

**"Spain and the World
at the Dawn of 2006"
Report of a Listening Post
held on 11th January**



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. SHARING PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Every time the State has more control over the citizens, limiting their possibilities to change, and restricting their freedom. The use of the globalization of some ideas by the big powers, which don't have any credibility (for example: Iraq's invasion to finish terrorism; the gas pipeline proposed by Chaves). And also, the jobs and resources management are organized depending on the political party who is in the power.

There is a lack of ideas, of values, of enthusiasm and ideals. Nobody tries to educate children. Children miss their parents, and also elderly people are abandoned. It seems that work has generated this situation, because there is no time for anything, only for work.

It seems that society tries to repair what our grandparents did or didn't do in the Civil War, because now we are living the same problem that in the 1936, there is the same division but with democratic systems.

Again we can observe the control everywhere. In London, buses carry cameras which are filming everybody all the time. Then you go out to the street and there are scanners. You feel you are under observation, like the eye of Big Brother. In the Plaza Mayor there are also cameras to avoid robberies, and everywhere there are cameras to control the traffic.

In the airports there are scanners and cameras. The e-mails are stored for 2 years. There is a big and general paranoia. The impact of technology is enormous. Everything is fastest but there is a loss of language. And also it can be associated with violence: adolescents have recorded fights with their cellular mobiles. But violence doesn't emerge from technology.

There is a progress in the work but people feel worse, they feel slave to the work, they have lost their freedom and illusion. They were talking about "1000 euros generation", this is the best prepared generation, but they only earn 1000 euros. There is a social resignation because everything depends on your individual effort instead of a group effort of cooperation. The competitiveness marks the society.

There are subliminal messages that seems war drums of the future, because there is a struggle for the energy control, and it would be catastrophic if someone cut off the energy (for example: Chaves threaten USA; weapon of mass destruction in Iran; Persian Gulf and Iraq war).

Another point is the climatic changes in the Earth because of enormous energy consumption. And now China is another threat because it's beginning to consume a lot, and it's possible that in one year it would consume the same energy that Europe and USA together.

There are a lot of things around us that are very worrying, but the message that it's been transmitted is that there are no problems, nothing is happening, the truth is been hidden (avian flu doesn't come, and also the war). The mass media manipulates the information (for example: don't buy catalane products). That's the way to fragment the society. The religions also fractionate people.

But the question is that external problems are so big that people prefer to stay in their individual world. At the end, people it's been silenced because there are another kind of problems more near than this external problems that make impossible to complain, for example the mortgage, anti-smoking law which at the end are blocking the important problems.

In the last part of the debate, people began to argue and confront when they were talking about the society fragmentation and which were the causes of it.

IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR ISSUES

Group 1

- The Big Brother eye that control us.
- People like robots (working all day, and that prevent to transmit emotions and values to the new generations).
- Passivity of the people.

Group 2

- Lack of education and bad culture in our children.
- Passivity and individualism of the people.
- Violence in society.

Group 3

- Fragmentation of the family relationship.
- Concentration of power in the economic part of the society which has direct effect in works.
- Concentration of power in the energy control and mass media.

ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

1. Social and personal fragmentation. Raise of the aggression at every level of life. Incapacity to manage conflicts.

Analysis:

In the Spanish society there is a strong increase of the tensions of two political positions and understandings of the idea of "Spain". In one side the present situation it is seen as very similar to the situation in which the Spanish civil war exploited. In the other side there is a denial of this perspective and the fear to the confrontation it is used by right wing party to attack and block changes and independent movements.

At the same time in this climate of fragmentation, tension and conflict where dialogue is very difficult, almost impossible, people can be fed up of this conflicts and think that this are problems created by the politicians not by the people, disconnecting and reacting in a passive way or reacting in a very aggressive way asking for the boycott to the Catalan and Basque enterprises that support the independent claims.

Hypothesis:

There is a tendency of bipolarization at every level, where nations, corporations, political parties are concentrated in order to compete or fight for the power and resources. Reality becomes just black or white and there is no space for dialogue, ideas, or thinking.

The global equilibrium where the US is ruling the world it is threaten because of the emergence of new countries (China) and areas (Latin America), Muslim countries, that exerts a control to the energetic resources. The competition for power and resources, brings conflicts, a feeling of tension as results of the paranoia and the fight for control. People can feel the result of competitiveness in their own lives, in their work, driving in the city even in the personal relationships. People is worried with the mortgage and their work that pays their living standard and feels disconnected, passive and powerless to the government conflicts, corporation competition and global changes.

2. Power concentration, economic, energetic, mass media etc. The feeling of being out of control and being controlled.

Analysis:

In Spain there is an important trend to concentration of power in few hands. There are few holdings with an identifiable politic support that are fighting for the control of key sectors of the Spanish economy. The last one has been the take over intent of a gas company, controlled by one of the largest banks of the country with national Catalan politic interests inside, of the largest electricity corporation. The economical, political and social explanation to this trend is that there is a need to concentrate interests in order to be more powerful and to compete in a better situation.

There is a sense that in Spain we are repeating the structures of holding and lobbies typical of the US and this is getting an evolution of a sense of American way of life in Spain.

At the same time that more power is concentrated in fewer hands, lobbies and groups of power, the feeling of people is that personally we are losing power. We have a poorer quality of life. One person has to work more hours to pay the rent or the mortgage of his or her home. Just one income is not enough and it is needed the incomes of the couple. The most culturally ever prepared generation of Spaniards, with university degrees, idioms etc it is now in very difficult position and with a feeling of being an slave of companies and society.

Hypothesis:

There is a split of the sense of power. Corporations has the power and personally there are feelings of powerless, frustration and general irritability. Politics and government are controlled by the market economy, the corporations and lobbies. "We call ourselves a democracy just because we vote every four years. Nothing

more". Persons doesn't feel themselves as citizens instead now persons feel just as consumers.

Now there is no fight among ideas but there is a competition for the economic power. So persons now we are not interested in ideas, or thinking about what is happening to us in this society. People is just involved in compete for economical power and this could be the reason to be so individualistic, aloof, aggressive and frustrated.

Persons can identify their power only if they see themselves as consumers. People thinks that can exert some power when they decide what to consume or not.

3. Breakdown of the family relations, excessive individualism and passivity. Lack of education and culture.

Analysis:

The family relations are more and more difficult. Parents go out for work and leave their son unattended in the school or the kindergarten. When they come back at home they are too busy to educate children. Parents delegate the responsibility of education in the school and the school can't cope with this responsibility.

The society just cares for those who works and produce and are potential consumers. Children and elderly people are left aside.

People copes with their life in a very individualistic way. There is confusion between what is urgent and what is important. This comes to a lack of communication and thinking, within the couples, between parents and children and the whole family.

There is an increase of irritation and aggression and a sense of dissatisfaction.

The school gives contents to the children but does not teach them how to learn to think. Families give many things to the children but can't contain their anxieties and frustrations.

Hypothesis:

The feeling of the persons of confusion and personal betrayal where the important is what you have instead what you are, generates irritation and aggression. There is a feeling of not being in control of your own life but life is so overwhelming that the reaction is doing nothing, passivity. Because positive and negative things in life are the response to your individual effort and this is not enough to change anything.

Competitiveness, frustration and aggression is below the individualism and the incapability to cooperate with others. There is a feeling that the isolation, aggression, individualism and against thinking state of mind is the result of a culture ruled by a market economy that prefers consumers easy to manipulate rather than thoughtful citizens.

Convener: Ignacio Garcia & Beatriz Benito