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Clandestine In Chile: The Adventures Of Miguel Littin (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

In 1973, the film director Miguel Littín fled Chile after a U.S.-supported military coup toppled the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende. The new dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, instituted a reign of terror and turned Chile into a laboratory to test the poisonous prescriptions of the American economist Milton Friedman. In 1985, Littín returned to Chile disguised as a Uruguayan businessman. He was desperate to see the homeland he'd been exiled from for so many years; he also meant to pull off a very tricky stunt: with the help of three film crews from three different countries, each supposedly busy making a movie to promote tourism, he would secretly put together a film that would tell the truth about Pinochet's benighted Chile—a film that would capture the world's attention while landing the general and his secret police with a very visible black eye. Afterwards, the great novelist Gabriel García Márquez sat down with Littín to hear the story of his escapade, with all its scary, comic, and not-a-little surreal ups and downs. Then, applying the same unequalled gifts that had already gained him a Nobel Prize, García Márquez wrote it down. *Clandestine in Chile* is a true-life adventure story and a classic of modern reportage.

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Customer Reviews

"The journalism which began Márquez's Nobel Prize-winning career is employed here not only to tell Littín's remarkable story, but offer a tragic summary of Chilean politics." *The Independent* (London) "Reissued nearly 25 years after its initial

appearance, the book recounts a middle-aged caper, vainglorious yet genuinely gripping. Time has drained the adventure of its urgency, and our geographical and cultural distance blunts its force. Still, this remains a significant document. An invaluable preface by Francisco Goldman explains why.

• The Boston Globe • “Clandestine in Chile is a memoir of Mr. Littin’s six-week adventure, as told to and recast by Mr. Garcia Marquez, and a sketch for what the latter calls the film behind the film, the personal story he finds more moving than the original film project. The idea is moving, indeed dazzling...[Gabriel Garcia Márquez] seems chiefly to have lent some of his own quietly lyrical cadences to certain images and chapter endings. He evokes well the haunting cold of autumn in Chile, and gently registers the exile’s nostalgias and surprises.”

• Michael Wood, The New York Times • “Garcia Marquez has written a terse political thriller with shafts of insight into conflicts of identity.”

• Newsweek • “In Garcia Marquez’s prose, Littin’s actions become truly heroic and the clandestine hero achieves the grandeur of all popular heroes. Readers now have the story of a magnificent civil disobedience.”

• The Globe and Mail (Canada) • “Garcia Marquez’s book is based on hours of taped interviews with Littin, and is retold in the first person, which gives it suspense and immediacy and brings embattled Chile vividly to life. It portrays a government without legitimacy, a people living in fear and a resistance movement determined to fight for change.”

• The Sunday Times (London) • “A rousing adventure story, this is also the best reportage available about conditions in Chile today.”

• “It is excellent journalism...this book remains an interesting historical document”

• “smuggled across the Chilean border like contraband”

• “of what life was like under the old dictator. I have never read a book that pokes quite such irreverent fun at the dangers of military power.”

• The Independent (London) • “Fluid and full of surprises.”

• The Washington Post • “Two foremost artists of Latin America meet in this breathtaking story. Clandestine is a fascinating literary journey. The book alone is celebration enough of human ingenuity and determination. I recommend it wholeheartedly.”

• Marjorie Agosin, The Christian Science Monitor • “Marquez re-creates the story brilliantly from taped interviews with Littin and writes it in first person.”

• Claire Scobie, The Sun Herald (Sydney) • “An extraordinary if Chaplinesque adventure which would make good comedy if it did not take place against the background of one of the most repressive regimes in modern times. [it succeeds] as a reporting style swinging freely between effervescence and emotionalism.”

• The Courier Mail

Gabriel García Márquez (b. 1928) was born in Aracataca, Colombia. He began working as a reporter while studying law at the University of Cartagena and published his first book, the novella *The Leaf Storm*, in Bogotá in 1955. Among his best-known subsequent works are the novels *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, and *The General in His Labyrinth*. In 1986 he wrote *Clandestine in Chile: The Adventures of Miguel Littín*, about an exile's return to the repressive Chile of General Augusto Pinochet. The political revelations of the book led to the burning of almost 15,000 copies by the Chilean government. García Márquez has lived primarily in Mexico since the 1960s, and in 1982 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Asa Zatz was born in Mexico and has translated nearly one hundred books. He lives in New York. Francisco Goldman is the author of four novels, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, *The Ordinary Seaman*, *The Divine Husband*, the forthcoming *Say Her Name*, and one work of nonfiction, *The Art of Political Murder*.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, famous for his books, 'A Hundred Years of Solitude' and 'Love in the time of Cholera' puts on his journalistic hat again, and produced this summary of 18 hours of interview with Miguel Littín, a famous Chilean film director who had returned to Chile during Pinochet's regime of terror to film the condition of the country and the effects on the people. Miguel Littín had fled Chile after Pinochet toppled Allende in the coup and remained in exile, being on Pinochet's list of 5000 people forbidden to enter the country. Littín spent 6 weeks in Chile disguised as a Uruguayan businessman. Precise and detailed planning with 3 European film crews who were unaware of each other for security, filming different sections of Chile, was necessary and made possible only with the assistance of the underground resistance. In order to escape detection, Littín had to stay in character the entire time he was in Chile, keep an eye out for the carabineros paying attention to him, avoid calling on friends and family, make sure his teams were kept safe, the film footage smuggled out of Chile into Italy, and that they all get out before the game was up. His adventures were very cloak and dagger, meetings were a series of complicated passwords and his guardian angel was clearly working overtime because he had some incredible luck in getting out of more than a few potential dangerous situations where his disguise could have been uncovered.

Clandestine in Chile tells the story of Miguel Littín, a filmmaker who travels to Chile in disguise after being exiled. Miguel and his film crews document the human rights abuses in Chile under Pinochet

and interview the victims of the regime's violence. The story is fast paced and provides a look at how much the Chilean people suffered under Pinochet (which I knew little about before reading this work). I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Latin American history or anyone who just wants a fast paced, interesting read.

Excellent book for anyone interested in the other 9/11 in Chile. The Allende/Pinochet era

This was a real surprise for me. It's very fast paced and gives a feel for the claustrophobic environment of Chile during the time. I have no idea how much this matched Littin's real experiences, but it's a fascinating story and I think it does give a glimpse of Chile during those times.

Meet my expectation

Boring.

I found this a diverting read, but, unlike most reviewers, only two-dimensional in its pleasures. The reason is that we aren't told anything about the contents of what Littin filmed, or much even about Chile during that era, other than that the police were perhaps nicer to foreigners (or those whom they believed to be foreigners) than Littin might have expected. Also contrary to some other reviewers, I found the preface by Francisco Goldman to be very helpful for putting the book into context: After the 1973 coup in Chile, García Márquez had vowed not to write fiction until the junta fell. But he had misjudged Pinochet's longevity in power, and in 1979 GM announced that he had begun work on a book of short stories -- a capitulation that actually disappointed many of his fans, resulting in some bad PR for the writer. After Pinochet had embarrassed GM for staying in power so successfully, and after GM had become "el Nobel" in 1982, this 1986 book was GM's way to embarrass Pinochet as "an act of personal revenge and protest." This personal purpose is the source of the book's limitations. GM focuses most on showing how Littin was able to fool the junta's security apparatus -- getting in and out of Chile a couple of times and even shooting documentary footage in the presidential palace. At the time this nose-thumbing story may have been a sufficiently electrifying justification for a book, but to a reader today interested in what was happening in Chile it is a little frustrating. Even considering the book as drama rather than history, while GM does engage us with the pain and comedy of Littin's life in disguise, there are too

many other characters of whom we're told almost nothing: such as Elena, a plaid-skirted young woman in the underground who posed as Littfâ-n's wife, or the pretty nun who appears more than once in intrigue-drenched circumstances. These characters aren't developed not only because the book is based solely on a couple days' interviews with Littfâ-n, but because their backstories weren't necessary for achieving GM's aims. Featuring cloak-and-dagger tactics, many close shaves, and even its own Rollin/Paris (and, briefly, Cinnamon) characters, the book is fun in the way that an old fake-out-the-dictator episode of Mission Impossible is fun -- and thanks to the way GM chose to tell this true story, it's almost as fluffy as one of those scripts, too. Nonetheless, a good choice if you're in the mood for something light.

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