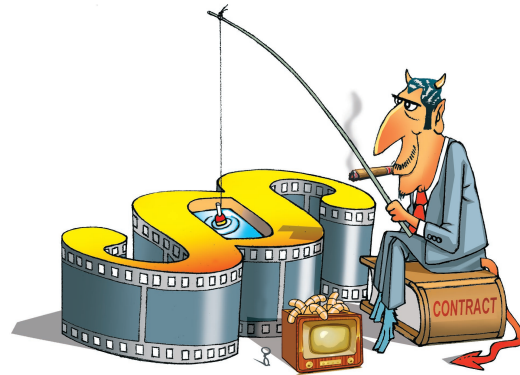


## DOX #97: THE RIGHT TO REMAIN COMPLIANT

**SATIRE:** Wherein our filmmaking hero has finally found the recipe to success, only to see his dream falter in the second-last article of the contract. **By Boris Mitić**



After years of arthouse fame, I had finally learned how to juggle in all the elements of an instant documentary blockbuster: competitive character-driven emancipatory melodrama with self-flagellating exhibitionism and sexual minorities and current affairs and a catchy title and transmedia potential. That, of course, landed me my first big TV deal even before I had finished the sentence. I called my mother and told her something she always wanted to hear: Mother, I succeeded.

When I arrived home, all the neighbors were there, giving me that proud-to-know-you local-patriotic look. The icon of our patron saint was taken down, replaced by the framed TV contract. The musicians were waiting for my father's cue to fire up the room when I would put down the signature. The room smelled of overcooked food, jealousy and tears of joy. But the contract was thick. Unusually thick. I looked at the audience. Their eyes read, you're not gonna read the whole thing now, are you? I didn't. But it already felt suspicious.

48 hours later, when the party was slowly fading out, I went to the toilet and took the contract with me. For safety reasons. And then I read it. Up to 2/3, it was standard copy. And then, three words flushed down my dreams of glory. Article 6 - Legal Compliance. It listed all the legislative caveats that the film must avoid in order to comply with TV regulations. There were 36 of them, and any single offense would terminate the whole deal. I read slowly, sobering up at each line. I had succeeded in breaching every single rule, and even thought of two more that weren't on the list but that could logically be included.

The friendly swearing of my main characters, which was the landmark of their personal jargon and charisma, included every imaginable offense to race, sexuality and political affiliation.

The film totaled, from what I could recall, 38 instances of coarse language, 59 consumptions of alcohol or tobacco, 83 logos and 17 nudities.

A baby was psychotically repeating marketing slogans, implying indirect 'product placement'.

A kid was possibly 'alluding to violence'.

Three animals were killed and eaten.

There was a scene of spontaneous i.e. 'gratuitous' sex.

Obvious 'future politicians' were shown 'in compromising context'.

'A terrorist group appeared in the film', even though they were officially rebatpised as a 'liberation army' just weeks later.

I didn't have a signed location release form for their torture camp.

I didn't clear the music rights for all the ethnic and K-POP melodies they were listening to in the background.

I breached 'the defamation rule' by showing a charity organization offering long expired humanitarian aid. Even worse - I was making 'hidden advertisement' by mentioning the name of another charity whose packages were slightly less expired.

I included potentially 'distressing scenes' of people not being hypocritical.

I showed several 'harmful acts' of profound, peaceful debating 'which teenagers could be enticed to copy'.

The film's pro-iconoclastic stance was an offense in generic terms of 'religious promotion'.

In one scene, a Vietnamese maid was watching a Turkish soap opera on a Colombian satellite channel that was obviously not the one that I was signing the deal with. 'No right to promote the competition.'

And those were only the opening paragraphs of Article 6.

Not only was I not legal, I was completely illegal.

When the police came, everybody thought it was because of the noise. But I knew. "You have the right to remain compliant" was written all over the smokey silence. I escaped through the toilet window and started preparing my glorious comeback...

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: "The Art of Being Compliant", wherein our filmmaking hero applies the previously learned lessons.

*Boris Mitić makes arthouse documentaries that he sells to televisions. This text was based on an actual UK television contract that he was offered last year. [boris@dribblingpictures.com](mailto:boris@dribblingpictures.com)*