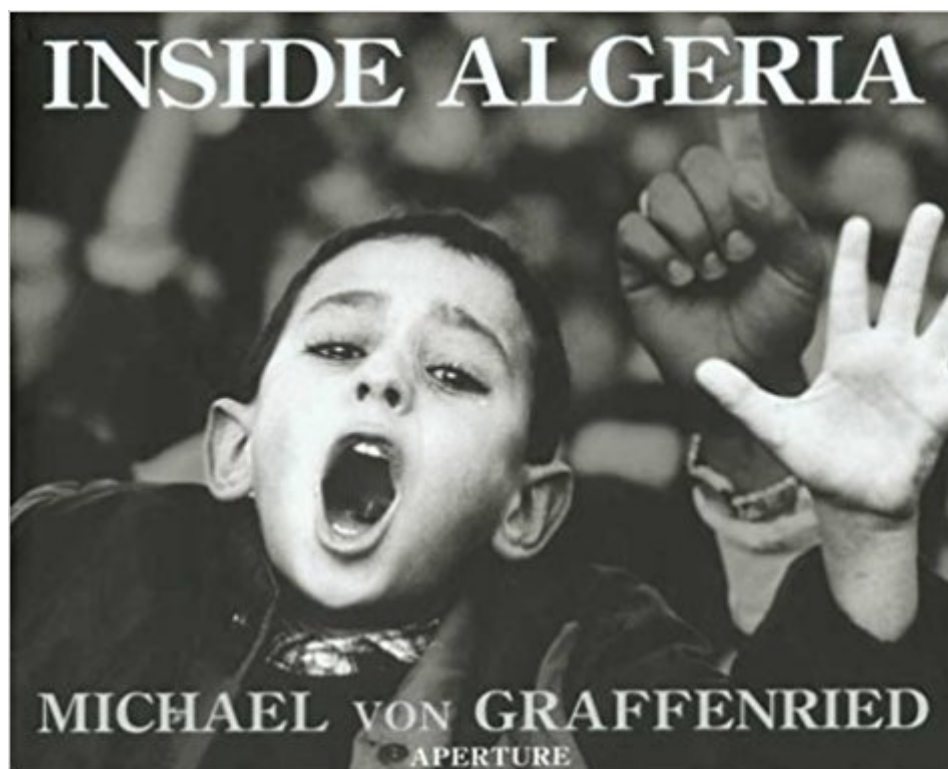


The book was found

Inside Algeria



Synopsis

"These images, snatched by Graffenried without having been aimed, for to raise a camera to one's eye is to put one's life in danger, testify to a truth that no one is showing, that of daily fear and furor that you won't see on the six o'clock news."--Robert Delpire, Director of the Centre National de la Photographie in Paris, from his Foreword

Michael von Graffenried, an award-winning Swiss photographer, covertly photographed civil strife in Algeria from the early 1990s through 1998. In a land where Islamic terrorists have executed over sixty journalists and photographers in the last seven years, Graffenried's very survival is remarkable. His extraordinary accomplishment, however, is these photographs, which form a composite of Algeria that is more whole than the nation itself, fractured by one segment of the population in favor of democracy and another in favor of an Islamic state. Graffenried makes his pictures secretly, using an antique Widelux panoramic camera with a hidden lens. He would risk his picture and his life were he to raise a camera to his eyes. Instead, he shoots from the hip, with his hands clasped over what looks like a pair of binoculars. In learning to frame his photographs without a viewfinder, he opens himself to a rich array of surprise and irony in his pictures, and reveals a society that has been concealed from the international community for nearly seven years.

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Customer Reviews

"In Algeria, where photography is both a taboo and a potential weapon, Graffenried's silent, hidden camera and swift footwork allow for the only possible safe working method. The results form a dramatic and original view of daily life in a society wracked by civil war."--Patricia Strathern,

Reportage"Working under adverse and potentially dangerous circumstances, in a culture that profoundly distrusts cameras, Michael von Graffenried has assembled an extraordinarily compelling portrait of the people of modern Algeria."--Carol Squiers, American Photo

Michael von Graffenried was born in Bern, Switzerland in 1957. He is a self-taught freelance photographer based in Paris. His work has appeared in thirteen books and numerous international magazines and newspapers, including The New York Times, Time, Newsweek, Life, Paris Match, Le Monde, Geo, and The International Herald Tribune. He has contributed to many television programs in Europe. He received a World Press Photo award in 1989 for his reportage on perestroika in the Moscow art scene. During the 1990s, his photographic projects took him to the Middle East, Cuba, Slovenia, the Baltics, China, Vietnam, the Sudan, Haiti, and Algeria. His photographs are held in several permanent museum collections and are exhibited internationally. In the United States he is represented by the Witkin Gallery in New York City. Mary-Jane Deeb is the editor of The Middle East Journal and a professor of International Relations and Middle East Politics at American University in Washington, D.C. The author of Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa (Westview Press, 1990), she is working on a book entitled Algeria: A State in Evolution. She is a frequent media commentator, with appearances on CNN, ABC World News, and the CBS Evening News.

Swiss photojournalist von Graffenried made eight trips to Algeria during the 1990s to document the horrific effects of the conflict that started smoldering in the late '80s and burst into open civil war with the cancellation of the 1991-92 elections. One has to admire the sheer bravery of the effort, as this was a period in which some seventy or so journalists were killed by Islamic guerillas, and some 100,000 people were killed by guerillas and the army. Beyond this obvious danger, there is no "camera culture" in Algeria (nor indeed in most Arab countries). Traditionally, the camera is reserved for documenting special occasions, and in Algeria it is tainted by its association with the French, who used it during Algeria's struggle for independence as a tool of control. To overcome these obstacles, von Graffenried used an old a Widelux panoramic camera which produces 150° views without any lens or shutter noise. Armed with this camera which looks like a pair of binoculars, he would shoot from the hip, guessing at what was in frame. This technique is one that makes for interesting ethical debates, and even von Graffenried admitted in an interview that "it makes you feel dirty." Thankfully he was able to rise to this challenge and come away with such a stunning collection of ninety black and white photographs, beautifully reproduced in this stark

coffee-table book. The breadth of subject matter is amazing: a FIS rally, children and poverty in the Bab el Oued, black marketeering in the Casbah, beautiful Berber children in Kabyle, the funerals of president Boudiaf, writer Tahar Djaout, and Islamist fighters, behind the scenes of the "ninja" (special forces police) barracks and in operations, the aftermath of a car bomb, teenagers trying to live normally at the clubs and beaches, the aftermath of a village massacre, and so on. There is a lot of pain and suffering in this book, and as someone who spent their childhood in Algeria, it's a heartbreaking portrait. Still, it's an outstanding work of photojournalism that demands the attention of anyone interested in photographing in adverse situations, foreign cultures, and the Middle East in general. It is also to be highly commended for putting a human face and picture to the exceedingly nasty civil war that stole a generation from Algeria. Interestingly, von Graffenried returned to Algeria in 2002, when the country was somewhat safer and tracked down some of the people he photographed to show them the book. With him was Algerian documentary filmmaker Mohammed Soudani, who recorded the varying reactions people had to the photographs. The resulting film, *Guerre Sans Image* (War Without Images) is apparently quite good, though I've not seen it.

In 1962, after 132 years of brutal occupation and inhumane treatment of the native population, Algeria gained its independence from France. France left 98% of the Algerian population illiterate. Isn't that another crime against humanity? In addition, the "Mujahidines" who fought the French armies thought they deserved to be in charge of the country and they did get control of the government. Which way should one expect such country to go? Of course to disaster. To make things worse, they thought because France was capitalist, Algeria should be on the opposite side (socialism). While under occupation, the population suffered daily from poverty, oppression and starvation while the Europeans settlers enjoyed the vast tracts of fertile lands and natural resources taken from the natives. France used techniques, such as "divide and conquer" and "make them illiterate to control them" and "starve them to subdue them" to keep its grip tight on Algeria.. What happened in Algeria since the independence is mainly the natural consequences of the brutal colonialism it endured and survived for 132 years. Almost every developed country went through a crisis/revolution/civil war. Today, the foreign influence and interference (politics and economics) in the majority of the third world countries have devastating effects and Algeria is no exception.

As a photographer (albeit amateur) who has attempted to work inside other Arab countries photographing Islamist insurgencies and security forces, I have a huge amount of respect for the environment in which von Graffenreid attempted to work. He has succeeded hugely. His

photographs are stark, absolutely searing, and freighted with undertones of almost unbearable tension. This book should be mandatory for anyone with an interest in photojournalism, combat photography, the Middle East, Islamist politics, and covert photography.

To the first reviewer: Algeria an Arab country? Where did you get this one? Don't talk about people and countries you don't know about. Algeria is Berber. Many algerians are arabic-speaking, but no one is Arab. How dare you reduce Berbers to this shamefully exoticizing picture : "beautiful Berber children in Kabyle" ? There is no "camera culture" because there's no money for cameras, this has nothing to do with social taboos. As for the book, it's selective anyway. So you want to get your picture of it go and visit.

Algeria gained independence from France July 5, 1962 when the Evian accords were signed. The country had been fighting a war of independence, led by the National Liberation Front, since the 1950's. More than one million Algerian's were killed and over two million have been internally displaced. On December 26, 1991, the Algeria's first multi-party general election took place. The military intervened in the election for fear that the Islamic Salvation Front would win the election. Early February 1992 a state of emergency was declared and since that time it's believed that over 100,000 Algerian's have been killed in the eight years of civil strife. Michael Von Graffenried photography and story are timely and incredible because it captures a people who are tired of conflict and who are struggling to stay alive.

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