

**"Bulgaria and the World
at the Dawn of 2006"
Report of a Listening Post
held on Friday 13th January
at the Bulgarian Institute
of Human Relations**



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

The role of a parent is a challenge. It necessitates new knowledge and is attractive alternative of others public roles in which we feel otherwise alone and isolate. There are things that seem to be forever missed to be learned and acquired. It looks like that every younger generation learns easier.

There is some longing for complementary relationships: men/women and friends. Current changes make requisite the learning of new role-skills. There is longing for some missing knowledge.

Authority roles (of a parent, a tutor/mentor) become more important. Sometimes they could be used as a sort of private shelter from some ambiguous and challenging social reality.

The pretentious and the non-understandable currently replaces the mystical.

The new knowledge opens new opportunities for some new encounters. However, we don't know whether these new encounters are not just a reaction, a "flight" from something else. There is something that is not enough.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

There is some current change process, which leads to the loss of some traditional things such as patriarchal authority for example. When coping with such change we resort to some shelters such as the family or the anonymity of the internet where we find security in the face of some severe anxieties such as the feeling of being physically threatened (statistics for the severely increased mortality amongst the men's population in Bulgaria). Men seem to be amongst the losers; others losers in the process of change are parents' generations. There are, however, individuals that succeed to find satisfaction and new opportunities within this process they develop new bonds of security and support.

There are some barbarians (role performed by some youth, by some colleagues, by some gypsies, Macedonians, Serbians, Kosovans) around, but we prefer not to mention them.

The "private" and the "public" domains are experienced as if in a battle, where the private still wins: a recurrent social message being: "This is not my theme!".

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

It is possible that our social order has up until recently been dominated by some patriarchal center. In the context of the decay of the patriarchal values we feel as if left in the margins of the "world" where we feel physically threatened, guilty and lonely.

The process of change can be experienced as a sort of contact with some barbarian, we feel ambivalent to - we fear it, we are disgusted by it, but we also secretly like it. The barbarian seems to be coping with changes. Although the price we pay for this adaptation to the changes is the lack of good rapport with our roots and with our peers.

The position of authority as something in between the "patriarch" and the "barbarian" is born relatively late and is still too fragile. In some special moments, the past is still blocking the participation in the here-and-now.

The need for someone from outside/above to bring forth the meaning remains.

A recurrent group experience is a message like this: "Just tell us what is the direction and we are ready!"

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