Maureen S. Klassen, *It Happened in Moscow: A Memoir of Discovery*. Winnipeg, Man. and Goessel, Kans: Kindred Productions, 2013. Pp. 207. Softcover.

This book deals with a family secret involving C. F. Klassen and his wife Mary Brieger Klassen. C. F. was a prominent Mennonite leader who played a major role in the establishment and operation of the *Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein* (All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union or *AMLV*) in Moscow in the 1920s, and in helping Russian Mennonite refugees establish new lives in North America, Europe, and South America. We learn from Klassen (who is the daughter-in-law of C. F. and Mary) that C. F. was not Mary's first husband. That distinction belonged to Jakob Reimer, a Russian Mennonite about whom the author knew nothing until she and her husband started working for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Moscow in the early 1990s. It was here that Klassen discovered the identity of Jakob Reimer: he was a Crimean Mennonite whom Mary Brieger (a Lutheran woman from Riga) married in 1915. They had a son, Harold, who was born in Moscow in 1923. For reasons unclear to Klassen, Jakob left Mary in 1924 and the couple divorced in 1925; a year later, Mary married C. F., with whom she had worked in the Moscow *AMLV* office. C. F. always treated Harold as his own child, and later Mary and C. F. started their own family after emigrating to Canada in 1928. Jakob Reimer, on the other hand, eventually moved to the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan where he worked as an electrical engineer in the late 1920s and 1930s. Jakob remarried in 1925 and he and his second wife started a new family with the birth of their daughter, Erika, in 1926. Jacob was later arrested for alleged sabotage and his connections to Mennonites in the West (including C. F. and Mary); he was executed by the Soviet secret police, NKVD, in late 1937. It is not clear whether Mary and C. F. knew what had happened to Jakob; they disclosed to Harold that C. F. was not his biological father, but for unknown reasons they said little else to Harold or their other children about Jakob, or Mary's past relationship with him.

In writing this story, Klassen did not have access to many historical records to document her narrative: there are a few photographs of Mary and Jakob, several letters that Mary wrote to C. F.'s mother in the late 1920s, and a transcript of Jakob's interrogation shortly after he was arrested by the NKVD. Most of Klassen's information about Jakob actually came from Jakob's daughter Erika, whom the author met for the first time in Moscow in 1993. Erika was only eleven years old when her father was executed; therefore, much of her information about her father was second-hand fragments gleaned from relatives and family friends.

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