

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



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. SHARING PREOCCUPATIONS AND IDEAS

At the beginning the first issues that came up were focused on changes. Political changes as in the Basque country, social changes and economical, but this was erased in a very conclusive way saying that the most important problem that we have as society is the immigration.

All the following debate were turning around the immigration and what model of society we are living in.

- How we are so individualistic that there is no space for social commitment.
- How the European Constitution is focused on structural and economical issues but there is a "vacuum" in social policy.
- How we exclude the immigrants and everything that threatens our welfare state, but we are also excluded in the same moment that we don't follow the system's path.
- How governments and economical power repress other thinkings that are possible, as the anti-globalization movements.
- How we are trying to solve problems that we have already generated (immigration, poverty, injustice, dictatorships, wars...)
- How we are buying resources in other countries but our enterprises doesn't invest there with a medium or long term vision.
- How in the European Constitution there is no space to think in Federalism as a way to solve the conflict with the nationalist claims of many of the European countries. Spain, UK, Italy France
- How this year has been marked by the violence but it is very difficult to really understand its root.

At the end of this space everybody was agree that maybe some concrete issues as the terrorist attack in Madrid, the change of government after an election marked by the terrorist attack, the war of Iraq and the "Plan Ibarretxe" (a secesionist plan of the basque government) has been avoided maybe because there were too much tension in them.

Part 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR ISSUES

- Immigration and feelings of exclusion.
- The government repression
 - Poverty criminalization.

- The model of state.
 - The European Constitution
 - The welfare state decrease.
 - Rights recognition.
- Solidarity and Shame in western societies.
- The violence.
- Mass media.
- Loss of confidence:
 - On people
 - On Institutions
 - On politics
- Integration or assimilation.
- Globalization

Part 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

On the analysis of the main issues the group clustered the items in two

One of the clusters was:

- The immigration
- The model of state - The European Constitution
- The welfare state decrease

The second cluster was:

- The violence
- The government repression
- Mass Media
- Loss of confidence on persons, institutions and politics.
- Globalization. Integration or assimilation
- Solidarity and shame.

After these clusters were made there was a big amount of anxiety that made impossible to give a structure to a Hypothesis formation for each cluster. Time was running out and the group concluded that all the items were related among them. So the decision was to go ahead and try to find explanations for the whole.

Loss of confidence on persons, institutions and politics:

After the 1989 Berlin's wall fallen the ideologies has been substituted by economical models. It seems that social relationships has been substituted by work relationships and economically based links. Socially, ideologies are something bad and dangerous and a person that support an ideology is seen as " demodé" idealist, out of our time, radical, dangerous and out of the system.

People's life is under a mortgage almost for the rest of their life. The increase of the price of the houses is a crazy thing that just make benefits to the banks, builder enterprises and people that have capital to invest and speculate. Just to live under a roof takes more than half of an average salary and it can be worse if you buy it and you have a mortgage by thirty years. People that need to pay a house are attached to their work under any condition and there is little space to complaints. Elder people has to leave their homes because with their retirement they can't afford the expenses of their

house and their homes are sold to young people that are supposed to have enough time to pay a mortgage. Under these times of uncertainty people seem to believe that the only valuable security is the economical one and this could be represented by the owning of your house.

People in order to live "in the welfare state" and not be excluded have to live for their work. The impression over people makes that many rights that workers had achieved after decades of fight are now not considered and are unrespected. People can't choose how many hours want to work. People fear unemployment because without a job how are you going to afford the mortgage, the car ...schools etc.

There is a social make up to cover what we don't want to see that is everything that can threaten the illusion of happiness of the welfare society. The most important thing that it is excluded is poverty. The poverty is the origin of most of the problems of our society. Violence, terrorism, radicalism and immigration is linked to the injustice of poverty.

In response to this, as society don't want to see we use to get a thick skin in order to not be affected. The feeling of shame is under many solidarity reactions but in many cases the solidarity is used by the system (mainly governments) as a way to control the people that can be dangerous. This is another expression of the paranoid part of our society.

Poverty nowadays is below the immigration movements in our society. Sub-Saharan people, Moroccos and Latin American immigrants come to Spain attracted by the illusion of a happy welfare state society and repelled by the poverty, corruption, wars and other problems of their countries.

The pressure of the immigration constrain the society to give responses to a problem that we have also create in those countries that we have exploited their resources but we haven't help them to develop. The immigration also raise the question of, which society we want to live in. The answer now is that willing to protect our wealth and security we have decided that some persons are illegal and have no rights.

Our awareness it is only shaken when there is a huge catastrophe as the tsunami in the Asian South east, the earthquake of Bam or Hurricanes in The Caribbean. But what it really shake our conscience is the fear to the violence and terror of those more radicals and integrist that have their roots in the inequity and omnipotence of the western world.

There is a loss of confidence in the personal relationships, maybe because those relationships are linked to their work.

People becomes aloof and distant from others and find security in smaller circles of relationships.

There is a loss of confidence in the institutions, such as justice, health organizations, educational, non profit organizations at the end it seems that every one work for economical and political interests specially those of the more powerful ones.

There is a loss of confidence on the politic and the politicians. This is a general perception from the people and became specially aware when Pilar Manjón

(representing a terrorism Victims Association) reported to the congress commission that was in charge of the 11 March bomb attack, where 200 people were killed, full of tears that politicians were manipulating the feelings of those who died. Also said that they were just worried in their political interests forgetting the people that voted them.

This moment watched in live at the TV shook the conscience of the politicians and it seemed that message touched them because was expressing the feelings and thoughts of the whole society.

The loss of confidence in the institutions and politicians has to do with the perception that the state and the government loose their power and there are some lobbies that really controls them. Some voices says that the state it doesn't really exist and what it does exist is the power of " The capital".

To the economical power it is good for their interest having the society split in just two alternatives the conservative and the progresist, but really there are not too many differences between them but there is a climate of confrontation and violence in the fight for power that doesn't allow to think in other perspectives.

Mass media are partial and support one of the alternatives and can't criticize enterprises or government because they are part of the business. Newspapers need adverts and the support of the system (the government or other political institutions with holdings of enterprises that support them). One of the hypothesis is that if there is a climate of fear it is easier to polarize the public opinion. Polarization facilitates the use of the power resulting from the management of 10 million of votes.

The independence of the Basque country threatens the model and identity of Spain and opens the door to other claims of independence as Catalonia or Galicia.

Bellow the fight against violence as a way to reach political claims. It seems to be unthinkable to find a balance between what is local and what is globalization. As bad is just to look at your belly than to erase any differences.

There are not any visionary politician and there aren't any real leaders. Leaders go to the enterprises and intellectuals has retired themselves from the politic scene. The example of Lula Da Silva in Brazil shows how much fear is in the system when there is a movement of change and shows how the system wants to neutralize it.

Instead of all this there is a sense of optimism when you look back and see your history and look at the changes of the Spanish society with a special recognition to the "Transition period ". There is a perception that there are a lot of people with a strong compromise with society and with valuable initiatives that don't appear on the mass media.

The Hypothesis is that changes doesn't get society's attention in the same way that fear does.

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