



The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability

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When first published last year on the thirtieth anniversary of the Chilean coup, Peter Kornbluh's *Pinochet File* was hailed on the editorial page of the *New York Times*—no doubt to the aggravation of Henry Kissinger and all those who would deny the U.S. role in undermining Chilean democracy and supporting the advent of General Pinochet's brutal dictatorship. "Thanks to Peter Kornbluh," Marc Cooper wrote, "we have the first complete, almost day-to-day and fully documented record of this sordid chapter in Cold War American history."

Peter Kornbluh led the campaign for the declassification of some 24,000 secret CIA, White House, NSC, and Defense Department records on Chile. The paperback edition includes new information and documents released since the hardcover went to press. This material is incorporated into a powerful retelling of the events that Newsweek magazine calls "a remarkable reconstruction of the secret U.S. foreign policy that transformed Chile into a dictatorship."

The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability Details

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From Reader Review The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability for online ebook

Christopher Saunders says

Comprehensive recounting of the crimes of Augusto Pinochet, military dictator of Chile from 1973 through 1990, and the United States' role in his regime. Kornbluh presents a damning mixture of declassified documents and analysis, demonstrating American meddling in Chilean elections dating back at least to 1961, when Kennedy decided to make the country a test case for his Alliance for Progress - which meant blocking Salvador Allende's progressive alliance and undermining Chilean democracy in the name of freedom. The utter callousness and naked criminality of American officials, from CIA chiefs Richard Helms and William Colby ("Make economy scream"), to various businessmen hoping to plunder post-coup Chile, to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon's Cold War obsessions are striking; it's impossible to read this book and doubt that American intervention was instrumental in destroying Allende's government. Not that Pinochet is without blame or agency; as Kornbluh shows, despite massive American aid he became a loose cannon, unleashing death squads against dissenters at home and enemies abroad through Operation Condor, culminating in the murder of Orlando Letelier in Washington, DC. Accounts of torture, assassination and political chicanery make for painful reading, yet demonstrate a human cost beyond figures and abstract rhetoric. As a case study of amorality in American foreign policy the book's without peer, though it's valuable as well at showing how a reckless, evil client can exceed even the worst expectations.

Matthew says

A must-read for every American, unfortunately. A history of US support and involvement in the Chilean coup of 1973, with receipts.

Mark says

Recommended to me by Emily. As I've followed the trials of Pinochet since his first arrest in Spain it is on my to read list. Most likely will be before, during or after a trip to S. America.

Doug says

Good read. It is a little long but very readable considering the subject matter. The government documents provided are a great resource. It's a good reminder of how the USG was willing to tolerate almost anything in the "fight" against communism.

Jennifer says

This was a very well-written, detailed account of the atrocities committed in Chile and how the U.S.

influenced and actively changed the course of history in this country--all in the name of supposed anti-communism. Our role in ousting a democratically-elected president will forever be a stain among many others of our supposed desire to spread freedom and democracy in the world.

Sean Glover says

In this astonishingly well-written and comprehensive book, one may find, in part, THE answer. Why did the "CIA obstruct" the declassification of various intelligence documents prior to release by the NARA. I don't know probably because the USG forty committee was attempting to "foster a military coup" and otherwise aiming to prevent, by any means necessary, the election and potential positive achievements of the first democratically elected Marxist/socialist president in the western hemisphere, Salvador Allende.

This book not only provided interesting facts especially about the corrupt actions of Nixon, Kissinger, and many others, it also inspired commitment to freedom of information and investigative research; increased interest and sympathy for/in Marx and his writing and living as well as incorporeal figures who carry/carried the Marxist legacy, i.e. Neruda, Castro, Trotsky and quite a few others I cannot think of; and finally enhanced lyrics to a song I'm writing called 'the other side of propaganda:' "Economic strangulation brought about by ethical disintegration, linked to the people's exacerbation through covert defamation for the purpose of radical inflammation..."

Fraser Sherman says

While I knew that the US worked to bring down Chilean president Allende in the early 1970s (he'd committed the unpardonable crime of getting elected while socialist) and supported the Pinochet dictatorship that followed, the details still make horrifying reading. Despite Pinochet's brutal repression of dissenters, leftists and rivals among his own people, his anticommunism washed away all sins as far as the US government was concerned; even when the regime murdered US citizens in Chile or took out a Chilean anti-regime activist in DC, the government still wanted him to be our buddy. Depressing and sobering.

Matt says

September 11th not only resonates for Americans. On September 11, 1973 the presidential palace in Santiago, Chile was bombed killing the democratically elected president, Salvador Allende. An attack conducted by the Chilean armed forces led by Augusto Pinochet.

But *The Pinochet Files* is not so much a history of Allende or Pinochet. It's a U.S. history book. It's a history of U.S. involvement in inciting, enabling and ultimately supporting the brutal military junta which replaced a democratically elected president. It's a story of the CIA's involvement and America's *realpolitik* justification. It's another chapter in the duplicitous history of U.S. foreign affairs which undermines our repeated empty rhetoric of moral action. It's another reason why we earned the world's contempt.

The full extent of CIA involvement is still debated which, since it's an organization defined by obfuscation, must make it a difficult opponent. However, Kornbluh does an admirable job sifting through declassified, though redacted, documents to support his claims. Dozens of pages after each chapter shows his photocopied

original sources. It makes for compelling arguments and distressing truths.

Sarah says

This comprehensive, controversial and enlightening volume from Peter Kornbluh unveils one of history's greatest obstructions of democracy, perpetrated by an organization supposedly renowned for its democratic ideals--the United States government. The hundreds of declassified and redacted CIA, DoD, FBI, and other USG documents, and accompanying commentary, unveil the troubling covert and overt influence of the United States in installing and upholding one of the world's most notorious dictators and his regime of atrocity. What more appropriate time to consider the original 9/11 (coincidentally the date of the U.S.-supported Chilean military coup in 1973), than amidst the Snowden-leaked NSA spying revelations currently embroiling the U.S. government? See if your mistrust and skepticism recovers after this read! Also, thank your local archivist: without archivists at the National Archives/NARA, no such call to accountability would exist.

Paul Rhodes says

Very long book, but very useful. Documents how the United States of America created the conditions in Chile necessary to precipitate a coup d'etat and then supported the obvious fascist pig Pinochet, despite his exportation of terrorism even to this nation's capital. The villains in this story are besides Pinochet and murdering and maiming minions Nixon and, of course, Henry Kissinger. You'd think that a Jew who had escaped the Holocaust would have not supported a Nazi like Pinochet with so much mouth-frothing zeal, but you'd be wrong. Why Kissinger is not in some prison rotting away for his laundry list Crimes against Humanity, I have no idea.

The Hero in this book, if there is any, is surprisingly Eliot Abrams of the Reagan Administration. He was the one who pushed the U.S. Government to push Pinochet out of power. Who woulda thunk it? Eliot Abrams, the asshole who lied about the massacre at El Mozote and one of the architects of our Vernichtungskrieg in Nicaragua, was a champion of human rights in Chile? Ain't that something?

Yeah, well, Chile had long been a PR Disaster for the United States. We still could get away with some of our lies about El Salvador and Nicaragua, but the brutal dictatorship in Chile was just too obvious to be covered up by Reagan's vacuous smile. It was hurting our self-appointed reputation as a Champion of Democracy. Chile made us look bad, and because only appearances mattered to the Reagan Administration, it had to do something about Pinochet. And so the Reaganites spurred on by Abrams forced Pinochet to hold that proverbial free and fair election, and he was voted out.

Of course, the Reaganites, it should be repeated, did this not because this gave a tinker's damn about human rights. They just needed a good PR coup so they could continue savaging Latin America. Nevertheless, what they accomplished in Chile was much better than what our Human Rights President ever did for the Chileans.

Mike says

Who was this general turned dictator and why did he torture and kill so many of his country's people?

A long-time ally of the U.S., from the time of Nixon, the Pinochet regime's relationship to the U.S.—which included a 1976 car-bombing in Washington D.C.—is explored via U.S. government documentation released under the freedom of information act.

I think my favorite part was the nicknames given to the more infamous of his torture camps (some run by ex-Nazis). As I recall "Casa Sexy" was one of them, so named because they played disco music all the time.

Jenny says

If you want to know what the CIA was up to in Chile in 1973, this book breaks it all down...

Misanthropist says

If I could give it 0 stars, I would. This book was incredibly boring and incredibly biased and incredibly long and I suffered until the end, but I hated every minute of it. :P I wouldn't have read it, but someone lent it to my mother and she can't read English, so she asked me to read it for her so I could give her an opinion. That's the only reason why I read it. I hope I never have to read something like this again or I'll truly die of boredom. -_-

Katie says

As I read this book, I kept thinking that it was both frightening and fascinating. Kornbluh does a fantastic job of sifting through thousands of documents to present a complex story that spans decades and dozens of characters from a variety of political persuasions in the US and Chile. Not an easy read, but I would absolutely recommend it to anyone interested in US-Chilean relations or US-Latin American relations in general. Above all, to me it demonstrated the power and importance, as well as the limitations, of open government/records. The inclusion of primary source documents, including many in redacted form, is a nice touch and gives extra weight to the narrative.
