

## **Yenidüzen Article 2012**

**„Despite of all, there is still hope“**

**Yenidüzen – 22/08/2012**

**translated by Aysel Muezzinler**

### **„Despite of all, there is still hope“**

**“All the participants want to see the Cyprus problem solved and lasting peace on the island. The only way that Cyprus can be unified is with a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation”**

**“Given the decades of long negotiations, the failing of the Annan Plan in 2004 and the fact that even Christofias and Talat could not agree on a comprehensive solution; and also taking into account the recent developments in Cyprus, the problems of EU-Turkey accession talks, there is unfortunately not so much space for optimism. Nevertheless, there is still hope”**

**“Due to the EU presidency of Cyprus, the Cyprus conflict is of interest for the media again. This is the most positive effect of this period. Many of the participants criticised the political elites for not actively supporting bi-communal activities and for not preparing the ground on different levels of society for a common future”**



The German-Cypriot Youth Exchange Project took place for the 6<sup>th</sup> time in Germany this year. The project aims to bring young people together in a tri-communal environment to make them understand each other by creating and encouraging trust and friendship between

them. Majority of this year's Greek and Turkish Cypriot participants criticised the politicians for not actively supporting bi-communal projects; and not preparing the ground on different levels of society for a common future.

Coskun Tözen, one of the coordinators of German Socialist Youth Movement (Die Falken) Youth Exchange Project, has talked to Face to Face about this year's Exchange Project.

Tözen stated that, "Given the decades of long negotiations, the failing of the Annan Plan in 2004 and the fact that even Christofias and Talat could not agree on a comprehensive solution; and also taking into account the recent developments in Cyprus, the problems of EU-Turkey accession talks, there is unfortunately not so much space for optimism. Nevertheless, there is still hope and most of the participants believe at least that the recent status cannot be upheld forever."

- ⌚ **Question:** The German-Cypriot Youth Exchange Project took place for the 6<sup>th</sup> time this year. First of all, can you please give some information about the project?
  
- ⌚ **Tözen:** German-Cypriot Youth Exchange Project is founded in 2007 by the initiative of the Hannover branch of German Socialist Youth Movement (SJD-Die Falken). This is a tri-communal youth project that takes place by the participation of German and Greek and Turkish Cypriots. German Socialist Youth Movement (SJD-Die Falken) is a totally independent, deep-rooted and education-oriented organisation. It has no connections with any political party. In this project, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are represented by the IKME and BIL-BAN foundations, respectively. The project is funded by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, Gedenken und Frieden Foundation and Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge Foundation. The project aims to bring young people together in a tri-communal environment to make them understand each other by creating and encouraging trust and friendship between them. The project takes place each year in Germany and on both parts of Cyprus, alternately. This year we were in Germany.

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE THIS YEAR?

- ⌚ **Question:** What have you done in the programme this year?
  
- ⌚ **Tözen:** The programme this year was conducted in Germany from 4- 15 August. The first half of the programme took place in Berlin, the second half in Hanover. The concept of the programme consists mainly of three pillars: workshops on specific topics dealing with the political and social history of Germany and Cyprus, sightseeing that is connected to the content of the workshops and meetings with politicians and members of non-governmental organisations. Actually, I am amazed of

what we did in these 12 days. For a youth exchange we had really very high standards, regarding the workshops and the in-depth discussions of all the topics. It is important to point out that the Cypriot and German participants prepared most of the workshops before the programme started. The workshops this year covered the German past from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century until today with specific focus given on the Nazi period and the German division and unification. Of course, we also dealt with recent political developments and right-wing extremism in Germany.

Regarding the political history of Cyprus, we conducted different workshops dealing with the roots of the conflict and focusing on the inter-communal clashes in the 50s and especially from 1963-74; the constitution of 1960 and the de facto break down of the Republic after 1963; and the events that lead to the complete de facto division of the island in 1974. Of course, we embedded these events in the local, regional and global levels of the conflict. Above all, we discussed the conflict to solve the Cyprus problem after 1974 and pointed out the main problems and aspects. We discussed also the developments in the civil societies in Cyprus. For example, we had a workshop about AHDR (Association for Historical Dialogue and Research), un-biased history education and the Home for Cooperation. Not all of the Cypriot participants knew AHDR and that bi-communal house before.



Considering our activities, we met with representatives of Friedrich Ebert Foundation and German-Cypriot Forum in Berlin. We visited the German federal parliament; we had a meeting with a politician from the Pirates' Party in Berlin; one hour ship tour and city tours in Berlin and Hanover; and also an official welcome in the City Hall of Hanover.

Furthermore, on one day we had an excursion to the Harz region. We visited the memorial place of Mittelbau Dora, where the Nazi regime ran one of the many concentration camps. At this place the secret weapons (rockets V1, V2) of the Nazis were built underground by forced labourers. On the same day, we also visited Sorge, a locality with a museum where you can see a piece of the former division line that divided East and West Germany.

In doing all the workshops and activities pointed out above, we try to learn from history and compare political developments and structures to derive new ideas from for the future.

For group dynamics and trust-building, we also played some games and; last but not least had also a ropes-course in Hanover, which was assessed as 'extraordinary' by the participants. I should also add that our camp took place in a very friendly, warm, entertaining and pleasant atmosphere. Participants established new friendships between each other. Cypriot participants had the chance to experience the German culture, whereas German participants learned more about Cyprus and the culture. Cypriots brought some local food and drinks with themselves and introduced and shared them with German participants.

## **"Young people want a lasting peace in Cyprus"**

- ⌚ **Question:** While the project was taking place for the 6<sup>th</sup> time this year, the negotiations continue at the technical level and Cyprus Republic leads the EU Presidency. What was discussed regarding these issues? What do young people think about the future?



- ⌚ **Tözen:** All the participants want to see the Cyprus problem solved and lasting peace on the island. The only way that Cyprus can be unified is with a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation. Given the decades of long negotiations, the failing of the Annan Plan in 2004 and the fact that even Christofias and Talat could not agree on a comprehensive solution; and also taking into account the recent developments in Cyprus, the problems of EU-Turkey accession talks, there is unfortunately not so much space for optimism. Nevertheless, there is still hope and most of the participants believe at least that the recent status cannot be upheld forever.

## **THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF EU PRESIDENCY OF CYPRUS...**

Regarding the EU presidency, the most positive effect is that during that period the Cyprus conflict is of interest for the media again. Many of the participants criticized the political elites for not actively supporting bi-communal activities and for not preparing the ground on different levels of society for a common future. One example is that, children and youth are still educated with biased and one-sided history of their island. Some participants expressed their fear that with more time passing by, the new generations will lose their interest in a unified Cyprus. We discussed a lot about what grass-roots level activities and the civil societies on both sides of the line can contribute. There are evolving good developments and structures during the last years such as the Home for Cooperation and the CCMC (Cyprus Community Media Centre).

## **“WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR THE UNIFICATION OF CYPRUS”**

- ⌚ **Question:** In our previous interview last year, you wished for a unified Cyprus. However, this has not happened. What would you like to say after this point? How do you see the situation in Cyprus, when you consider it from Germany?
  
- ⌚ **Tözen:** Unfortunately, we are still waiting for unification. When looking from Germany or generally from outside, to the Cyprus conflict, it is important to understand the complexity of the deep-rooted political conflict and the configuration of the conflict through time on the local, regional and international level. My opinion is that conflicts like the Cyprus problem cannot be solved only by the political elites. In addition to the negotiations to find a comprehensive settlement, it is important to involve the population in bi-communal activities and projects on different levels of the civil societies.
  
- ⌚ **Question:** What will be done in the context of this project in the future?
  
- ⌚ **Tözen:** In autumn next year, the programme will be conducted again in Cyprus. The programme will take place again on both sides of the line. We will work further on topics regarding different aspects of the political history of Cyprus; recent political developments and developments within the civil societies in North and South. The exact dates and the contents of the next programme will be discussed and prepared by the coordinators and participants.

## **About Coskun Tözen**

Coskun Tözen was born in 1973 in Istanbul. His father is a Turkish Cypriot. He lives in Germany and studied Political Sciences and History in the Leibniz University of Hannover. He completed his master's degree about the Cyprus conflict at the same university in 2005. He teaches to undergraduate and graduate students of the Leibniz University of Hannover about the Cyprus conflict, the EU-Turkey negotiations and EU. He also works at the Hannover branch of the German Socialist Youth Movement (Die Falken).