

# Take my hand, we need each other

## a Cyprus story

*PYLA, Cyprus -- Pyla, a small village in southeastern Cyprus, was the venue on Sunday evening of a bi-communal music, song and dancing event aimed at bringing closer Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the divided island.*

Hundreds of people from both Cypriot communities converged at the village to voice their support for efforts now going on for more than a year to solve the long standing Cyprus problem.

Pyla, or Pile in Turkish, is the only village where Greek and Turkish Cypriots continue to live together, after the 1974 Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, which forced members of the two communities to abandon mixed towns and villages and take residence either in the Greek Cypriot south or in the Turkish Cypriot north, divided by a buffer zone.

The village itself is in the buffer zone, administered by the UN Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

The event was organized by Greek and Turkish Cypriot parties which take part in monthly meetings. The meetings started almost three decades ago under the auspices of the embassy of then Czechoslovakia, and are now continuing under the auspices of the Slovak embassy.

Sunday's event was under the joint auspices of Elsi Christofia, wife of Cyprus President and Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Oya



Talat, wife of Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat.

Their husbands have since September 2008 engaged in direct talks aimed at reunifying the divided island. But the negotiations have been moving at a very slow pace.

Present at the event to show support for the efforts to cultivate closer ties between Greek and Turkish Cypriots were Alexander Downer, the special envoy of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to Cyprus, representatives of the European Union mission in Cyprus, a host of foreign ambassadors, government ministers and parliamentary deputies.

Slovak Ambassador Anna Tourenikova was clear about the significance of the event. "Goings-on such as this one with the participation of ordinary people promote friendship and cooperation between the two communities of Cyprus," she said.

She added that rapprochement is a basic element of efforts for a settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Elsi Christofia echoed her opinion, saying cultural cooperation among the two communities, helping build trust and confidence in each other, is part of the policy for solving the Cyprus problem.

"Rapprochement alone can not solve the problem but it can greatly contribute to regaining trust on the basis of mutual respect, friendship, love and acceptance of being different," she said.

Elsi Christofia was confident that Greek and Turkish Cypriots, having a long tradition of living together harmoniously, which the inhabitants of Pyla are still doing today, can go on living together in a reunited island.

"Breeding the right mentality to accept historic truths and combating nationalism which cultivates animosity is a basic prerequisite," she told the crowd.

Oya Talat pointed to the fact that before crossing points were established six years ago between the Turkish Cypriot north and the Greek Cypriot south, Pyla had been the venue of meetings for friends from both communities who wanted to bring about a solution.

"Beyond conflict, our social history is full of memories of friendship, love, respect, understanding and tolerance. The atmosphere tonight is a pointer of this social togetherness. We should be ashamed because we live in an era of lack of security, but we are here because we are not to accept the division as a final outcome," Oya Talat said.

Party representatives from both communities said the message of Sunday's

event was one of peaceful coexistence, of a common struggle of Greek and Turkish Cypriots and one of support and encouragement to the leaders of the two communities to reach a solution and put an end to the division of Cyprus and its people.

The culminated in the singing of local songs composed by Greek and Turkish Cypriot composers by a bi-communal chorus and Cypriot dances performed by the "Dance for Peace" group.

*"Take my hand,  
You are my brother;  
Take my hand,  
You are my sister;  
Take my hand,  
We need each other..."*

The song by six school girls from both communities long lingered on the ears of the audience.



Elsi Christofia

## Tetsuya's Singapore fling

ONE of Australia's most internationally recognised chefs, Japanese-born Tetsuya Wakuda, is finally to open a second restaurant: in Singapore.

And he'll be in stellar company.

The Sydney-based Wakuda will join some of the cooking world's biggest names at a Las Vegas-style resort currently under development in the island republic.

Wakuda's restaurant will share neighbours including Mario Batali, Wolfgang Puck and Daniel Boulud from the US, the Frenchman Guy Savoy and Spaniard Santi Santamaria.

Marina Bay Sands in Singapore is connected with the Las Vegas Sands Corporation, which aims to replicate the

high-end dining appeal that has transformed the US city into one of that country's most important restaurant cities over the past 10 years.

The company already has resorts in Macau and Israel. Wakuda joins a slew of Australia-based chef/entrepreneurs with interests abroad, including Sydney's Luke Mangan (Tokyo and San Francisco), Melbourne's Guy Grossi (Malaysia), MasterChef's George Calombaris (Greece) and Melbourne's Shannon Bennett (Oman).

Wakuda's name has recently been connected with a venture at Hobart's Moorilla winery, where retir-



ing Tasmanian multi-millionaire David Walsh is building a museum for his collection of antiquities. However, it is thought any such Tetsuya-Moorilla alliance is unlikely until the museum is launched in 2011.

Wakuda, 50, whose restaurant is perennially ranked among the world's 50 best, arrived in Sydney in 1982 needing a room, a job and English lessons.

A Greek-born real estate agent reportedly told the young traveller: "Tetsuya, the best school is in the kitchen. They feed you, teach you English then they pay you at the end of the week. What other school does that?"

Wakuda took his advice; the rest is history.

Singapore will not be Wakuda's first tilt at an overseas venture. The restaurateur worked as a consultant to the short-lived Mju restaurant, in Knightsbridge, London, in 2006, but the relationship with its owners lasted less than a year.

It's understood Singapore will be far more hands-on than a consultancy. A spokesman for Wakuda, who is in Japan, said they expected to open Tetsuya's Singapore in June next year.

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