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Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On The Eve Of London 1998 (Latin America Otherwise) (Bk. 1)



Synopsis

During the two years just before the 1998 arrest in London of General Augusto Pinochet, the historian Steve J. Stern had been in Chile collecting oral histories of life under Pinochet as part of an investigation into the form and meaning of memories of state-sponsored atrocities. In this compelling work, Stern shares the recollections of individual Chileans and draws on their stories to provide a framework for understanding memory struggles in history. "A thoughtful, nuanced study of how Chileans remember the traumatic 1973 coup by Augusto Pinochet against Salvador Allende and the nearly two decades of military government that followed. . . . In light of the recent revelations of American human rights abuses of Iraqi prisoners, [Stern's] insights into the legacies of torture and abuse in the Chilean prisons of the 1970s certainly have contemporary significance for any society that undergoes a national trauma. Publishers Weekly "This outstanding work of scholarship sets a benchmark in the history of state terror, trauma, and memory in Latin America. "Thomas Miller Klubock, American Historical Review "This is a book of uncommon depth and introspection. . . . Steve J. Stern has not only advanced the memory of the horrors of the military dictatorship; he has assured the place of Pinochet's legacy of atrocity in our collective conscience. "Peter Kornbluh, author of The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability "Steve J. Stern's book elegantly recounts the conflicted recent history of Chile. He has found a deft solution to the knotty problem of evenhandedness in representing points of view so divergent they defy even the most careful attempts to portray the facts of the Pinochet period. He weaves a tapestry of memory in which narratives of horror and rupture commingle with the sincere perceptions of Chileans who remember Pinochet's rule as salvation. The facts are there, but more important is the understanding we gain by knowing how ordinary Chileans, Pinochet's supporters and his victims work through their unresolved past. "John Dinges, author of The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents

Book Information

Series: Latin America Otherwise

Paperback: 280 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books; New Ed edition (September 4, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822338165

ISBN-13: 978-0822338161

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.7 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #321,907 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #27 in [Books > History > Americas > South America > Chile](#) #329 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Latin America](#) #343 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historiography](#)

Customer Reviews

This first volume of *The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile: A Trilogy* is a thoughtful, nuanced study of how Chileans remember the traumatic 1973 coup by Augusto Pinochet against Salvador Allende and the nearly two decades of military government that followed. "London 1998" in the subtitle refers, of course, to the arrest of the former Chilean dictator for human rights abuses. Combining oral histories with political analysis, Stern (chair of the history department at the University of Wisconsin at Madison) commendably delves into the stories of Chileans who supported Pinochet as well as of the families of his government's victims. Arguing that memory plays a key role in struggles for political and cultural legitimacy, he studies how individual memories compete for a place in the formation of a deeply symbolic, collective memory. Memory, he contends, functions within multiple frameworks: salvation, rupture, persecution and awakening. Nonspecialists at times may be frustrated by Stern's cursory references to related academic studies, yet overall he makes a serviceable effort to write for a general audience. In light of the recent revelations of American human rights abuses of Iraqi prisoners, his insights into the legacies of torture and abuse in the Chilean prisons of the 1970s certainly have contemporary significance for any society that undergoes a national trauma. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Remembering Pinochet’s Chile will set the terms of the debate and become essential reading for all scholars and students of memory issues. . . . It is a pathbreaking book, the cutting edge of a major historical project. Steve J. Stern presents new information, particularly through oral histories, including those of Pinochet soldiers and partisans who have rarely been willing to be interviewed by scholars about the human rights violations of the era.” (Peter Winn, editor of *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973–2002*) “Steve J. Stern’s book elegantly recounts the conflicted

recent history of Chile. He has found a deft solution to the knotty problem of evenhandedness in representing points of view so divergent they defy even the most careful attempts to portray the facts of the Pinochet period. He weaves a tapestry of memory in which narratives of horror and rupture commingle with the sincere perceptions of Chileans who remember Pinochet's rule as salvation. The facts are there, but more important is the understanding we gain by knowing how ordinary Chileans •Pinochet's supporters and his victims• work through their unresolved past. (John Dinges, author of *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*) "This is a book of uncommon depth and introspection. In Remembering Pinochet's Chile Steve J. Stern has not only advanced the memory of the horrors of the military dictatorship; he has assured the place of Pinochet's legacy of atrocity in our collective conscience. (Peter Kornbluh, author of *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*) "Stern's collection makes an important and original contribution to our understanding of how interpretations of the role played by the Chilean coup influenced subsequent political culture, and is a valuable exploration of personal histories through ethnographic research. Stern can only be praised for recording and disseminating stories that have rarely if ever been heard before, demonstrating a rare gift for eliciting testimony that is a tribute to his skill as a researcher and providing the reader with a potent and, indeed, moving sense of the full impact that the Pinochet dictatorship had on Chilean society. (Gavin O'Toole *Latin American Review of Books*) "Accessibly narrated and based on extensive archival research and ethnographic interviews, Stern's volume is certain to appear on many course syllabi in the near future. . . . [He] manages, quite adeptly, to add a dimension of complexity to concepts like censorship that are often discussed in rather unambiguous and generalized terms both in scholarly work on dictatorship and in university classrooms. . . . Stern brilliantly traces the evolution of memory as a critical category in Pinochet's Chile and helps us to see how the scripting of the past became a fierce political battle that would last long into the years of transition. (Michael J. Lazzara *The Americas*) "The work operates at a high level of theoretical sophistication of memory studies, but it applies that theory most concretely and insightfully to the events in Chile. . . . Recommended. (J. A. Rhodes *Choice*) "Stern successfully paints a broad picture of the dictatorship, its effects, and the struggle against it. Elegant and accessible, his book is likely to remain, for many years to come, a central reference text on the Pinochet regime and its ensuing battles to define historical memory. (Michael J. Lazara *A Contracorriente*) "[T]he theme of memory, a rigorous interdisciplinary methodology, and a creative narrative structure are the combined source of this work's brilliance, one that sets

a benchmark for future historical studies and challenges the conceptual boundaries for the study of Latin American dictatorships. (Elizabeth Quay Hutchison *American Historical Review*) "[T]his is an impressive synthesis based on prodigious research. . . . His focus on social memory, which allows him to consider the moral and subjective elements of human experience, together with his historian's sensitivity to indeterminacy and human agency make this a compelling interpretation of how Chileans lived the Pinochet years. (Alexander Wilde *Left History*) "In a classic oral historian's fashion, Stern shares stories and voices of the seldom heard. . . . Battling for Hearts and Minds also provides meticulous explanations of how Stern gathered and assessed distinct memory strands. In this 500-page work, almost 100 pages are notes, and Stern includes a thoughtful essay on primary sources as well as oral research as methodology. Combined with his lucid prose, this makes the volume quite valuable as a model for young researchers as well as for classroom use. (Katherine Hite *Journal of Latin American Studies*) "Stern has also provided scholars a window to understanding the logic and strategy of the Left. This book deserves wide reading and consideration by scholars both within and outside of the Latin America specialty. His forthcoming volume should be eagerly awaited." (Keith D. Dickson *Canadian Journal of History*) "[A] brilliantly crafted, deeply layered narrative of the interaction between memory and history. . . . It is a must read for anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of authoritarian rule and democratic resurgence in the Cold War period of Latin American history. Given its conceptual resonances and unique methodology it is sure to be of interest to students of historical memory anywhere in the world. (James A. Wood *The Latin Americanist*) "[A] remarkable tale of the inner contest between rival public memories—those of the regime's backers and those of its detractors. Going well beyond some of the (now conventional) reliance upon testimonials, Stern follows the hopes and heartaches of civic activists, teachers, officers, and churchgoers as they organized themselves around real and symbolic struggles during the dictatorship's most brutal years and its eventual demise. (Jeremy Adelman *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) "As a superb study of contemporary Chilean history, Stern's two volumes are certain to become classics for all those interested in the social, political, and economic evolution of Chile. Yet, Stern's extraordinary accounts of how memory is built, signified, and reconstructed—as a dependent and independent variable, as methodologically rigorous jargon would have it—can also provide a useful and attractive framework for those interested in how memory is, ultimately and within constraints, created and re-created. (Patricio Navia *Latin American Research Review*)

Great read! Very insightful for thinking about how contested memories become national narratives. Looking forward to reading the next two.

Steve Stern is probably the best regarded latin american historian in the western hemisphere. This book is not only about the events and the opinions leading up to the Sept 11, 1977 coup in Chile, but the problem of voice and narrative in historical texts. Stern effectively wrestles with the problem, providing not only a clear sense of personal stories of those living in chile prior to the coup, but providing a theoretical backbone to navigate the intense partisan narratives that swirl around the years of terror. Stern is highly skeptical of the "official" voice of history, whether or not it supports recent reforms in Chile. Indeed, his text is part of the larger process of restorative justice that brings all the competing narratives to the fore. There are still people who love and admire Pinochet and, while many would be tempted to scorn and omit their stories, Stern's text does not dismiss their important voices.

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