

AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

France and the World at the Dawn of 2016 Report of a New Year's Listening Post



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants are invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles. This part is concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that relates to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants. Participants are invited to share their preoccupations and experiences as citizens of Australia, and to explore these from their various social roles, be these in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities.

Part 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2 the aim is to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.

1. A context of crises

The overall context is marked by two major events:

- The attacks in France and especially in Paris, in January and November,
- The major problems associated with migration waves of refugees, with the human dramas in the mediterranean sea, difficult living conditions of migrants and disorders associated with it.

These situations give rise to feelings of anger, nausea, but also compassionate impulses. The change of context is perceived in its radicality: "*We were privileged, in a world without war, fairly easy, with the prospect of a future for our children better than ours. We must now learn to live in a world of uncertainty.*" Hence the importance of answering the question: what is stable in the own personality in this world of uncertainty?

2. Loss of sense in the relationship and restoration efforts

Several participants report relationship problems within families or couples. Disruptions and tensions are also found in society and

business. For companies, the pressure of the search for profitability is particularly destructive. These experiences are associated with feelings of dislocation and loss of humanity.

Conversely, behaviors recognize and reinforce close ties, like the person who made a photomontage book about his grandmother's life. Close links give meaning to existence.

3. Loss of confidence in institutions

A strong suspicion towards institutions dominates, and above all toward policies. The reaction of the latter facing doctors' demonstrations is unacceptable. People feel lost in the institutions. Against this, they believe in the individual, in its collective ability to mobilize. Expressions and manifestations after the attacks, after the photo of this young child stranded on a Greek beach, confirm hopes in the individuals and their ability to block solitude. The will and the need of society are expressed by acts.

4. The issue of places

Taking up, occupying some space is a major issue. The plight of migrants in camps in northern France, questions about the management of migration flows remind many participants to episodes of their personal or family history.

There is no place for the human being in the business, there is a lack of space in a life too full of certainties, one wonders about the place given to others. These situations are sources of heavy suffering. A sense of disarticulation or dislocation dominates. People do not know or can not say and develop these feelings because there is no place to say it. Therefore, the extremists use them for their own goals of destabilization.

Part 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members are working with the information resulting from Parts 1 and 2, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and, developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the members are working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world. Their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.

The situations of attacks and immigration issues are experienced abruptly, imposing a change of environment which is unknown to us and we find it difficult to get the measure of it. These social issues have

personal, family, professional resonances.

From a psychic point of view, there are destabilizing eruption of instinctual behaviour, because no one is prepared to face these new situations. This is the order of a psychic break, of a trauma which can't be mentally elaborated. From this point of view, commemorations and tributes to the deceased have a cathartic function.

Faced with this situation, two types of contrasting reactions are expressed. For one thing, they are in the order of withdrawal, of fear, or focus on a small circle of close relations. For another, they are expressed at the societal level through a powerful force seeking to regain the social bond. Ultimately, facing risks reactive feelings of brotherhood.

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