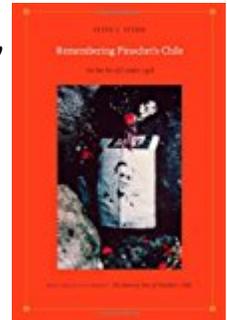
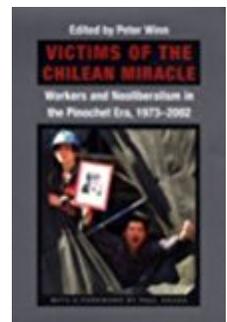


Steve J. Stern. *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998: The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile, Vol. I.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. 278 S. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8223-3354-8.



Peter Winn, ed.. *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973-2002.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004. xvi + 423 pp. \$89.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8223-3309-8.



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Although both books examine Chile and Pinochet, the questions they pose, the topics they cover, and the conclusions they reach are very different. Yet separately or even more forcefully in combination with each other, these books offer the reader a powerful vision of the impact that the Pinochet dictatorship had and continues to have on Chileans and Chilean society. The Stern book examines how Chileans remember the Pinochet period and uses the insights gained from this exploration to engage an innovative and thoughtful theoretical discussion of memory. The Winn book, which is an edited volume, reveals the devastating consequences that the military regime and the post-dictatorship Concertacion

governments have had on workers and the labor movement.

Remembering Pinochet's Chile operates on two interrelated levels. One level consists of a fascinating exploration of how Chileans remember the Pinochet period. To determine this, Stern interviews Chileans from across the political spectrum, representing diverse political classes. As he illustrates, Chileans' memories of Pinochet are often bi-directional; they both reflect past (and current) political attitudes toward the government of Salvador Allende that preceded the dictatorship and promote current political perspectives and goals.

In order to gauge how Chileans thought about the Pinochet period, Stern conducted numerous

interviews with an assortment of people. These interviews, which supply Stern with much of the empirical data he uses in the book, provide vivid portraits of the interviewees and valuable insights into how and why people construct both the Pinochet period and their own relationship to it. Thus, through them we learn about Doña Elena, an upper-class woman from the landowning elite, who considers September 11, 1973, (the day the military overthrew the Allende government) "as the best day of her life," because the military pronouncement, which is how she characterizes the coup, saved Chile from "imminent catastrophe" (p. 7, 27). In sharp contrast to Elena's story is that of Herminda Morales, a working-class leftist whose two sons remain missing to this day, victims of the military's practice of kidnapping and making those it considered its opponents disappear. Far from saving Chile, Morales believes the dictatorship produced a lasting wound that has not yet healed.

However, Stern does more than just recount the stories of certain select Chileans. He uses their stories, their ways of constructing the past to argue for a theoretically sophisticated vision of memory, one that draws on the extensive literature that exists on the topic and also makes significant contributions to it. Stern argues that memories can best be understood as part of a historical process and are intimately linked to politics. To illustrate this perspective, Stern explores four distinct, and in some cases related, ways that people remember the Pinochet period. The first is "Heroic Memory" (memory as salvation), an attitude that Doña Elena, mentioned above, embodies. She, along with other Chileans with similar politics, remembers the Allende era as a time of crisis and praises the valiant military and Pinochet for saving Chile from disaster. Her polar opposite, Herminda Morales, laments the overthrow of Allende and views the Pinochet period as a time of persecution, suffering, loss, and brutality. Her memory is a dissident one (memory as unresolved rupture), since it opposes the heroic vision

of the Pinochet period that Doña Elena cherishes, just as Herminda Morales and her family contested the dictatorship itself.

Memories serve to inspire Violeta, a Catholic who was active in the human rights movement during the Pinochet dictatorship. She remembers the mass protests against Pinochet, working with other human rights activists, and the contributions that grassroots activists made to the recreation and reemergence of a civic culture in Chile. Her own activism and her fears of torture led her to examine and learn more about herself. For all these reasons, her memories of the Pinochet period are ones of both persecution and awakening.

Stern's discussion of Colonel Juan F. is a fascinating exploration of how a military officer who served during the dictatorship remembers, or more accurately closes the lid on many of his memories of his past. Stern labels this an Indifferent Memory (memory as a closed box) since it attempts to "Clos[e] the Box on the Past" (p. 88). What most strongly alerts Stern to the Colonel's "will to forget" his involvement in the political violence that characterized the Pinochet period was his behavior at the end of the interview. As Stern tries to leave, the Colonel detains him for more than half an hour and repeats his belief that Chileans do not care about the past. His excessive insistence on this point prompted Stern to research the Colonel's activities during the military regime; from this investigation Stern concludes that the Colonel was neither unaware of a massacre that took place in the province to which he was posted nor as indifferent to its moral and political implications as he would have Stern believe.. Instead of either glorifying or lamenting the Pinochet period, the Colonel makes a bad faith effort to put it behind him.

Stern also explores what he calls "Emblematic Memory," which offers a "framework that organizes meaning, selectivity, and counter-memory" (p. 105). Unlike individual memories, emblematic memory receives some form of public acceptance

and validation and offers a framework in which people can shape their memories; it also helps to organize the way people construct their memories.

Illustrating the highly original nature of Stern's exploration of memory is his introduction of new terms. One particularly useful word is "policide," which he defines as "an effort to destroy root and branch--permanently--the ways of doing and thinking politics that had come to characterize Chile by the 1960s" (p. 31). Like genocide and ethnocide, the word policide, whose applicability extends beyond Chile, accurately describes the efforts of a political regime to eliminate not just individuals but political vision, identity, and practice because of the threat they pose to those who hold the reigns of power.

This is a pathbreaking book that not only contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussion of memory but also brings to light the experiences and perspectives of several prototypical Chileans whose stories have seldom been heard before. Of particular importance are Stern's interviews with members of the Chilean military; they range from the Colonel mentioned above, to conscripts who were appalled by the violence they witnessed and in which felt forced to participate. Stern's ability to elicit the intimate testimony he did from the interviews is a tribute to his skills as an interviewer and offers all those who engage in oral history a lesson: interviewing people is much more than formulating questions, it also demands a full sensory, intellectual, and emotional engagement with the interviewees to understand what they are telling you and, just as importantly, what they are not telling you.

Victims of the Chilean Miracle is a must-read book for students of modern Latin American history. It offers a profound and moving indictment of the neoliberal economic policies implemented during the Pinochet regime as well as a sharp criticism of the post-Pinochet Concertacion governments for continuing these policies. At the same

time, it graphically articulates the impact these policies had on workers, the working class, and the trade union movement on both an individual and a collective level. Although the book fittingly focuses on Chile, since it was the first Latin American country to introduce neoliberalism and has done so very thoroughly, the lessons this book offers apply far beyond that nation.

The book consists of two framing essays, one by Peter Winn (who edited the volume) on the Pinochet period and the other by Volker Frank on the post-Pinochet decade, 1990-2000. The following chapters present case studies of workers in different areas of the Chilean economy, detailing the stories of workers in the textile, fishing, agricultural, copper, forestry, and metalwork industries. These essays present a very dismal picture of what life was like for Chilean workers during the Pinochet dictatorship and an almost equally grim one for the situation of workers in the post-dictatorial period. For this reason, this is a heart-wrenching book, one that reveals all too clearly how disastrous neoliberalism has been for working-class consciousness, organization, and standard of living, let alone the overall economic health and environmental well being of the nation.

The essays work remarkably well together; each builds on the other to produce a coherent picture of what workers have experienced and how they have responded to the drastic economic transformations that Chile has undergone since the overthrow of the Allende government in 1973. Political repression was one of the recognized hallmarks of the Pinochet regime. Somewhat less acknowledged are the targeted attacks that the military dictatorship directed against the trade union movement and working-class activists. As these essays make clear, in order to implement neoliberalism in Chile, the military had to eliminate any challenges to its economic policy. The Left certainly represented one such obstacle and, as this book makes abundantly clear, the working

class did too. To prevent working-class opposition to its policies from emerging, the Pinochet regime not only arrested working-class leaders and activists, it also implemented the infamous 1978 Plan Laboral. This plan decimated the labor movement by stripping the unions of bargaining power, undercutting labor's ability to strike, and vesting enormous power in the hands of the employers. The combination of political repression, an economic recession, and the imposition of an anti-worker labor code severely undermined workers' ability to organize against the plan, let alone seriously oppose it.

The working class was the sector of Chilean society hit the hardest by Pinochet's economic and political policies. It was also, as Winn and Thomas Miller Klubock make clear in their respective essays, the workers whose public denunciations of the dictatorship initiated and created the public space for the mass protests that emerged in the early 1980s. This is one of the saddest ironies revealed by the book. The Chilean working class was probably one of the best organized and most class-conscious in Latin America prior to the military coup. It was certainly the social sector that suffered the most during the dictatorship. And it was the organized working class that took to streets to protest the dictatorship. The denouement, however, is not a happy one, as many of the essays make clear. The dictatorship ended, but much of its legacy remains. Workers have not regained their power and their organizations remain weak. As a result, the living and working conditions of most Chilean workers are onerous and exhausting. They are paid way too little, forced to travel long distances just to obtain or maintain a job. Denied the respect, health care, and benefits they deserve, many of them understandably lack hope that the future will be better. In one of the most damning critiques of the Concertacion's impact on workers, Volker Frank points out that "the quality of a worker's life in Chile's new democracy leaves much to be desired

and may be lower today than it was in 1990" when the Pinochet dictatorship ended (p. 114).

Each essay in the book is a strong and original exploration of different workers' realities in distinct industries. Peter Winn's essay builds on his book *Weavers of the Revolution* and examines how the textile industry in Chile has changed in the last three decades and how these transformations, along with the policies of the Pinochet and Concertacion governments, have affected workers.[1] Contrary to expectations, conditions for the textile workers have improved very little, if at all under the Concertacion. In part, this is due to the globalization of the economy and the enormous power exerted by international capital to seek cheap labor, thus undercutting the ability of organized labor to resist its demands. Also, as Winn points out, the Concertacion governments wanted to make it clear to the business elite in Chile (and elsewhere) that they had no intention of repeating the economic policies of the Allende government. Far from supporting workers' demands, these governments have been far more conciliatory, even ingratiating to capital, thus disappointing many in the working class who anticipated that the ending of the dictatorship would result in improved conditions for workers.

This is a theme that many of the chapters echo. Joel Stillerman's essay on metalworkers reveals that many of the same conditions for workers exist in this economic sector as well. The essay also shows just how profound the political repression, dissolution of the union movement, and economic changes have been on workers' consciousness. For many workers, individualism and consumerism, a byproduct of neoliberalism, have replaced a coherent identity based on class and a shared sense of exploitation and unity.

Thomas Miller Klubock's chapter on the El Teniente copper miners also illustrates the negative impact that the last thirty years have had on workers' ability to collectively resist the economic assaults that have been launched against them. El

Teniente copper miners had long been a privileged sector of Chilean workers, a status earned by their organization and struggles, and by the centrality of copper to the Chilean economy. Neoliberalism introduced new and advanced technologies, privatization, and subcontractors, all of which served to undermine the workers' collective strength, which was the source of their ability to resist the attacks launched against them. Although they launched the anti-Pinochet struggle, and thus were pivotal in the restoration of democracy, their political contributions have largely been unpaid.

As Heidi Tinsman's discussion of female agricultural workers shows, however, when we consider women workers the picture is a bit more complicated. The Pinochet regime prioritized the production of goods for export, primary among which was Chilean fruit. As the fruit export industry expanded in the Chilean countryside, many rural women got paying jobs for the first time. This income, which challenged many established gender practices, allowed women to have more economic independence and, as a result, a more positive sense of self. Although they work in highly exploitative conditions, their ability to earn a wage, much of which they spend on their households, some of which they spend on themselves, has altered their position within their homes and enhanced their bargaining power in their relationships with men.

As Rachel Shurman describes it, work in the fishing industry is exceedingly difficult and, like many of the other areas of work, made harder by the absence of a strong union that could successfully demand improved working conditions. Contributing to the workers' weakened bargaining position is the fact that Chile's fish industry is inserted into the global market, and reflects both the ebbs and flows of global demand and global competition. This chapter clearly shows the extent to which conditions of Chilean fish workers de-

pend on global factors, most of which do not favor the workers.

The final essay by Klubock brings to life a world that, I believe, few of us know much about: the farming and production of wood and wood products. It also is a fairly searing account of the miserable and highly exploitative conditions in which these isolated and unorganized laborers work. In order to find jobs, many workers travel to the isolated mountains where the forests are, leaving behind their families and their affective relationships to live in substandard housing, eat unhealthy and insufficient food, and work long hours. In one of the more poignant stories in a book full of them, Klubock recounts the cases of workers who do not even get paid for their labor, since their employers simply refuse to pay them or vanish, leaving the worker with nothing to show and nothing to give his family after weeks of arduous labor. This chapter, like so many of the others, should enrage all those who read it and encourage us to act to remedy the situation.

These are two very important and powerful books that can be read and appreciated on both the graduate and undergraduate level. They starkly reveal the enormous and largely negative impact that the Pinochet dictatorship had on Chile. The political traumas that Stern describes are matched by the political/economic disasters discussed in the Winn volume. These two books offer new insights into the Pinochet dictatorship and its legacy, and help the reader understand both the Chile of today and of the last thirty years.

Note

[1]. Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

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