



Tom Licht

Vater, Sohn und der Krieg
(Father, Son and the War)

Text by Anne-Kristin Jahn

Designed by Alexandra Bruns

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8000-kilometer road trip, on which a father and son experience the shadows of the Second World War

In 2013 German photographer Tom Licht (b. 1972) took off with his father (b. 1940) on a somewhat different kind of road trip: from their small home village in Southern Thuringia thousands of kilometers eastward, on the search for the place where, 72 years previously, his grandfather, 35 years old at the time, had fallen during an attack on a Russian village in the war.

The mismatched father-and-son pair sets off on an extended search for clues that follows the erstwhile route of the Wehrmacht regiment of their unknown medical NCO until just outside Moscow and, in doing so, is confronted with barely healed scars of the Second World War just as it must face its own, hitherto unspoken psychological wounds.

The highly personal photographs that Tom Licht brings back from this journey and now publishes in this book enable us only to intuit how, against the backdrop of the horrors of war and by the example of a specific, tragic family history, the millions-fold fate of a fatherless postwar generation is showing its effects to this day.

Tom Licht completed the postgraduate course at the Ostkreuz School of Photography in Berlin under Ute Mahler and Robert Lyons. He lives and works in Zurich and Berlin.

From the text by Anne-Kristin Jahn

War casts long shadows. After the Second World War, they not only fell on the "children of war" generation, but also on the "grand-

children of war." The book at hand tells of an 8000-kilometer journey, on which a father and son experience these shadows.

Wilfried and Tom Licht's path led them from their home village, Mengersgereuth-Hämmern in Thuringia, all the way to Ssenjatino near Moscow. It is the same path that Wilfried's father, Tom's grandfather, marched to his death.

(...)

Willy Licht was a part of this war. Together with almost two million German soldiers, he was "placed in the field" as a medical non-commissioned officer in the fall of 1941 in order to "annihilate" Moscow. In the very same year, Helma Licht, his wife, held a letter in her hands: "Your husband was killed in action by a shot through the heart while most faithfully fulfilling his duty in an attack on the town of Ssenjatino." A widow as a young woman, she survived her husband by three decades and lived in her son Wilfried's house until her death.

What shadows fall on a son's life, whose father could not be his father, because he was killed in action "faithfully fulfilling his duty"? What shadows lie on a grandson's life, whose father belongs to the generation of the "poor and fatherless"?

"If an inner situation is not made conscious," says Carl Gustav Jung, "it appears outside as fate." The question why he is the way he is, was probably the main motivation of Tom Licht for the journey he undertook together with his father. He wanted to understand his fate.

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Kathrin Szymikowski, kathrin.szymikowski@kehrerverlag.com
or Beate Kury, beate.kury@kehrerverlag.com
Kehrer Verlag, Wieblingen Weg 21, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany
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