

Yeraltı Notları, 16 Nisan 2008
Sevgül Uludağ

An exhibition in Polis about `the missing` ...

We leave Nicosia at 10 o'clock in the morning to go to Polis... It is Saturday, the only day that I do not work throughout the week...

We travel all the way to Petra tou Romiou when we stop for coffee...

We sit to have coffee and chat, looking at the birth place of Aphrodite... The sea is such a crystal clear turquoise that it's almost unbelievable, this beauty of Cyprus...

And we continue because we want to eat lunch at Latchi... There we go to a fish restaurant, Porto Latchi... It's on the beach and we watch the tourists coming in and out of the sea while we eat fish meze with my son and my husband...

Then we go back to Polis to find our hotel: Andreas Sizinis, whose father was `missing` and was found in a mass grave in Caoz found this hotel for us... It's a three star hotel and a surprise is waiting for us: A swimming pool! I didn't expect that so I am so happy to be swimming for the first time this year...

During long hours of work, sometimes I would dream of lying on my back in the sea and just looking at the sky... Today is a gift from nature for me: I can do that in the swimming pool and forget all the pain and trauma I am dealing with and that has become very much part of my life... I immerse myself in water and swim in the pool...

`I had forgotten how swimming was so nice!` I tell my husband...

I lie on my back and look at the blue sky... The sounds are dimmed because my ears are submerged in water... I let go of all the tiredness, all the worries, all the questions I have and just simply become part of the nature. There are two big pine trees above the swimming pool and just the blue sky...

In the evening we go to the exhibition of a Cypriot painter, Hulusi Halit. He is from Paphos but has been living in Germany since 1974. After he read my book `Oysters with the missing pearls`, he was so affected that he did a series of oil paintings about the `missing persons` and tonight he will exhibit them, together with other paintings of his about dry but alive trees, as well as some portraits from Polis... Maria Georgiadou whose mother, father, sister and brother are `missing` from Kythrea and Sevilya Berk, whose mother and father are `missing` from the road Famagusta-Pervolia are also here to speak about their lives... I will have a power-point show with photos about the stories of `missing` and `mass graves` and Panicos Chrysanthou will show part of the film he had made with Niyazi Kizilyurek, `Our Wall` tonight... The mayor of Polis, Angelos Georgiou opens the exhibition and the Kivoto 3000 Art Gallery is packed with Germans, English and Greek Cypriots... Some have come from Nicosia, some from Paphos, some from Limassol... Hulusi is happy tonight and so am I because I have the chance to speak in Polis, about the `missing persons` of Polis...

One of those, Cengiz Ratip was killed in the centre of Polis on the 14th of February 1964, together with Turgut Sitki. Cengiz Ratip, at that time was an MP of the Republic of Cyprus. Turgut Sitki was a teacher. No one tells us where they are buried and after so many years, we are still searching for the burial site... In the same year in August, Ahmet Ibrahim, a merchant from Polis, also goes `missing` and his burial site is unknown till now...

The wife of Cengiz, Hayriye Ratip is old and fragile now...

She has a message for the people of Polis:

`Cengiz was a kind man... He had never done any wrong to anyone... He had very good relations with Greek Cypriots... When some Turkish Cypriots from Kokkino area had kidnapped a bus full of Greek Cypriot students, he had gone and saved them and had brought them back to their families... Greek Cypriots were so happy and they had praised Cengiz... Please, I want to bury him properly so if you know where he is buried, tell us...`