

## SOME SUCCESSES

I made use of the relatively constructive atmosphere following Gazimestan at the next session of the Presidency, on 5 July 1989, in a debate on European integration and protection of human rights. The other members of the Presidency and the Yugoslav foreign ministry had expected a routine discussion, so they had drawn up in advance some very general resolutions which said nothing. None of the members of the Presidency took part in the debate itself. At one point Jović even left the room and returned later. When I proposed my own resolutions based directly on what I had argued for, because no one apart from me had contributed to the debate, they were all very surprised. My argument was a clear and direct advocacy of Yugoslavia participating in European integration. I swiftly brought this point on the agenda to a conclusion -formally and before the others managed to wake up and react. After the session Jović approached me. He was very upset, saying that it was not right that such revolutionary resolutions be adopted in such rapid fashion, based only on my arguments. But I countered him very formally. I told him we had held a session, I had proposed some resolutions, they were passed and that was the end of the matter. This wrangling between

us lasted all day. He pestered me all afternoon about it but I stuck to my guns. Later, I used those resolutions a number of times to further my foreign-policy activities with public appearances directed towards Europe.

The following are excerpts from the transcript of that session:

“Would anyone like to speak? [No one.] Then I'll summarise what I set out as possible resolutions in the points I made.

“The Presidency supports an orientation towards institutional incorporation into the Council of Europe and EFTA. The federal Executive Council should submit an analysis with a proposal for the dynamics of overall and sectoral incorporation, which applies particularly to EFTA. Political activities leading to realisation of the goal of joining the Council of Europe should be intensified at all levels, including a summit visit in early 1990. In relations with the European Community we should accelerate activities leading towards our functional incorporation, especially with respect to standards, with the aim of acquiring preferential treatment, which would lead Yugoslavia to complete functional incorporation into a common European market.” Later in the session we discussed the question of human rights. Here again there was not a great deal of debate. And of course I took advantage of the opportunity. I had prepared my positions in advance and managed to ‘sell’ them to the Presidency as resolutions.

Excerpts from the transcript:

Janez Drnovšek: “I'll try to summarise the conclusions. I think the Presidency has underlined the special importance of human rights and supports their consistent institutionalisation in our country.

"Secondly, I think we agree on the need to bring our legislation into line with accepted international conventions relating to human rights as soon as possible.

"Thirdly, the institution of human rights must be present; in other words it must be an essential element of the continued construction of a legal system and a new Constitution.

"Fourthly, we must accelerate activities aimed at achieving accession to those international conventions which we have yet to adopt – including an optional protocol, the International Act on Civil and Political Rights

and the European Convention on Human Rights.

"Fifthly, we must increase every aspect of those activities by which we aim to better and more objectively inform the international public and implement or protect human rights in our country.

"And sixthly, human rights must be an important element in our international activities, including the Non-Aligned Movement."

After this session I was very pleased. I had managed to make the priority guidelines of my political programme the official stance of the Presidency. In a way I had broken through the inertia of the workings of the federal bodies. It seemed to me then that a constructive and tolerant approach combined with a persistent application of certain fundamental tenets (democracy, the free market, European orientation) might indeed prove fruitful.

Clearly it would not all be plain sailing. One or two fingers were crossed behind backs when these policies were adopted. Nevertheless, I was able to use these policies adopted by the Presidency as the basis for all my public appearances as head of state, in international dealings and as a basis for applying pressure on other Yugoslav institutions. But I well recall Kadijević's comment on the question of protecting human rights:

"This is an instrument with which to destroy the socialist systems. It is not a matter of human rights but of political goals." Human rights continued to be the cornerstone of my public appearances and of my work within the Presidency, either relating to specific examples, such as internment, or on the subject of the necessary changes to the law and the Constitution. On 30 July I received a delegation from the Forum for Human Rights. It was headed by Professor Vojo Dimitrijević. I made good use of our discussions and was able to make a positive public statement as far as their demands were concerned – including an amendment to the infamous Article 133 of the Penal Code, which had introduced the so-called verbal delict and was the basis on which political prisoners were interned in Yugoslavia. I also stated that a future amendment to the Constitution would have to give priority treatment and protection to human rights. And I used the opportunity to announce publicly that almost all the internees being held in isolation had been released and that the remainder would be set free in the coming days.