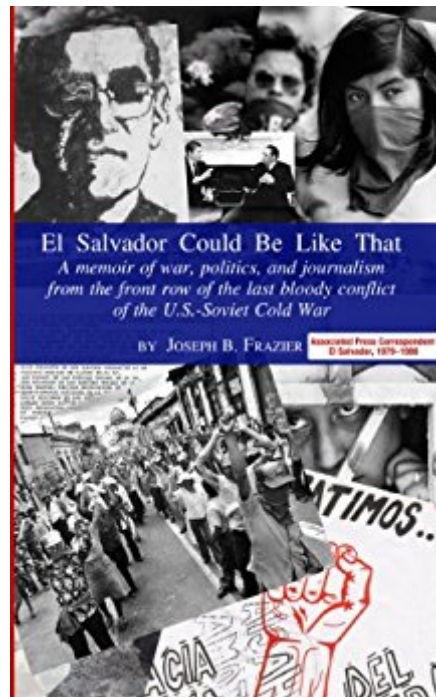




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# El Salvador Could Be Like That: A Memoir Of War And Journalism



## Synopsis

This book is dedicated to the reporters, photographers, and journalists I worked with as we tried to make sense out of the tragic times that came to define much of Central America, especially tiny, bludgeoned El Salvador in the 1980s. The wars that brought us together are forgotten now. So are the lessons they should have taught us. This book is a reminder of both. Peeling away academia and officialdom from the conflict in El Salvador, presenting it as it fell on the backs of the Salvadoran people, the ones who somehow never really mattered in many official eyes, from whatever country those official eyes might have peered. These are snapshots of the underbelly of a largely forgotten war that has wound up on the scrapheap with equally forgotten conflicts. It is a ground-level eye view of that war and of what it did to the peasants, the soldiers, the school kids and union leaders, the shopkeepers, the fishermen and artisans, the parish priests, the everyday, unremarkable people who often wound up in unmarked graves, and also on the edit room floor.

## Book Information

File Size: 1240 KB

Print Length: 231 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Karina Library Press (March 5, 2013)

Publication Date: March 5, 2013

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00BPHFJGW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #193,824 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #9

in Kindle Books > History > Americas > Central America > El Salvador #45 in Kindle Store >

Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > Latin America > Central America #125 in Kindle Store >

Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Journalists

## Customer Reviews

Joe Frazier's account reflects his background as an AP correspondent. He works hard, eschews fancy prose and tells you what happened. I spent four years at the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador; Joe and I overlapped for much of the time. Now as then, he is smart, comprehensible and engaged. He is not settling scores and I do not think any unbiased observer would find his work anything but honest. If you have strong opinions and want them reinforced, there is plenty of stuff out there for you. If you want to read a fair account of a people, a country and a policy shot through with contradictions, you should buy and read this book.

Overall, I enjoyed this book. I appreciated the stories and perspective of the author, to the reader this book provided a pretty balanced understanding of the challenges of the civil war in El Salvador. The book tells the story of the war through different perspectives and stories, trying to make sense of it all. I particularly liked the chapter on Oscar Romero. The only drawback for me was the editing, there were quite a few editing and grammar mistakes, and at times there were sections that were difficult to understand because of that. Despite that, I still enjoyed the book.

Three wars later, Americans have forgotten the proxy wars that were fought in Nicaragua and El Salvador (as well as Guatemala and Honduras, by implication) throughout the 1980s and which dominated the national media. As the author reminds us, the Reagan Administration's fear of another Nicaragua, or worse, another Cuba, in Central America brought the tiny nation of El Salvador into the Cold War maelstrom. Mr. Frazier takes us back to that time not as a historian, but rather, from the perspective of a journalist who actually witnessed, reported on, and was himself victimized by this tragic conflict. While his perspective is first-hand and personal, Mr. Frazier addresses the political and social currents that drove the conflict and how this otherwise seemingly irrelevant (from an American foreign policy perspective), tiny nation became the epicenter of perhaps the last East-West conflict. This book is essentially for anyone seeking to understand the first-hand effects of American foreign policy decision-making, particularly how those decisions played out in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s.

The truth of the Cold War that began in 1945 was often much different than the pro-American/Western European propaganda, or pro-Communist propaganda portrayed by the big media outlets between 1945 and 1989. While reporters often reported information in a manner that cast their own countries in a positive light, the reality that they saw out in the field was often much different. Joseph Frazer, one of the top reporters in the field during the final decade of the Cold War

offers the reader a unique perspective on what was really going on in El Salvador, one of the last major conflicts in the Cold War. Frazer depicts this conflict as one of the bloodiest engagements in the Cold War that cost thousands of lives and virtually decimated the indigenous tribes of El Salvador. He makes no bones about the fact that neither the Communists, nor the Americans had particular care about the lives of non-combatants including his fellow reporters and that this was a war in which any collateral damage was perfectly acceptable. This highlights a very negative time in American history in which the lies we were told by our government covered up genocide, racism, and a war that forced many El Salvadorans to flee their homeland. The book was excellent, detailed and well-written. I grabbed this when it was free and would gladly recommend it even at full price.

I've searched long and hard for a decent book written about the recent war torn history of El Salvador and haven't found much until this book. It is a must read for anyone with even a remote interest in US foreign policy in Central America.

Joe Frazier waited nearly three decades to process events he covered in Central America including events that he personally suffered through, namely the death of his wife, Tico Times journalist Linda Frazier, at the hands of a Sandinista-commanded Argentine terrorist who blew up a press conference she was covering at La Penca in 1984. The book refreshingly lacks the blatant cheerleading for leftist forces that permeates far too many Western journalists' accounts of events in Central America that were written at the time.

Very readable, poignant, gritty, informative. First hand stories of El Salvador during its most tortured civil war years from a journalist who lived through much of it. Also very personal, with conversations and reactions from the small villages to the capital streets. A good find.

Very enjoyable read, with a lot of unique stories from the author's time in El Salvador. Having covered both sides of the war, his perspective is more nuanced than most accounts of the war. I only wish the book were a bit longer.

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