



## Germany at the dawn of 2018 Report of a Listening Post held in Berlin on 9 January 2018

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### **PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES [in German]**

*In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations; or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.*

Das Gespräch bewegte sich hin und her zwischen dem Blick auf die anderen und dem Blick uns selbst, dem Negativen und dem Positiven, der Macht, Machtlosigkeit, Schuld und Hilflosigkeit der anderen und uns selbst. Es wurden auch Zuversicht und Hoffnung geäußert.

Das Gespräch begann mit der Einschätzung, dass die Welt voller bedrohlicher Konflikte ist, die Mut und Visionen erforderlich machen. Nach dem Beginn folgten verschiedene Beiträge, die das Vorherrschen negativer Einstellungen dem Fehlen positiver Einstellungen in der Gesellschaft gegenüberstellten. Hier einige Beispiele:

- Oberflächlichkeit und eine mathematische Sichtweise, die die Hauptsachen unterbelichtet und entmenschlicht versus ein Verstehen und Aushalten von anderen – am Beispiel einer Theateraufführung,
- Individualinteressen, ungerechte Verteilung von Ressourcen, weltweit und in unserem Land versus dem Blick auf die Welt,
- Hedonismus, Reichtum und Selbstgerechtigkeit versus bewusstes Leben mit der Umwelt,
- Armut versus Bildung für alle,
- Wachstum versus Sozialverantwortung,
- Destruktivität versus Mut,
- Reizüberflutung und Unaufmerksamkeit versus engagiertes und visionäres Handeln.

Zu einem Zeitpunkt kam die Frage auf, wieviel Prozent der Menschen wohl eine konstruktive, helfende Einstellung hätten. Wenige meinten zwei Prozent – dies vor bezogen auf Vertreter von Behörden –, einige meinten 20 Prozent, viele

meinten 40 Prozent in der Gesellschaft insgesamt.

Innerhalb dieser Thematik gab es Beiträge, die die Ursachen von Problemen darstellten: die Reizüberflutung von Kindern, die zum Weghören und Abspalten führt, die Belastung von geflüchteten Jugendlichen, die die zu Gewalt und Zerstörung führt, die fehlende Integration von Geflüchteten, die zu rigiden Reaktionen der Betreuer führt, die Sicherheit in unserer Gesellschaft versus der Gewalt in anderen Teilen der Welt, was zur Flucht führt.

Daneben gab es Beiträge, die die fehlende Unterstützung der Politik zum Inhalt hatten: das Alleinlassen von Zugewanderten mit ihren traumatischen Erfahrungen und mit unzumutbaren Zuständen in Unterkünften, Ohnmacht statt Hilfe von staatlichen Stellen gegenüber den Belastungen und Aggressionen von Zugewanderten – dies am Beispiel einer angeblich fehlenden Therapiefähigkeit von aggressiven zugewanderten Jugendlichen –, der Eindruck, dass der Staat seine Verantwortung für die Arbeit mit Flüchtlingen auf die Ehrenamtlichen abwälzt. Auch die nicht vertrauenswürdigen Medien wurden kritisiert.

Schließlich gab es einen Kreis von Beiträgen, der eigene Defizite angesichts von Spaltungen ansprach: die negativen Folgen von gut gemeinten Aktionen wie Altkleidersammlungen, das Suchen einfacher Lösungen angesichts komplizierter Zusammenhänge, allgemein den Fatalismus, das Übersehen von positiven Dingen wie „ungehobene Schätze“ aus dem Zusammenleben in der DDR, positive Erlebnisse der Wende, d.h. dem Ende der DDR und dem Zusammenwachsen von Ost- und Westdeutschland, das Interesse an einer Wiedervereinigung in Korea.

Und schließlich gab Beiträge, die Handlungsfähigkeit und Zuversicht ausdrückten: gegenüber der Machtlosigkeit im Großen die Möglichkeit zur Änderung im Kleinen, gegenüber der Flut und Übersichtlichkeit von Medien das Bemühen einzelner Journalisten zur richtigen Bewertung und das Nutzen der eigenen Möglichkeiten, Informationen auszuwählen, gegenüber dem Gewaltpotenzial und den Problemen der Geflüchteten Hilfsbereitschaft, Engagement und Optimismus bei uns.

## **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

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

### **Theme 1: The bright and the dark side of the moon**

This picture puts the negative references to the characteristics of our society such as mechanization, superficiality and self-centeredness in relation to positive expressions of helpfulness, willingness to change and solution orientation. Joining element is the group that includes both sides.

### **Theme 2: Surf-riders and dancers on the volcano**

To this topic belong the expressions of powerlessness towards developments that are overwhelming, being left alone by politics and marginalized feelings

because of anxiety and loneliness. In the discussion, fears of real threats were voiced such as poverty, violence and unjust distribution of resources, as well as fears of violence in the close neighborhood and of the anxiety of those who threaten others. The image also expresses that wealth and selfishness in our society covers hidden or far away conflicts. This was also formulated as: The world comes to us if we do not turn ourselves to it.

### **Theme 3: Pulling horse wished for (Zugpferd gewünscht)**

This topic summarizes the discussions that express the will to concrete changes and improvements. That means not only actively looking to the bright side, but also strengthening it and seeing our own mistakes.

It was critically asked if we are looking for a leader and a hero. Although in the first part of the discussion also the word "hero" fell, and in the second part it was formulated that we are looking for "inspiring role models", and in the third part we intensively discussed about religion – the majority of the group agreed that what was meant were pragmatic and practical ways of finding solutions, courage and confidence. Or in other words, finding "the hero within us". One participant recalled the well-known poem of Bonhoeffer "By loving forces silently surrounded" [„Von guten Mächten treu und still umgeben“, s.b.] as a search for the light, the power and help; but in the midst of a very deep darkness. Bonhoeffer was killed on 09.04.1945 in the concentration camp Flossenbürg.

### **PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

*In Part 3, the participants 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, participants 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.*

#### **Analysis 1:**

As in the group discussion in the first part, the participants also in the analysis in the second made part a gradual turn from the negative view of others and the lack of help and helpers to the more differentiated view of what is achievable through self-authorization and collaboration. It is a movement from the dark side to the bright side, from the global to the local, from fear and anger to action, from viewing the narrow thinking of others to viewing their intuition and understanding.

The image of dancing on the volcano and riding on waves could be an image of the awareness of our fear and anger, which can ingest us, but which we want to ignore in order to act. This was also expressed in the "metadiscussion" about experimenting in the listening post: Is it fruitful to work with metaphors or is something lost by using them und not sticking to the spoken word? The group

was inclined to regard metaphors as useful. Maybe this was an expression that we know there are things in the background which are uncomfortable, but because of their existence we want to be able to act.

### **Hypothesis 1:**

Because we see the dark sides of society directed against the community and know that they can destroy, we are forced, but also willing, to use our collective abilities to strengthen the bright side, even if doing so we ignore some of the existing anger.

### **Analysis 2:**

The discussion in the group was somehow integrative. The group consisted of different circles that did not know each other: old and new participants, with many or few acquaintances, couples and individuals, and it was relatively large (15). Despite this, a friendly mutual interest arose, everyone spoke. The evening started with thanks for listening and not interrupting, ending with the comment that something is missing in the round, namely young people. One could see a desire for inclusion. We want to create a community, are grateful that we are admitted ourselves and want to involve others who are not in yet. In the background there could be a fear that one could not make it into the community.

Because the fear is large, we have the desire to be drawn and supported in our efforts for integration and breakup. As for example one is inspired by the ideas of French President Macron – here the term "inspiring role models" was used. With help and support, we even discover our own "horsepower" and energies and move from a passive to an active attitude, although the activity remains precarious.

### **Hypothesis 2:**

Because we know the consequences of anger and hate, which also leads to being outcaste, we want and expect ourselves to be integrative and part of the community, not least because of our history. But we also know that the integration is precarious and therefore we desire inspiration, help and support.

**Convenors:** Friedrich Wilhelm Lindemann, Ulrike Beland

## **Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906 - 1945)**

Von guten Mächten treu und still umgeben,  
behütet und getröstet wunderbar,  
so will ich diese Tage mit euch leben  
und mit euch gehen in ein neues Jahr.

Noch will das alte unsre Herzen quälen,  
noch drückt uns böser Tage schwere Last.  
Ach Herr, gib unsern aufgeschreckten Seelen  
das Heil, für das du uns geschaffen hast.

Und reichst du uns den schweren Kelch, den bitteren  
des Leids, gefüllt bis an den höchsten Rand,  
so nehmen wir ihn dankbar ohne Zittern  
aus deiner guten und geliebten Hand.

Doch willst du uns noch einmal Freude schenken  
an dieser Welt und ihrer Sonne Glanz,  
dann wolln wir des Vergangenen gedenken,  
und dann gehört dir unser Leben ganz.

### Translation

By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered,  
and confidently waiting come what may,  
we know that God is with us night and morning,  
and never fails to greet us each new day.

Yet is this heart by its old foe tormented,  
still evil days bring burdens hard to bear;  
Oh, give our frightened souls the sure salvation  
for which, O Lord, You taught us to prepare.

And when this cup You give is filled to brimming  
with bitter suffering, hard to understand,  
we take it thankfully and without trembling,  
out of so good and so beloved a hand.

Yet when again in this same world You give us  
the joy we had, the brightness of Your Sun,  
we shall remember all the days we lived through,  
and our whole life shall then be Yours alone.