

## **Pinochet Dies, Reflections of a Displaced Chilean**

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Today I reflect on the past, on what could have been if September 11, 1973 was an ordinary day in not so ordinary times in my beloved and distant Chile. Dreaming of the impossible, I long to be in the streets of Santiago making myself count among the thousands who have long opposed Dictator Augusto Pinochet. Instead I am far away as many Chileans are who were uprooted and never able to re-insert themselves back into the country. I know I tried and perhaps I will again later in life.

A celebratory day for me would have been the day that Pinochet was convicted of crimes against humanity. In the end the Chilean state spared him because the power of traditional elites is entrenched throughout all levels of government, including the judiciary, and in the pillars of the economy which was made possible through strategic changes to the Constitution during dictatorial rule.

Pinochet was both a puppet and intellectual author of repression that secured US and Chilean capital at the expense of the lower classes. It is important to remember that Pinochet did not act alone. His regime came into power with the assistance of the CIA and through other mercenaries who continue to walk freely in the streets of Santiago.

Today the country's elites (albeit somewhat changed with new types of capital ventures) continue to be the same. The same last names from the most prominent oligarchic families continue to have the same ring. So for me Pinochet's passing does not mean much. Fascism Chilean style remains. The "free market" and repression have induced social atomization and eroded radical consciousness of the working classes. Moreover, workers have been reduced to consumers. Poets have stopped reciting. Activists are seen as delinquents while businessmen are celebrated. Many of the Left have been bought by power, status and money. This is the brilliance of Chilean neoliberal governmentality which has been able to institutionalize and quell dissent. When this complex psycho-social-economic machinery does not work bring in the Terrorist Law. This is how the Chilean state for instance has been able to justify the incarceration of Mapuche leaders for defending their lands and ways of life from Chilean and foreign capital encroachments.

Many of us, from different generations and life experiences, have had to learn to live with an untreatable type of schizophrenia that constantly clashes the past, present with forgetting and remembering. All I can do is to console myself with the dreams of our fallen heroes who dared to dream about a better world. I believe we have to continue fighting to make these dreams a reality wherever our country's painful history has displaced us, in the here and the now, wherever we are...