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Komitet pravnik za ljudska prava / Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights
17 Svetogorska Street, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia Tel/Fax: +381 11 33 44 235; 33 444 25; 3238 980
e-mail yucomoffice@gmail.com
www.yucom.org.yu

Human Rights and Democracy Violation Early Warning *Weekly Newsletter* No. 26

Slobodan Antić and *Politika* Readers on Education Methods

The *Politika* daily carried Oct 23 (page 11,) a contribution written by **Slobodan Antić**, its guest columnist and Professor at the Dept. of Sociology, University in Belgrade. The text titled „Safeguarding Children From Parents“ advocates corporal punishment of children. This view is best illustrated in the following quote: „For a vast majority of parents corporal punishment is not an expression of hatred or sadism in relation to their children. It represents the wish to protect them from irrational actions that would lead them to endanger their lives. It is, for the greatest majority of fathers and mothers, an expression of absolute parental love and concern. Criminalizing all sorts of corporal punishment by parents, including the mildest¹ ones, goes contrary to the very best interests of children themselves“.

Apart from dwelling on this topic from his rather peculiar perspective of upbringing of young generations, **Prof. Antić** used his column to launch yet another attack on nongovernmental and other organizations and groups advocating children's and human rights. He vehemently opposes the efforts aimed at educating children about their rights and encouraging them to report whatever cases of parental abuse to proper authorities (e.g. *Ombudsman's Office*, as described in this article) and argues that they represent „political misuse of children and turn them against their own parents“, and amount to making denunciators of them. Acting in defense of traditionalist repressive educational methods, **Prof. Antić** openly, consciously and purposefully instigates disregard of socially dangerous and legally proscribed forms of behavior. By this, he degrades the very standards of children's and human rights in general. **Prof. Antić** resorts to such blatant advocacy of children's rights violation against the background of a crusade-like war that he has been waging against nongovernmental organizations in Serbia, whom he even in the context of children's rights defense labels „undemocratic“ and even „totalitarian“. This war finds much resonance in Serbian media and meets no particular opposition in the country's political establishment.

Prof. Antić's column triggered a lively debate in *Politika's* Internet edition: over 100 readers – many of them classifying themselves as *intellectuals*: teachers, doctors,

¹ The author uses the term „a parental slap on the buttock“ to denominate a mild form of punishment.





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engineers etc. who include Serbs living in Western countries – sent their comments on the column. Less than 10 of a total of 102 comments reflect a critical attitude towards **Prof. Antić's** main thesis; all others welcome his „courage and readiness to publicly address facts almost everyone is deeply convinced in, but no one dare express it“.

Departing from the impression that these comments offer at least partial insight in the state of mind of a segment of Serbian elite, EWS decided to submit some of the characteristic excerpts to our readers'attention:

„In the Netherlands, where freedoms are the most generous, problems are also the gravest, especially problems with children...“.

.....

„I work in education and teach civic education². Although I'm not at all in agreement with the curriculum in that area because children's' rights are promoted out of all proportions, I still teach because I must.“

.....

„I am a teacher and I'm deeply convinced that everything used to be much better under Socialism ... Today everything is brought to be nonsense. With the reforms modeled on the ideas of nongovernmental organizations and Europe, we have entered a dead end street“.

.....

„Some obviously think that blind replication of laws from the West and imitation of their way of life would bring us welfare. “

.....

„If an ideal Serb were to be made after the measurements of NGO creators, that would turn out to be a human being conceived by artificial insemination from an unknown donor, abandoned by his/her emancipated mother immediately after birth, adopted and brought up (without an occasional slap on the buttock) by same-sex parents, and shaped up as an a-national person almost to perfection“.

.....

„Our NGOs are not ours; they are devilish, they are neither competent nor benevolent“.

.....

² According to the law, pupils and/or their parents can chose between religion and civic education.





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„Most of this text represents a good insight into the NGOs' intention to mould us after European laws... One should not replicate [foreign] laws and regulations and attempt to apply them on inadequate grounds, what our NGOs gladly do, and thus attempt to turn us into mutants without identity, freedom and attitude“.

.....

„The purpose is to minimize parents' influence on children in order to enable the media and NGOs to educate our children. The aim is to create obedient slaves rather than human beings of personal integrity“.

.....

„[If it continues like this] all we have to do is to destroy family which rests upon our tradition and [Serbian] Orthodoxy“.

.....

„How about introducing a law to protect the citizens (both parents and children) from some NGOs?“

.....

„How about somebody ... explaining the NGOs that they and their viewpoints are not wanted in Serbia? “

.....

„At this age ... kids do not know what child rights are and that their rights are jeopardized. It is clear that they [are made to] learn several sentences by heart, that all this comes from NGOs which instigate them to rebel against their own parents with the ultimate goal to depict Serbia as a backward country which should be punished“.

.....

„I sometimes get the impression that these NGOs have been entrusted the task to turn Serbia in Orwell's animal farm “.

.....

„It would be more rational to struggle against abortion than against a clap on the buttock“.

.....

„Right, Mr. Antić, not everything lies in tolerance!“

.....

„Corporal punishment is poison! In small quantities it cures and in big quantities it kills!“

.....





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„The fascistoid NWO³ (New World Order) with their Headquarters in Washington reaches its criminal tentacles to the family ... in order to create armies for its wars of conquest, i. e. new Afghanistans, new Serbias, and new Iraqs, which should be conquered and enslaved. Fascism is (again) coming from the West...”.

.....

“By virtue of the fact that I have sired the child, God gave me the right to bring it up as I can and know”.

.....

„Doctors, too, advise that an occasional slap on a child’s buttock does it when the child does not obey. It is not abuse, it’s education”.

.....

„What we are dealing with is destruction of family in all its pores. It can’t be. I will not allow it!”

.....

„Various self-appointed benefactors and NGOs, whose only concern is to introduce changes in the society without considering whether these changes are good, have caused an overall chaos in the West. We are heading that way at high speed, too. Punishing parents who beat their children to death and ... traumatize them ... that is one thing, whereas leaving them without means to educate their children is something else. There are two methods of education: the stick and the carrot. Applying each of them individually brings about catastrophic results. Only combined can they produce good results”.

.....

„As a mother of a child in the first grade, I have much fear of that kind of school. As a teacher, I am very angry, because when I look at the workings of this whole philosophy of European school reform, that leads towards kids leaving school without basic knowledge, school which instructs our kids to spy on their parents, which indoctrinates our kids with rights (and no responsibilities) – means disaster in any sense”.

.....

„The purpose is to minimize parents’ influence on their children, so as to let them be educated by media and various NGOs. The aim is to educate them into being obedient slaves rather than human beings of personal integrity”.

.....

³ Allusion to NVO – *Nongovernmental organizations* in Serbian.





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„Lonesome psychologists, eternal aunts, withered ladies” – names attached to children’s and human rights activists demonized by **Prof. AntoniĆ**, and often used in numerous comments in *Politika*.

Outlook:

It is of particular significance that views like these are publicized in *Politika* – newspaper partly owned by the state and one of the nation’s most influential media, especially among political, business, cultural and educational elites. Of no lesser importance is the fact that the contemporary Serbian society – still suffering grave economic, political, moral and psychological consequences of the 1990s Balkan wars – is confronted with various forms of violence that are increasingly becoming a dominant pattern of behavior.

