

conservatives and the language of feminist antimilitarists can, and has, dangerously converged over assigning the martial to the male." A look at the ways that women have participated as peacekeepers in the United Nations and women's roles in the Israeli Armed Forces provide examples of the complexity of women's participation in militaries.

A section on resistance movements and literature explores women's aspirations for equality and the difficulty in carrying through the dreams of revolutionary armed struggle. Women's active participation in resistance movements in Central America and Palestine and the hopes for new societies that include women as full actors are explored through official discourse, revolutionary symbols and images, testimonial literature, autobiography, and poetry.

Articles dealing with motherhood, parenting and war run head on into the usual discussions about women's roles as mothers and what this means for feminists theorizing about women and war. Sara Ruddick's article describing women of peace is careful to make the point, "In outlining the 'figure' of a *woman* of peace I make no quantitative, much less competitive comparisons between women's and men's peacefulness." She goes on to state, "Women can no longer understand themselves as peaceful by 'nature.' They are responsible for their attitude toward war and non-violence." The discourse around women's mothering roles and how this is constructed in support of war and in opposition to war makes it clear that our capacity to bear children cannot be the defining aspect of women's relationship to war and peace.

In the final section on peace culture and peace action specific women's organizations working for peace are discussed. A description of internal difficulties in the U.S. women's peace groups highlights divisions that arose regarding race and class. The discussions about women's organizing in Israel and Palestine describes

the work, the difficulties, and the tensions of women coming together across the division created by armed conflict to work for peace. The case of the Women in Black in Israel and their effective, persistent, moving, and ubiquitous presence in silent protest for peace presents a strong argument for the strength and value of women's actions for peace. The final chapter, written by Susan McKay, emphasizes women's roles as actors in the period of post-conflict reconstruction. She points out that reconstruction is highly gendered and women must be vigilant in the rebuilding period. In particular, she asserts the importance of defining peace in ways that promote equality and development. She notes that post-conflict peace accords rarely take gender into account even when women have played important roles in the conflict. The idea of a society returning to a sense of normalcy means a return to gender roles that are not in women's interests. She reminds readers of Cynthia Enloe's argument for "reading peace agreements with a feminist lens to interpret whether the intent of the agreement is to demasculinize or remasculinize public life, to ask what has changed postwar."

The gendered dimension of war is forcefully presented in each section of this book. It is a challenging look at the politics of women acting in a variety of ways to support and oppose war. It is both theoretical and practical with examples taken from a large number of the 35 or so currently active armed conflicts engaging women around the world. While Cynthia Enloe notes that, "in the torrents of media images that accompany an international crisis, women are typically made visible only as symbols, victims, or dependents," the writers featured here make women's participation as politically conscious actors visible and explicit. In addition the violence and attacks experienced by women in periods of armed conflict is situated concretely in women's everyday ex-

perience during times of so-called peace. This reader is not light or easy. It is a demanding, challenging, comprehensive look at the complexities of women's experiences in the realm of war and peace.

## **WOMEN DIVIDED: GENDER, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Rosemary Sales. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

BY ANNE MCGRATH

The 1998 Belfast Agreement, sometimes known as the Good Friday Agreement, sparked a flurry of conferences, workshops, cross community, and cross border gatherings which, in turn, sparked an outpouring of literature. *Women Divided: Gender, Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland*, by Rosemary Sales, is one of the results. The book developed from Sales's doctoral dissertation and explores, in detail, the divided society of Northern Ireland and the impact of these divisions on women. The invisibility of women in the "peace process" and the intersection of gender oppression and sectarianism are central themes. The usual process, in writing about Northern Ireland, of separating sectarian practice from the underlay of gender inequality is challenged throughout the book.

The book describes the transition from a Northern Irish Parliament to the dissolution of that Parliament and the establishment of Direct Rule from Britain. Sales confidently titles one of her chapters "Explaining the Conflict" and, indeed, presents a very clear, cogent description of the background to the conflict, the historical underpinnings, the institutional mechanisms and practices, the key actors, and the main groupings. She is very aware of the audacity required

to attempt to explain the conflict and makes the point that:

Northern Ireland is often portrayed, especially to British audiences, as a backward place left behind by the tide of history, in which warring tribes are engaged in an atavistic religious feud which the modern world has outgrown. The conflict is represented as violent, criminal, and above all, irrational.

The perception that it is impossible to understand the conflict is similar to depictions of other regions and, as in other regions of the world, the roots of the conflict can be clearly traced to colonialism and institutionalized discrimination. Religion, which is how the rest of the world identifies the Northern Irish conflict, merely acts as a marker for the political divisions between the two communities. In her description of the different positions operating in Northern Ireland, Sales makes particular note of the ways in which gender has been central to the construction of sectarian divisions between the communities and the differences in the gender ideologies of the communities.

Sectarian division has marked the North of Ireland for centuries and brutal sectarian violence has been a relentless feature of the North for the past 30 years. The advent of "The Troubles" in 1969 was a response by the nationalist community to the overwhelming inequalities and injustices of the state. Discrimination in housing, employment, and education was central to the functioning of the society under the Stormont regime. The legacy of these policies endures today and it is still common to see jobs, schools, houses, and communities as either Catholic or Protestant. Even the cooperatively run "black taxi" services, which drive up and down the main streets in Belfast and are the second largest form of public transportation in the city, are run along rigidly sectarian lines. The

taxi park a short distance from each other near the city centre and run up either the Falls or the Shankill roads depending on their respective community loyalties.

In the context of a deeply divided society it is entirely to be expected that women are divided. In those circumstances where women have managed to come together across sectarian lines to discuss "women's issues" the constitutional questions remain divisive. The response of many has been to adopt a position of "religion-blindness." Community groups and women's groups generally avoid discussions about religion, sectarian violence, and the "peace process." It is even true that many of these groups insist that they do not talk about politics—in Northern Ireland the word, "politics," is a code word for constitutional issues. Ironically, women's groups engaged with issues of childcare, sexual violence, reproductive choice, and employment opportunities for women, declare emphatically that they don't talk about politics. Sales quotes one woman, an equal-opportunities manager in a public sector organization, who describes some of the feelings associated with this avoidance,

People don't talk about politics here, even in the Equal Opportunities Unit. We don't even talk about trade union issues, because of the fear of offending people.

Indeed, this point takes on new meaning in Northern Ireland where almost everything is cast in the light of its relationship to the sectarian divisions in society. Social programs that benefit women and children are cast in sectarian light because of the perception that Catholic family size creates unfair advantage. In one case, a Protestant woman engaged in a campaign to oppose Margaret Thatcher's decision to stop the free milk program for school age children was accused of nationalist sympathies because Catholics have more chil-

dren and benefit more from such programs.

The avoidance of divisive issues has contributed to very successful cross-community organizing by women but has pitfalls for current and future contributions to the "peace process." The inability to tackle the larger questions of inequality and injustice sustained by sectarian violence may jeopardize peacebuilding activities. The role of the state, which is seen as the representative of one community and the enemy of the other, is one example of the dangers involved in avoiding rather than confronting differences based on community loyalties. In the case of sexual violence, for instance, campaigns that encourage women to report abuse are problematic because women report being pressured by the police to become informers against their community. In cases where the abuser is a member of a paramilitary organization the act of reporting becomes an act of community disloyalty. Refusing to acknowledge differences in the larger society and the systemic discrimination and oppression of one community does not contribute to peace and justice. The liberal notion of assuming equality and refusing to acknowledge inequality has the effect of reinforcing and entrenching existing injustices and unfair policies and practices. Sales makes the point that, "While the discussion of religion remains 'taboo' in many workplaces, sectarian practices are still rife."

A key example of the success of women's cross community work is in the area of community and women's centres. The collaboration of the Falls and Shankill Women's Centre's to oppose a Belfast City Council decision to stop funding to the Falls Centre is one key example. This cooperation led to the establishment of the Women's Support Network which brings women together across the political spectrum to campaign for greater resources for women. Again, it is a fragile cooperation that rests on avoidance of

political divisions.

*Women Divided* is an excellent guide to the gendered nature of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the role of the State in fostering and maintaining sectarian divisions, the importance of feminist organizing, and the imperative of constructing a peace that challenges entrenched inequalities based on class, religion, and gender. With theoretical and practical sections dealing with the roots of the conflict, the economic and social underpinnings of colonialism, the role of women in a divided society, and the value and challenges of feminist campaigning, Sales clarifies the conflict and argues strongly for women's active and principled involvement in the "peace process."

## **WOMEN, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM: THE POLITICS OF TRANSITION**

Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller,  
Eds. London and New York:  
Routledge, 1998.

BY SHAHRZAD MOJAB

The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the unprecedented rise of national movements globally. Ironically, this upsurge reached its climax when, in the wake of the fall of the Berlin wall, the triumph of "market democracy" was messianically proclaimed as the "end of history," while at the same time, others declared the fall of all "national borders" under the impact of globalization. Some feminist perspectives celebrated "differences," identities, the fragmentation of women, and challenged the "sisterhood is global" slogan. Totalizing the idea of "difference," they denied any possibilities of sameness or universalism. In this intellectual and political mi-

lieu, efforts to question these perspectives are welcomed. Wilford and Miller's edited volume must be read in this context.

The volume, according to the editors, "grew out of a series of research seminars held in Northern Ireland during 1993 and 1994." However, its theme, "women, ethnicity and nationalism," emerged from the original theme of the series, which was "the Economic and Political Participation of Women." This anthology consists of ten chapters. Three chapters review and conclude the debate on the interlocking relationships between ethnicity, women, and nationalism. Rick Wilford provides a useful survey of the literature in the first chapter. This is followed by Nira Yuval-Davis's chapter, "Gender and Nation," which illuminates further some of the theoretical tensions in the literature about gender, nation, and nationalism, as well as women's rights to citizenship. Chapters three to nine contain cases from Northern Ireland, South Africa, Russia and the former Soviet Union, post-socialist societies, Yemen, Lebanon, and Malaysia.

Finally, Robert Miller's "Conclusion," tries to pull this diverse collection together by making two important points. First, Miller argues that except for Northern Ireland [note that the book went to the press before the 1999 peace deals] all other societies included in the collection have gone through "a regime change in the recent past." Miller, however, warns us against the simple equation of political transition with "democratization." Miller argues, realistically, that political democratization "does not in itself automatically lead to an improvement in women's position: indeed, it may have the contrary effect." He concludes the book with the following statement:

Any assumption that a transition from a repressive to an ostensibly less authoritarian regime, even when accompanied by a heightened involvement of

women in politics, will by itself lead to an improvement in political processes, appears naive when set against the reality of lived experience.

Second, based on the cases presented in the book, Miller notes that, instead of women's full political participation in societies in transition, they may have recourse to or be forced into other alternatives. He identifies four such instances: "compliance with a male-dominated nationalist project of maternity and ... acting as the symbol of the nation's sanctity...;" "exegesis, where women can attempt to 'square the circle' by reinterpreting the dominant patriarchal ideology to their own benefit...;" "silence, where the domestic role becomes so all-pervading that women become completely invisible in the public sphere...;" and "exile, where women must leave their community (and perhaps nation) of origin in order to seek self-realization."

Although the book does not claim to settle theoretical debates about nationalism, it is a welcome addition to the growing literature on women, nationalism, ethnicity, and citizenship. The case studies cast doubt on the currently fashionable theoretical privileging of difference and identity, and the celebration of religious, ethnic, and national particularisms. While some feminists choose to "feminize" nationalism, the evidence presented in the book and a growing literature on women and war provides a very grim picture of heavy toll that nationalist, ethnic, and religious conflicts take on women. In war or peace, nationalism continues to be a patriarchal project failing to address gender equality; at best, in Western nation-states, nationalists have reluctantly accepted legal equality.

The book, like all texts, may be read differently. In my reading, it provides yet another body of evidence, which calls for the centring of universalism and internationalism in women's struggles against patriarchy. As the blurb on the back cover