

## TRIP TO GERMANY

"In the end, German reunification must be a matter for the German people to decide on."

(From my interview with *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, 24 November 1989.)

After all this, I still had to go on an official visit to Germany on the same evening. This was the follow-up to Chancellor Kohl's invitation when we met in Paris. You can imagine what kind of state I was in when I set off for Bonn after all the confrontation of the previous days. I left on the Monday afternoon directly from the session of the Presidency, and that same evening I met the president of the German parliament, Rita Sussmut. This was a pleasant and interesting meeting. I was able to recall it later with Ms Sussmut, when we met at the end of 1993 at the funeral ceremony in Budapest for Jozsef Antal, the late Hungarian prime minister. The Germans received us with the highest state honours, and with great friendliness and attention. They took me to a very attractive manor house near Cologne, called Gymnich. The security provided by the German police was exceptional. I remember a really sweet blonde lady who was in charge of overall security. As a joke I suggested that she

could swap with our own security staff. On the journey to Bonn and to Cologne they closed the motorway, which seemed to me really unusual, since I knew there was normally very heavy traffic on these German autobahns. The whole time I was accompanied by a large number of motorcycle outriders.

I began the second day of the visit at a reception with German President Richard von Weizsacker. First came the review of the guard of honour, then talks with the President. Then followed lunch with the President and a number of distinguished guests and senior figures from German public life. Von Weizsacker was a very agreeable and interesting person to talk to. This was a time when tectonic changes were beginning in Europe. Von Weizsacker said: "If you write a speech today for the day after tomorrow, you might have to change it after the events of tomorrow." In general I found with all the people I spoke to in Germany much sympathy and support. I met a host of other distinguished German politicians: Hans Jochen Vogel, then president of the Social Democrats, Alfred Dreggert, leader of the parliamentary group of the Christian Democrats, Wolfgang Mischnik, leader of the free democrats in parliament, and Willy Brandt, who was then the honorary president of the Social Democrat International. My conversation with him was long and fascinating. Brandt had considerable experience and contacts with former Yugoslav leaders, including Tito. In a certain way he showed sympathy towards Yugoslavia, or at least towards its preservation. On the following day I had a meeting with Chancellor Kohl. He received me in the Chancellor's residence with the usual ceremony, complete with group photos and statements, and then we had talks. I would have preferred to talk to him alone – and I think he would have preferred it too – but there was no way I could shake off the foreign minister. During the talks I set out a range of specific economic questions and our participation in European integration. The Chancellor was positive about most of these issues. He then showed me his office, and for a short time we spoke alone. This was followed by the joint lunch, in which our talks continued. One interesting twist was that after lunch we were scheduled to give toasts, as is usual on such occasions, but the Chancellor asked why we should read out toasts that had been written by others, by officials. Such toasts belonged in the archives; instead, each should just tell us what was on his mind. He then went on to give some views on the

issues open for discussion and on our talks, and I followed suit. At that time the question of German reunification was a very hot topic, along with the arrival in West Germany of refugees from East Germany. Hungary had just opened its borders to East Germans who could then travel on to West Germany. Chancellor Kohl said that they would never forget the Hungarian leadership for this. In turn, I expressed support for the ten points on German reunification which on that very same day Kohl had issued as his policy. I reiterated this support at the press conference on the same afternoon, and this was one of the first expressions of support for German reunification. During the press conference I was asked a great many questions, including some rather awkward ones in connection with the Serbs and Kosovo. I responded emphatically, although without any sensationalism, in spite of the fact that at times I felt like answering some questions much more sharply, and more in tune with what I was thinking and feeling. But throughout those months I held myself back considerably, so as not to provoke any further problems or additional tension. After all, I was trying to reduce tension, not increase it.

In general the trip to Germany was very intensive and useful. After the disputes in Belgrade and the endless Presidency sessions, and following the constant bickering over the Meeting of Truth and other pressures, the German visit was a real tonic, even though it was hard work. In this way I went on to carry out the programme I had set up from the beginning, of forging links with the West and with Europe. I established a range of contacts with the main Western leaders, although federal foreign policy was constantly diverting me elsewhere – far off into Africa, Asia and the non-aligned states, in other words, away from Europe. Kohl's invitation was a special gesture towards me as the representative of Slovenia in the Federal Presidency. Among the people I spoke to in Germany I was constantly asked what I thought about the current processes in Eastern Europe. What kind of structure would the future Europe have. Questions about Yugoslavia were discreet, but it was clear that the Germans were very worried about its future development. The events of recent days must have been familiar to them, even if they made no direct mention of them. My answers were open, since I myself was under pressure from these serious developments. I spoke about my programme of democratisation, the market economy and the Europeanisation of Yugoslavia. I said that we were competing against an

ever growing nationalism which threatened to explode. The question was, which would come first: democratic consolidation or collapse? I still hoped then that we might avoid an explosion. The latest events in Yugoslavia and in the Federal Presidency were a palpable demonstration of this competition: the political and economic programme, as well as our path towards Europe, had been shifted, and were accompanied by ever greater excesses such as the Meeting of Truth and the economic blockade of Slovenia.

On 7 December I returned from Bonn to Belgrade, where I went into another important round of talks. French Prime Minister Michel Rocard came to visit. I had also met Rocard in Paris. Our talks were very agreeable and similar to those I had in Germany. I tried to obtain support for our involvement in European integration. At that time the most salient and feasible prospect was obtaining membership of the Council of Europe. In the talks over lunch we were joined by Ante Marković, who as usual explained everything in very general terms. While this was going on, Rocard and I exchanged glances a few times, and at one point, following a long monologue from Marković, I asked him if he now understood precisely what we were talking about. He laughed and said:

"Mr Marković has great pedagogical capabilities." Gradually the end of 1989 approached. I remember sitting down in my residence in Dedinje with Silva Bauman and talking about what kind of a year it had been, and what would need to be done by the end of my term in office on 15 May 1990. Throughout these months I was trying to fulfil my pre-election policies. I felt a responsibility to the Slovenes, who had so unexpectedly elected me and who followed my progress with much sympathy and confidence; and of course I felt a responsibility to everyone else in the country. It was difficult, but I wanted to hold out for the one-year term of President of the Presidency. I considered myself duty bound to do so. However, throughout this time I was sure that I would conclude the term and then quit the position altogether. Even while I was serving my term as President, I was not convinced that I would hold out to the end. The whole time I was expecting new tensions, where I would find myself wedged between the interests of the federation and those of Slovenia, and where I would probably tender my resignation. Or there might arise some other dramatic situation, or some major violation of human rights. Up to that time, however, in spite of all

the complications and pressures, things never got so bad. I placed European integration on the agenda of the Presidency, and I also made some diplomatic moves in that direction. I managed the Non-Aligned Conference very correctly, and put in place the basis of an anti-inflation programme. I fought for the reduction and removal of emergency measures in Kosovo, for the freeing of political prisoners and for a change in the penal code. I defended Slovenia from Serbian pressure over the passing of the Slovene constitutional amendments and the Meeting of Truth. When I thought about what I wanted and ought to do by the end of my term, up to 15 May 1990, I identified the following goals: the complete lifting of the state of emergency in Kosovo, pardoning of all political prisoners in Yugoslavia and the start of the process of Yugoslavia being accepted into the Council of Europe. I had the impression that I could be very satisfied with my term in office if I could manage to get all this done. It seemed in advance, however, that this would be a very difficult task to accomplish in the remaining four and a half months.