



LISTENING POST

Chile at the Dawn of 2020

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Part 1. Sharing concerns and experiences

Soon after beginning of the LP session, participants pointed out almost unanimously that their memory of what happened in 2019 in Chile was very selective, focusing mainly on the explosive and violent experiences of social movements that affected society during the last three months of the year: October, November and December. The memory of previous experiences was obscured in oblivion, due to its diminished importance in contrast to the great significance of the social movements in society and the citizenship taking place at the end of the year.

The unexpected, continuing and growing explosion of social movements undermined the functioning of institutions by overcoming the capacity of governmental authorities to restore public order. In these circumstances, citizens lived experiences of anomia that substantively altered the conventional meaning of individual identities, families, narratives and their participation in roles in society. The social outburst, in people's experience, showed a hidden face of Chile that had made invisible the enormous inequalities at economic and social levels, the abuse, suffering and injustice affecting a vast majority of the country's population. In this context, one can understand the anger and violence expressed by a large mass of citizens against the neoliberal, social and economic capitalist system, so unjustly discriminatory between the powerful and those who suffer a life of great precariousness in health, education, social protection and work.

LP participants expressed their fear of the spiral of violence triggered by social movements in their battles with the police, with their arrests, outrages, wounded and killed, amid looting and barricades in fights with the police forces. Participants experienced the fear of violence, not knowing how to deal with it except by withdrawing, apart from a young woman who did actively participate in the battles with the police, feeling the emoti

onal and physical exhaustion of fighting at such events. Participants regret not finding spaces of containment facilitating conversation and the expression of their emotions, especially at work, where mutual listening could have contributed to create constructive actions to help to appease the effects of such violence.

When the Government declared a State of Emergency and established a Curfew to restore public order, people's feeling was that the country was in a situation of internal war. According to LP participants, this military intervention exacerbated the fear in the population, because it seemed to be an announcement of a Coup, thus inevitably taking all of them back in remembrance of the past, to the Pinochet dictatorship that ruled the country for 17 years. A few days after the Army in control of the public order, the soldiers were sent back to their barracks, although this did not mean that violence stopped, in fact, it is still going on until the present day.

The display of participants' concerns ended with an emotional tone of desolation and hopelessness for the immediate future of Chilean society, because there is no institutional authority in force, one sufficiently legitimized, nor any political leadership that may effectively and promptly overcome the extremely violent fragmentation evident in recent months in Chile. Rather, there is the pessimistic feeling that violence will escalate with equal or greater intensity at the beginning of the working year in March 2020, at the end of the summer period.

Part 2. Important issues

Need to exercise the role of citizen: in the current circumstances, associated with the vicissitudes of social movements, it is essential that Chileans take an active and prominent role in society's events, aiming to achieve improved Social Justice in Chile. This means developing the creation of trust, with leaderships replacing the current authorities' ineptitude, and achieving cooperation between antagonistic groups, with tolerance in the face of the differences and uncertainties to be encountered.

Personal and social change: closely in tune with the previous topic, this paper sets forth that individuals must develop the ability to relate to others in spite of their existing differences, to know and understand their realities and welcoming their perspectives and interests. This means openness to a plurality of connections, overcoming fears and uncertainties in pursuit of Social Justice. It also means having the tolerance to confront struggles between conservatives and radicals in order to reach reciprocal understandings and achieve negotiations that will bring normalcy to society. In these struggles, it is important to consider the context of historical violence experienced by the popular sectors in order to understand events with retrospective perspectives and not just focusing on the immediate or on the very short-term.

Inherited

wounds: In this case, it is emphasized that the current social movements are rooted in historical social traumas that have affected the popular sectors, whose reasons for fighting for their class interests have been defeated and massacred through military interventions. This historical traumatic violence tends to be forgotten, by memories that repress fears of the aggressions that popular sectors have suffered from the part of state

institutions. In the current circumstances of social movements' vitality, historical social traumas should be considered in the face of the possibility of skewing the sins of the past.

Part 3. Hypothesis

The hypotheses focus on the main issues raised by LP participants in the context of their concerns and experiences.

The topics explore the hopes, anxieties, defense mechanisms and perceptions that constitute LP participants' responses to the outside world, to the context in which they experienced everyday life during the events of the social movements.

These explorations are rooted in the catastrophic change that occurred in society with the beginning, development and consolidation of the massive and violent social protests. This meant that society was enveloped in "a mental state of fight" where radical groups staged a combative offensive against Chile's prevailing neoliberal capitalist system. The banner of struggle was and has been the achievement of transformations that will generate a Fair and Equal Distributive Social Justice in Chile, especially for those that live in conditions of great precariousness. The "mental state of fight" expanded and became stronger throughout society causing perplexity, bewilderment and isolation by a great part of the citizens, because it was a clear sign of a severe disruption of the public order. From this basic hypothesis we proceeded to consider hypotheses according to the topics raised by LP participants.

The issues communicated by participants shared their being the expression of their intentions, desires and expectations of an ethical/moral commitment to get involved and participate in the events occurring in society, exercising their citizens' roles by using their personal authorities to make Chile a country with Social Justice. This ethical/moral commitment suggests an introspective personal communication, which brings to the conscience the presence of values, norms, social responsibilities and solidarity rooted in their deepest mental spaces. The act of introspection occurred publicly in the audience of the LP attendees, where people declared their intention to have and act with sensitivity in the face of the sufferings of their fellow citizens affected by misfortune. This suggests an expanded and enriched concept in their minds of how to understand their roles in society and in organizations, that will lead to the unfolding of emotional resources, judgments and righteous actions according to situations that demand collaborative interventions.

The ethical/moral commitment that arises in the context of the LP is considered a response to the guilt and anxieties that people feel in the face of their lack of involvement and participation in social movements where, apparently, they had a passive stance that transferred to others the responsibility for future of events and their solutions. This commitment is intended to overcome the lack of involvement with the massive social protest actions which, defensively, led to avoid the anxieties of having to take decisive positions and take on risks regarding their participation in such movements.

The Government and members of parliament's absent or invisible authority and leadership constitute an incentive for LP participants to take the ethical/moral determination to begin to insert themselves in the dynamics of social movements, within the opportunities available to them. The subjects, in the face of the ineptitude they observe in

the authorities, declare that the time has come to take themselves the responsibility for their concerns, fears and anxieties, without passing on to others the responsibilities that will deal with the solution of their needs. This vigorous declaration of personal authority by the LP participants, gives voluntary dynamisms to face, with discernment, the anxieties caused by the social movements in their interactions with the authorities. In this, there is an acknowledgement that enough resources and personal authority are available to be able to manage themselves in the challenges of specific circumstances.

The erosion caused by social movements in institutions, which alter both personal and social life, has had the effect of weakening or destroying the role of social systems as defense against anxieties. This has meant that ordinary people have had to suffer the failed function of institutions as defenses against anxieties. This failure has placed on people a burden of emotional tensions that are difficult to tolerate, being unconsciously driven to psychic disorder of chaos and anomy. LP participants, in their presentations of topics and concerns, showed eloquently their anxieties and extreme fears as they became aware of the collapse of institutions that supported the social order at an individual level and at the level of society. LP attendees were able to realize that the creation of conversation spaces by themselves, is an appropriate way to contain emotional overflows in the face of the weakening of institutions in their role as protectors of anxiety.

The LP believes that social movements may be constitutive of a collective identity organized to confront the institutionalized organization of neoliberal capitalist power, which imposes precarious living conditions for the large mass of underprivileged sectors, disregarding their true needs. The fact that social movements reach a massive and powerful collective identity, opens the possibility that decisions on living conditions in the country may have the widespread participation of citizens, with voice and vote in the decisions, according to their class interests. Achieving this identity can be a restorative instance for the traumatic outrages that the underprivileged Chilean people's milieu has suffered throughout its history.

The general hypothesis behind the carrying out of the LP is that this was a beneficial reflexive instance so that people, as individuals and collectively, could digest concerns and experiences associated with the convulsed social movements. Participants had the opportunity to gather their thoughts and judgment abilities, which may enable them to face situations with discernment in order to apply principles of social justice. However, these auspicious results are overshadowed by the participants themselves when they express their pessimistic view that social movements and their concomitant violence will soon continue, with equal or greater anger, protesting injustices of the capitalist system that dominates Chile. The institutional transformations that the institutional political world seeks to implement to pacify the country in its current situation, do not seem to be enough for the urgent needs of the vast majority of the Chilean population.

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