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Letters to the Editor  

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Dear Friends,

TRAVEL TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Having seen in the Bahá'í Journal the request of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Czech Republic for pioneers from the United Kingdom to settle in the their country, it seemed like a good idea to give you an idea of what it is like to be a Bahá'í living in this republic, (albeit, perhaps, a personalised and subjective one).

Firstly, the Czech Republic is an exceptionally beautiful country. It is rich in culture and history and most of its cities have not been touched by the ravages of either World War 2 bombing or greedy developers. There are, of course, signs of Communist development everywhere, such as the numerous tower blocks of flats which house a significant proportion of the population. But the rich history and wonderful architecture have not been lost. There are also acres of beautiful forests, lush meadows and gorgeous lakes and rivers. At times, it seems like every vista can induce a gasp of awe, wonder or delight!

As for the society, the Czech people in general are a very educated, inquiring and easy-going people. They are reflective, very conscious of acts of courtesy and are cautious about jumping into new things or making important decisions. In teaching the Faith here, the National Assembly advises Bahá'ís to make friends first. Experience shows this to be true. Of course, many people may listen courteously about the Faith and accept literature, but they will go away and make up their own minds in private and, chances are, you may not see them again. Czechs are really touched by sincere acts of service and love. They want to see the reality of any idea, confession or movement. They have had 40 years of idealistic Communism which, in the end, proved to them to be a sham. They are not easily turned by expressed hopes and convincing words that promise to be the answer for a better society.

Things here are changing fast. This country is rapidly “westernising”. Along with greater freedom, opportunities and wealth, have come increases in crime, graffiti, drug abuse and other destructive behaviours. Actually, I feel there is not a moment to lose. If we procrastinate, many opportunities may be lost.

At the moment, the possibilities to come here to teach English are almost endless! Language schools and universities are on their bended knees, begging for native speakers to come and teach. In many cases, you do not even need a formal qualification. “Native speaker” is your qualification! If you feel able to do this kind of work, you could probably settle in many places in the country and find a job. The salary may be lower than western equivalents, but the cost of living here is still very affordable. (And there are no shortages of essential commodities – things have moved on from the days of quotas and queuing!)

Not long ago, the Czech government passed a law that all jobs should be advertised to local people first, before being offered to foreigners, as a move to solve the national unemployment problem. But in the case of native English speakers, there is no way a local could claim to do that! More pioneers here would be invaluable. Growth of the Faith here is rather slow. There are currently seven Local Assemblies (honestly eight at Ridván) and

the Community is mostly young and needs deepening.

Please think of this service to the Faith. It is surely significant that the Czech National Assembly felt moved to call upon the United Kingdom Community to render such assistance at this time.

With loving greetings, Greg Akehurst Moore

Dear Editor,

FEEDBACK ON STUDY CIRCLES

I have noticed that all over the country there has been a lot of discussion going on about the training Institute process, particularly with regard to the use of the Ruhi materials.

During this first serious usage of the material, it is important that it is adequately evaluated, but so far there has been no obvious forum for participant response and reflections. In the interests of actually getting the courses running and really giving Ruhi a try, there seems even to have been an opposition to individuals expressing more critical views on the course material, and this has resulted in frustration and sometimes even strong feelings of negativity due to the sense that Ruhi is almost being imposed from above rather than realising that we are actually in a situation where we are using the best available material, but simultaneously and crucially, assessing its strengths and weaknesses so that in time, it can be developed, improved and adapted to the culture of our country.

It needs to be made clear to people that this is a new venture in the Bahá'í Faith, we are all part of it and we have the responsibility to engage in the process, testing and evaluating the methods and approaches so that improvements can be made. If people do not realise this then rather than using their criticisms constructively they often resort to complaining which can lead to conflict and disunity.

I like to suggest that we have a page in the journal for feedback, discussion, debate, new ideas and proposals regarding the Ruhi Material and Study Circles.

Yours sincerely, Poppy Villiers-Stuart (age 20)

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