

## **CONVERTIBILITY OF THE DINAR**

In November and December I devoted a lot of time to the economy. On my invitation we were visited at the beginning of November by Jeffrey Sachs, with whom I had an excellent understanding. In my opinion he was, and still is, one of the leading economists in the world. He was able to think and present his ideas extremely clearly and simply. Sachs set up a concept of economic stabilisation in Yugoslavia. We had already discussed this in New York, and then we came to it again in Belgrade. Between our meetings I sent him all the relevant information and material, so he came well prepared. He proposed what I had already wanted and what I had written into my pre-election policy outline, namely the convertibility of the dinar. And why not straight away? Before Jeffrey arrived I proposed this to Marković, but to begin with he had not responded. Sachs proposed that in the dramatic conditions of hyperinflation we set up a fixed exchange rate between the German mark and the dinar and declare the convertibility of the dinar. He proposed a range of other measures, including a restrictive monetary policy. I invited him to a session of the Federal Presidency, which at that time was highly unusual. We talked about this on later occasions, and neither of us could (\*\*\*)TEXT MISSING – PAGES136 + 137)

all political prisoners, mainly Albanians, including Azem Vlasi and Adem Demači. But the new violence meant an end to dialogue; an end to our hopes that through political negotiation and agreement we might be able to establish a more peaceful situation and in this way create the conditions for further democratisation, including in Kosovo. I could not come to terms with the policy of repression in Kosovo. I asked myself whether my own policy was right. Perhaps the Albanians were thinking that with my support they could force positive changes in Kosovo through violent means. Meanwhile people in Slovenia claimed that my position on Kosovo was not radical enough, that I was not tough enough on the Serbs and that I was too keen to find a middle path of compromise. The Serbs for their part made me out to be a champion of the Albanians, supporting them in their separatism and in their struggle against the Serbs. I had discovered that Kosovo was such a sensitive issue for the Serbs that it was simply not possible to discuss it with them rationally, although I tried often enough. The Serbian media frequently attacked me for having pro-Albanian policies. It seems that I became a special assignment for Mihael Kertes, the well-known *miting* rally ringleader and political provocateur. He constantly attacked me, both in the media and at various rallies. They came up with some quite incredible fabrications, claiming that as President of the Presidency I had organised the crossing of Albanian refugees from Albania into Kosovo, that these refugees were the ringleaders of the demonstrations in Kosovo and that all this was part of a Greater Albanian nationalism or the idea itself of a Greater Albania. And of course all this was supported by Slovenia in order to weaken Serbia. The demonstrations were repeated every day, week in week out. Pressure mounted in Belgrade. Formally the state of emergency was still in place in Kosovo, and there was still a unit of the federal police stationed there. There were increasingly vocal demands for us to send in the JNA, and for the Army to be deployed in Kosovo to restore order there once and for all. These demands were made by the media, by the Serbian representatives in the Presidency and by Milošević. We debated this in the Presidency sessions of 17 and 29 January 1990. I clashed sharply with the Serbian representatives. To begin with the Army was quite reserved in its attitude to this problem, and when I talked to General Kadijević, he maintained that involving the Army was not right, since the

police should do the job. However, pressure grew and in the end Kadijević changed his position. Day by day the whole business became more grim and dramatic. On 31 January we held a joint session of the Presidency with the presidents of the republics and provinces. On the same day a delegation of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo came to Belgrade. They were received by Milošević, and clearly this gave them the cue to request a meeting with me. Around twenty of them came to the federation building. The conversation was torture. It was simply not possible to control it. I stayed calm and rational, while the Serbs and Montenegrins created a storm, with one woman even screaming. This had obviously been orchestrated to put me off balance and increase the pressure.

The following day I was sent another delegation, a group of Belgrade students. The students had already been demonstrating, and demanding strict measures in Kosovo, with the use of the Army and repressive means. At first they wanted to send me a large group, but in the end I just received a delegation of five. The talks were much calmer in tone, but their message was clear: they expected the Presidency of Yugoslavia to implement serious measures and use the Army to bring order to Kosovo. Otherwise the Belgrade students planned to hold a destructive rally and come out against the bodies of the federation. In the media I was facing increasing threats and demands for my resignation. On the same day I received a delegation of academics from Kosovo. These were Albanian intellectuals, and representatives of the political alternative. Calmly and coherently they presented the situation in Kosovo and asked for support. The fact that I even received the Albanians further inflamed the Serbs. I decided on that very same day to pay a visit to Kosovo, and I announced it for the following day, Friday 2 February 1990. We quickly drew up the itinerary, and the visit was quite a surprise, and certainly unexpected. The situation was extremely fraught. I had my Slovene bodyguard Tone with me in Belgrade, and he only came over in the most critical and tense situations. Normally I was guarded by federal security agents from Belgrade. My bodyguard Tone suggested then for the first time that I should wear a bullet-proof vest, which I tried on but found too restricting. I decided to go without it. We left for Priština in the morning by special plane. When we arrived at

Priština airport, I was surrounded by security guards and police. They were all obviously nervous. The tension was most palpable on the walk into the centre, where the presidency building stood. It was not so much the possibility of an assassination attempt from the Albanian side, since this was unlikely. After all, the Albanians supported me; they saw in me an ally against Serbian aggression. The greatest danger was that the other side would provoke an assassination attempt and blame the Albanians for it. This would bring the situation to a head. My bodyguard Tone was beside me the whole time, and under his raincoat he had a whole arsenal of weaponry.

In the Kosovo Presidency building I was awaited by the entire Kosovo leadership and the heads of the military command. First I had talks with the president of the Kosovo Presidency, Mr Kamdočaj, and then with the entire Kosovo leadership. I listened to their reports and to the reports from the Army of the events of recent days. I made clear my commitment to calming the situation, and to setting up a political dialogue between the dissenting Albanians and the Serbs. They then told me that the representatives of the Serbs and Montenegrins desired a meeting with me, and that so did the Albanian representatives. A group of people had come from some village with a special complaint. I decided to meet both sides. My conversation with the Albanians was calm, but they were very clearly frightened, so I tried to encourage them, and expressed my support and my commitment to a peaceful and sensible resolving of the conflict. The representatives of the village told me of an instance when police officers had opened fire on Albanians without reason. I promised and demanded a special enquiry, and we later debated this in the Presidency. I demanded measures against the perpetrators, and an enquiry was eventually set in motion. The meeting with the Montenegrins and Serbs was again heavy going, as it had been in Belgrade, and featured raised voices and threats. I replied rationally, but occasionally I was also rather curt. Following these meetings I made a public statement. Priština was bursting with journalists, both Yugoslav and foreign, who were keeping track of the high drama there. I decided to give a statement in which I spoke again of the need for democratic dialogue, for peaceful resolving of trouble, and I made it clear that in Yugoslavia we would democratise political life, that we were on the path to political pluralism and that the Albanians would

have the opportunity to decide on their fate in democratic elections. In short, the message was that resistance and repression at this moment were damaging, and were no good for me, the Albanians nor for the prospects of democracy in Yugoslavia. If we could maintain calm, we would then be able to spread democracy everywhere, including Kosovo. Of course the journalists wanted to ask questions, and I would certainly have had my plate full trying to answer them without making the situation worse. But my message was very clear: against repression, against violence from either side, and for a further calming of the situation, for dialogue and democracy. I then returned by plane, first to Belgrade and then on to Ljubljana. In Belgrade we agreed in the Presidency that as President I would give an account of the situation at an extraordinary session of the Yugoslav Assembly, which was scheduled for Wednesday 7 February. I therefore had before me a weekend during which I should prepare my first expose as Federal President to the federal parliament. This was to be given in the most dramatic circumstances, in which I would have to speak about Kosovo, as well as political democratisation, pluralism, human rights, the market economy and European integration. When I went home for the weekend, I took a dictaphone with me, and I went for walks, pondering and composing my speech, which was already being awaited with considerable interest both at home and abroad. I was sorry to have to devote so much attention to Kosovo, and that this was all taking place in such unsettled circumstances. I was afraid that other important issues would be lost in the drama over Kosovo. Of course the expectations of the various republics were entirely different. In Slovenia they wanted me to strongly condemn Serbia and support the Albanians, while in Serbia they wanted me to give a sharp condemnation of Albanian separatism, support every possible form of repression and so on. The part of my speech about Kosovo was balanced, reflecting my policy of dialogue between opposing sides and with the prospect in view of democracy and a calming of ethnic antipathies. A major section of the speech, however, was devoted to the new Constitution, and to the introduction of political pluralism. Given that the new Constitution had never been adopted, this speech of mine – which the federal parliament confirmed – was in fact the only formal basis for the introduction of a multiparty system in the then Yugoslavia. This document was adopted

on the federal level, and this was the speech of the highest state representative and the commander-in-chief of the JNA. The same JNA which the Slovenes feared would be used to prevent democracy by force. I spoke of the market economy, European integration and human rights. On that Tuesday and Wednesday in February we had a meeting of the Presidency before the Yugoslav Assembly session, and here the entire Presidency was supposed to assess and confirm the speech. As expected, Jović made a lot of remarks, along with some other representatives, particularly Bučin and Zelenović. A dispute ensued, and there was a very ugly atmosphere over whether the Presidency should confirm every word of the speech or whether the President of the Presidency himself could compose it. Their argument was that the Presidency was a collective body and that therefore the President could not speak on its behalf merely off his own bat. The session of the federal parliament was first scheduled for ten in the morning, and then moved to four in the afternoon. For the whole morning, the Presidency kept meeting and recessing, and Jović and I spoke separately. I persisted in keeping my speech as it was, and was prepared in just a few places to make some minor changes. The whole thing came to the point where Jović announced that if I insisted on sticking to my speech, he would give his own speech in order to distance himself from me, so that we would then have a public polemic between members of the Presidency at the Yugoslav Assembly session. The affair dragged on, the tension was at breaking point, and in the end the Assembly session had to be postponed yet again, in spite of the scheduled live TV broadcast which the entire nation was awaiting. Eventually, after I had made some minor concessions and modified one or two paragraphs, Jović dropped his plan to make a separate speech. So with a whole day of dramatic disputes behind me, I went to the parliament, where the session began over an hour late. There I provided a new shock for the members of the Presidency and the deputies. I spoke in Slovene again. The chamber was full of tension, coldness and enmity. When I finished, there was a deathly hush. Normally the speeches by the President of the Presidency were met with vocal acclaim, but not this time. I stayed for a while during the debate, and then left the session. The debate continued for the next three days. The Serbian deputies were fierce in their attack. Towards the end of the session, Jović made his own contribution to the

debate, with a hard-line Serbian position, as expected. He had to do this to keep his own electorate happy. Overall a kind of balance was established, even though there were a lot of very different views expressed. The important thing in the end was that the Assembly confirmed my introductory speech. Looking back on it today, I still think that the speech was extremely good. The circumstances surrounding it were very difficult. The speech was met at the time with quite positive appraisal, particularly among diplomatic circles. The US State Department issued a statement in which it explicitly emphasised that it supported my policy towards Kosovo. But relations continued to deteriorate. I rejected the demands of the Serbian members of the Presidency that I call a session and order military intervention in Kosovo. Then came what was called Black Tuesday. The demonstrations became more violent and the number of casualties grew. At eleven in the evening Kadijević called me to say that the situation in Kosovo was going from bad to worse, that he had new information, conditions were becoming critical and he therefore requested an immediate Presidency session. I was left with no choice but to agree to a meeting of the Presidency, since otherwise they would have just called one without me. The Presidency met at seven the following morning. Later I realised that the whole scenario had again been clearly prepared in advance. Spreading alarm late in the evening, the extremely dramatic situation, all of it was impossible to verify properly. At the Presidency session of 20 February 1990, the situation was first presented by interior minister Gračanin and defence minister General Kadijević. The reports were extremely alarmist. Kadijević proposed that the Army intervene, although entirely as a show of strength, deploying at certain key communications points to create the right psychological effect. The Army would only use force if it was attacked. After a brief debate I put the proposal to a vote. I alone did not agree with the proposed military measures, with all the other members of the Presidency being in favour. So on that same day the Army appeared at key communications points and trouble spots. Then something I had not expected happened. After the Army arrived the demonstrations stopped, the situation calmed down and from that day there were no more casualties in Kosovo. I had very mixed feelings over this. In Slovenia, of course, the military

intervention was condemned. The public was clearly informed that I personally had not agreed with it. My mixed feelings derived from the fact that the clashes really did stop. The question was, did this mean that the other side, those who favoured military intervention, were actually right? If there had been no Army deployment, there would have been further clashes and more casualties. So was my pacifism in this case justified? Was Slovene pacifism justified? Or perhaps it was more a case simply of the fear of the Army becoming involved in settling affairs of an internal political nature, since if it intervened in Kosovo, it could do the same later in Slovenia.

When the measure was passed in the Presidency vote, at first I did not want to sign the decree. For several hours I looked at that piece of paper and wondered whether it would be better to resign as President. Later I asked myself: what if I had really resigned? Perhaps that would have provoked new trouble, a new crisis and new victims. We debated the Kosovo situation several times in the Presidency sessions over the next month. The situation calmed down. I continued with my activities. I demanded an enquiry into the operations of the state bodies, particularly the police, during the troubles. And since I no longer trusted the official reports, I sent two of my bureau staff to Kosovo – Marjan Kramar and Nikola Prokšelj. On my behalf they met the representatives of the opposition, the Albanians. This piqued the Serbs terribly. Jović brought up this subject at a session of the Presidency. I would not relent, however, and insisted on the enquiries, demanding absolute propriety from state bodies. Again I suggested to the Serbs a dialogue with the Albanians, but they responded stonily to this, attacking me and accusing me in their papers of supporting Albanian separatism. But there was no more unrest. So on 18 April 1990 the Presidency finally lifted all the emergency measures in Kosovo. I had achieved what I set out to do at the start of my term, although unfortunately aggressive nationalism had not been truly overcome. It was simply biding its time.



## **14TH PARTY CONGRESS AND THE POHORSKA ZLATA LISICA**

In February a new momentous event in Yugoslav history came onto the agenda – the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. I got through this event much more coolly and agreeably than many of the other earlier and later events in which I had to play the most difficult role. The ethnic differences in Yugoslavia had for some time found expression in the Party, in which the republic and Party oligarchies represented the interests of their own nations, and often the public had to follow all this on live TV broadcasts of the interminable Central Committee sessions. It was here that the republic Party leaders such as Milošević and Kučan enjoyed their greatest exposure. From the beginning my relationship towards the Party had always been very clear. In the elections for the member of the Presidency in Slovenia I stood as an independent candidate against the candidate supported by the Slovene League of Communists. So from the outset I felt no obligation towards the Party in Slovenia or to the Slovene political leadership. My individuality and my feeling that I was responsible only to the people who had elected me, often caused a variety of clashes in my dealings with the Slovene leadership. To put it simply, I was not

overly interested in their directives, and acted according to my own wits. In my relations with the federal Party structures this meant that I declined any kind of cooperation in the activities of the Yugoslav League of Communists and their involvement in the affairs of the Federal Presidency. Up to that time the firmly established practice had been for the presidents of the Party Central Committee to participate in all the sessions of the Federal Presidency. And equally, the President or other members of the Presidency would attend sessions of the Central Committee presidency. I abruptly ended this practice. I never once participated in any kind of session of federal Party bodies, although I was invited. Neither did I ever invite the president of the Yugoslav Party to any session of the Federal Presidency. I drew a very strict dividing line between the functioning of the state leadership – the Presidency – and the functioning of the Party leadership. Often I was importuned to keep up the established practice all the same, but I categorically refused to do so. I did not make any show of this in the media, not wishing to exacerbate relations. I was acting alone and in a more serious conflict situation I could not count on the support of the political establishment in the republics, which were still universally dominated by the Party. The media were also mainly still under the wing of the republic Party establishment. And I never once called a special coordination session, which up to that time was the primary instrument of decision-making in the federation. The coordination session of all the political chiefs was headed by the President of the Federal Presidency. It consisted of the presidents of the Party Central Committee, the socialist alliance, and the youth and federal trades unions. These coordination sessions made decisions on fundamental political questions.

The consistent separation of the state and Party was one of the fixed points in which I persevered throughout my term in office. So for this reason I was not even faintly interested in the wretched 14th Party Congress. The Slovene communists had prepared themselves specially for it, as indeed had others. The whole thing was due to unfold as a public spectacle, with live media broadcasts. I decided that there was no way I was going to take part in the Congress, although I was being implored to do so, both in Belgrade and in Slovenia. Just before the Congress, the president of the Slovene communists, Milan Kučan, called me on the phone and suggested that I participate in the Congress, and

that if I was not going to, then at least I should not go and take part in some other public event. He was thinking of the World Cup ski race, the popular *Zlata Lisica* (Golden Fox) on the Pohorje mountains near Maribor, which was naturally the focus of enormous attention in Slovenia, since skiing is the Slovene national sport. But I decided to go ahead and attend the *Zlata Lisica*.

This was my own special demonstration. All the eminent Yugoslav politicians had turned up at the Congress in Belgrade - not just Party bosses, but also the representatives of federal bodies, complete with federal Prime Minister Marković. I alone was missing, the President of the Federal Presidency, and therefore the highest representative of the state. This was very noticeable, and sent a clear message, since at the same time I was appearing in Maribor and taking part in all the *Zlata Lisica* events: the opening ceremony, watching the competition between the world's best skiers, and making several high-profile visits in Maribor. And just to crown the success of the whole affair, local girl Mateja Svet won. She beat the best in the world, and this turned into a real Slovene national holiday. On the first day Bogić Bogičević, a member of the Presidency, also came to Maribor. We were both there at the opening ceremony of the *Zlata Lisica*, and in the evening he returned to Belgrade to take part in the Party Congress. He tried to convince me to go with him, but I stayed in Maribor. In Belgrade they were in constant dispute, debating night and day, and listening to endless discussions. In previous years I had always turned off the TV whenever they showed Party congresses. On the Pohorje mountains the sun was shining and Slovenia had won. The people received me very warmly.

Media attention was to a large extent deliberately focused on Belgrade, where the Slovene delegation had demonstratively walked out of the Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The Slovene delegation had been more or less forced to do this. The first multiparty elections in Slovenia were scheduled for April 1990, so in effect the Slovene leadership, in its desire to be democratic, had caught the last train out of Yugoslavia's League of Communists. However, with my open participation at the *Zlata Lisica* I stole some of their thunder. In Belgrade the League of Communists was making a fine show of its chronic and tortured death-throes, while on the Pohorje and in Maribor people had

gladly given themselves over to the skiing festival, and to sharing in the glory of our skiers. It seemed to me that here were the people who had voted for me and whom I was representing. The Party Congress in Belgrade represented a truly dark alternative to this image.

## TRIP TO EGYPT

"Everyone who drinks water from the Nile wishes to return to the banks of the Nile and again drink this water. What are your feelings on this, Mr President?"

(First question in an interview for the Egyptian agency MENA, before leaving for Egypt on 22 February 1990.)

I had met Egyptian President Mubarak on several occasions, and had established good, open relations with him. He invited me to visit Egypt on 22 February 1990. I accepted the invitation, since Egypt was an important country, and Mubarak an acknowledged statesman. Apart from that, I had done a year's tour of duty in Egypt in 1977, as the youngest member of the embassy staff there – third secretary and assistant counsellor for economic affairs. This was my first grand excursion into the world. Up to that time I had worked at home, in the small town of Zagorje, in a construction company. I happened to hear one time that Slovenia was looking for young economists and lawyers for the diplomatic service, since in comparison with the other republics Slovenia was always under-represented in the diplomatic corps. I applied and quite soon was offered a position in Egypt. After some three months of preparation at the federal

foreign ministry in Belgrade I went to Cairo. But I only stayed there a short time. The diplomatic service turned out to be something quite different from my expectations; it had a rigid officialdom and a strict hierarchy, which killed any initiative. My desire to do something more useful was nipped in the bud, and I was left with two alternatives. Either I should acquiesce and accept the established patterns of the Yugoslav diplomatic service, or I should resign. I decided to do the latter. I retained, however, pleasant memories of Egypt, of the country and its people. Egypt remained for me a kind of unfinished story, so my return there twelve years later was very interesting. I was now coming as the President of Yugoslavia and head of the Non-Aligned Movement. In comparison with the opening chapters of my story in the Cairo embassy, my visit now was like something from a fairy tale. The Egyptian media saw it in a similar way, and they did indeed make a story out of it. They followed my visit and my impressions of that time with great interest. The visit was full of protocol and ceremony. It seemed incredible to me that in Cairo, which I remembered as a city of traffic, in which it was virtually impossible to get from one end of town to the other, they had now closed the roads to let through the motorcade that was taking me on a tour of some of the most prominent parts of the city. On my arrival President Mubarak was there to receive me. After reviewing the guard of honour and being ceremonially welcomed, we had special talks alone, followed by talks between the delegations. I asked Mubarak what he thought about Yugoslavia recognising Israel. As expected, he gave his approval. Otherwise, the talks were more routine, since there were no particular problems between Egypt and Yugoslavia. I remember planting a tree in a special garden where all the visiting dignitaries planted trees. We had the same tradition in Yugoslavia in Tito's time. On every particular protocol occasion, I reviewed a new guard of honour. I stayed in a palace like something from the "Thousand and One Nights". But in that vast palace, surrounded by a great army, I felt alone and somehow uncomfortable. The Yugoslav embassy had also organised a reception for me. This was in the building that I knew from an earlier time and an entirely different function. It was quite extraordinary how this time everyone fawned on me, compared to the superciliousness and backsliding of a few years ago. All in the same building. In my conversation with Prime Minister Siddiqi I raised the (\*\*\*)TEXT MISSING!!(\*\*\*)