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“Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised”

Viena Chilena 73 | 23: an archive for the intergenerational memory of the Chilean diaspora in Vienna, Austria

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Viena Chilena 73 | 23 collective

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“Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised”. Viena Chilena 73 | 23: an archive for the intergenerational memory of the Chilean diaspora in Vienna, Austria

Abstract. As part of this special issue, we invited Viena Chilena 73 | 23, a project initiated to record and articulate the history and memory of Chilean exile in Austria and Austrian-Chilean solidarity during the 50 years since the 1973 military coup in Chile. This contribution pieces together elements of the project website, extracts of their archival work and reflections from the project collective.

Resumen. Como parte de este número especial, invitamos a Viena Chilena 73 | 23, un proyecto iniciado para registrar y articular la historia y memoria del exilio chileno en Austria y la solidaridad Austriaca-Chilena durante los 50 años que siguieron al golpe militar de 1973 en Chile. Esta contribución reúne elementos del sitio web del proyecto, extractos del trabajo de archivos y reflexiones del proyecto colectivo.

Introduction

The title of this piece, “Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised” was retrieved from a biographical interview with a Viennese woman in her early thirties, born to parents who had escaped the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile as children. This interview pertains to the collection of a community archive, created in a joint effort of grassroots activists, community members and engaged research principles. United under the name of project Vienna Chile 73 |

¹ Berthold Molden, Rayen Cornejo Torres, and Marcela Torres-Heredia form part of the Vienna-based Viena Chilena 73 | 23 project (<https://www.vienachilena.org>).

23, our group took the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Chilean coup d'état on 11th September 1973 as an opportunity to reconstruct and reflect on the trajectory of Chilean exile and migration to Vienna. Thus, our project is a participatory research intervention into migration history that both embodies and explores the spaces of solidarity between Austria and Chile. Sponsored by the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria (Zukunftsfond der Republik Österreich) and the City Council of Vienna, the project set out to create an online archive for the community's history and memory. It was carried out by a working group of community members, researchers and artists, and was eventually handed over to the Association for Austrian-Chilean Memory Culture (Verein zur Förderung österreichisch-chilenischer Erinnerungskultur), which was specifically created for this purpose.

The project took place between March and November 2023. Its methodology was based on oral history and participatory methods with the goal of developing a collective articulation and empowering self-representation. It was designed by historian Berthold Molden, with historian Rayen Cornejo conceptualising its oral history compartment, while cultural anthropologist Marcela Torres coordinated community mobilisation. Every step was taken in intense collaboration with representatives of the Chilean diaspora, namely Gabriela Jorquera, Andrés Peña and Miguel Peña. The project produced a digital archive (bilingual in Spanish and German) and a digital exhibition (in German).²

Viena Chilena 73|23 was created in response to the desires articulated by members of the community, and it could only be realised as an active endeavour from within this community. Thus, the initial effort consisted of mobilising community participation, not exclusively in terms of interviewees and providers of archival documents, but also as Citizen Scientists participating in knowledge production. For example, the project included instances in which members of the community became familiar with the oral history methodology, and later, some were able to participate in the interview transcription process. This contribution enabled us to generate reflective instances and knowledge production practices of and with the community. The Association, Comunidad Chilena en Austria, also played an important role in the entire process of mobilisation.

² The exhibition was created by the artist Marika Schmiedt and features a special part on solidarity. Just like the archive, it is accessible at <https://www.vienachilena.org> [last accessed 17/07/2024]. It was designed by graphic designer Dominik Hruza, who also built the data bank.

The Archive

The main requirement of the digital archive was its simple navigation and low-threshold interface, both for administrators and for users. One of the archive's most notable features is its collection of 14 biographical interviews, offering a unique insight into the experiences of Chilean women. These interviews provide a valuable addition to accounts of the Chilean diaspora and Austria-Chile Solidarity, which had previously neglected women's perspectives. Given the significant impact of generational specificity on this experience, the project concentrated on examining the nuances of various historical periods within the Chilean community in Vienna. In light of the aforementioned considerations, the research group was divided into four generational categories for the purpose of conducting the interviews. During this process, it became evident that it was challenging to differentiate the experiences of the various generations due to their heterogeneous composition. However, these categories were designed to encompass the general traits of segments of the community. Accordingly, the first generation was characterised by leaving Chile as adults due to the political unrest that began in 1973. The second generation were those who left Chile as children. The third generation consisted of people born into families in exile in Austria. It was also considered necessary to include a fourth "generation" of women; those who migrated from Chile to Austria after the end of the dictatorship, for an array of reasons. This interview sample design was chosen to reflect the heterogeneous composition of the current Chilean community in Vienna.

Furthermore, the archive holds a blend of other documents representing the intergenerational experience of exile and other forms of migration. Each item comes with a brief statement from the donor about its personal significance. These documents include several types of materials: IDs, migration-related paperwork and other official documents, personal photographs, historical photographs (e.g., courtesy of the Picture Archive of the Austrian National Library), newspaper and other media clippings, pamphlets, political posters and personal correspondence.

While the exhibition offers a certain historical narrative, the archive's organisational structure is deliberately open. At least in its initial phase, we have renounced the use of specific tags to categorise the significance of any mnemonic uttering and document. Instead, users approach all transcripts, captions, etc., of the archive either through browsing or, within each interview transcript, with a full-text search along self-defined search terms. The archival materials allow for addressing various issues related to migration, exile and diaspora. By way of example, we have selected the topic of this issue: solidarity.

Solidarity between Chile and Austria

It is evident that the concept of solidarity has been a constant presence in our project. Even more so, it stands for a core value and connecting thread for most members of Vienna's Chilean community. Austria's original asylum policy was based on the solidarity of its socialist government with the overthrown People's Front (Unidad Popular), led by former President Slavafor Allende. Beyond this institutional level, there was a bottom-up solidarity from Austrian NGOs as well as individuals. Soon a specific Chilean solidarity organisation was founded, providing the blueprint for similar associations focused on other Latin American societies (such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, etc.). Moreover, solidarity was a strong, cohesive force within the community, albeit increasingly heterogeneous.

Articulations of this phenomenon can be found in many documents of Viena Chilena 73 | 23. To begin with, the virtual exhibition features a chapter dedicated to practices of Austro-Chilean solidarity, recapping its institutional history and illustrating it with a series of posters, photos, press clippings and other documents (Viena Chilena, 2024).



Figure 1: Excerpts from the virtual exhibition

The archive itself offers many references to the subject of solidarity, as the opening quote demonstrated. It reflects the position of a politically active woman of the third generation, whose values were strongly influenced by the political legacy of her parents and grandparents, as well as experiences of solidarity in her life. Both of her parents came to Austria as children, accompanying their politically persecuted parents. She was socialised in the proximity of Austrian social democracy, where she emphasised solidarity in an

intersectional manner. However, this is but one example: solidarity came up in several interviews, and, depending on the speaker, it was possible to detect differences in the meaning and significance attached to the term.

Solidarity also emerged as a theme in several photos and other documents that community members contributed to the project. The following selection showcases some aspects addressed in these materials.



Figure 2: Concert by Ahora, a Chilean folk band playing at Stadtfest (1980). Pictured (from left to right): Nano Orellana, Jorge Orellana, Manara Cañete, Patricio Cañete. Photographer unknown.



Figure 3: “Solidarity with Chile” at the annual festival of the Communist newspaper Volksstimme (the Volksstimme-Fest), Prater Gardens, Vienna (date unknown, estimated between the late 1970s



Figure 4: “Village of Solidarity” at the Volksstimme-Fest Prater Gardens, Vienna. A co-organizer told us the following about the event: “Sale of arts and crafts, the profits were sent to Chile. Empanadas and Sangría were for sale, there was a barbeque, 200 pork chops per day. We took turns in guarding the tents and the equipment. The Solidarity Village was organized in a circle and in the middle, there was a stage where different Latin American bands played. One band from Chile was called Ranquil.” Photographer: Luis Villaroel.



Figure 5: Official response to the request for support of the release of the Chilean political prisoner Juan Gutiérrez: “A triumph of the solidarity shown by the Austrian government” (1984). Person mentioned: Dante Notari Santos. Author: Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

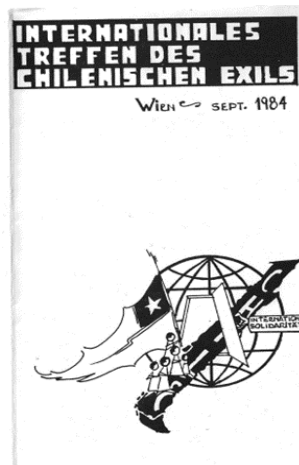


Figure 6: Invitation to the International Encounter of the Chilean Exile, Vienna (1984). As community member Manuel Pinto, who contributed to this pamphlet, put it: “This was yet another flank to fight the dictatorship.” Artist unknown.



Figure 7: Camping with the Rote Falken [Red Falcons, the youth organization of the Austrian Socialist Party], (September 1982). One of the then-boys who participated in these summer camps told us: “We were a group of approximately 30 boys and girls from Chile, between seven and fifteen years old. We were there for two or three weeks. It was very nice, a solidary encounter, they treated us very well.” Photographer: Carlos Yañez Carreño.



Figure 8: Anti-Fascist memorial ceremony, Vienna (17 February 1982). Pictured: Galvarino Gómez, the representative of the Partido Comunista de Chile in Austria; Luis Corvalán, Secretary General of the Partido Comunista de Chile; and Bruno Furch, a member of Austria's Communist resistance against Hitler, a former fighter in the Spanish Civil War, and Vice-president of the Frente de la Solidaridad con Chile. Photographer: Franz Hausner.

Outreach

While *Viena Chilena 73|23* catered to a need of the community itself, i.e., to provide a platform to have their experience of exile recorded and available, the process always involved a dimension of outward representation. The history of Chilean exile was to be included in Austria's broader historical canon, just as migration memory, in general, should become part of national cultures of remembrance. The results of the project were first presented in a community event hosted by the Austrian Institute for Latin America as part of Vienna's adult-education institution, Wiener Volkshochschulen, in November 2023. The project was also covered by Austrian media catering to Latin American communities, and around the actual anniversary of the coup, in September, there was general media coverage of the project and some of the interviewees. The project was also represented at a commemorative exhibition in Chile (see Museo de la Memoria, 2024). Since then, *Viena Chilena 73|23* has been invited by critical, activist-curatorial platforms such as the program "before it gets better..." at the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (Volkskundemuseum, 2024), to artistic-activist research symposia such as "Pass(ed) On" at the University of Arts Linz (Kunstuniversität Linz, 2024). There is also an ongoing exchange with migrant collectives intervening at the intersections between public life, arts, politics, and knowledge production, e.g., at the Museum of Migration (Wienwoche, 2023). Within the academic realm, a first Master's thesis based on *Viena Chilena 73|23* is currently in the making at the University of Vienna, and the experience will be conveyed in university classes and adult education events in the future.

On the importance of living archives

All these activities constitute outreach formats, interlacing the memory of the Chilean diaspora with other parts of Austrian society. One of the aims is to show how the legacy of solidarity can be a powerful reminder of a living, open democracy. The archive itself has also been conceived as a living thing – its contents are meant to be continuously expanded by the Chilean exile community. Furthermore, an extended version of *Viena Chilena's* design is currently being realized as "*Viena Latina – VIELAC*" (cf. *Viena Latina*, 2024), a project carried out by the Austrian Institute for Latin America, Wien Museum, and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and funded by the EU-program "Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme." In conclusion, the objective of *Viena Chilena 73 | 23* has not been to merely document a part of Austrian and global history, but to create a platform of collective historical self-representation and mnemonic articulation for the Chilean community of Vienna. As a participative form of engaged research,

this project—just as Viena Latina—aims for empowerment and self-determined knowledge production in a post-migrant context.

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