

Few Latin American dictatorships received as much international condemnation as that of General Pinochet.

This book provides a fresh perspective on Chile and the Cold War, and the overall quality of the contributions is most impressive.

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Victor Herrero, *Agustín Edwards Eastman: una biografía desclasificada del dueño de El Mercurio* (Santiago de Chile: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, Debate, Chile, 2014), pp. 618, €8.49, E-book.

Victor Herrero's declassified biography of Agustín Edwards Eastman, the owner of *El Mercurio*, the most powerful newspaper in Chile, is a thorough study of the media's role in modern politics and of the Edwards family's influence on Chilean capitalism. Poised between academic history and investigative journalism, the book combines exhaustive archival analysis with material drawn from 70 interviews. Herrero weaves together a convincing account of five generations of Agustín Edwards, focusing on the last patriarch's impact on business and politics. The book sheds fresh light on the philosophy of *El Mercurio* and its mission to shape Chile's destiny. More than a mere biography, it is also a contribution to Latin American history and political economy, media studies and the sociology of elites.

The book contains five parts. Chapter 1 recounts the forging of the Edwards' family fortune and its influence on the Chilean polity. The first Agustín, Edwards Ossandón, made his wealth in the mining and banking industries of the 1830s. The second, Edwards Ross, a senator and mining mogul, helped provoke the War of the Pacific, 1879–83, conspired to overthrow President Balmaceda in 1891, and helped form a modern national press. He acquired *La Época* and *El Mercurio*, thus consolidating a media empire that has lasted for generations. The third, Edwards Mac-Cure, was Chilean Ambassador to the United Kingdom and nearly elected president in 1910. His frustrated political ambitions were canalised through his friend Arturo Alessandri, who became president in 1925 with Edwards' support. Edwards was then self-exiled in Europe during the Ibañez military government (1927–32), an experience that deeply shaped his grandson, the fifth Agustín, Edwards Eastman.

The next four chapters are focused on Edwards Eastman's life. Chapter 2, from 1956 to 1969, describes his management style as well as his obsession with preventing the election of Allende to the presidency. Using his power at *El Mercurio*, Edwards supported Frei's 1964 presidential campaign, boosting his connections with Rockefeller and the CIA, and helping secure Frei's eventual victory. Chapter 3 focuses on Edwards' experience of Allende's government (1970–3), and his self-exile in the United States during the *Unidad Popular*. It explores the role of the CIA in provoking the military coup, both through financing *El Mercurio*'s anti-Allende campaign, as well as by applying economic pressure on the government. Chapter 4 describes Edwards' role during the Pinochet dictatorship and explores how *El Mercurio* helped to justify the Chicago Boys' neoliberal transformations. These years are paradoxically marked by the decline of Edwards' empire and his entrenchment at *El Mercurio*, where he became the newsroom director in 1982. The last chapter examines Edwards' accommodation to the emerging democratic order wrought by Concertación governments (1990–2010). The kidnapping of his son

Cristián in 1992 is seen to be a personal watershed for Edwards, shedding light on his latter anxieties concerning crime, the country's image and the defence of rural values.

The book has many virtues. First, it does a good job of showing how the Edwards empire epitomises Chilean hierarchical capitalism, with its roots in the extractive and financial sectors. The Edwards were never great builders of industry or technological innovation, but were adept at using their money and political clout to advance their interests in the name of the nation. The Edwards story reveals the ancient connivance between business and politics in Chile and shows how the state apparatus has tended to serve the capitalist class.

Second, this biography traces the political ethos that inspired Chilean elites for generations, including the Edwards clan, an ethos rooted in the 1830s ministry of Diego Portales and his idea of 'freedom within order'. Afraid of uncontrolled, politicised masses, the Portales ethos values strong central authority and institutional channels as sources of governance. Indeed, it affirms stable political order as the key to 'freedom', and as the primary political value. Herrero shows how different Edwards family members embodied this political mindset, and how their drive to safeguard order sometimes undermined democratic interests.

Third, the book persuasively explores the role of the press in contemporary societies. *El Mercurio* is known as the *dean* of the Chilean press, not only for its immense political influence, but also for its esteemed pretension to neutrality. Its reputation grew largely on the basis of its cool, dispassionate tone, impervious to partisan and economic pressures. Herrero's investigation, however, shows many significant entanglements between *El Mercurio* and various governments. For example, *El Mercurio* supported the Pinochet regime in exchange for relief from the newspapers' debts during the 1980s. And while it continued supporting Pinochet's legacy during the transition to democracy in the 1990s, it built bridges with Concertación politicians, effectively helping to forge the 'Chilean consensus'. Concertación politicians were invited to participate in *Paz Ciudadana*, Edwards' crime reduction organisation, and many became columnists of *El Mercurio*.

Fourth, this book contributes to the sociology of elites. It shows how the Edwards sense of being the 'owners of Chile' was passed down through generations. The practice of marrying into other elite families, of passing down leadership positions in businesses, and of bequeathing political capital, helped ensure the lineage. This story of generational privilege points to the corresponding lack of class mobility in Chilean society, a theme the author returns to throughout the book.

The book closes by describing Edwards Eastman's business affairs today, which are now concentrated only in *El Mercurio* and the cattle industry. This shrinkage of his economic power is due in part to his extravagant consumption, for example his collecting of islands and yachts. Despite this shrinkage, however, the inheritor of the wealthiest business group of the 1950s has largely succeeded in spreading his political ideas.

Passionate about history, Edwards wanted his family's biography written, and in 2002 opened his libraries, archives and letters to historians for this purpose. The outcome, however, dissatisfied Edwards, and he refused the biography's publication. Herrero's account has come to fill this gap with a compelling story that no doubt differs from the one Edwards wanted told. Partly for this reason, it is an excellent book that any researcher attentive to contemporary Latin American history and media studies should read.

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