

A weekend with Cypriot and German youth

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I spent my weekend with a group German and Cypriot youths who came together to exchange their views and experiences.

I spent this weekend in a joint activity organised by Cypriot youth and a German non-governmental organisation. The meeting was actually arranged by the worldwide socialist youth organisation the Falcon Movement's German arm: the 'Socialist Youth of Germany -Falcons'. The Cypriot partners of the meeting were the youth branches of the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) and New Cyprus Party (YKP) from the North and the United Democrats (EDI), the 'Citizens for the Opening of Ledra Street' and Dialogue and Research Association.

The Falcon Movement was established by young Europeans in the early 1900s. The German representation, located in Hanover, defines the Falcons' goal as contributing to the education of youth between the ages of 6 and 20. Fulfilling this goal all over the country, the group organises group studies, camps, international meetings, concerts, political conferences and demonstrations in line with its ideology.

In the Cyprus initiative, nine German youth found a chance to discuss political issues, particularly the Cyprus Problem with their Turkish Cypriot counterparts along with cultural subjects like music, cinema, food etc. The young people found the chance to listen to each other's music, taste each other's food and have fun in the traditionally organized night - even though the Cypriot side was a little unprepared. Despite the efforts of the German group, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots were not able to come together - a minus for both communities vis-à-vis the German group.

Exchange program to start

The Political Secretary of the Group, Daniel Dammeier stated that the primary objective of their visit was to renovate and continue the 'Youth Institute Program' project which was funded by the European Union from 1999 to 2004. This project provided youth from around Europe with international problems like Ireland, Israel-Palestine and Cyprus to come together frequently in a discussion forum. Young people from these countries came together in Hanover once and produced a music CD, on which everyone sang in his/her own language.

Coskun Tozen from the Youth Centre of the Movement, who also work on the Cyprus Problem at the University of Hanover, told me that they have started a youth exchange program with Israel and the same would probably be started with Cyprus next year.

The group, who stayed on the island from October 25 until November 5, also met politicians, artists and intellectuals both from the South and the North such as Takis Hadjidemetriou, Valentino Sofokleus, Alpay Durduran, Sevgul Uludag and Tony Angastiniotis. Besides these the German youth were escorted throughout the buffer zone by the United Nations Peace Force and were informed about the work of UNFICYP.

With hope that the number of such initiatives will increase in northern Cyprus thus making Turkish Cypriot youth more international...

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