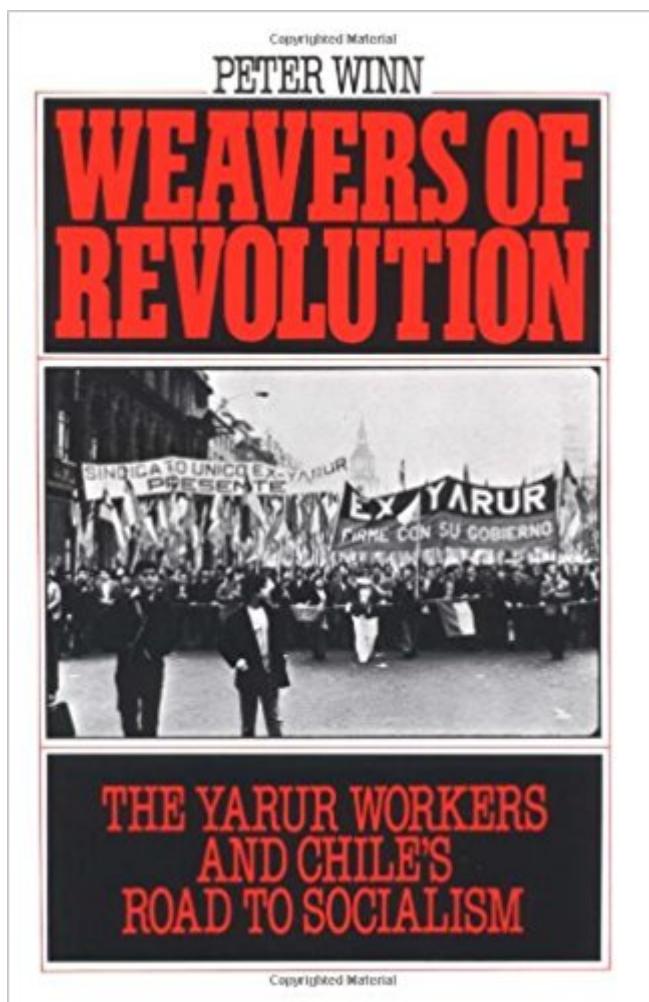


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Weavers Of Revolution: The Yarur Workers And Chile's Road To Socialism



Synopsis

This analysis of the dramatic seizure of the Yarur cotton mill in Santiago and its repercussions for Allende's revolution is based on extensive, unique interviews with officials (including Allende) and workers as well as on archival research.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Excellent book."--Gregory Crider, Drake University "The most useful of all my assigned supplementary texts. Students enjoyed reading it and felt they gained real insights into the causes of revolution...Provided a sustained and enthusiastic discussion."--Bill Donovan, Loyola College in Maryland "Well-written and accessible for a general audience."--Latin American Research Review "Provides valuable insights into one of the central dynamics of the short-lived Popular Unity government of Chile....No other work concretely takes us to the factory floor to examine the internal tensions of this revolutionary process."--Science and Society "[A] terrific book. Students loved it and learned a lot from it."--Jeffrey Rubin, Amherst College "A landmark in Latin American history and a leading example of the new social history in practice....Winn has combined the finest elements of historical work, a dramatic, human, and moving story recounted in the language of the main actors of the drama and woven into the larger context of its time and place....Written in a lively and often eloquent style...reads more like a novel than a scholarly work."--Hobart Spalding, The Americas "A richly textured...magnificent and much needed account of the most human and democratic phase of the Chilean road to socialism."--James Petras, The Nation "A marvelously good book; one of the

best published on Latin America in the past few years."--Arnold Bauer, University of California at Davis"Rich, vivid and fine in the telling...one of the outstanding historical studies to appear in the great wave of new scholarship on Latin America in the last twenty years."--John Womack, Harvard University"A long-needed and well-written corrective to the simplistic views that have shaped too much of our understanding of the pivotal years in the U.S.-Latin America relationship."--Walter LaFeber, Cornell University

Peter Winn is at Tufts University.

Readable, well-written, and highly informative. I couldn't imagine what it must have been like for the Old Timers who, having been exploited brutally for decades, now possessed the dignity and pride of being the cooperative owners and managers of their mill.

Slow at times, but very well researched. This is an important, yet little known, story about America and our Cold War foreign policy.

The guys/gals in this book have a rippling effect in the history of co's. It really goes to show that south America has been the testing ground of NeoLiberal politics for the last 50 years.

Winn is puzzlingly ignorant of the basic history of socialism, frequently making inaccurate claims about the novelty of worker actions or perspectives and failing to explain extremely straightforward applications of mainstream socialist thought. I cannot imagine that he has ever read Marx, which seems an odd blind spot for someone who publishes about socialist revolutionary process. His pro-capitalist perspective is further puzzling. Winn never misses an opportunity to explain that the workers never understood what they were doing, or to praise Yarur, even seeming amused that the factory owner kept a "harem" of female workers and assigned favorable work opportunities according to sexual favors. While the work on the Yarur factory is clearly exhaustively researched, the frequent errors in context and analysis substantially discount the scholarly value of the work. Aesthetically it is a good example of academic writing of its period: thus contemporary readers may find it insufferably florid.

I agree with the last reviewer, except for her\his curious reference to this being a "Trotskyist" view. What I like about this book is the way one can see the dilemmas and perspectives of different actors

within the coalition that backed Allende. Less an endorsement of any one tendency's political line, this book brings out the tragedy of various democratic revolutionary factions all trying to do the right thing and unable to unite the face of repression. Best of all, it links the perspectives of ordinary workers with the difficult choices face by leaders.

Winn is currently a History Professor at Tufts University (added the link to his office below) but at the time he began the research for this book he was completing his doctorate at Cambridge University. It is an interesting read, mostly documented with interviews with workers at the mill themselves. Winn gives good insight into the history of the mill itself and in doing so carefully explains the Chilean political class structure and the generational differences between the less politicized older workers and the more vocal younger workers. His main thesis, is essentially that Allende was too cautious in believing that he could appease the Christian Democratic faction of the Popular Unity coalition and instead should have embraced the calls from his own Socialist Party faction to immediately turn over factories to workers. While one may disagree with his perspective, there is no doubt that this work should be read by people from all political stripes if they want a detailed work into the politics within the PU government and grassroots activism in Chile during the Allende years.[...]

The seizure of Yarur factory on April 25, 1971 marked the beginning of a tumultuous struggle for socialism in Chile. Salvador Allende, of the popular unity party, ran on a platform that sought to unify the working population. Allende's vow to guide Chile down the democratic road to socialism is one of his greatest legacies. The democratic road to socialism was paved, at least symbolically, with the efforts of the working class. The failures and successes of Allende's travel through la "via Chilena" hinge on whether "the Chilean revolutionary process was of and by the workers or merely for the workers." Allende would die the death of a martyr: machine gun in hand in an enflamed national palace that had been besieged by a hostile coup. If Allende died the death of martyr, to whom was he a hero? Inconsistent with traditional revolutionary ideology Allende feared a rampant revolution. As a self-proclaimed Marxist his views irked both capitalists and the middle class. El presidente compaÑero, regardless, was a president for the people. His core constituency demanded a revolution from below and thus complicated the revolution from above that Allende attempted to impose. With these conflicts in mind Peter Winn analyzes the extent to which Allende (a socialist) both failed and succeeded as a revolutionary.

Winn's book gives a detailed (and Trotskyist) account of a "revolution from below" that transpired during Allende's "revolution from above." It depicts the struggles of textile workers as they grew conscious of their class standing, became unionized and, ultimately, seized control of the nation's most prominent mill. In the end, however, Winn demonstrates how the Yarur workers and the Popular Unity government imagined different Chilean roads to socialism, and how this divergence brought the social revolution and the Ex-Yarur mill to a tragic conclusion. It is a well-crafted and readable book...a "must" for any student of Latin American history, social revolution or Marxist theory.

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