

**"Chile and the World
at the Dawn of 2005"**
Report of a Listening Post
held on Wednesday 12th January



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Analysis 1

People that attend the Listening Post had difficulties to consider themselves as citizens of Chilean society. These difficulties are linked to the vagueness and ambiguity of people's relation to society and to what happens in the country. In the everyday life, they have a fragmented, anonymous and impersonal connection to society, with the exception of their links with persons and groups that are close to them, such as family, partners, job colleagues, and friends. It is evident to them that relations between groups in society are tinged by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, through which order and stability are searched for. By the discussion, the group expresses that the exercise of citizenship is both difficult and ineffective, since it brings about apathy, indifference, and the need to give up the capacity to act in a responsible way in society's affairs (processes and responsibilities).

Hypothesis 1

The difficulties that people have to take on the role as Chilean citizens during the Listening Post are connected with anxieties that are stirred up by the awareness of being part of a wider, heterogeneous and conflictive social system. These feelings are normally unconsciously repressed. People are resistant to integrate in their minds those aspects that contradict and challenge their particular points of view.

Thinking could bring about anxiety because it is an act that entails being aware of differences, facing responsibilities and taking part on society. People defend themselves from these demands by fragmenting and reducing society to very small spaces and to close social links, through which they can share similar perspectives putting aside what seems to be different. In other words the Listening Post makes evident people's anxieties and defences that are elicited in the process of taking on the role as Chilean citizens. In this way, society is defensively used as a receptacle for individual projections against anxiety.

Analysis 2

The Chilean society has suffered the influence of sudden and fast changes that weaken relationships between citizens and organizations. These ties had usually served as a mean to give security and protection to citizens. Chile is a society in transition from a traditional culture strongly influenced by the Catholic Church's morality, the military government and the central role of family. In society an opening occurs: subjects that were considered taboo are now being debated in a public manner, subjects like duties

and rights of genders, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, paedophilia, harassment, sexual abuse, human rights, and torture. The APEC meeting that took place in Chile during November 2004, permits society to be in touch with leading societies and governments in today's agenda, therefore feeling only steps away from being a developed country. To the people participating in the listening post, these changes produce stress, feelings of despair and uncertainty, since they imply the participation in a continuous life rhythm to reach their demands, where individuals need to work incessantly to show their worth and thus, be part of institutions and organizations. Competition is ruthless and brutal, values have been distorted and there is no validation for the person for itself, but for what that person does and shows. The market is the place where societal values are exchanged since there are no transcendental values. The future is vague, specially for new generations, there is no country project to unify and merge citizens. The Chilean society is facing an opening towards a new post industrial identity, process by which people observe chances to be more free, genuine, authentic and liberated from the oppression of religion and social conventions, but that same freedom scares and paralyzes.

Hypothesis 2

Through their experiences, people manifest their anxieties towards the change that allows society to move from a culture of dependence to a state of transition where they live the destabilizing effects of a dependence that did not prevail, where there is no assurance of the path that has been taken and if, as individuals, they are part of a collective project. The unsuccessful dependence provokes desolation since people can no longer trust on certainties when it comes to professional life, natural resources, family, marriage. Relationships are, generally speaking, vague, short term oriented and treacherous. Changes and instability generate anger, fear, and hopelessness, feelings that are projected to society and its structures. Deep down, the anxieties of individuals are connected to the fact that identities have lost their social reference which were fed for long time on stable relationships between individuals and organizations. Due to the unsteadiness of those ties, individuals feel anger and treason by the despair they confront and because they have to wrestle on their own against the effects of the unsuccessful dependence. Individuals feel a psychic tension between dreams of a traditional culture that protected them and a post modern future that brings not only uncertainties but also opportunities for a more autonomous and genuine identity and life.

Analysis 3

In the group there is a heated discussion on the quality of Chilean society, where two opposite positions are adopted. One position considers that thirty years ago the society was better than what is today, meanwhile the other position holds that the actual society is better because offers improved life quality conditions for its citizens.

There are opposite justifications according to the previous positions: democracy and dictatorship; oppression to women and children, and freedom and respect; poverty and equal distribution of wealth; exploitation and justice; diseases and access to health systems; ignorance and education; etc. Within this debate there is also a polarization between generations, the younger and the elder. The latest perceive themselves as guardians of important values, watching with horror how young people is exposed to the lost of ethical principles, leading to chaos and destruction. In this sense, it is believed that elder people are protectors of the moral legacy for the young generations and the

perpetuation of society. However, younger people in the group show rebellion to elder people guardianship, feeling capable of being autonomous and injecting revitalizing new values to the society.

In the discussion is present a dilemma between the losing of values and the evolution towards new values. Between the members of the group there is aggressive feelings and distrust, according to the categories of younger and elder. On the other side, in this discussion there is a dialogue of contrasts and contradictions where, some elder members indicate that they already reach their goal on providing the new generations with a good society, hereafter young people must keep it and improve it. Those elder people have a fantasy that implies they already gave a rich legacy to the new generations, so they can rest and enjoy the benefits of such legacy.

Hypothesis 3

It is observed after the polarized discussion over the quality of Chilean society that there is an esquizoid and paranoid defense of arguments. People react in such way in front of the anxiety produced by the participation in a society that leaves behind securities and certainties, and that hopelessly must confront a vital space full of uncertainties that provoke doubts and instability.

In an unsuspected manner, people divide social reality, either valuing the past and its tradition, either valuing the present and its post-modernism. It seems that in this division there is an inability to integrate tradition and transformation. Even more, this division in the group is shown in the perception of two sub-groups, the elder that file for tradition and the younger that divorce from that tradition and file for change and for what is new. The conflict gets verbalized between lost of values versus new values, where the relationships between generations results antagonist and even aggressive.

The chance to have continuity, and richness, between what is old and new is out of the members' perception. Also it is understood that this division is a way people has to protect their identities, avoiding to face the task of re-examine their concepts about themselves, taking into account what they have been in the past and what they could be in the present and the future.

Analysis 4.

The group is surrounded by diverse emotions with respect to the relations with society. On one side individuals feel rage for being immersed in a system that demands continuous achievements, that forces competition, solitude and oppression. They experience anger because they are part of a wheel which they are not able to leave because pushing the brake and escaping the system are outside their conscious reach. The society exerts a deep psychic control on the people to participate in, there is an ego ideal that pushes members with unconscious forces, to respond to social expectations, although there is exhaustion that not always leads to satisfactory compensations. Also the attractiveness of the market is recognized, the fascination of being able to satisfy necessities through immediacy, to open to enjoyment in fullness and without guilt. Nevertheless the group feels that guilt invades them, obstructing them to act freely and in total openness towards enjoyment.

Hypothesis 4.

We interpreted that in the group there is a sense of primitive dissatisfaction with forming part of a society that rigorously disciplines people's behavior. An ideal of high and demanding ego is settled and moves to its fulfillment, but it's difficult to obtain and generally does not compensate the efforts that are made. It surges the image of a society like a mother who has lost her capacity to feed, to take care and to protect and the figure and actions of a father prevail, who is ruthless in the duties that imposes to children, is avaricious, stingy and abusive at the time of repairing and compensating for what is done. The disappearance of the benefactor state, the impotence of unions to protect people and the mercantilist orientation of managers in organizations are evidences of a society that harasses and mistreats its children. People feel destitute, consumption and enjoyment are offered like an ephemeral temporary option that helps to compensate the feeling of destituteness, abandonment and the cruelty of a mother and father who do not take care nor protect. Guilt does not allow the liberation of that system of political domination which penetrates with force in people's psyches. Guilt impels to continue to be an obedient and disciplined member of the system, to act in coherence, sleeping any rebellion attempts or finding a reasonable exit to frustrations lived with the society.

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