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"The more we are the faster we will reach our goal!"

In the hot days of August, a bizarre yet very amusing piece of news spread across Slovenia – three prominent and internationally renowned Slovenian artists, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi, and Žiga Kariž, had changed their names to Janez Janša.¹

Along with the news, rumours brought other (unofficial) information, for example that the three new JJs (even before changing their names) entered the SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party) and that at recently at one of their weddings, a confusing situation arose when – besides the groom – both best men also bore the name of "Janez Janša". Rumour had it that the registrar had terrible difficulties in trying to remain solemn.

Just prior to the renaming, the three artists (under their former names) reconstructed the famous "Triglav" by the OHO group (originally mounted in 1968) in the same place where the performance got its name and presented it to the media as a multiple "state-forming" jubilee. Though state-forming has lately become a kind of unwritten prerequisite characteristic for all artistic events looking to gain any public relevance in our country, I, personally, understood their performance of "Triglav" to be a subversive affirmation registered into the paradoxical, anachronistic, cultural horizon; since more than 15 years after the creation of the Slovenian state official cultural policy still views the state as a kind of reserve for the endangered Slovenian ethnic group rather than an autonomous entity. However, while I feel confident in my understanding of Triglav, I am still wondering how to regard this recent name change.

The three artists emphasise that the change of name is not a public but a private matter and I see no reason to disbelieve them (at least to a certain degree). Their declarative registration of their change of name into the private sphere lends this writing the stamp of yellow journalism and along with it the risk of the said artists suing me for this interpretation. Nonetheless, I will carry it out. Although their gesture is not an artistic act, it still can be thought about within the framework of performance, because all three of them will - as artists and public

¹ This is a relatively rare combination of a Slovene name and surname by which approximately 10 Slovene citizens are identified, including the Slovene Prime Minister and President of the leading party in parliament - SDS (Slovenska demokratska stranka, i.e. Slovene Democratic Party).

personas - use their new names to sign their works of art, which will, indeed, be available for public consumption. For example, one of Janez Janšas is currently in Berlin at the "Tanz im August" festival, where he is appearing at events together with Meg Stuart, Xavier Le Roy, Giselle Vienne, Felix Rucket, Olga Pona, Alice Chauchat.

The theoretical apparatus available in the field of artistic and/or political activism allows us to categorise their gesture as that kind of subversive affirmation called over-identification; however, in this case the gesture is—from now on—in constant process: it will be semiotised in connection with their every new work of art and public appearance, therefore it will take some turns unprecedented in other known forms of subversive affirmation.. "Subversive affirmation is an artistic/political tactic that allows artists and activists to take part in certain social, political, or economic discourses and to affirm, appropriate, or consume them while simultaneously undermining them. It is characterised precisely by the fact that with affirmation there simultaneously occurs a distancing from, or revelation of, what is being affirmed. In subversive affirmation there is always a surplus which destabilises affirmation and turns it into its opposite. /.../ Subversive affirmation and over-identification – as 'tactics of explicit consent' – are forms of critique that through techniques of affirmation, involvement and identification put the viewer/listener precisely in such a state or situation which s/he would or will criticise later. What the various tactics and parasitic practices have in common is that they employ the classical aesthetic methods of: imitation, simulation, mimicry and camouflage in the sense of 'becoming invisible' by disappearing into the background," can be read in one of the latest issues of Maska magazine, which in fact deals with different types of subversive affirmation in the history of contemporary arts and political activism.

Regarding over-identification, Slavoj Žižek in his 1993 article "Why Are Laibach Not Fascists" mentions several parameters that define over-identification. I have already described the first parameter above, the second one involves performing the unwritten, obscene law or "nightly code", which supplements the official, written law of a legal system (the violation of the public law, which does not suffice the authority, is NOT punished as drastically as the violation of the illegal code of a given authority, because it is precisely by violating the illegal code that an individual adopts a distance because of which the authority does not have him or her in its power any more; e.g. a journalist is forgiven for distorting the truth /withholding information/ about a given authority, but when he or she breaches the

article of the illegal code that reads "do not write critically about the authority" he or she is immediately punished, even if his or her assertions are true). The third characteristic of over-identification is its affirmative nature that puts the receivers (readers, viewers) of this gesture off their stride, as they cannot rely on the desire of the carrier of this over-identification ("Tell us, guys, what do you want to achieve with this renaming of yours?"), but instead have to define their desire regarding this gesture by themselves (the receivers are thrown into countertransference, where their desire ceases to be the "desire of the Other"). The problem is as follows: if the receivers knew that with their gesture the guys adopted an ironic distance towards the authority (the Prime Minister), the matter would be solved, because with that the receivers' ironic distance would gain a subversive sign as well, however, as Žižek asks, "What if this distance, far from posing any threat to the system, designates the supreme form of conformism, since the normal function of the system requires cynical distance?"

Based on previous gestures of the three artists, what can I write about their over-identification? "The more we are the faster we will reach our goal!" is a sentence the Prime Minister uttered during a public appearance. What does this sentence, which was taken literally by the three artists as the scenario for their performance, say? Above all, it expresses a form of demagoguery of political egalitarianism, which has, thus far, been a characteristic of all totalitarian regimes. Within the framework of democracy it means, above all, an ontological incomprehension of the difference, which is otherwise registered in democratic pluralism and which is, with its defect, characteristic of the Western hegemony of human and any other rights: "I am willing to respect you being different if you are equal to me." This could, perhaps, apply to the pamphlets the pamphlets of the entire Slovenian political spectrum, a spectrum that thinks in a distinctly single-party manner and that has lately been publicly striving to overcome "the old differences between political blocks" (e.g. Pahor with the Social Democrats, the Zares society). This obviously makes one ask oneself where the need to exit the former single-party system came from. In retrospect, it more and more seems that the need derived from the frustrations of some "impossible political elites", from people who could not realise their political ambitions and who did not have the possibility to establish themselves as the authority. With their over-identification gesture, the three artists point out, in my opinion, a historical characteristic of the Slovenian people, who can neither think nor act in accordance with differences, who in scientific community like to pride themselves on the "richness" of different dialects surviving on a small geo-political territory, without realising that these dialects are some of the most striking proof that people in this

area communicated terribly poorly with each other. Therefore, we will be in breach of the nightly code of the current political elites (right right, left right and centre right) until we ourselves take part in "the more we are" and change our names to Janez Janša, Dimitrij Rupel, and if someone wants to be ahead of time, also Borut Pahor. In short, ideological uniformity offers us a wide selection of options. "And then we will be able to win our bread, our rights!"

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