

M. Langford and J. Langford. *A Cold War Tourist and his Camera*. Montreal and Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011. Viii + 195pp.

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In *A Cold War Tourist and his Camera*, Martha Langford, Concordia University Research Chair in Art History, and her brother John Langford, Professor in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, bring back into view an intriguing collection of amateur Cold War snapshots. Their study analyses the photographs taken by their father, Warren Langford, during his 1963 Canadian National Defence College (NDC) training tours of North American, African and European Cold War hot spots. While the itinerary of the NDC tours allowed their father to capture some of the Cold War's iconic scenes, for example the Berlin Wall and North American missile sites, Warren Langford also took the opportunity, on days off, to photograph his fellow students and touristic sites. This contrast, they suggest, "reflects the dream of world travel and the nightmare of nuclear annihilation" (7). Arguing that any photographic collection is "freighted with the conventions of the time," they examine this fascinating photographic representation of the Cold War, later compiled into a slide show, in terms of both private memories and public histories (7).

Drawing on Martha Langford's previous research and her understanding of the family album as an "oral-photographic performance," the authors adopt a conversational approach to analysing their father's photographs and reanimating his memories. While this is a difficult task, reconstructing the conversations meant to be inspired by the album, their attempt is admirable. Using the papers of the NDC, interviews with its staff and contemporary Cold War scholarship, they expertly reconstruct his tours and discuss in detail what each of their father's images depict, the realities of what he experienced and the likely impressions that he took away with

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him. While there can be no substitute for the original compiler, as the authors admit, this method provides as personal an insight as possible into a collection in which Warren Langford left little record of his feelings. Leaving no stone unturned, examining even seemingly unimportant aspects of each photograph, their study should be commended for its comprehensive research and insightful analysis. The failure, however, to follow the European tour to its conclusion in the important Western Cold War capitals of Brussels, Paris and London and to conclude what impressions their father took away from this part of the tour does weaken the study.

In examining their father's images the authors discuss his photographic experience, providing a useful guide for those keen to unpack "the cultural work that we have inherited" (157). They reveal how photographic ethics, the complexities of the author and those of the image shaped their father's photographs and those of amateur photography more widely. Particularly illuminating is their discussion of their father's photographic motives. Warren Langford went into a photographic frenzy in some locations but remained oddly inactive in others, for example in Belgrade. Leaving little inclination as to why, the authors apply orthodox Cold War scholarship, which dominated the teachings of the NDC and whose view Warren Langford adhered to, and semiotic theories of tourism and tourist photography to garner his motives. Aware that their findings may deviate considerably from their father's original intentions, they persuasively argue that his photographic decisions were chiefly "encouraged by the political rhetoric of the National Defence College training and the cultural rhetoric of mass-media publications" (155-156). His motives for the photographs taken on days off, they suggest, are better classified into "categories identified by John Taylor in his *A Dream of England* as touristic modes: the travellers gaze, the tourists glance, and the day trippers blink" (155).

Langford's collection is also historically valuable. Although more obviously connected with the Cold War than most, the authors argue that Langford's collection is reflective of amateur collections of the period more widely. Presenting a Cold War world "teetering between the nuclear family and nuclear annihilation," (4) amateur collections, they argue, temper the "contained violence, sexual intrigue, and simmering collective psychosis" (3) captured by the mass media of the time. Taken in the context of a Cold War tour, the authors believe that their father's collection provides a perfect opportunity to "look behind the curtain of mass-media photographic propaganda" of the Cold War (25). Comparing his photographs with

those published in *LIFE* and *National Geographic* during the period, the authors draw some noteworthy distinctions. While his images appear similar in style to professional photographs, Langford's shots preserve the photographic experience and depict a Cold War devoid of any journalistic event. Civilians in Nigeria react to his camera and East-West relations in Berlin seem relatively relaxed as Canadian officials joke around with their Soviet counterparts. Whether Langford's slides constitute a "history from below," as the authors also suggest, is more debatable (9). On a government controlled tour, Langford saw what he was allowed to see, scenes which for the most part confirmed the orthodox Cold War teachings of the NDC.

While recovering the photographic memories of those departed remains a nigh on impossible task, *A Cold War Tourist's* attempt is laudable. Extensively researched and intelligently written, the study illuminates their father's fascinating Cold War photographic collection. While mass media images have been carefully scrutinized for their ideological message, this study's attempt to consider an amateur representation of the Cold War is refreshing. Greater research into the mass of unconsidered amateur collections is needed however, if we are to understand more about the "everyday" experience of the Cold War.