

DUBROVNIK

In July I spent a few days in Dubrovnik. On 11 July I met Frederic Mayor, the Director-General of UNESCO. We met in a glorious seaside villa. He loved Dubrovnik and our meeting in these surroundings was really something special. I surprised him by speaking in Spanish. We were to meet again three years later in Barcelona, at a time when Dubrovnik was being bombarded and besieged, and the contrast with my memory of that first meeting in such a wonderful atmosphere is hard to imagine. The people of Dubrovnik received me with great enthusiasm and liking. I attended the opening of the traditional Dubrovnik games and enjoyed a quite spontaneous ovation from the locals, which was something that happened to me several times on my visits around the country, particularly in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was not merely a case of greeting the head of state; it seemed that I embodied the people's wishes, their expectations and hopes. It was a good feeling but it placed on me a further, and considerable, burden of responsibility.

PARIS

One or two interesting plots provided the backdrop to my participation at the bicentenary of the French Revolution in Paris. The French organised a huge celebration for 13 and 14 July and the world's most prominent political leaders were invited. The invitations had obviously been sent out earlier and when I spoke to Lončar's deputy, Maksić (Lončar was away), I had the feeling that there was something secret about the whole affair. Maksić was a career diplomat, a Serb but not at all dogmatic. I got the impression from him that it was probably due to our side that the opportunity to attend the celebrations in Paris had not been taken advantage of. But then the French ambassador turned up with an invitation for me to attend. When Jović began to make things difficult at a session of the Presidency, I realised that there was a wider issue involved, something which had been going on for a while, and that they were trying to prevent me from going to Paris. From some of the reactions I guessed that Lončar was probably mixed up in it too. Later, I learned from the Yugoslav ambassador in Paris that the Yugoslav foreign ministry had been trying at all costs to stop me going to Paris. This was to happen again and again. Clearly the Serbs were interested in

preventing me from having contact with Europe and the West. There was also a certain jealousy on the part of foreign minister Lončar. Nevertheless, Paris was an excellent opportunity to meet the world's foremost political leaders. Thirty-five heads of state and government were invited. Lončar and a small protocol delegation travelled with me but the special events were to be attended only by heads of state and government, unaccompanied. Not even the foreign ministers would be present. So over the course of two and a half days I attended a series of lunches, dinners, various receptions and parades along with the other heads of state and government. There was tremendous opportunity for discussion and for establishing contact with virtually all the national leaders present. And the fact that I spoke foreign languages was very useful, as I was able to converse with almost all the political leaders in their own language. The celebrations were excellent from start to finish, although the Parisians were probably annoyed at having their streets closed so that we could be carted from one place to another. I met first of all with the host, French President François Mitterrand. On one occasion, when I was talking to a group of Latin American presidents in Spanish, the Venezuelan President called US President George Bush over and said: "Look George, this is the Yugoslav President and he speaks better Spanish than I do." I never dreamt that I would first meet the President of the United States through my Spanish. Meeting George Bush at that time was a big occasion for me. The American President was the central figure of the meeting, everyone wanted to talk to him, but I still managed to find the chance to speak briefly with him about Yugoslavia. I met Japanese Prime Minister Uno, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. I also had the opportunity to meet German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who invited me to visit Germany. He praised highly the work I was doing in the Presidency and was clearly well informed. My visit to Germany went ahead towards the end of the year. It was one of those rare arrangements that got past Lončar and the Yugoslav foreign ministry, and they were all surprised that the invitation had been made and the visit took place. I also made the acquaintance of Portuguese President Mario Soares; he too invited me on an official visit to Portugal, a trip I made in April 1990. In Paris I met and talked several times with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv

Gandhi, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and with Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe, who was presiding over the Non-Aligned Movement at the time. I had an interesting discussion with French Prime Minister Michel Rocard. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, and I established that we were the youngest guests, both in terms of age as well the length of time we had been in office. This was also the occasion when I had the first of what was to prove a series of meetings with the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar.

I met the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors. This occasion was the first time I broached the subject of incorporation into the European Community with Delors, a subject that has been with me ever since. In my discussions with Delors as well as with other Western European leaders I put forward the positions that I had managed to have adopted by the Presidency just a few days before my departure for Paris. With the politicians from the non-aligned countries I discussed the preparations for the forthcoming summit conference in Belgrade, which was just days away. I had the feeling that they were scrutinising me closely as the future leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Many other things happened in Paris. We all attended the opening of the new Paris Opera House, with some of the world's great opera stars performing. One of the African presidents was sat beside me. He nodded off several times and began to snore. I was in something of a quandary as to how to stop him, then I elbowed him sharply to wake him up. I also met a number of politicians' spouses. The wife of Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney, a Yugoslav by birth, was very friendly. She introduced me to Barbara Bush and some others and tried to be as helpful as possible. The Italian-born wife of Rajiv Gandhi was born near the Slovene border. At one of the dinners we were sat together with the spouses. Next to me sat a mustachioed man who introduced himself as Mr Benazir Bhutto. At another dinner I was surrounded by the wives of French ministers, who to my surprise were quite charmed by my French. While my time in Paris was very interesting, I did regret not being able to mingle with the Parisians, to celebrate with them. Especially since I had many memories of Paris from my student days. I did not like driving in convoy with a police escort through closed junctions with the streets cleared of people, looking out at the cafes of Paris. I was sorry that I

could not enjoy the fine Parisian atmosphere. As a student I had hitch-hiked to Paris and slept in a youth hostel. But back then, even with very little money (I didn't eat much), I managed to see all the main sights. By contrast, on this occasion we were served delicious food and the finest French wines.

Before leaving Paris I gave a press conference, which was attended by numerous foreign and Yugoslav reporters. Again, I was able to emphasise the European orientation and the democratic and market processes which I had established through the Presidency. The introduction to a **long** interview I gave to the French newspaper *La Croix* began with the following presentation:

"The new, young Yugoslav head of state wants his country to be more efficient and is turning increasingly towards the West."

La Croix. "You were elected to the Presidency as the representative of Slovenia although you were not from the League of Communists. How would you explain this in terms of the political evolution taking place in your country?"

Dr Drnovšek: "I was an independent candidate, chosen first in a general election. You could label me an advocate of economic efficiency and democracy. I'm in favour of competition, not merely in the economy but also in politics. Yugoslavs must debate peacefully, freely and openly in order to discover a new political path." When I returned to Belgrade, Jović was still whining about my visit. It was clear that by attending the celebrations in Paris I had greatly annoyed the Serbs, since Paris was in their sphere of interest. Just before I left for Paris *Le Monde* published an interview with Milošević. This was typical. Clearly it had been prepared intentionally - the work of the Serbian lobby in Paris. Nevertheless, the trip was a great success. I was delighted that I had been able to establish personal ties with numerous political leaders, contacts which I later kept up. And I gained a new self-confidence.