

NEW RELEASE 2024

Robert Nickelsberg
Legacy of Lies
El Salvador 1981–1984

Essays by Jon Lee Anderson, Carlos Dada, Alma Guillermoprieto, Robert Nickelsberg, Scott Wallace
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Previously unpublished images by the TIME magazine photographer illuminate an important chapter in Latin American history.

In the early 1980s, the Cold War clashes that had bloodied other parts of the world shifted to Central America. Following the overthrow of Nicaragua's Somoza government by the left-wing Sandinista rebels in 1979, the United States sought to prop up El Salvador's right-wing military government as a backstop against home-grown insurgents and rising Soviet and Cuban influence. Its role helped fuel a lethal 13-year civil war. *Legacy of Lies* contains previously unpublished black-and-white images that American photographer Robert Nickelsberg produced on behalf of TIME magazine and is supplemented by essays by renowned journalists.

From the essay *Lies and Delusion* by **Alma Guillermoprieto**:

» *It's all here—not just the corpses and the violence but the desperately insular, unequal society that produced them: the graduation parties; the brutalized, wiry campesinos, hungry for food but also for some small amount of justice; the demented press conferences where the brutality was lied about; the corporals and complacent generals; the majorettes; the guerrillas. It's a portrait of a time. There is a nakedness about Nickelsberg's images, an unvarnished quality that speaks of their essential truthfulness. (...) Countries do not like to remember their failures any more than individuals do. But the work of the photographers and writers who cover a conflict are small flags raised against forgetfulness. Books make memory permanent, and so this book, too, raises its flag.* «

For nearly three decades, **Robert Nickelsberg**, a TIME magazine contract photographer, documented political and cultural shifts in developing countries. After covering conflicts in Central and South America in the mid-1980s, he shifted to Asia. Living in

New Delhi from 1988 to 1999, he captured the rise of religious extremism in South Asia.

His portfolio spans Iraq, Kuwait, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Nickelsberg's involvement with Afghanistan began in 1988 when he accompanied mujahideen crossing the border from Pakistan. His book *A Distant War* encapsulated 25 years of work in Afghanistan, earning him the 2013 Overseas Press Club's Olivier Rebbot Award for the best photographic reporting from abroad.

His hard-hitting photographs have been exhibited at venues such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the International Center of Photography, Queensborough Community College, the Afghanistan Center at Kabul University, and the New America foundation in New York.

In 2008, grants from the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma and the South Asian Journalism Association supported his reporting on post-traumatic stress disease in Kashmir, India. In 2015, the O'Halloran Family Foundation honored him with a grant for his ongoing project addressing domestic sex trafficking.

Explore his work on Instagram (@nickelsberg) and the website robertnickelsberg.com.

Forthcoming Exhibition

Bronx Documentary Center, New York, 20.09. – 27.10.2024

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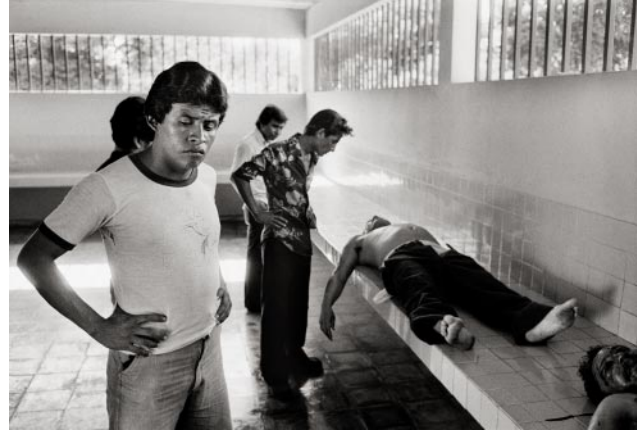
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Press images



01 ERP guerrillas pause to talk to local residents. San Agustín, Department of Usulután, July 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg



02 Family members identify corpses in a morgue. La Libertad, August 1984 © Robert Nickelsberg



03 A Salvadoran journalist displays a white flag to show FPL guerrillas that he travels in peace on the Pan American Highway. Department of San Vicente, June 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg



04 Members of the Atlacatl Battalion cross a river during a counterinsurgency operation. Department of San Miguel, September 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg



05 An armored Cadillac belonging to the U.S. Embassy awaits an arriving U.S. government plane. Ilopango Airport, San Salvador, 1982 © Robert Nickelsberg



06 The sister of one of the victims faints upon hearing of his death. Santa Clara, July 1982 © Robert Nickelsberg



07_ Lieutenant Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, Atlacatl Battalion commander, hands a new soccer ball to local children as part of a civil pacification operation near guerrilla territory. Joateca, Department of Morazán, October 1984 © Robert Nickelsberg



08_ Salvadoran Army recruits take part in a training exercise overseen by U.S. Army Rangers and Special Forces at a Salvadoran Air Force base. Ilopango Airport, San Salvador, March 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg



09_ An Atlacatl Battalion soldier sleeps before his unit moves at dawn into position against ERP guerrillas during a counterinsurgency operation. Department of San Miguel, September 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg



10_ Salvadoran military commanders attend a ceremony at the Escuela Militar Capitán General Gerardo Barrios. Santa Tecla, May 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg



11_ In FPL territory, guerrillas cross a river near the Salvadoran-Honduran border. Department of Chalatenango, February 1981 © Robert Nickelsberg



12_ An ERP guerrilla stands in front of burning trucks on the Pan American Highway. Department of Usulután, March 1983 © Robert Nickelsberg