

**"Serbia and the World
at the Dawn of 2005"
Report of a Listening Post
held on 19th January**



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. SHARING PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

The session was opened with the idea that unspoken guilt considering recent wars is responsible for some of the problems in Society. Most of the group members refused this idea considering that the majority of the population is not even thinking about their role in Yugoslav wars and were mentioning the fact that 70% of the population never travelled abroad. Array of themes in the following discussion was vast and I will group them into several categories.

- Feeling of hopelessness and despair in front of the impotent institutions incapable to resolve the problems in society. Lack of professional interest and general incapability for planning the future came to the fore.
- Next theme which followed the previous one was about the wide and deep traumatisation of the whole society. Conversation then turned toward increased depression in society as well as toward cruelty and selfishness which are increasing.
- Next theme was talking about good old times. The youngest group member reminded us older that his generation is the last one remembering those good old times and that we have to think about this fact.

For all these themes fear of national socialistic and ultra right wing parties was common. My impression was that we behaved as a dependent group. One of the reasons for such behavior for sure was that we are the members of the society which expects help from others; also we as a new group in front of the new task were also in search for some authority who will lead us through an uncharted world.

Part 2. THEMES

It was not easy to pick one or two themes from the multitude we discussed. After a heated discussion we choose the theme "transition of the society".

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

It was not easy to switch to an emotional and irrational level of thinking in the third part. My impression was that the previous story about massive traumatisation holds a lot of truth because feelings of hopelessness and despair were present in the discussion. We started talking about fears that we feel in front of the coming changes and the fear that our choice is between a nationalistic or a corporative state. Theme of transition then provoked feelings of fear of growing old as well as fears of illness and the idea that only if strong and healthy we can succeed in transition.

Next topic dealt with fears of what will happen if the transition of the society failed or would be too slow. In this part feelings of helplessness were also present. This feeling was beautifully presented by one female member in the group that said: "What I have to do to become a potent member of the Society". Feelings of helplessness and despair changed with the feelings of anger and rage that changes in the society are too slow and that Milosevic times are not yet over. Then again we switched to "good old times" when the salaries were good and when we did not need visas to travel across Europe. Then all of us became very angry with European politicians that are keeping us like Red Indians in a reservation. Last few minutes we spoke about High Politics.

Hypothesis: My impression is that we can sort our group into fight or flight groups. What was obvious in the group process was interchange of despair and hopelessness on one side and anger and rage on the other side. Both feelings were directed towards nationalistic and traditionalistic forces in the society.

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