"Germany and the World at the Dawn of 2007"
Report of a Listening Post held on 10th January

OPUS

Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles. This part was concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that related to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

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

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 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 were 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 experiences recounted revealed a tendency to opt for quantification and measurability in dealing with problems especially in health, education/school and service areas. Digital methods of quantifying are preferred. As a consequence, other areas such as human relationships remain unperceived. Thus staff engaged for example in psychological consulting or in hospitals are transferred with no transition whatsoever from valuable work in progress to other fields or functions. That means the end or disruption of long-term processes which build on the continuity of relationships. Nurses are increasingly involved with more documentation and with less contact to patients.

The excessive emphasis on quantifiable performance neglects and inhibits perception of, for example, subtler interpersonal capabilities that are not so easily reduced into measurable components, and impedes the development and preservation of creativity in one's role.

Short-term solutions ("thinking in quarterly results") are in opposition to long-term meaningful behaviors. The supply of constantly evolving, aggressively marketed products for consumers (ie in the IT area) serves to displace genuine interests into the background if not to veil them from recognition.

In the group process the reactions towards these tendencies hovered initially between depressive resignation and fight/flight. Later it became possible to confront intimidating aspects and report of productive confrontations with satisfactory results. We admit to an innate willingness to be seduced into a passive and dependent role. To fight against this mood it appears essential to develop individual structures against being flooded by data, e.g. setting up effective protective personal limits. Since individual resources are not infinite, it is necessary to ascertain priorities for one's own conduct and to seek contact to others in order to further mutual creativity and put feasible projects into practice.

Finally the group became aware that no words had been lost on the subjects of war and peace. One had the impression that the alarming international situation and the ecological threat are such immense dangers that there is less scope for individual activity and a stronger pull towards flight from possible work. It may well be that topics are sought with room for personal involvement in order to avoid surrendering to paralysis.

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