



German CARP Retreat in Cyprus

Frenaros, Cyprus, September 18 - 24, 2017

By Karl Martin Zimmerman

The recent CARP summer retreat took place on the beautiful yet sadly divided island of Cyprus. This retreat's topic was "Epanenosis" (Greek: reunification) and focused on the current division of the country and its people into Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and its recent history. In case you do not know about the situation let me just summarize it briefly. In the year 1974 the Turkish military invaded the state of Cyprus and have besieged the northern part since, setting up a strict border between the north and south and pushing people from their homes. This Turkish territory was self-proclaimed as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and is only recognized as such by Turkey and itself. Now this division caused a lot of pain in the country and this pain still holds in the people of Cyprus. We as a group of foreign students gained an insight into these emotions by visiting the border and the northern part of the island and by hearing testimonies and talks from locals who have either experienced the invasion or are active experts on the field such as a politics professor and a journalist.

Coming from Germany, a formerly divided country, myself I could see how it must have been in my own home country some years ago and this gave the whole experience even more weight. But this week was not only about the sad history of Cyprus, no we also got to appreciate the beautiful and happy side of it!

The nature and its beaches and the sea were also a big part of this retreat. A trip to the sea was almost every afternoons schedule. Spending time together in this beautiful environment bonded us together as a group of friends and encouraged conversations on both fun and meaningful topics.

Beginning each day by studying the Unification Thought set a basis for further philosophical discussions about our limitations in thought for example. In my opinion this retreat was a successful cultural exchange and I feel very grateful to have been part of it and that I could experience Cyprus like this. I gained a lot of insight on topics I did not have before and thus changed my opinion on certain political situations.

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