

Visit of German President to Chile Raises Colonia Dignidad Issue

Por Anna Schlidt · 20/07/2016

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Florian Gallenberger
and Joachim Gauck
at the reception in
the German
embassy, on July 13
(in the background:
Reinhard Zeitner,
condemned for
collaborating with
sexual abuse)

A film by moviemaker Florian Gallenberger was the first explosion, but now, German President Joachim Gauck's visit to Chile has led to major denunciations and accusations. Not even the well-known faces of Emma Watson (from the Harry Potter saga) and Daniel Brühl (Good-Bye Lenin), along with Swedish actor Mikael Nyqvist (Millennium), created the miracle of a good welcome by critics and audience.

However, Gallenberger achieved much more. He drew the attention of the government of Germany and made its foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier,

promise to move forward the declassification of documents. The feature-length film has become an indispensable document of reference to understand the extent of the horrors committed in the colony founded by German settlers in Chile in 1961.

Gauck, who visited the Museum of Memory in this capital and sent his wife to a screening of the film Colonia here, admitted Germany's errors when ignoring the situation in Colonia Dignidad, which is now called Villa Baviera. "What Germany regrets is that German diplomats in the first place looked away or became allies of the victimizers. I would at least love that a foreign minister had said very clear words at the time," he noted.

Relatives of the missing and executed detainees in Colonia Dignidad were ready to demonstrate on Wednesday in front of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights. They cancelled the action when they were received by the head of cabinet of the German Presidency, David Gill. Present in the group was Myrna Troncoso, from the region of Maule, where Colonia Dignidad is located.

She was accompanied by Rosa Merino, the sister of Juan Pedro Merino Molina, whose interrogation under torture, before being assassinated and missing, is in the records of Colonia Dignidad. Another participant was Víctor Sarmiento, the brother of Hernán, who also disappeared from the German settlement. "We are speaking from the heart about what the Colony does minute after minute with tourism, and the pain that causes us," Troncoso said. She noted that "from the moment when our relatives were tortured and assassinated; from the moment when they were interred and disinterred illegally, all crimes against humanity, Colonia did no longer belong to the Germans."

The attorney for about 100 ex settlers, Winfried Hempel, who was born in Colonia Dignidad, pointed out that the attitude of the German head of state was contradictory: "Gauck commits a big error when ignoring the responsibility of the

German state in the events that allowed Colonia Dignidad to commit all kinds all kinds of crimes”, he said. Hempel charged that as a child he saw the millionaire owner of the holding Cencosud, the German-Chilean citizen Horst Paulmann, walking in the colony.

[rosa merino](#)

Rosa Merino (l.) and first lady Daniela Schadt (r.)

“Horst Paulmann was a regular visitor to Colonia, ever since I can remember I saw that man walking along with Paul Schäfer (the bloody ex Nazi and pedophile leader of Colonia Dignidad) and that has to be said once and for all,” he stressed. The lawyer assured that Paulmann, who is a prominent businessman in Chile at present, not only sold merchandise in his supermarket (Jumbo) in the Colony, but he also gave away with every purchase a promotional video showing “the beautiful face of Colonia”. “If that is not covering up, if that is not complicity, I don’t know what it is”, Hempel stressed.

The settlement of German immigrants became a centre of detention and torture during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990), in addition to Schäfer’s pedophile activities. Schäfer died in April 2010 in a hospital in Santiago. He was serving 20 years in prison for dishonest abuses and raping children and had to compensate 11 minors.

In addition, he was sentenced to seven years in prison for having an arsenal in Colonia Dignidad. He was also accused of murder using sarin gas, the massacre of Cerro Gallo, near Colonia, where many political prisoners were executed, and the ownership of a forced labor camp in Monte Maravilla.

Fotos: [FDCL](#), Gerhard Dilger