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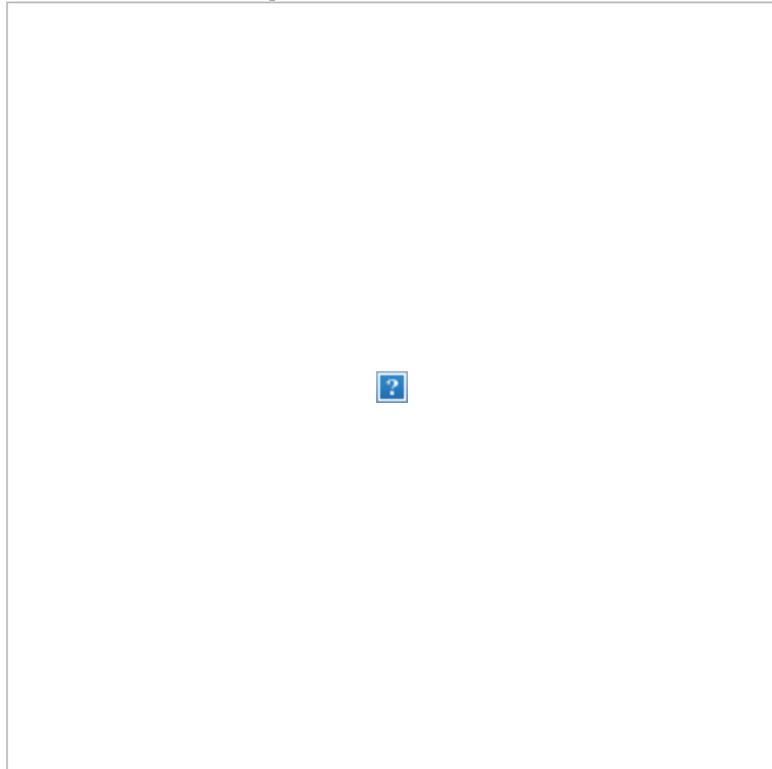
 LARGE PRINT / Standard Print.Changing Times in the Czech Republic

Changing Times in the Czech Republic

Some personal impressions of the Youth Conference

IT WAS DANGEROUS, it was safe, it was uplifting, it was fascinating, it was informative, it was so very cold, it was intensely warm, it was invigorating, it was relaxing, it was nowhere, it was somewhere, it was a privilege!

“It” was the international youth seminar “Changing Times”. The seminar took place from the 26th December until 1st January, 2003 on a hill near the small town Hluboka, situated in the south west of the Czech Republic. But this was not just any hill, it was the location of the new campus of Townshend International School, a social economic project that was founded by Bahá'ís.



Friends gathered for the Youth Conference in Hluboka

Since all the students had left the school for Christmas break it was our turn, as participants, to take over the campus that nestles in picturesque beauty. The ever-changing weather, with its temperature fluctuations, was dangerous, the organising team diligently tried to protect walkers from the slippery black ice that lurked under foot. However, the atmosphere of the conference was quite the opposite from the polar weather: it was socially warm and secure, participants were able to relax in the Cubana Room café in the afternoon. Typically for all youth conference seminars the itinerary was very informative and intense, but at the same time very entertaining and uplifting. Speakers came from around the world.

The UK had two representatives. Ismael Velasco spoke in his friendly manner about Bahá'í scholarship and made many people ponder whether they themselves could be Bahá'í scholars. Dr Kishan Manocha gave a comprehensive and enriching presentation about the book Century of Light. Saba Khabirpour, from Germany, discussed practical implications of the Five Year Plan in light of the last Ridván Message; once again the supreme importance of the messages was brought to the awareness of audience. Professor Bushrui, from the United States, gave thought provoking speeches about various aspects of Bahá'í life in relation to ethics and the individual in modern society. He also enlightened the audience with his thoughts and feelings on the Message of the House of Justice to the religious leaders of the world. Dr Dorothy Marcic, also hailing from the United States, captivated the audience with a Musical Journey of Women throughout history. Lastly but by

no means least, Mr Ardawan Lalui, from Czech Republic lectured on social-economic projects and their concurrent significance in the present and future for both the Bahá'í and world community. His message was to encourage everyone to start small and think about what change each one of us might be able to make in society using Bahá'í principles.

In the afternoon workshops were offered, some of which complemented the talks and others addressed independent issues. Among the titles of the workshops were; Career Management Strategies, Building Sound Relationships, Attracting Divine Blessings, The Ministry of the Custodians, and many more. Each day was packed full of information and spiritual nourishment and the evening programmes presented a refreshingly joyful and thoughtful end. Music, magic shows, comedy, and the history of the Faith made each evening unique. Among all those wonderful events, Professor Bushrui's personal memories of his encounters with the beloved Guardian were very touching for me. Marriage, a topic not part of the planned agenda, crept in as Professor Bushrui and his dear wife revealed valuable insights to their 48 year-long marriage which will surely serve as a continuing source of inspiration and leave a lasting impression on the audience.

"Time often passes by in the twinkling of an eye". This phrase was particularly true for this conference. All too soon the conference was over, but never fear "Changing Times" will be an annual event open to all those above the age of 18.

I look forward to seeing old and new faces alike next year, hopefully with more participation from British youth.

Carlo Schröder



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