

in October 2000 as a result of persistent efforts by women's peace organizations, which calls for increased participation of women at all decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes.

Transformation is not just about external structures and conditions; it implies internal changes in consciousness and agency. Some of the most important work for change is subtle, involving education, shifts in framing, consciousness-raising, and sharing of stories such as those in the second part of this book. As many of the contributions in the book make clear, the roles women play in war and its aftermath are less important than the way they conceptualize them. Traditional domestic roles can be politicized and interpreted in an expansive way; conversely, without a real change in the underlying ideas, women's changing roles can be accommodated within the existing social order.

Reading this book caused me to reconceptualize a project I was involved in Toronto during the 1991-92 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina called "Woman to Woman." The project involved ex-patriate women from all sides of the conflict, and because of our different political outlooks, we opted for what we saw as a humanitarian project: providing small bags of essential toiletries to women in the war-zone. I now recognize its potential as a political act of caring for the Other (following Lepa Mladjenovic's chapter in the book).

I see this book as being useful for both academics and activists. Through pointing out the obstacles to change, as well as the conditions and contexts that make change possible, it indicates many suggestions for more effective political organizing and activism and further study.

WOMEN WITHOUT MEN: MENNONITE REFUGEES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Marlene Epp.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

BY SHANNON STETTNER

Immigration histories that focus on a single gender generally trace the voluntary movements of males. Marlene Epp's *Women Without Men* differs from such histories because it traces the forced relocation of Mennonite women and their children from Russia during World War II. Numerically, these refugees represent a small number: between 1947 and 1952, 8,000, overwhelmingly female, Mennonites came to Canada. Yet, Epp argues that these women are worthwhile subjects because of "the intersection of multiple identities—those of woman, of widow, of Soviet, of ethnic German, of Mennonite," which "combined and contrasted to produce unique choices and experiences." This observation informs the three major themes she explores: 1) the intersections of gender, war and immigration; 2) how the women's ethno-religious identification as Mennonites affected their experience; and 3) family fragmentation and reconfiguration, with particular emphasis on the role and attitudes of the widows. Ultimately, she cautions that their status was one "to be endured, not relished," their widowhood both "liberating" and "debilitating."

Many immigration histories inadequately address conditions in the sending society. *Women Without Men* avoids this shortcoming through a detailed account of the dislocation process in Russia, the refugees' retreat with the German army, and their experiences in refugee camps, all of which are important to under-

standing their adaptation to Canada. Establishing this context is particularly germane since Epp's analysis relays the constant struggle between "the way in which Mennonite women's roles were deconstructed prior to and during the war and then reconstructed after immigration." While female-headed families became necessary in Russia, they were problematic for Mennonite communities in both Paraguay and Canada. In Paraguay female-headed families were considered weak (spiritually and physically), while in Canada they were viewed as morally suspect because they defied the nuclear family norm. Epp employs this dichotomy of strength versus weakness to illustrate the complications confronting the refugees' adaptation.

In the exploration of the challenges of adaptation, Epp convincingly exposes the conflict between generations of immigrants. She utilizes, among archival sources, 34 taped oral histories, which are particularly valuable in contrasting individual and group or "social" memories. Early immigrants from the Soviet Union had romanticized memories of the country which clashed with the harsh ones held by the recent refugees. Conflict is also demonstrated in Epp's discussion of the differences in religious expression. Both groups argued that their faith was stronger; one because of their regular church attendance and strict adherence to doctrine, the other because their faith had been tested through dislocation and resettlement. Tension between the old and new immigrants most clearly ignited over the issue of remarriage. As many husbands had "disappeared" and their deaths were never verified, the Mennonite community in Canada struggled over whether to allow refugees to remarry, even though remarriage would negate the problematic presence of single women in the Mennonite community. On this issue, Epp's analysis is interesting because it highlights the sometimes conflicting treatment of remarriage

at the national versus the congregational level. Similar analysis of other issues at both levels would have been beneficial in demonstrating the extent to which individual communities (versus theoretical bodies) were responsive to the needs of the women, and to what extent responses hinged on generational differences.

Arguably the most noteworthy accomplishment in *Women Without Men* is Epp's discussion of the refugee women's sexual vulnerability. Once their husbands and fathers had been "removed," Mennonite women were vulnerable both to their Soviet oppressors and to the German officers from whom they sought protection. Epp poignantly demonstrates the limits of their agency, noting how some women submitted to "voluntary rape" or "instrumental sex" to achieve a desired end, e.g. to avoid a more violent rape or to ease conditions for other family members. These rapes, she argues, also "reinforced a gender hierarchy" upon the women who had been forced "out of traditional gender roles." She also explores the close link in her subjects' memories between rape and the threat of repatriation, which has become central to the social memory or master narrative of the refugees, exposing how the survivors at once incorporated and depersonalized the rapes.

Although Epp skillfully outlines the difficulties Mennonite refugees had adapting to Canadian Mennonite society, she could have provided more commentary on their adaptation to the larger Canadian society. Such analysis could have explored, for example, whether the female refugees' life experiences more closely approximated the ideas/experiences of non-Mennonite Canadian women. Despite this small criticism, this book is a remarkable achievement. *Women Without Men* is a successful microcosmic study of wartime dislocation and resettlement, made more powerful through Epp's exploration of the distinctly female experience of forced immigration which these women confronted.

LONG SHADOWS: TRUTH, LIES AND HISTORY

Erna Paris.
Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001.

BY SHARON FERGUSON-
HOOD

Erna Paris, in her book, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History*, takes us to places and incidents in our history that we might not want to go to. She writes about denial and the unwillingness to cope with past history. She also offers hope in a world where there often appears to be none.

The first seven chapters explore war, memory, race, and truth and reconciliation. Paris writes about the atrocities of the holocaust in Germany during the Second World War, slavery in the United States, apartheid in Africa, and the recent effects of war on the people of Yugoslavia and Bosnia. The last chapter talks about new genocide, new trials, and the legacy of Nuremberg. Paris' historical research is phenomenal. In order to write this book, she traveled extensively around the world and interviewed numerous people.

The main focus of her book, however, is exploring how we cope with our past history and how we might look at in order to encourage a positive outcome for the future. She speaks with people who are left to cope with their parents' deeds; with people who directly involved with healing and reconciliation; and with people who are embroiled in present day conflicts related to the history. Paris writes,

By the 1990s, all of Adolph Hitler's categories of sub-humans had been acknowledged and memorialized in one way or another by the German government. But there was one class of sufferers the fuhrer had never

imagined: the children and the grandchildren of his loyal footsoldiers who would bear the burdens of their parents' deed.

More than once Erna Paris speaks of how painfully difficult this research process is. Her book is a pursuit of memory and as she talks with people who are remembering, she experiences their pain and her own as well. She also has to cope with those in denial and their outward expression that nothing happened. While reporting these varied responses, Paris is clear that the past will affect generations to come for a very long time.

A surprise in the book for me is the information that Bill Clinton was the only US president to create a task force to explore the possibilities of America apologizing for slavery. The task force was completed but never recognized as a significant piece of work. No action was ever taken to apologize even though information was collected that proved racism to be rampant.

Forgiveness is a thread that winds its way through the book. One woman interviewed says that, "she sees racism in America as a collective weight that very few blacks can throw off." However, in the midst of that she and many others interviewed in this book feel that forgiveness is essential. Paris discovered that forgiveness means different things to different people, with its focus depending on where one lived or what one was dealing with.

Many people said that too much time is wasted on looking back to the past. They felt that we should be looking to the future. In contrast, Paris argued that we must participate in both the past and the future if we are to successfully live together in harmony.

Paris goes to great length to give background information for every country she explores. She explains the history that has led that country to where it is at today; she explores the politics of the country, both past