

Cosic hit back at Milosevic's 'self will' and comments by Montenegro's President Bulatovic, 2 June 1993

On 2 June, Dobrica Cosic, the deposed President of Yugoslavia, hit back in a very tough statement to the Yugoslav news agency, Tanjug, in which he comprehensively attacked the alliance between Milosevic's Socialists (SPS), and Seselj's Radicals (SRS) and also Milosevic personally. Needless to add the statement was not broadcast by state TV or radio and its impact on SPS and SRS supporters outside Belgrade was therefore negligible. I felt very sad. I had grown fond of Cosic who had allowed the responsibility of office to temper many of his more nationalistic views and demonstrated a readiness to listen to international opinion and won respect around the negotiating table from Izetbegovic and Tudjman.

Cosic's spirited defence began by recalling the platform on which he had accepted the Presidency -- constitutional reform and a democratisation of society -- and outlining how the SPS and SRS had blocked those reforms. His lack of power in the face of this coalition had meant that for some time Cosic had warned about this de facto coalition between the two parties which he faced. But he had been persuaded by 'domestic and foreign advisers' not to resign. Slowly Milosevic had taken power over the Federal Ministry for the Interior and the Federal Security Forces. Milosevic had appointed the Serbian Foreign Minister, Jovanovic, as Federal Foreign Minister, and by placing others in key Ministries was ensuring that Federal power was wholly in his hands. This had driven Montenegro to adopt an independent foreign policy, further diminishing Federal authority so that all that had remained of the Federation was the army and the burden of a cumbersome and expensive bureaucracy.

Cosic went on to offer an explanation of why Milosevic deposed him in a 'coup d'état...with the prearranged support of Seselj'. Milosevic, 'the ideological son of Stalin and Tito, could no longer tolerate Cosic's opposition to his policies and 'despotic self-will' and, obsessed with his love of power, seized on oral reports of Cosic's discussions on 27 May with the army as preparations for a putsch, inventing the 'stenographer's record' in a typically communist scenario of 'discovering a conspiracy', as a reason to instruct the SPS to vote with Seselj against Cosic. Cosic claimed there had been no stenographer's record, and challenged Milosevic to produce a copy. The deposition procedure in the Federal Parliament had been a classical 'Stalinist act' by two 'totalitarian parties', which would cause great political and moral damage to Serbia and Montenegro and further diminish the nation's image. Although he had no interest in his personal rehabilitation, he called on the Federal Parliament to form a State Commission to investigate the stenographer's record. If it failed to do so, the Federal Parliament would have confirmed that totalitarianism had legitimately re-established itself in Yugoslavia in the form of the SRS and SPS.

Momir Bulatovic, the Montenegrin President, told reporters in Belgrade that it was time to consider whether the way in which the Federal Parliament was working was right, as he was coming under great pressure from Montenegrin political parties who believed that it was no longer in harmony with the procedures that they were accustomed to in Montenegro but Bulatovic ducked direct comment on the departure of Cosic, saying that he agreed with the views of his party colleague, Svetozar Marovic, who had deplored the way in which Cosic had been deposed. Asked about relations between the DPS and its Serbian sister party, the SPS, Bulatovic said, "In politics everything changes. We are going to need an intensive discussion between the two parties." In an interview for Borba, in Brussels the Montenegrin Foreign Minister, Miodrag Lekic, said that the removal of Cosic, "the father of Serbian nationalism", was no great loss for Montenegrins, whose separate identity he had denied, but it was not yet clear if Cosic's departure would contribute to prolonging or shortening the war.

#