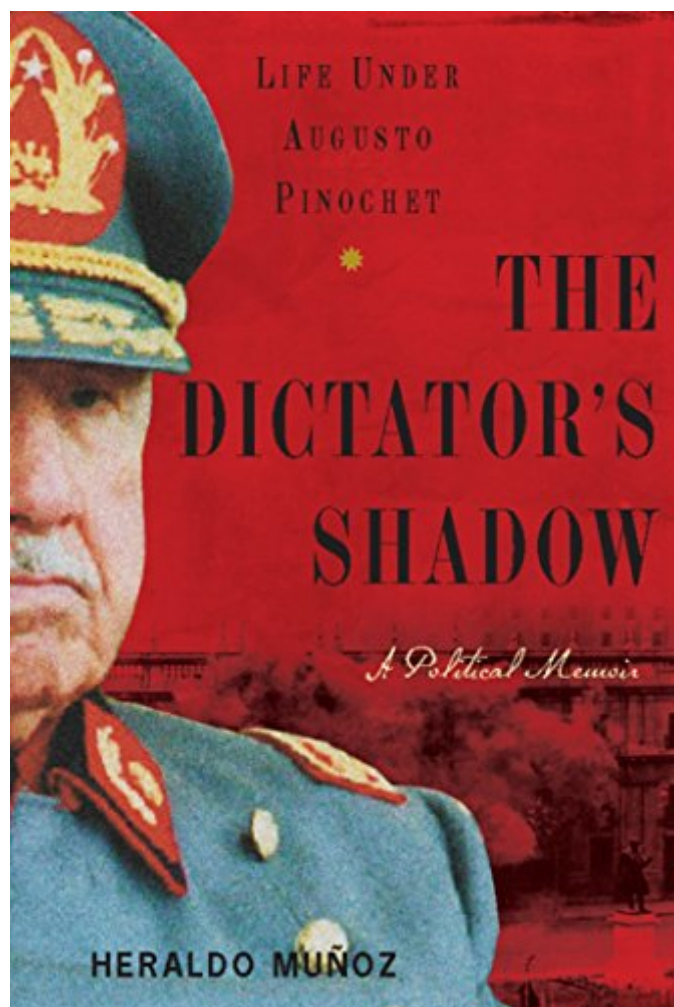


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The Dictator's Shadow: Life Under Augusto Pinochet



Synopsis

Augusto Pinochet was the most important Third World dictator of the Cold War, and perhaps the most ruthless. In *The Dictator's Shadow*, United Nations Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz takes advantage of his unmatched set of perspectives—as a former revolutionary who fought the Pinochet regime, as a respected scholar, and as a diplomat—to tell what this extraordinary figure meant to Chile, the United States, and the world. Pinochet's American backers saw his regime as a bulwark against Communism; his nation was a testing ground for U.S.-inspired economic theories. Countries desiring World Bank support were told to emulate Pinochet's free-market policies, and Chile's government pension even inspired President George W. Bush's plan to privatize Social Security. The other baggage—the assassinations, tortures, people thrown out of airplanes, mass murders of political prisoners—was simply the price to be paid for building a modern state. But the questions raised by Pinochet's rule still remain: Are such dictators somehow necessary? Horrifying but also inspiring, *The Dictator's Shadow* is a unique tale of how geopolitical rivalries can profoundly affect everyday life.

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Customer Reviews

This is a serene, well written and easy to read analysis of a cruel period in the history of Chile. A must for those who want to learn from the mistakes of the past and to learn that repression, hate, absence of the rule of law and of political freedom are not the only possible ways to accomplish economic prosperity and stability for the nations.

Heraldo Muñoz, a former leader in the left movements of Chile, provides a look at the dictator Augusto Pinochet who ruled with an iron fist in Chile throughout the 1970's and early 80's. Muñoz provides what he terms as a political memoir to look at the changes surrounding the regime from those who opposed it throughout the time of Pinochet. One point that has to be appreciated from this book is that while it captures the horrors of Pinochet's time it does not go through a categorical list of atrocities as most Pinochet books do. Muñoz focuses instead on what was changing in Chile and how it fit into a wider global context vis a vis communism and the west. While clearly gloating over the fall of Pinochet and outright mocking Pinochet's defense at trial this book gives one side's account of the story and it is a side that has not been told in this much detail from one on the ground yet. For those who are starting out in this subject I would not recommend this book as it assumes a decent knowledge of Chile and does not give a balanced look at the sides. For those who have read more this is an excellent addition to the literature on the topic and a wonderful primary source for those looking into the history of Chile.

As a Chilean born towards the end of Pinochet's rule, this book is particularly interesting as the author makes an evident effort to be as objective as possible, while acknowledging his biases. The detailed events of the No campaign tell us that, not so long ago, the current political parties had more in common than divisions, and offer some hope for the future.

An extremely good read, I couldn't put down the last third of the book. Mr. Muñoz's condemnation of Pinochet is fact-based and well argued, and yet it reads like a thriller. It's an important era in human history, and there are many stories that need to be told. This is one of them, and a powerful one at that. I would absolutely recommend this book.

Mr. Muñoz has provided a detailed, interesting account of President Pinochet's rule and the concerted effort to re-establish democracy in Chile. I was particularly interested in the steps taken to pry Pinochet from power. For those of us with great fondness for Chile and her people, this was a wonderful story of how Chileans reinstated democratic rule which had so long been their birthright.

Chile vencera', indeed.

Written by a Chilean socialist politician, it delivers a balanced and complete narrative of Pinochet's years in power. An effort to use sources from both sides is welcome. It nicely mixes personal accounts with a thorough examination of the main political and social events in Chile during Pinochet's times.

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