

Why Are You Slovenes Such Wet Blankets?

The topic discussed in this essay needs careful consideration, as one can easily be sidetracked by its sheer complexity and trivialities. Although I racked my head for quite some time before I started writing this assignment, I could find no more but one single reason responsible for an act of ruining one's high spirits, just because we are low spirited ourselves. The culprit I was able to find is envy. All the rest of them stem from it – they are merely its consequence. While it is safe to assume that all of the nations inhabiting our planet have known this emotion since their inception (after all, envy is mentioned in the famous Sumerian-Acadian Gilgamesh epic), I am going to focus on Slovenes, as I know my own nation best, obviously.

If a foreigner inquired about a characteristic property common to all Slovenes, envy was likely to pop up first. Analogous to the meanness of the Scots, it has become well nigh proverbial and has been a large part of our society for such a long time that we almost pride ourselves with it – even jokes have sprung from it. The most famous one says that if a Slovene suffered the loss of certain goods (since most of the Slovenes were farmers up until after the World War II, a cow is taken as an example), he or she would not lament it. Rather than that, a true Slovene would pray for the death of his or her neighbour's cow. The funny (or sad, depending on your point of view and your current mood) thing is that for quite a large part of the Slovenes, this is true! Reasons for that are hard to pin down; still, I will give here my personal opinion on this matter. Some of the arguments may not be particularly plausible on their own, but I have included them, because they may become believable when combined with other reasons.

One of the most often cited reasons that we are envious is the fact that we are a small nation. As such, we have been throughout our existence stumped upon by a plethora of larger and powerful nations. From the year of 745 when the Franks have claimed Carinthia and up until we proclaimed our independence in 1991, the stomping boot has not changed much, only the name of the nation wearing it has (although one might argue that the Yugoslavian boot was much lighter in comparison to those of the nations before it). This, no doubt, had a negative effect on our self-esteem. To this day, we have probably not recovered, and xenophobia, which has lately been present among us, no doubt stems from our own complexes we have picked up over the centuries. A large part of Slovenes, who are mostly Christians, is against building a mosque in Slovenia. They feel they are threatened by yet another nation (or more precisely, a religious community), invading our territory – therefore they are trying to stop Muslims from exercising their right to practice their religion, which is

exactly the same right Slovenes have been denied under Franks. Some of the Slovenes feel that Muslims deserve the same treatment, as we have received in the distant past – a long and painful waiting before the right thing is done. To add insult to injury most people do not realize that most of the Muslims living in Slovenia are Slovenes as well, therefore Catholic Slovenes are essentially denying their right to Muslim Slovenes. A terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 had of course made matters even worse. Xenophobia and intolerance have been changed from a subject of loath and scorn, to an activity, which is spurred even by our politicians. They use negative emotions I mentioned as means of getting votes in the election race, because the circumstances allow for this. Envy diminishes even the slightest chance for Muslims to build their mosque. At least some of the Slovenian population must feel that now that we have achieved our independence, everyone is after us and wishes to take it away from us. They might not even be aware of that this fear is likely buried deep in the abyss of their sub-conscience. Although such a reaction is expected, it should be avoided, not endorsed. On the other hand, most of the nations are increasingly becoming xenophobic after the 9/11, and we may be no better or worse than they are.

The second reason for the Slovenian envy is, in my opinion, the fact that we have never learned to respect our achievements and have therefore never really been aware of them. There are many nations which are, by the standards of the bigger ones, considered small, who have not achieved their independence yet. Really, most of these nations are much more numerous in comparison to Slovenes. Yet our history seems to have stained our self-esteem to such an extent that we would rather spend our time fighting over the wrongdoings done during the ten-day war than enjoy our independence. Most of the nations celebrate their independence day ceremonially, with joy and pride. Most of the Slovenes, on the other hand, do not even hang out the national flag on the day – to add insult to injury, many of them are not sure when the independence day is celebrated.

The third and final point I would like to make which might explain why the Slovenes are thought of as envious actually opposes all the points hitherto made and seems the most plausible to me. I know quite a few of foreigners and not one of them thinks that the Slovenes are all that much envious in comparison to other nations. It just may be that we perceive ourselves as more envious than the others. Because of some reason unknown to me, the Slovenes seem to have begun thinking of ourselves as an immensely envious nation. In my opinion, this is not true. I think we just show our envy more openly and hindrance-free, whereas other nations are usually more reserved in that respect (one should not over

generalize, but in most cases this argument, in my opinion, holds water). Why this is so, is difficult to explain, and I would rather leave this question open.

In conclusion, I feel the need to point out that the title of the essay portrays us in a much more negative light than we actually deserve. We are by no means perfect, but then again no one is. Envy is a negative emotion, which one must get out of one's system occasionally. However, one must also exercise caution and not always think only of one's own good. This is true for the Slovenes and other nations. After all, we are not that much different from the others.