

The Incredible Unending Trial of General Augusto Pinochet: An Open Media Saga

General Augusto Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile, died in 2006 at the age of 91. But his legacy continues to haunt the country, and his trial for human rights abuses remains one of the most complex and controversial legal cases in recent history.

Pinochet came to power in a military coup in 1973, and ruled Chile for 17 years. During his time in office, he oversaw a brutal regime that killed or "disappeared" thousands of dissidents.



Exorcising Terror: The Incredible Unending Trial of General Augusto Pinochet (Open Media Series)

by Ariel Dorfman

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After Pinochet was arrested in London in 1998, Spain began extradition proceedings against him. But the British government, fearing that a trial would destabilize Chile, refused to extradite him. Pinochet was eventually

released in 2000, but the Spanish authorities continued to pursue their case against him.

In 2004, Pinochet was indicted in Chile on charges of human rights abuses. But the case was repeatedly delayed, and Pinochet never faced trial. He died in 2006, still a free man.

The trial of Augusto Pinochet was a complex and controversial affair. It raised important questions about the limits of justice, the role of the military in a democracy, and the legacy of authoritarianism in Latin America.

The case also had a significant impact on the development of international law. In 1998, the International Criminal Court (ICC) was established to prosecute individuals accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The ICC's jurisdiction is limited to crimes committed after 2002, but the Pinochet case helped to establish the principle that individuals can be held accountable for human rights abuses, even if they are no longer in power.

The Pinochet Regime

Augusto Pinochet was born in Valparaíso, Chile, in 1915. He joined the Chilean Army in 1933, and rose through the ranks to become commander-in-chief in 1973.

On September 11, 1973, Pinochet led a military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende. Pinochet established a military junta that ruled Chile for the next 17 years.

The Pinochet regime was characterized by widespread human rights abuses. The regime used torture, arbitrary detention, and summary executions to suppress dissent. Thousands of people were killed or "disappeared" during Pinochet's rule.

The Pinochet regime also implemented a series of economic reforms that led to a sharp increase in poverty and inequality. The regime's policies favored the wealthy and powerful, and left many Chileans struggling to make ends meet.

The Fall of Pinochet

In 1988, Pinochet agreed to hold a plebiscite on whether he should remain in power. The plebiscite was held on October 5, 1988, and Pinochet was defeated by a margin of 55% to 43%.

Pinochet stepped down as president on March 11, 1990, and was replaced by Patricio Aylwin, a Christian Democrat. Aylwin's government began to investigate the human rights abuses that had occurred during the Pinochet regime.

In 1998, Pinochet was arrested in London on charges of human rights abuses. The Spanish authorities had requested his extradition, but the British government refused to extradite him. Pinochet was eventually released in 2000, but the Spanish authorities continued to pursue their case against him.

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The Legacy of Pinochet

The legacy of Augusto Pinochet is complex and controversial. Some Chileans view him as a hero who saved the country from communism. Others view him as a brutal dictator who committed human rights abuses against his own people.

The Pinochet regime had a profound impact on Chile. The regime's human rights abuses left a deep scar on the country, and its economic policies led to increased poverty and inequality.

The trial of Augusto Pinochet was a significant event in Chilean history. The case raised important questions about the limits of justice, the role of the military in a democracy, and the legacy of authoritarianism in Latin America.

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