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THE INVESTIGATIVE BRIGADE

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hunting Human Rights Criminals
in Post-Pinochet Chile

PASCALE BONNEFOY MIRALLES

TRANSLATED BY RUSS DAVIDSON

"This is an extraordinary book . . . an encouraging book."

—CNN CHILE

"A gripping read by a scrupulous, dogged, and articulate investigator. Gave me a fascinating look behind the events unfolding in Chile's storied history of human rights and transitional justice, events that fill in important gaps in explaining how a country still under the sway of a former dictator could make such steady progress toward truth, justice, and reconciliation."

—JOHN DINGES, author of
The Condor Years

"This compelling, thrilling, and inspirational book takes a unique approach to the issue of accountability for human rights crimes: Bonnefoy tells the stories of the actual police detectives who investigated, tracked, and detained some of the most infamous human rights violators in modern history. Worthy of a broad audience."

—PETER KORNBLOH, coauthor of
Back Channel to Cuba

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Cover illustration: Protest against torture and violation of human rights during Pinochet dictatorship, Santiago, Chile, 1985. Courtesy Julio Etchart / Alamy Stock Photo.

During the seventeen-year Pinochet dictatorship, more than three thousand Chileans were murdered or disappeared without a trace. In 1991, a year after the brutal military regime ended, the new civilian government tasked the nation's detective force to investigate these crimes. Chilean journalist Pascale Bonnefoy tells the dramatic story of the detectives who hunted down and attempted to bring human rights violators to account. Led by a tiny group called Department V, the effort took place in the context of a frail transition to democracy and while the force itself was undergoing profound reforms. With Pinochet still in charge of the army, a center-left government tested how far it could go to bringing criminals to justice without risking military backlash.

To uncover this story, Bonnefoy gained the trust of detectives assigned to the cases and drew on their direct testimony. She excavated investigative files, witness testimony, and previously secret documents that helped her chronicle the dedicated brigade's dangerous mission. While substantial justice and institutional change took another decade to kick in, the detectives' work made it possible. Still unfolding, the post-Pinochet example is admired by many working for transitional justice around the globe.

PASCAL BONNEFOY MIRALLES is an investigative journalist based in Santiago, Chile, and associate professor of journalism at the University of Chile, Santiago.

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