ENVER HOXHA

The

Khrushchevites

Memoirs
Two decades have gone by since the Meeting of 81 communist and workers' parties of the world, which has gone down in history as one of the most important events in the struggle which is being waged between Marxism-Leninism and opportunism. At this Meeting our Party opened fire on the revisionist group of Khrushchev which was ruling in the Soviet Union and struggling in every way to subjugate the entire international communist movement, all the communist and workers' parties of the world, and set them on its road of betrayal.

Our open and principled attack on Khrushchevite modern revisionism at the Meeting in November 1960 was not a surprise move. On the contrary, it was the logical continuation of the Marxist-Leninist stand which the Party of Labour of Albania had always maintained, was the transition to a new, higher stage of the struggle which our Party had long been waging for the defence and consistent application of Marxism-Leninism. From the time the Khrushchevites took power to the moment when we came out in open confrontation with them, the relations of the Party of Labour of Albania with the Communist Party of
the Soviet Union passed through a complicated process, with zig zags, with periods of exacerbation and periods of temporary normalization. This was the process of each getting to know the other through encounters in the course of the struggle and the continual clash of views. After the Khrushchevite revisionist putschists came to power, our Party, basing itself on the events that were taking place there, on certain stands and actions, which were ill-defined at first, but which, step by step, were becoming more concrete, began to sense the great danger of this clique of renegades, which hid behind a deafening pseudo-Marxist demagogy, and to understand that this clique was becoming a great threat both to the cause of the revolution and socialism as a whole, and to our country.

We became more and more aware that the views and stands of Nikita Khrushchev on important questions of the international communist movement and the socialist camp differed from our views and stands. The 20th Congress of the CPSU, in particular, was the event which made us adopt a stand of opposition to Khrushchev and the Khrushchevites. As Marxist-Leninists and in a Marxist-Leninist way, time after time we had pointed out to the Soviet leaders our reservations and objections to their conciliatory stands towards the Yugoslav revisionists, about many aspects of their unprincipled foreign policy, about many of their wrong and completely un-Marxist stands and
actions on major international problems, etc. Although they sometimes feigned a retreat, they continued on their course, while we refused to swallow what they served up to us, but on the contrary, defended our views and implemented our internal and external policy.

With the passage of time this brought about that we became better acquainted with each other’s positions, and neither side trusted the other. For our part, we continued to preserve our friendship with the Soviet Union, with its peoples, continued to build socialism according to the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, continued as before to defend the great Stalin and his work and to fight unwaveringly against Yugoslav revisionism. Our existing doubts about the Soviet revisionists increased and deepened from day to day, because day by day Khrushchev and company were acting in opposition to Marxism-Leninism.

Khrushchev was aware of our reservations about the 20th Congress, and about the policy which he followed with the Titoites, imperialism, etc., but his tactic was not to hasten to exacerbate the situation with us Albanians. He hoped to profit from the friendship which we displayed for the Soviet Union to take the Albanian fortress from within and to get us into the bag through smiles and threats, through giving us some reduced credits, as well as through pressure and blockades. Khrushchev and the Khrushchevites thought: «We
know the Albanians. However stubborn they are, however hot-tempered they are, they have nowhere else to turn to, because we have them pinned up and, if they prove difficult, if they don’t obey us, then we will show our teeth, we’ll cut them off and boycott them, and overthrow all those who oppose us.

The Khrushchev group prepared this course of action, promoted and deepened it, thinking that it would achieve its aim «quietly and gently» and «without any fuss». However, the reality was convincing them that this tactic was yielding no fruit, and thus their impatience and arrogance began to emerge. The situation became tense. Then it was «eased» only to grow tense again. We understood where this course would lead Khrushchev and company, therefore we strengthened our vigilance, and while replying to manifestations of their despotism, we tried to prolong the «peace» while safeguarding our principles.

But the moment came when the cup was full to overflowing. The «peace», which had seemed to exist before, could continue no longer. Khrushchev went openly on to the attack to subjugate and force us to follow his utterly opportunistic line. Then we told Khrushchev bluntly and loudly «No!», we said «Stop!» to his treacherous activity. This marked the beginning of a long and very difficult struggle in which our Party, to its glory and the glory of the people who gave birth to it
and raised it, consistently defended the interests of its socialist Homeland, persistently defended Marxism-Leninism and the genuine international communist movement.

At that time many people did not understand the stand of the Party of Labour of Albania; there were even well-wishers of our Party and country who considered this action hasty, some had not yet completely understood the Khrushchevites' betrayal, some others thought that we broke away from the Soviet Union to link up with China, etc. Today, not only the friends, but also the enemies of socialist Albania have understood the principled character of the uninterrupted struggle which our Party has waged and is waging against opportunists of every hue.

Time has fully confirmed how right the Party of Labour of Albania was to fight the Khrushchevites and refuse to follow their line. To this fight, which demanded and still demands great sacrifices, our small Homeland owes the freedom and independence it prizes so highly and its successful development on the road of socialism. Only thanks to the Marxist-Leninist line of our Party did Albania not become and never will become a protectorate of the Russians or anyone else.

Since 1961 our Party of Labour has not had any link or contact with the Khrushchevites. In the future, too, it will never establish party relations with them, and we do not have and will never
have even state relations with the Soviet social-
imperialists. As up to now, our Party will con-
sistently wage the ideological and political struggle
for the exposure of these enemies of Marxism-
Leninism. We acted in this way both when
Khrushchev was in power and when he was
brought down and replaced by the Brezhnev
clique. Our Party had no illusions, but on the
contrary, was quite certain that Brezhnev, Kosy-
gin, Suslov, Mikoyan, etc., who had been Khrush-
chev’s closest collaborators, who had jointly or-
ganized and put into practice the revisionist coun-
ter-revolution in the Soviet Union, would persist
in their former line.

They eliminated Khrushchev with the aim of
protecting Khrushchevism from the discredit
which the master himself was bringing upon it
with his endless buffoonery, eliminated the
«father» with the aim of implementing the com-
plete restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union
with greater intensity and effectiveness.

In this direction Brezhnev and company have
proved to be «worthy pupils» of their ill-famed
teacher. Within the Soviet Union they established
and strengthened the dictatorial fascist regime,
while they turned the foreign policy of their state
into a policy of great-state chauvinism, expansion
and hegemonism. Under the leadership of the
Brezhnev Khrushchevites, the Soviet Union has
been turned into an imperialist world power and,
like the United States of America, aims to rule the world. Among the bitter evidence of the utterly reactionary policy of Soviet social-imperialism are the tragic events in Czechoslovakia, the strengthening of the domination of the Kremlin over the countries of the Warsaw Treaty, the deepening of their all-round dependence on Moscow and the extension of the tentacles of Soviet social-imperialism to Asia, Africa and elsewhere. The correct assessments and forecasts of our Party about the reactionary internal and foreign policy of Brezhnev have been and are being constantly confirmed. The most recent example is Afghanistan, where the Brezhnev Khrushchevites undertook an open fascist aggression and now are trying to quell the flames of the people's war with fire and steel in order to prolong their social-imperialist occupation.

The fact that our small Homeland and people have not suffered the tragic fate of all those who are now languishing under imperialist or social-imperialist slavery is the best testimony to the correctness of the consistent, courageous and principled line which our Party of Labour has always followed.

The merit for this correct course belongs to the whole Party and, in particular, to its leadership, the Central Committee, which, imbued with and loyal to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, our guiding theory, has always led the Party and
the people correctly. In the great tests which we have had to withstand, the unity of the Party with its leadership and the unity of the people around the Party have been brilliant and have become further tempered. This steel unity gave the Party support and strength in the difficult but glorious struggle against the Khrushchevite revisionists, too. This unity has been and is the foundation of the stability and confidence with which Albania has marched and is marching forward, withstanding the pressure and blackmail, the blandishments and demagogy of enemies of all hues.

As a communist and leader of the Party, I, too, have had to take part actively and make my contribution to all this heroic struggle of our Party. Charged by the Party and its leadership, since the liberation of Albania, and especially during the years 1950-1960, I have headed delegations of the Party and the state many times in official meetings with the Soviet leaders and with the main leaders of other communist and workers' parties. Likewise, many times we have exchanged reciprocal visits, I have taken part in consultations and international meetings of communist parties at which I have expressed and defended the correct line, decisions and instructions of the Party. In all these meetings and visits I have become closely acquainted with glorious, unforgettable leaders, like Stalin, Dimitrov, Gottwald, Bie-
rut, Pieck and others, and likewise, I have had to enter into contact with and know the Khrushchevite traitors, who, through a long and complicated process, gradually usurped power in the Soviet Union and in the former countries of people’s democracy respectively.

The relations with them and the stands maintained by our Party during this period have been reflected in the documents of the Party, in my writings which are being published by decision of the Central Committee, as well as in other documents which are found in the Central Archives of the Party. Now I am handing over these notes for publication as my reminiscences and impressions from the many contacts and clashes with the Khrushchevites, which cover the period from 1953, after the death of Stalin, to the end of 1961, when the Khrushchev group broke off diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of Albania. Taken together with other published materials and documents covering that period, these notes, too, I believe, will serve to acquaint the communists and working masses better, both with the counter-revolutionary activity of the Soviet revisionists inside and outside the Soviet Union, and with the always correct and consistent struggle of our Party in defence of Marxism-Leninism, the people and our socialist Homeland.
1. IN-FIGHTING AMONG THE TOP SOVIET LEADERS

Stalin dies. Next day the top Soviet leadership divides up the portfolios. Khrushchev climbs the steps to power. Disillusionment from the first meeting with the «new» Soviet leaders in June 1953. Ill-intentioned criticism from Mikoyan and Bulganin. The end of Beria’s short-lived reign. The meeting with Khrushchev in June 1954: «You helped in the exposure of Beria.» Khrushchev’s «theoretical» lecture on the roles of the first secretary of the party and the prime minister. The revisionist mafia spins its spider’s web inside and outside the Soviet Union.

The way in which the death of Stalin was announced and his funeral ceremony was organized created the impression amongst us, the Albanian communists and people, and others like us, that many members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the
Soviet Union had been awaiting his death impatiently.

One day after Stalin's death on March 6, 1953, the Central Committee of the party, the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR were summoned to an urgent joint meeting. On occasions of great losses, such as the death of Stalin, urgent meetings are necessary and indispensable. However, the many important changes which were announced in the press one day later, showed that this urgent meeting had been held for no other reason but... the sharing out of posts! Stalin had only just died, his body had not yet been placed in the hall where the final homage was to be paid, the program for the organization of paying homage and the funeral ceremony was still not worked out, the Soviet communists and the Soviet people were weeping over their great loss, while the top Soviet leadership found the time to share out the portfolios! Malenkov became premier, Beria became first deputy-premier and minister of internal affairs, and Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Molotov shared the other posts. Major changes were made in all the top organs in the party and the state within that day. The Presidium and the Bureau of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the party were merged into a single organ, new secretaries of the Central Committee of the party were elected, a number of ministries were amalgamated or united,
changes were made in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, etc.

These actions could not fail to make profound and by no means favourable impressions on us. Disturbing questions arose automatically: how were all these major changes made so suddenly within one day, and not just any ordinary day, but on the first day of mourning?! Logic compels us to believe that everything had been prepared in advance. The lists of these changes had been worked out long before in suspicious secrecy and they were simply waiting for the occasion to proclaim them in order to satisfy this one and that one...

It is never possible to take such extremely important decisions within a few hours, even on a completely normal day.

However, if at the start these were only doubts which shocked and surprised us, later developments, the occurrences and the facts which we were to learn about subsequently, made us even more convinced that hidden hands had prepared the plot long before and waited the opportunity to commence the course of the destruction of the Bolshevik Party and socialism in the Soviet Union.

The lack of unity in the Presidium of the Central Committee was made quite obvious at Stalin’s funeral, too, when there was strife among the members over who would take pride of place and who would speak first. Instead of displaying
unity at a time of misfortune before the peoples of the Soviet Union and all the communists of the world, who were deeply shocked and immensely grieved by the sudden death of Stalin, the «comrades» were competing for the limelight. Khrushchev opened the funeral ceremony, and Malenkov, Beria and Molotov spoke before Lenin Mausoleum. The conspirators behaved hypocritically over Stalin’s coffin and rushed to get the funeral ceremony over as quickly as possible in order to shut themselves up in the Kremlin again to continue the process of the division and re-division of the posts.

We, and many like us, thought that Molotov, Stalin’s closest collaborator, the oldest and the most mature bolshevik, with the greatest experience and best known inside and outside the Soviet Union, would be elected first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. But it did not turn out so. Malenkov was placed at the head, with Beria in second place. Behind them in those days, a little more in the shade, stood a «panther» which was preparing itself to gobble up and liquidate the former two. This was Nikita Khrushchev.

The way in which he rose was truly astonishing and suspect: he was appointed only as chairman of the central commission to organize the funeral ceremony for Stalin, and on March 7, when the division of posts was made public, he had
not been appointed to any new post, but had simply been freed from the task of first secretary of the Party Committee of Moscow, since «he was to concentrate on the work in the Central Committee of the party». Only a few days later, on March 14, 1953, Malenkov, «at his own request», was relieved of the post of secretary of the Central Committee of the party(!) and Nikita Khrushchev was listed first in the composition of the new Secretariat elected that same day.

Such actions did not please us at all, although they were not our responsibility. We were disillusioned in our opinions about the stability of the top Soviet leadership, but we explained this with our being totally uninformed about the situation developing in the party and the leadership of the Soviet Union. In the contacts which I had had with Stalin himself, with Malenkov, Molotov, Khrushchev, Beria, Mikoyan, Suslov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, and other main leaders, I had not seen even the smallest division or discord amongst them.

Stalin had fought consistently for and was one of the decisive factors of the Marxist-Leninist unity of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This unity in the party for which Stalin worked, was not created by means of terror, as Khrushchev and the Khrushchevites claimed later, continuing the slanders of the imperialists and the world capitalist bourgeoisie, who were striving to destroy and overthrow the dictatorship of the pro-
letariat in the Soviet Union, but was based on the triumphs of socialism, on the Marxist-Leninist line and ideology of the Bolshevik Party and on the indisputably great personality of Stalin. The trust which all had in Stalin was based on his justice and the ability with which he defended the Soviet Union and Leninism. Stalin waged the class struggle correctly, dealing merciless blows at the enemies of socialism (and he was quite right to do so). The concrete daily struggle of Stalin, the Bolshevik Party and the whole Soviet people proves this squarely, as do the political and ideological writings of Stalin, the documents and decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and also the press and the mass propaganda of those times against the Trotskyites, Bukharinites, Zinovievites, the Tukhachevskies, and all other traitors. This was a stern political and ideological class struggle to defend socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the party and the principles of Marxism-Leninism. For this Stalin has great merits.

Stalin proved himself to be an outstanding Marxist-Leninist with clear principles, with great courage and cool-headedness, and the maturity and foresight of a Marxist revolutionary. If we just reflect on the strength of the external and internal enemies in the Soviet Union, on the manoeuvres and unrestrained propaganda they indulged in, on the fiendish tactics they used, then we can properly
appreciate the principles and correct actions of Stalin at the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. If there were some excesses in the course of this just and titanic struggle, it was not Stalin who committed them, but Khrushchev, Beria and company, who for sinister hidden motives, showed themselves the most zealous for purges at the time when they were not yet so powerful. They acted in this way to gain credit as «ardent defenders» of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as «merciless with the enemies», with the aim of climbing the steps in order to usurp power later. The facts show that when Stalin discovered the hostile activity of a Yagoda or a Yezhov, the revolutionary court condemned them without hesitation. Such elements as Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Beria and their apparatchiki hid the truth from Stalin. In one way or another, they misled and deceived Stalin. He did not trust them, therefore he had told them to their faces, «...when I am gone you will sell the Soviet Union.» Khrushchev himself admitted this. And it turned out just as Stalin foresaw. As long as he was alive, even these enemies talked about unity, but after his death they encouraged the split. This process was being steadily extended.

From the visits which I made from time to time to the Soviet Union after 1953, for consultations over the problems of the political and economic situation, or over some problems of interna-
tional policy which were raised by the Soviets, who allegedly sought our opinion, too. I saw more and more clearly the sharpening of contradictions among the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

A few months after Stalin’s death, in June 1953, I went to Moscow at the head of a party and government delegation to seek an economic and military credit.

It was the time when Malenkov seemed to be the main leader. He was chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. Although Khrushchev had been listed first among the secretaries of the Central Committee of the party since March 1953, apparently he had not yet seized power completely, had still not prepared the putsch.

We normally made our requests in advance in writing, thus the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the party and government of the Soviet Union had long been aware of them and, indeed as it turned out, they had decided what they would give us and what they would not give us. They received us at the Kremlin. When we entered the room the Soviet leaders stood up and we shook hands with them. We exchanged the normal greetings.

I had met them all in the time of Stalin.
Malenkov looked just the same — a heavy-built man with a pale, hairless face. I had met him years before in Moscow, during meetings I had with Stalin, and he had made a good impression on me. He worshipped Stalin and it seemed to me that Stalin valued him, too. At the 19th Congress Malenkov delivered the report on behalf of the Central Committee of the party. He was one of the relatively new cadres who came into the leadership and who were liquidated later by the disguised revisionist Khrushchev and his associates. But now he was at the head of the table, holding the post of chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Beside him stood Beria, with his eyes glittering behind glasses and his hands never still. After him came Molotov, quiet, good-looking, one of the most serious and most honoured comrades for us, because he was an old bolshevik from the time of Lenin and a close comrade of Stalin’s. We still thought of Molotov in this way even after Stalin’s death.

Next to Molotov was Mikoyan, his dark face scowling. This merchant was holding one of those thick pencils, half red half blue (something you could see in all the offices of the Soviet Union), and was keeping the «score». Now he had taken even greater authority into his hands. On March 6, the day the posts were shared out, it was decided that the Ministry of Foreign Trade and that of Internal Trade should be combined in one, and the
Armenian wheeler-dealer grabbed the portfolio.

Finally there was the bearded Marshal Bulganin, with white hair and pale blue eyes, sitting a little bit bemused at a corner of the table.

«Let us hear what you have to say!» said Malenkov in a very grave tone. This was not at all a comradely beginning. This was to become the custom in talks with the new Soviet leaders, and no doubt this behaviour was supposed to show the pride of the great state. «Well, say what you have to say to us, we shall listen to you and pronounce our final opinion.»

I did not know Russian well, I could not speak it, but I could understand it. The talk was conducted through an interpreter.

I began to speak about the problems that were worrying us, especially about military questions and the problems of the economy. First, I gave an introduction about the internal and external political situation of our country, which was causing us some concern. It was essential to give solid reasons for our needs, to back up our requests in both the economic and military sectors. In connection with the latter, the aid which they provided for our army was always insufficient and minimal, regardless of the fact that in public we always spoke very highly of the value of that small amount of aid which they granted us. Together with the
arguments in support of our modest requests, I also portrayed the situation of our country in connection with our Yugoslav, Greek and Italian neighbours. From all around our country the enemies were carrying out intensive hostile work of diversion, espionage and sabotage from the sea, the air and the land. We were having continual clashes with armed bands of enemy agents and needed aid in military materials.

My concern was to make my exposé as concrete and concise as possible. I tried not to go on at too great a length and I had been speaking for no more than twenty minutes, when I heard Beria, with his snake’s eyes, say to Malenkov, who was sitting listening to me as expressionless as a mummy:

«Can’t we say what we have to say and put an end to this?»

Without changing his expression, without shifting his eyes from me (of course, he had to maintain his authority in front of his deputies!), Malenkov said to Beria:

«Wait!»

I was so annoyed I was ready to explode internally, but I preserved my aplomb and, in order to let them understand that I had heard and understood what they said, I cut down my talk and said to Malenkov:

«I have finished.»
«Pravilno!»* said Malenkov and gave Mikoyan the floor.

Beria, pleased that I had finished, put his hands in his pockets and tried to work out what impression their replies were making on me. Of course, I was not satisfied with what they had decided to give us in response to the very modest requests we had made. I spoke again and told them that they had made heavy reductions in the things we had asked for. Mikoyan jumped in to «explain» that the Soviet Union itself was poor, that it had gone through the war, that it had to assist other countries, too, etc.

«When we drafted these requests,» I told Mikoyan, «we took account of the reason you have just given, indeed we cut our calculations very fine, and your specialists who work in our country are witnesses to this.»

«Our specialists do not know what possibilities the Soviet Union has. We who have told you our opinions and possibilities know these things,» said Mikoyan.

Molotov was leaning on the table. He said something about Albania's relations with its neighbours, but he never raised his eyes. Malenkov and Beria seemed to be the two «cocks of the walk», while Mikoyan who was cold and bitter, did not say much, but when he did speak, it was only to

* That's right (Russian in the original).
make some vicious and venomous remark. From the way they spoke, the way they interrupted one another, the arrogant tone in which they gave «advice», the signs of discord among them were quite clear.

«Since this is what you have decided, there is no reason for me to prolong matters,» I said.

«Pravilno!» repeated Malenkov and asked in a loud voice: «Has anyone anything to add?»

«I have,» said Bulganin at the end of the table.

«You have the floor,» said Malenkov.

Bulganin opened a dossier and, in substance, said:

«You, Comrade Enver, have asked for aid for the army. We have agreed to give you as much as we have allocated to you, but I have a number of criticisms. The army ought to be a sound weapon of the dictatorship of the proletariat, its cadres loyal to the party and of proletarian origin, the party must have the army firmly under its leadership...»

Bulganin went on for a very long time with a «moralizing» speech, full of words of «advice». I listened carefully and waited for the criticisms, but they did not come. In the end he said this:

«Comrade Enver, we have information that many cadres of your army are the sons of beys and aghas, of dubious origin and activity. We must be certain about those into whose hands these wea-
pons, with which we shall supply you, will be put, therefore we advise you to study this problem deeply and carry out purges...»

This made my blood boil because it was a slanderous accusation and an insult to the cadres of our army. I raised my voice and asked the marshal:

«What is the source of this information which you give me with such assurance? Why do you insult our army?»

The atmosphere of the meeting became as cold as ice. They all lifted their heads and looked at me while I waited for Bulganin to reply. He found himself at a tight spot because he had not expected this cutting question, and he looked at Beria.

Beria began to speak, the movements of his hands and eyes revealing his embarrassment and irritation, and said that according to their information, we allegedly had unsuitable and dubious elements, not only in the army, but also in the apparatus of the state and in the economy! He even mentioned a percentage. Bulganin sighed with relief and looked around, not concealing his satisfaction, but Beria cut short his smile. He openly opposed Bulganin's «advice» about purges and stressed that the «elements with a bad past, but who have since taken the right road, must not be purged but should be pardoned.» The resentment and deep contradictions which existed between
these two were displayed quite openly. As it turned out later, the contradictions between Bulganin and Beria were not simply between these two persons, but were the reflection of deep contradictions, quarrels and opposition between the Soviet state security service and the intelligence organs of the Soviet army. But we were to learn these things later. In this concrete case we were dealing with a grave accusation raised against us. We could never accept this accusation, therefore, I stood up and said:

«Those who have given you this information have committed slander, hence they are enemies. There is no truth in what you said. The overwhelming majority of the cadres of our army have been poor peasants, shepherds, workers, artisans and revolutionary intellectuals. In our army there are no sons of beys and aghas. Or if there are perhaps ten or twenty individuals, they have abandoned their class and have shed their own blood, and by this I mean that during the war they not only took up arms against the foreign enemies, but rejected the class from which they emerged, and even their parents and relations, when they opposed the Party and the people. All the cadres of our army have fought in the war, have emerged from the war, and not only do I not accept these accusations but I am telling you that your informers are deceiving you, are concocting slanders. I assure you that the weapons that we
have received and will receive from you have been and will be in reliable hands, that the Party of Labour, and no one else, has led and still leads our People’s Army. That is all I had to say!» and I sat down.

When I had finished, Malenkov began to speak to close the debate. After stressing that he agreed with what the preceding speakers had said, he issued a load of «advice and instructions» for us, and then dwelt on the debate which we had with Bulganin and Beria about the «enemies» in the ranks of our army.

«As for undertaking purges in the army, I think that the problem should not be presented in this way,» said Malenkov, opposing the «advice» which Bulganin gave me about purges. «People are not born ready-formed, and they make mistakes in life. We must not be afraid to excuse people for their past mistakes. We have people who have fought against us with weapons, but now we are bringing out special laws to pardon them for their past and in this way to give them the possibility to work in the army and even to be in the party. The term 'purge' of the army is not suitable,» repeated Malenkov and closed the discussion.

Utter confusion: one said irresponsibly, «You have enemies» and «carry out purges», the other said, «We are bringing out laws to pardon them for their past»!
However, these were their opinions. We listened to them carefully and openly expressed our opposition to those things over which we disagreed. Finally, I thanked them for receiving me and, in passing, told them that the Central Committee of our Party had decided that I should be relieved of many functions and retain only the main function of General Secretary of the Party. (At that time I was General Secretary, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. These functions had remained in my hands since the time the country was liberated, when many difficulties caused by external and internal enemies had to be overcome.)

Malenkov found this decision correct and twice repeated his favourite «pravilno». Having nothing more to say, we shook hands and left.

My conclusion from this meeting was unpleasant. I saw that the leadership of the Soviet Union was ill-disposed towards our country. The arrogant way they behaved during the meeting, their refusal to give those few things that we sought, and their slanderous attack on the cadres of our army were not good signs.

From this meeting I observed also that there was no unity in the Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Malenkov and Beria were predominant, Molotov hardly spoke, Mikoyan seemed to be on the outer and spouted venom, while what Bulganin said was bullshit.
It was apparent that the in-fighting had begun among the leaders in the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However hard they tried to avoid giving the impression outside that the «changing of the guard» was taking place in the Kremlin, they were unable to hide everything. Changes had been and were being made in the party and the government. After he kicked out Malenkov, leaving him only the post of prime minister, Khrushchev made himself first secretary of the Central Committee in September 1953. It is evident that Khrushchev and his group of close cronies hatched up the intrigue in the Presidium carefully, by setting their opponents at loggerheads and eliminating Beria and apparently «taming» the others.

There are many versions about the arrest and execution of Beria. Amongst others it was said that men from the army, headed by General Moskalenko, arrested Beria right in the meeting of the Presidium of the CC of the party. Apparently Khrushchev and his henchmen charged the army with this «special mission», because they did not trust the state security, since Beria had had it in his hands for years on end. The plan had been hatched up in advance: while the meeting of the Presidium of the CC of the party was being held, Moskalenko and his men got into a nearby room unobserved. At the given moment, Malenkov pressed the bell and within a few seconds Moska-
lenko entered the office where the meeting was being held and approached Beria to arrest him. It was said that Beria reached out to take the satchel he had nearby, but Khrushchev, who was sitting «vigilant» by his side, was «quicker» and seized the satchel first. The «bird» could not fly away, the action was crowned with success! Precisely as in a detective film, but this was no ordinary film: the actors of this one were members of the Presidium of the CC of the CPSU!

This is what was said, took place and Khrushchev himself admitted it. Later, when a general, who I believe was called Sergatskov, came to Tirana as Soviet military adviser he also told us something about the trial of Beria. He told us that he had been called as a witness to declare in court that Beria had allegedly behaved arrogantly towards him. On this occasion Sergatskov told our comrades in confidence: «Beria defended himself very strongly in the court, accepted none of the accusations and refuted them all.»

In June 1954, a few months after Khrushchev's elevation to the post of first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, together with Comrade Hysni Kapo, we had to go to Moscow where we sought a meeting with the Soviet leaders to talk about the economic problems over the solution of which they were proving uncooperative. Khrushchev received us, together with Malenkov, who was still prime
minister, in the presence of Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Suslov and one or two others of lower rank.

I had had occasion to meet Khrushchev once or twice in the Ukraine before the death of Stalin. We had just emerged from the war and at that time it was natural that we had great trust not only in Stalin, the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which was indisputable, but also in all the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From the first meeting Khrushchev had impressed me as a «good capable fellow, full of vigour and talk» who did not fail to speak well of our war, although it was apparent he knew nothing about it.

He gave me a rather superficial account of the Ukraine, put on a dinner for me, from which I remember a kind of soup which they called «borsch» and a bowl of yoghurt so thick that you could cut it with a knife and I was not sure whether it was yoghurt or cheese; he presented me with an embroidered Ukrainian shirt and begged my pardon because he had to go to Moscow where they had a meeting of the Bureau. This encounter was in Kiev, and all the time he was with me, Khrushchev poured out every kind of praise for Stalin. Of course, seeing only the trips by air back and forth to Moscow of leaders who were so ably guiding this great country which we loved so much and hearing all those fine words they said about Stalin, I was very pleased with them and
enthusiastic about the successes they had achieved.

But Khrushchev's unexpected and rapid rise to power did not make a good impression on us. Not because we had anything against him, but because we thought that the role and figure of Khrushchev was not so well-known either in the Soviet Union or in the world, that he could so rapidly take the place of the great Stalin as first secretary of the Central Committee of the party. Khrushchev had never appeared at any of the meetings we had had for years on end with Stalin, although nearly all the top leaders of the party and Soviet state took part in most of those meetings. However, we did not express this and never mentioned our impression about this promotion of Khrushchev so high. We considered this an internal matter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, thought that they knew what they were doing, and wished with all our heart that things would always go well in the Soviet Union, as in the time of Stalin.

And now the day had come for us to meet Khrushchev face to face in our first official meeting.

I spoke first. I briefly presented the economic, political and organizational situation of the country, the situation in the Party and our people's state power. Knowing from the meeting a year earlier with Malenkov that the new leaders of the Soviet party and state did not like to listen
for long, I tried to be as concise as possible in my exposé and put the emphasis mainly on the economic questions about which we had sent a detailed letter to the Soviet leadership two months earlier. I remember that Khrushchev intervened only once during my speech. I was speaking of the very fine results which had been achieved in our country in the recent elections of deputies to the People’s Assembly and about the powerful party—people—state unity which was manifested during the elections.

"These results should not put you to sleep," interjected Khrushchev at that moment, drawing our attention to the very thing which we had not only always been aware of, but which I had stressed in the exposé I had given them, emphasizing particularly the work we did to consolidate unity, to build up the love of the people for the Party and the state, to strengthen vigilance, etc. However, it was his right to give as much advice as he wished and we had no reason to resent this.

Khrushchev spoke immediately after me and right from the start displayed his clownish nature in the treatment of problems:

"We are informed about your situation and problems from the materials we have studied," he began. "The report which Comrade Enver gave us here made matters clearer to us, and I describe it as a 'joint report', yours and ours."
But,» he continued, «I am still a bad Albanian and I am not going to speak now either about the economic problems or about the political ones, which Comrade Enver raised, because, for our part, we have still not exchanged opinions and reached a common view. Therefore, I am going to speak about something else.»

And he began to give us a long talk about the importance of the role of the party.

He spoke in a loud voice with many gestures of his hands and his head, looking in all directions without concentrating on any one point, interrupted his speech here and there to ask questions, and then, often without waiting for the reply, went on with his speech, hopping from branch to branch.

«The party leads, organizes, controls,» he theorized. «It is the initiator and inspirer. But Beria wanted to liquidate the role of the party,» and after a moment of silence he asked me: «Have you received the resolution which announced the sentence we passed on Beria?»

«Yes,» I replied.

He left his discourse about the party and started to speak about the activity of Beria; he accused him of almost every crime and described him as the cause of many evils. These were the first steps towards the attack on Stalin. For the time being, Khrushchev felt that he could not rise against the
figure and work of Stalin, therefore, in order to prepare the terrain he started with Beria. At this meeting, moreover, to our astonishment, Khrushchev told us:

«When you were here last year, you assisted in the exposure and unmasking of Beria.»

I stared in amazement, wondering what he was leading up to. Khrushchev's explanation was this:

«You remember the debate which you had last year with Bulganin and Beria over the accusation they made against your army. It was Beria who had given us that information, and the strong opposition which you put up in the presence of the comrades of the Presidium, helped us by supplementing the doubts and the facts which we had about the hostile activity of Beria. A few days after your departure for Albania we condemned him.»

However, in that first meeting with us Khrushchev was not concerned simply with Beria. The «Beria» dossier had been closed. Khrushchev had settled accounts with him. Now he had to go further. He dealt at length with the importance and the role of the first secretary or general secretary of the party.

«To me it is of no importance whether he is called 'first' secretary or 'general' secretary,» he
said in substance. «What is important is that the most able, qualified person with the greatest authority in the country must be elected to that post. We have our experience,» he continued. «After the death of Stalin we had four secretaries of the Central Committee but we had no one in charge, and thus we had no one to sign the minutes of meetings!»

After going all round the question from the aspect of «principle», Khrushchev did not fail to launch a few gibes which, of course, were aimed against Malenkov, although he mentioned no names.

«Imagine what would occur,» he said in his cunning way, «if the most capable and authoritative comrade were elected chairman of the Council of Ministers. He would have everyone on his back, and thus there would be a danger that the criticism put forward through the party would not be taken into account and hence the party would take second place and be turned into an organ of the Council of Ministers.»

While he was speaking I glanced several times at Malenkov who sat motionless while his whole body seemed to be sagging, his face an ashen hue. Voroshilov, his face flushed bright red, was watching me, waiting for Khrushchev to finish his «discourse». Then he began. He pointed out to me (as though I did not know) that the post of prime
minister was very important, too, for this or that reason, etc.

«I think,» said Voroshilov in an uncertain tone, as though he did not know with whom to side and whom to oppose, «that Comrade Khrushchev did not intend to imply that the Council of Ministers does not have its own special importance. The prime minister, likewise...»

Now Malenkov's face had become deathly pale. While wanting to soften the bad impression which Khrushchev had created, especially about Malenkov, with these words, Voroshilov brought out more clearly the tense situation which existed in the Presidium of the CC of the party. Klim Voroshilov went on with this lecture about the role and importance of the prime minister for several minutes!

Malenkov was the «scapegoat» which they displayed to me to see how I would react. In these two lectures I saw clearly that the split in the Presidium of the CC of the CPSU was growing deeper, that Malenkov and his supporters were on the way out. We were to see later where this process would lead.

At this same meeting Khrushchev told us that the other sister parties had been told of the Soviet «experience» of who should be first secretary of the party and who prime minister in the countries of people's democracy.
«We talked over these questions with the Polish comrades before the congress of their party,» Khrushchev told us. «We thrashed matters out thoroughly and thought that Comrade Bierut should remain chairman of the Council of Ministers and Comrade Ochab should be appointed first secretary of the party...»

Hence, right from the start Khrushchev was for pushing Bierut aside in the leadership of the party (and later for his elimination), since he had insisted that Ochab, «a very good Polish comrade», as he stressed to us, should be elected first secretary. Thus they were giving the green light for all the revisionist elements, who, up till yesterday, were wriggling and keeping a low profile, awaiting the opportune moments. Now these moments were being created by Khrushchev who, with his actions, stands and «new ideas», was becoming the inspirer and organizer of «changes» and «reorganizations».

However, the congress of the Polish United Workers' Party did not fulfil Khrushchev's desires. Bierut, a resolute Marxist-Leninist comrade, of whom I have very good memories, was elected first secretary of the party, while Cyrankiewicz was elected prime minister.

Khrushchev «reconciled» himself to this decision because there was nothing he could do about it. However, the revisionist mafia, which had begun to stir, was thinking about all the ways and
possibilities. It was creating its spider's web. And although Bierut was not removed from the leadership of the party in Warsaw, as Khrushchev wanted and dictated, later he was to be eliminated completely by a sudden «cold» caught in Moscow!