in Moscow* fits the genre of inspirational literature that many readers will find heart-warming. Historians and those wanting a more balanced account of C. F. and Mary Klassen, however, will have to look elsewhere.

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Hans Werner, *The Constructed Mennonite: History, Memory, and the Second World War*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013. Pp. 205. Softcover, \$27.95.

This book is a richly textured and layered story of the author's father. At its basic level, it is a biography – a fascinating story of a man who

lived through a remarkable era of European history and lived to tell the stories. Then, Hans Werner reflects on the role his father's memory played in shaping and reshaping the stories of his past, how memory selected what was included and excluded, how memory adapted to different contexts, and how memory was influenced by gender. In addition, Werner reflects on the importance of both storytelling and memory in the way his father constructed his identity; hence, the title of the book – *The Constructed Mennonite*.

Hans Werner organizes his father's story around his four names and identities. Born in a Siberian Mennonite village, he was Hans until he started school. In school he was renamed Ivan, signalling a stronger Soviet/Russian identity. At the beginning of World War II he was captured by the Germans and renamed Johann and took on a German identity. After the war ended, Johann was captured by the allies and emigrated to Canada. Here he was renamed John and took on a Canadian identity.

Context plays an important role in how and what is remembered. Hans' father did not keep a diary. His was an oral process of remembering. He told his stories in Low German, either in spontaneous settings, or as the result of formal interviews. They were all told after Germany had lost the war, after the immigration to Canada, after the Holocaust had been created as a remembered narrative to place Jewish suffering into an understandable context, and after the Cold War had reshaped Canada's view of the Soviet Union, an erstwhile ally in the Second World War.

In addition, John Werner was telling and retelling the stories, many of them war stories in which he participated, within the context of family and friends, and as a member of a pacifist Mennonite church. All of these realities put subtle pressures on John Werner to shape and reshape his stories.

This biography is that of a survivor. John Werner survived the Soviet era when millions died before and during the war, often at the hands of the Soviet government. He was active in the war, first as a tank commander against Finland, and then against the Germans, who captured him. He fought as a German soldier against the western allies, with a brief, abortive attempt to get to the war front in North Africa. He survived the massive German losses on the western front at the end of the war and was captured by the Americans. Then, after the war, he survived the forced starvation of millions of German prisoners-of-war by the allies.

At the end of the book, Hans Werner includes a chapter about his mother's stories about the Soviet era, the war years, and the emigration to Canada. He reflects on how his mother remembered and how her stories were different from his father's. Where his father's stories

portrayed him as the initiator, his mother's stories were about suffering events she had no ability to control. She too had to change names. When she came to Germany during the war and was enrolled as a citizen, the Germans considered her name, Sara, too Jewish, and she took the name Margarethe.

This book, despite its title, tells the story of two people who lived through the war years, and later constructed their identities through the stories they told. The book is, however, much more than a biography. It implies that we all construct who we are by our memories and our stories. In a real sense, we are all constructed.

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Janis Thiessen, *Manufacturing Mennonites: Work and Religion in Post-War Manitoba*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. Pp. x + 249. Softcover, \$27.95.

Mennonite-owned manufacturing companies loom large within Manitoba's economy. The three companies studied by Janis Thiessen – Friesen Printers in Altona, Loewen Windows in Steinbach, and Palliser Furniture in Winnipeg – employed between them at least 6600 workers in 2003. Yet, in one of Canada's most heavily unionized provinces, where a series of New Democratic Party (NDP) governments have made it easier for workers to unionize than almost anywhere else in the country, these three firms have never been unionized. So, what are relations like between these Mennonite capitalists and their mainly Mennonite work force? This is the key question that Thiessen explores in her finely nuanced study of the ways in which Mennonites experience social class relations.

Thiessen observes the importance of religious belief for Mennonites and the ways in which it affects both discourses and practices of labour relations. She is careful to demonstrate that, despite efforts by Mennonite elites to unite members of the faith behind conservative, supposedly faith-based values that denigrate trade unionism as contrary to the values of Christian brotherhood, most urban working-class Mennonites supported the NDP in the Schreyer years and beyond. Rural Mennonites, including members of the working class, proved more conservative but sometimes demonstrated some restiveness with employer paternalism.

Thiessen outlines the efforts made by the major Mennonite employers to persuade their workers not to unionize, particular after