



HIGH LEVEL EUROPEAN SEMINAR

PREVENTING ABORTION IN EUROPE

Legal framework and social policies

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Abortion and Human Rights

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Thank you Gregor for this invitation, thank you to the COMECE for this reception, pardon me for my voice but the air conditioning has had consequences.

We have lost, on this subject, a few battles, but we can, we must win the war. Why have we lost a few battles concerning abortion?

In my humble opinion, I think that we have insisted too many times on abortion as a crime, as something contrary to the right to life. It is true that abortion is a crime, a violation of the right to life, but also, abortion is a tragedy and a failure. We live in a European society characterised by the search for comfort, the non-complication of life and the primacy of individualism. Facing our position on abortion as a crime, the others have worked with ruse to make changes. Firstly, to change the name given to abortion.

For example in France, the word abortion has disappeared, today it is the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, and secondly it is very difficult, impossible legally to speak of a right to abortion. Instead of a right to abortion we can speak of a right to reproductive health. Precisely concerning abortion, the non-reproduction that includes the voluntary interruption of pregnancy.

The others, that I myself call “the sons of darkness” - which does not mean that I am the son of light, it a comparison to explain the situation a little – are more cunning than we are they say with Victor Klemperer, in *LTI, The Language of the Third Reich*, “*words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: we swallow them with our guard down, they seem to have no effect, and after a bit of time the toxic effect is felt*”.

Concerning abortion the toxic effect has already taken place. The others, the sons of darkness have won the battle of the words. Instead of right to abortion, we speak today of right to maternity freely decided. At home, in Spain, we have an organic law that I call the law on abortion but officially is the right to sexual reproductive health and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy. The word abortion is absolutely eliminated in the whole law. I congratulate very warmly Gregor Puppink who organised this seminar and who suggested the title “Prevention of abortion”. The subject of this seminar is to present abortion as a social and public health problem that affects society as a whole and for its future.

A personal thought; in my opinion, laws endure if society accepts them. If a society rejects a law, sooner or later, this law will disappear. For example, concerning the Spanish law on abortion, the Populist Party –today in the government– quickly made an appeal against this law before the Constitutional Court. The Populist Party asked for a cancellation of the law and immediate suspension of its application during the course of the case. By only a single voice of difference, the Constitutional Court decided not to suspend the application of the law, but it said that it would very quickly give a judgment on the merits. That was six years ago... In my opinion, I think that the majority of the Constitutional Council is against abortion, unfortunately, to say no to abortion and to this law may be something very daring and politically incorrect. I remember the cases of the Grand Chamber *Tysiac vs Poland* and *A. B. et C. vs Ireland (A. B. C.)*, there were a lot of judges against abortion but there was only one dissident opinion amongst 17 judges (for *A., B., and C.*). It is very unpleasant to have a single dissident opinion against 16. But I am still alive and I haven’t been eliminated. The others are very clever, cunning and resourceful.

For example, a well-known case *A, B et C. vs. Ireland*, it’s fantastic, it’s precisely the opposite of the Convention. In this case, there are three women represented by an NGO for abortion. One of them was presented as being sick from cancer and in need of undergoing an abortion, for which she had to go to the United-Kingdom, etc. But there was no proof, no document, nothing of all that, it was an act of faith that you had to do. The Irish government, a polite government, contested the claim saying that there was no document, no proof, I don’t know what I am supposed to say but I am very polite a government, so I am going to explain to you how abortion takes place here. Mistake! They were deceived.

The Court says yes, it’s true that there is no proof of the affirmations of the applicants but the government has explained to us the system of abortion in Ireland so we are going

to examine this system. Where is the concrete violation of human rights? Nothing. But, you know, it is the typical pro-abortion stance of the others. In this case, *A, B and C* there are a few words apparently naive, neutral but if you read this case and its facts, there is a claim that is for me very impactful. Mrs. A. became pregnant involuntarily. Excuse me? How can you say that you are involuntarily pregnant from the moment of conception and once you know that you are pregnant what does it mean and especially, what difference is there between being pregnant voluntarily and involuntarily? It is a word expressed apparently neutral but very dangerous in my opinion.

So, I'll conclude. There are solutions, yes of course, there are inconvenient solutions and there are difficult solutions.

First solution: to talk. To support our position against abortion, to prevent abortion with courage without being scared of being criticized. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in the theory of the spiral of silence spoke of the minority whose opinion is very largely expressed and the others; the majority, who is scared to give its opinion. This means that the opinion of the minority also becomes the opinion of the society. It's not true, the opinion of the majority is contrary, but this aggressive, strong and intelligent minority creates the spiral of silence and it is the opinion of society. One will answer that this is the theory of a German professor. No, this is how it works.

For example, we have the law on homosexual marriage, to justify the rights for homosexual marriage, to found these rights the Constitutional Court, as motivation, said that the surveys show that public opinion is in favour of marriage between same sex persons. So we start with a small minority that has a strongly expressed and very widespread opinion and if there are a few protests it will be fiercely criticized and in the end this opinion is the opinion of society. And then a Constitutional Court comes and tells us that because there is an opinion in favour of same sex marriage, we have to authorise homosexual marriage.

In the parable of the unrighteous steward (Luke, 16, 8), Jesus-Christ said that the sons of darkness are more clever and cunning than the sons of light. I think that sometimes, us, normally, sons of light, we are stupid, absolutely stupid.

For example, I think that we should work in the media, but with a lot of cleverness.

Here's an example; in Spain, there is a television show on regional TV. Under the socialist government it was a series about family with typical leftist prototypes meaning that a family composed of a father, mother and child is a disaster, it's corrupt and they are bad people. If in the series a priest appears, priests are liars, drunkards, womanizers, they are corrupt and are the worst beings possible. But if we find a homosexual couple it's fantastic, they are beautiful and angelical people. Abortion is liking drinking coffee. There are elections and the government changes and a right-wing government arrives with right-winged positions; it is decided that the series has to be cancelled but the general director is intelligent and cunning, he calls the producers of the series and says

“No the series is not going to be cancelled and better still, instead of one diffusion day per week, there will be three, but there will be only a slight modification for the script writer, I want the series to represent reality. Priests are normally good people, families composed of a father, mother and children are normal, there are homosexual couples composed of good and bad people.

Abortion is always a tragedy, a failure. If you respect these rules of social reality then the series can continue, you can continue and earn a lot of money and there is no problem.” Indeed the series introduced normal life, conclusion: it was a big success and the audience increased. So it’s possible to change things.

To conclude I would like to say one word: we have lost a few battles but we are going to win the war, if we want to win it. And to win it we must be more numerous, we must pray and we must have courage.