3. NOT MARXIST-LENINISTS BUT HUCKSTERS

Mikoyan, a cosmopolitan huckster and inveterate anti-Albanian. Difficult talks in June 1953 on economic matters — the Soviet leaders are bargaining over aid for Albania. Khrushchev’s «advice» one year later: «You don’t need heavy industry», «We shall supply you with oil and metals», «Don’t worry about bread grain, we’ll supply you with all you want.» Quarrels with Mikoyan. Discontent in Comecon from the revisionist chiefs. Ochab, Dej, Ulbricht. The June 1956 Comecon consultation in Moscow — Khrushchev: «...we must do what Hitler did.» Talks with Khrushchev again. His «advice»: «Albania should advance with cotton, sheep, fish and citrus fruit.»

We were determined to carry on and develop even further the practice, which was begun at the time when Stalin was alive, of exchanging opinions with and seeking the aid of the Soviet leadership over our economic problems. In the first 8-9
years of the people's power, we had achieved a series of successes in the economic development of the country, we had taken the first steps in the fields of industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture, had created a certain base in this direction and gained a certain experience, which would serve us to carry our socialist economy steadily ahead. But we had not become conceited over what we had achieved and neither did we conceal the problems, weaknesses and great difficulties which we had. Therefore we felt the need for continual consultation with our friends, and first of all, with the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; likewise we felt the need for some material aid and credits from them. These we never considered as charity and never sought them as such.

However, in this field of our relations and contacts with the post-Stalin Soviet leadership, too, we very soon saw the first signs that things were no longer going as before. There was something wrong, there was no longer that former atmosphere, when we would go to Stalin and open our hearts to him without hesitation and he would listen and speak to us just as frankly from his heart, the heart of an internationalist communist. More and more each day, in his successors, instead of communists, we saw hucksters.

Mikoyan, in particular, was the most negative, the most dubious element and the greatest
intriguer among the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This huckster, who was constantly grinding and clicking his false teeth, was also ruminating on diabolical anti-Marxist, conspiratorial, putschist plans, as was proved later. This individual, with an unpleasant face and a black heart, behaved in a very menacing way, especially towards us Albanians. Our relations with this tight-fisted dealer and money-changer were economic and commercial. Everything in connection with Albania, both in according credits, and in commercial exchanges, this individual looked at simply from the angle of a trader. The friendly, internationalist socialist feelings had been wiped out as far as he was concerned.

To Mikoyan, Albania was a «geographical notion», a country with a people of no value. I never heard him say one word about our war, our people, or the efforts we made in the struggle with the great difficulties for the revival of the country and our economy ruined by the war. He who had visited nearly every country, never once said that he would like to come to Albania. It seemed that the Soviet leadership based itself on the «great economic experience» of this cosmopolitan huckster, who, as history showed, plotted with Nikita Khrushchev against Stalin, whom they had decided to murder. He admitted this with his own mouth to Mehmet and me in February 1960. After
the putsch they linked up with American imperialism, and set about the destruction to its foundations of the great work of Lenin and Stalin, socialism in the Soviet Union. It was Mikoyan who decided what aid the Soviet Union would provide for Albania, as for the other countries.

In relations with us Mikoyan was not only the most miserly but also the most insulting. This anti-Albanian line of his was permanent, even when Stalin was alive. In my memoirs «With Stalin» I have written of an occasion when Stalin, speaking to me about the internationalist aid which the Soviets would give us, smiled and asked me:

«But the Albanians themselves, are they going to work?»

I immediately sensed why Stalin asked me this. Two or three days earlier we had had a long debate with Mikoyan in connection with our economic situation and the request for aid which our side presented to the Soviet leadership. Mikoyan had said insulting things about our situation and affairs, going so far as to say to us: «You are basing your development on foreign aid alone!»

«No,» I retorted. «It's not so. We are working day and night, we hardly sleep, but these are the conditions and the difficulties we have.» And I went on to speak about the tireless and self-sacrificing work which the workers, the working peas-
antry, the youth, the women and the whole population, young and old, in Albania were doing.

«But,» said the huckster, making a retreat, «you want to set up industry. Industry is difficult for you and there is nowhere for you to find it, except by seeking it from abroad, from us. Employ the forces in agriculture, improve the life of the countryside, and don’t expect to achieve development through industry alone.»

We continued to argue with the Armenian trader for a long time, and as usual, he closed the discussion by saying to us: «Very well, I shall put this before the leadership.» In fact, Stalin approved all our requests, and neither on this nor on any other occasion did he make criticisms of us like those of Mikoyan. However, he had poured out his poison against us to Stalin, too.

With all our economic delegations Mikoyan behaved like the hard-faced trader he was.

«We haven’t got it to give you. You are asking for big credits. We cannot help you to build the rice husking factory, cement factory, etc.,» he told us, although our requests for credits had been pared to the bone.

The modesty of our requests and our hesitation in making them were typical of the poor who know what suffering, sweat and toil are, and showed that we knew the colossal needs of the Soviet Union devastated by the war and its international obligations. As to the majority of the
factories and other projects, which they accorded us on credits and which we were building, the way to supplying them had been paved when Stalin was alive. In vain we explained to Mikoyan the deplorable situation of our war-devastated country, which did not inherit even the smallest factory from the bourgeoisie, and which had not a tractor to work with, so that it was not fair to treat us on the same footing as East Germany, Czechoslovakia, etc. Once I had a real quarrel with Mikoyan, because he saw fit to scold me over the fact that our cows gave 500 to 600 litres of milk a year.

«Why do you keep them?» he said. «Slaughter them!»

I said angrily:

«Our road will never be to slaughter our animals, but to feed them better and improve their breed. You ought to know that our people are still short of food, let alone the animals.»

«In our country one cow gives...» he boasted, mentioning so many thousand litres of milk.

«Excuse me,» I said, «you are an old cadre of the Soviet state and ought to know: immediately after the October Revolution, say in 1920 or 1924, did your cows give as much milk as they give today?»

«No,» he said. «Things were different then.»

«And this is the case with our country now,» I said. «We cannot reach your level within 4 or 5
years of liberation. The main thing is that we have set to work and we are eager for development and progress. We lack neither the desire nor the will. But we have to assess matters correctly.»

After the death of Stalin the anti-Albanian nuances in the attitude of the wheeler-dealer minister of the Soviet Union became a permanent line. However, now he was no longer on his own. His pencil, which always tended rather to mark crosses and write «no»-s to our modest requests, now found backing and support among the others. I have spoken above about the meeting in June 1953 with Malenkov, Beria, Mikoyan, and others in Moscow. Apart from other things, from the way they behaved towards us and how they handled the economic problems which we raised, I felt that now it was not only the body of the unforgettable Stalin that was missing in the Kremlin, but also his generous humane spirit, his attentive, friendly behaviour and his outstanding Marxist-Leninist thought.

I hadn’t spoken for more than a few minutes about the socio-economic situation in Albania, and the unprecedented mobilization of the working masses, the communists and cadres in work, when Malenkov interrupted me:

«Nu, tovarish Enver,»* he said, «you are presenting the situation in Albania to us as good, but

* Well, Comrade Enver (Russian in the original).
the facts are not so. Therefore listen to our ob-
servations.»

And they delivered a cart-load of criticism about our situation and work. We do not know from what source they had obtained these «data», but the fact is that things were exaggerated and inflated to an astonishing degree. Two of their «criticisms», in particular, have stuck in my mind. The first was about our state apparatus.

«Your apparatus,» the Soviet leadership had allegedly observed, «is so extended and inflated that not even Rockefeller and Morgan would dare to maintain it!»

And immediately after dubbing us Rockefellers and Morgans, in the next criticism they went to the other extreme:

«Your peasants are short of food, have no oxen, have no flocks, have not even a chicken (only they know how they had counted the chickens in Albania!), let alone other things of prime necessity.»

Rockefellers on the one hand, and poverty-stricken on the other! How was I to understand this logic?!

But the voice of Mikoyan did not allow me to ponder longer... As the man of figures he was, Mikoyan was speaking with percentages, numbers, comparisons and graphs. And he went on:

«Your economic situation is bad, your agri-
culture is in a miserable state, you have less livestock than before the war, you import 20 per cent of your bread grain, the collectivization is proceeding slowly, the peasantry is not convinced about the collectivization. You are exploiting the peasants. Financial matters are going badly with you. You do not know how to conduct trade,» the Armenian prattled.

Despite the respect which I had for the Soviet leaders, I could not remain silent.

«We are not feasting and dancing,» I replied. «We are toiling and sweating, but everything can’t be put right immediately. You have gone through this phase, too, don’t forget.»

«No,» he said, «we don’t forget, but we ourselves worked.»

«And we, too, are ourselves working,» I continued, «because there are no serfs in our country. We are not begging, but we are asking you for internationalist aid.»

My sharp replies made him soften his tone a little. Nevertheless he continued:

«Your plans are always unfulfilled. Let us take building. You are doing a colossal amount of building within your country. But these buildings are not being completed, in the first place, because you are short of labour power, and have not created suitable conditions, and second, because you are engaged in building many factories which are not necessary. You are doing all this building
without taking account of the real conditions of Albania. You are building a hydro-power station in Mat. We ask you: where are you going to use the electric power? We do not see where you will use it. You have no need for so much electric power.»

His reasoning seemed very astonishing to me, and I objected:

«When it is finished, the hydro-power station on the Mat River will provide about 25,000 kW. Does this seem a large and unnecessary amount to you?! Bear in mind, Comrade Mikoyan, not only that we need electric power just now, but also that the planned development of our economy in the future cannot be guaranteed without taking timely measures to ensure the necessary supply of electric power.»

«You are not exact in your planning. The hydro-power station is costing you an enormous amount and you won’t know what to do with the current,» he persisted. «Likewise you have planned to build unnecessary factories, like those for steel, timber-processing, paper, glass, linseed, bread, etc. Does Albania need all these factories? Why are you building the refinery? ¹ Have you enough oil or will you build this refinery to have it lie idle? Have a good look at these things and remove what is unnecessary. The question of agriculture is very

¹ This refers to the oil refinery which was going up in Cërrik at that time.
critical, therefore reduce your investments in industry and strengthen agriculture!»

I listened to him saying this and for a moment it seemed to me that I was facing not a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet deputy prime minister, but Kidric, Tito's envoy, who with his associates, seven to eight years earlier, had done everything possible to convince us to abandon industry and not set up any industrial project. «Agriculture, agriculture,» insisted the men of Belgrade. «Agriculture, only agriculture,» I was hearing them advise me now, in Moscow in 1953...

This whole meeting, which set out to examine our economic problems, continued in this spirit to the end.

A few days later, we sat down again with Mikoyan and one or two other Soviet officials and again «thrashed out» the economic problems. Seeing the unhelpful predisposition of the friends, we ourselves cancelled many of our requests. We restricted ourselves to the most essential things and, regardless of their «advice», I dug my toes in and managed to secure a small credit for industry, especially for the oil industry and the mines.

I shall never forget the moment when we met Malenkov and Mikoyan for the final talk.

«Acting on your advice,» I said, «I talked things over with my comrades and we decided that
the paper mill, as well as the glass, steel and bread factories, from our former requests, should be postponed until the coming five-year plan.»

«Pravilno!» said Malenkov, while Mikoyan hastened to put a cross on the list with his big pencil.

«We’ll postpone the building of the hydro-power station in Mat until 1957!»

«Pravilno!» repeated Malenkov and Mikoyan quickly crossed that out, too.

«We’ll remove the construction of the railway and the bitumen plant...»

«Pravilno, pravilno...»

And so this meeting came to an end.

«Come back again!» they told us when we were leaving. «Consider matters well and write to us!»

We thanked our friends for those things they had given us, and returned to Albania.

Although the least that could be said about our impressions from this trip to the Soviet Union is that they were not good, still we continued to preserve our feelings of friendship with and love for the great land of the Soviets, for the Homeland of Lenin and Stalin. Those things in their actions and gestures which had an unpleasant sound to us we kept strictly to ourselves, discussed them anxiously with one another, but in our hearts we did not want things there to take a wrong direction. We said to one another that the Soviet com-

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rades themselves had great economic difficulties in their own country, the loss of Stalin had undoubtedly confused them a little, it was not so easy for them to take over the work of leadership completely, and we ardently hoped that these would be transient manifestations that would be put right in time.

A few months later, however, we again experienced something unpleasant and not correct on their part.

On December 22, 1953, we sent the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union a long letter in which, after speaking about the measures we had taken for the strengthening of the people's power, our economic development, the improvement of life in the village and the progress of agriculture, we also presented a series of problems for consultation and some modest requests for aid and credits for our coming five-year plan. We had drafted this letter according to their instructions, based on an extensive study we had carried out over several months and our opinion was that its requests were very well founded and accurate.

The Soviet specialists and advisers who had come to our country in the framework of the aid and collaboration between our two countries were of the same opinion.

No more than five to six days after we sent our letter to Moscow, the reply of the Central
Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union arrived in Tirana. The whole letter consisted of 15 or 20 lines. «You have not presented the situation well», «you have viewed the situation hastily», «you have not gone into things deeply», «you have not taken the necessary measures», «prepare the plan better and write to us again». This was the entire content of those few lines signed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The disdainful and insulting tone of the new Soviet leadership could not fail to hurt us. We could not fail to ask in astonishment: «How can those people in Moscow know whether we have presented our problems rightly or wrongly, when it is we who live and work in Albania and not they?!»

However, the earlier meetings, especially with Mikoyan, had already taught us what should be done to make our letter pleasing to the Soviets: we cut out many of the requests we had presented, removed from the draft of the future plan some of the things we had envisaged and proposed, especially in the field of industry, and sent a second «edited», or more accurately, mutilated letter. We were not mistaken: they informed us they were awaiting us in Moscow to «consult with and help us».

We held the first meeting with the Soviet leaders on June 8, 1954. It was precisely that meeting at which Khrushchev did not want to speak
about our economic problems, since he was still «a bad Albanian», as he told us, but gave us a lecture about the role of the first secretary of the party and the prime minister.

Nevertheless, at the end of his lecture, Khrushchev also spoke about economic problems, in general, allegedly in the form of orientation and advice, especially about the line we should follow in our economic policy.

«In the development of your economy,» he said, «you must be careful with your calculations. Let us take oil, for example. Is it in your interest to invest so much for oil?!» he asked.

I understood immediately what he was getting at. Despite the «instructions» that they had given us previously, that we should give up prospecting for and extraction of oil in Albania, in the second letter which we sent them, we persisted in our opinions and asked them to assist us in this sector. Now, since he raised the matter, I took the opportunity to put forward our opinion once again.

«As you know from the letter which we sent you,» I said, «the government and the Central Committee of our Party, faced with a major economic and political problem, came to the conclusion that we must continue the extraction of and prospecting for oil at all costs, although this is a heavy burden and will continue to be a heavy burden on our economy for some time yet, if the flow of oil is not increased. We must continue to prospect for
and extract oil,» I continued, «because this is a substance of great strategic and economic importance for our country and our camp. However, the existing wells bored for prospecting and exploitation are utterly inadequate. The output of the existing wells is steadily falling off, and this not only causes considerable deficits in production and burdens our economy, but causes major fluctuations in the balance of our exports.»

«Are you certain that you have oil deposits?» asked Khrushchev.

«Allow me to tell you that the expedition of the geological studies for oil, led by Soviet specialists, which has been working since 1950, is optimistic about the presence of oil in many parts of our country, apart from the existing fields. However, the assessment of new reserves in both the existing fields and the new fields requires investments. We have made large expenditure in this sector, are building the refinery, have the most militant part of the working class there and have trained oil-worker cadres. In all this process,» I continued, «we cannot but honestly acknowledge many shortcomings and weaknesses on our part in the organization of the work. But we are struggling with all our might to eliminate them. However, here we are still in the dark about the reserves of oil. The reserves known up to now are minimal and they could run out within a period of 2 or 3 years if we do not intensify our prospecting.»
«That should not worry you,» interjected Khrushchev, «we have plenty of oil, we will supply you.»

«Yes,» I replied, «during the years 1948-1953 we were compelled to import refined oil and lubricating oils which cost millions of rubles. But you understand that this was and still is a very heavy burden for us and just think what funds will be freed if we find and use the oil which lies underground in our country.

«Apart from these very cogent reasons,» I went on, «there is another major reason for the necessity of the work with oil: in case of a threat to our country, if it is impossible in practice for our friends to supply us with fuel, we shall find ourselves without a drop of oil, and everything in our country will come to a standstill.

«Bearing in mind all these circumstances,» I said to Khrushchev, «we decided that we must continue the work for the extraction of and prospecting for oil. However, we need your aid for this. On the basis of the data from Soviet and Albanian experts, if we continue to extract oil and carry on our prospecting with the means we have at present, and in those places where we have those small reserves, we cannot go on for more than two or three years. After this period, we will again be facing very grave difficulties.

«Therefore, on the basis of this situation, we ask the Soviet government to study our request
about granting us a credit for the oil sector for the next three years. I would like to add that the machinery we have and will receive will be used by our own cadres, as well as a very small number of Soviet engineers.»

«Very well, very well,» said Khrushchev, «but the thing is that calculations must be made well, in detail and you must see whether it is worthwhile. I know that your oil is not in demand, it contains many impurities, especially bitumen and a high percentage of sulphur, and processing it makes it even less profitable. Let us give you an example of what has occurred to us with our oil at Baku. We have invested billions of rubles there. Beria always sought sums for investment for the development of oil in Baku from Joseph Vissarionovich, since Stalin, having worked in Baku in the past, knew that there was oil there. However, from the discoveries we have made today in other places of our homeland and from the analyses we have made, it turns out that the exploitation of the oil at Baku is not profitable.»

After giving me a good lecture with figures about the «profitability» and «non-profitability» of the extraction of oil, with the aim that I «should not make mistakes» like Stalin(!), Khrushchev came round to the point:

«Hence we must make our reckoning on economic questions very carefully, both in our country and in yours, and if you have profitable
sources of oil, fine, we give you credits. However, reckoning things this way, it turns out that it is more profitable for us to supply you from our oil...

«We must have regard for profitability in everything,» continued Khrushchev. «Let us take industry. I am of the same opinion as you that Albania should have its own industry. But what sort of industry? I think that you ought to develop the food industry, such as preserving and processing fish, fruit, vegetable oil, etc. You want to develop heavy industry, too. This should be looked at carefully,» he said and after mentioning that we could set up some engineering plant for repair work and spare parts, he added:

«As for the mineral-processing industry, for the production of metals, this is unprofitable for you. We have metals and we can supply you with what you want. If we give you one day’s production from our industry, your needs will be fulfilled for the whole year.»

«Likewise in agriculture. In your country,» he continued, «you should plant those crops which grow best and are more profitable. In this direction, too, we have made mistakes, as in Georgia, for example. We had taken the decision to plant bread grain there, to plant cotton in the Ukraine, etc. But calculations show that in Georgia we should grow citrus fruit, grapes, and other fruit, and should grow grain in the Ukraine. Now we
have taken other decisions and have eliminated those crops which don't grow well, both in Georgia and other places. Thus, in Albania, too, those crops which do best and yield the greatest production, such as cotton, citrus fruit, olives, etc., should be developed. In this way Albania will become a beautiful garden and we will fulfil each other's needs.»

«One of the main directions of the development of agriculture in our country,» I said, «is that of increasing bread grain production. Bread has always been and still is a great problem for us.»

«Don't worry about growing bread grain,» interjected Khrushchev immediately. «We shall supply you with all the wheat you want, because even one day's overfulfilment of the plan in the Soviet Union is sufficient for Albania to live on for three years. We are advancing rapidly in agriculture,» he continued. «Let me read you some of the statistics about the fulfilment of the plan of the spring sowing in our country: the planting has been fulfilled... per cent, ... hectares of land more than last year have been planted, ... million hectares above the plan...» and he went on to stuff us with figures, which he rattled off, one after the other, to give us the impression that we were dealing not with any sort of leader, but with one that had the situation at his fingertips.

As for his figures, we had no reason to doubt
their accuracy, therefore we were pleased and wished the Soviet Union the greatest possible progress. As to the opinions and «directions» which he gave us for the development of our economy, however, we could not agree with Khrushchev at all. I do not want to say that as early as this first official meeting with him, in June 1954, we managed to realize that we were facing the future chief of modern revisionism. No, we were to realize this later, but at this meeting we noticed that his ideas, both about oil and the orientation of industry and agriculture in our country, were not correct, did not respond to the needs of our country, and were not compatible with the basic principles of the construction of socialism in a country or with the teachings and experience of Lenin and Stalin. Therefore, we decided to oppose his ideas and defend our own views.

At this meeting, however, Khrushchev left no room for debate.

«I expressed these opinions so that you will bear them in mind,» he said in conclusion. «As to the discussion of the concrete questions you raised here in connection with the development of your economy, for our part, we have appointed a group of comrades headed by Mikoyan. Finally, we shall meet again and make the decision jointly.»

For several days on end we battled with Mikoyan, who now set to work with his pruning
shears. In order to reject our requests for the development of industry, which were modest enough, but on which we insisted, he and his comrades, as usual, repeated the same old refrain:

«Why do you need industry?! Don't you see the state of your countryside?»

Naturally we knew the situation in our countryside much better than they, knew the backwardness of our agriculture inherited from the past, and precisely because we knew these things well, we had always devoted special attention to the progress of agriculture and to the raising of the standard of living in the countryside. We had made and were making very big investments for our possibilities in land improvement, irrigation, opening up new land, etc.; we were supplying the peasantry with selected seeds and farming machinery, had set up a number of state farms, had progressed well in the collectivization, had continually taken measures to facilitate and encourage the increase of agricultural production and the raising of the standard of living in the village, etc. But you can’t achieve everything overnight. Moreover, we were well aware of the Marxist-Leninist truth, and we felt it in our daily practice, that agriculture could never advance without the development of industry, without the creation and strengthening of those basic branches which would favour the harmonious development of the whole of our people’s economy. Therefore, in these meet-
ings with the Soviet leaders we stuck to our opinions and persisted in our requests.

«Despite all the progress it has made,» we told them among other things, «today our industry produces only a limited range of products and is quite unable to fulfil the needs of the working people. In many cases, too, securing our products depends on the delivery of many goods from abroad, such as fuel, steel, rolled steel, tyres, chemicals, chemical fertilizers, spare parts, instruments, and many other things.

«Hence, our country is heavily dependent on imports. Our industry still produces very little, and being remote from friendly countries, frequently production is suspended in whole branches of industry because of the lack of some raw material, supplementary material or instrument. Our state has never possessed even the smallest reserve in any kind of material — from bread to pencils. It is necessary for us to import not only the main goods, like grain, fuel, etc., but also every kind of machinery and equipment, instruments, spare parts, textiles, footwear, thread, needles, nails, glass, rope, string, sacks, pencils, paper, razor blades, matches, medicaments, etc.

«Such a grave situation, comrades,» we went on, «does not make us pessimistic, but this is the reality. We have to strive might and main to overcome the difficulties in order to improve the situation. But how to achieve this?
«The Central Committee of the Party and our Government think that the existing situation cannot be altered, except by developing industry along with agriculture, the industry which, step by step, will relieve us of that great burden of imports, which we are obliged to cope with at present,» we told them.

In the end Mikoyan and his group gave way. «All right,» he said, «we shall refer those things on which we have not reached agreement to the leadership and decide on them jointly at the final meeting.»

At the final meeting of this visit, which was held two or three days before we left for Albania, Khrushchev’s behaviour was more friendly and more open. After our insistence on those things we were seeking (undoubtedly Mikoyan had informed him of the debates we had had), Khrushchev showed himself «more generous», repeated several times, «We will assist little Albania», and agreed that some of our requests for credits and aid would be fulfilled.

At this meeting he spoke well about our Party, the Central Committee and me, and, as usual, was unsparing in his «boastful promises». We were soon to understand why he acted like that: it was still the beginning of the elevation of him and his group, and for this he needed popularity, good opinion, the idea within the Soviet Union and abroad that we had to do with a jolly good fellow,
a warm-hearted, skilful and wise leader, who knows how to put up opposition, but can also back down, who is not tight-fisted, but prudent and a consummate accountant.

Thus, it was the time when Khrushchev was «making investments» in favour of his secret action, and to this end, according to the occasion, he had to appear «generous», «friendly» and «humane». However, behind this fine, «friendly» façade, the guard of the Mikoyans and other functionaries of commerce was extremely active, and both with us and with others, they behaved like real hucksters in the talks over economic problems. They were Khrushchev’s men who, with his knowledge and on his instructions, employed all kinds of pressure and trickery during «working meetings» and «the concrete examination of matters» to prune our requests and to «smooth» matters over in such a way that when we finally met Khrushchev, all that remained for him to do was to smile, flatter and propose toasts.

Once we had a bitter wrangle with Mikoyan in connection with granting us a credit for mass consumer goods. There is no need here to dwell on what a grave situation we had during those years for such goods, or on the urgent needs which our country had in this direction. The Soviet leadership was aware of the situation, but, in support of our request for the credit I mentioned, we had written it a letter in which we gave a brief outline
of how we fulfilled the needs of the population. However, before beginning the examination of our request, Mikoyan levelled the following charge against us:

«You are using up the credits we have granted you for the development of the economy in other sectors. You buy mass consumer goods with them.»

I replied: «We have had and still have very great needs for consumer goods, but I am not aware of what you charge us with. We have never permitted the credits for the development of industry or agriculture to be used to purchase commodities.»

«Yes, you have!» repeated Mikoyan. «You have used up... million rubles,» and he mentioned a figure which I don’t remember precisely, but which amounted to more than ten million.

«I’m hearing this for the first time,» I said, «nevertheless, we shall look into the matter.»

«I shall convince you!» said Mikoyan in a stern and angry tone and ordered one of the nearby functionaries to bring in the documents. A little later he came in, looking pale, and laid the accounts before Mikoyan.

«There is no violation,» he said. «The Albanian side has bought the goods you mentioned with the credit which our side accorded it precisely for consumer goods.»

Mikoyan, in a tight spot, muttered something
between his teeth, and then, in connection with our request for a new credit for the purchase of consumer goods, he replied:

«We can no longer give you such credits, because we make deals over these things: you give us something, we give you something in return.»

«I am sorry that you present the question in this way, when you are well aware that our country is in difficulties and when the Italian, Yugoslav and Greek enemies have us encircled and are plotting against us,» I replied. «What else do you want us to give you? We supply you and the countries of people's democracy with the chrome, oil and copper we extract. Do you expect us to give you the bread from the mouths of our people, who still have insufficient food? I do not consider your reasoning in order,» I told the Armenian, «and I ask you to re-examine the matter.»

They did re-examine it, but they accepted our requests after making big cuts. They gave us some limited credits, but they gave us arrogant criticism wholesale with lashings of «advice».

All these stands, and others like these, in our relations with them, continued up to the time of the Meeting of the 81 parties, which was held in Moscow in November 1960.

During this time we had many bilateral meetings with the Soviet leaders, at which we discussed economic problems with them and sought some aid and credits, and we also had many con-
tacts with them in the meetings, talks and con-
sultations which were organized in the frame-
work of the Council of Mutual Economic Aid.

The way in which these meetings were organ-
ized and our friends behaved towards us, towards
the problems we raised and the difficulties we
had, more and more impelled us to ask ourselves:
are we dealing with Marxist-Leninists or huck-
sters? Ulbricht, Novotny, Ochab, Dej, Kadar, Go-
mulka, Cyrankeiwicz, Zhivkov, and the others,
were at one another’s throats; each of them com-
plained that he was in dire straits; they all called
for «more aid» from their friends, because they
had «pressure from below»; they tried to elbow
one another out, presented all kinds of «argu-
ments» and figures; they tried to dodge their obli-
gations and to grab as much as possible at the ex-
 pense of others. Meanwhile Khrushchev or his
envoys would get up, deliver lectures on the «so-
cialist division of labour», support one or the other,
according to their own interests in a given situa-
tion, and demand «unity» and «understanding» in
the «socialist family». And in all this wrangling
Albania went almost unmentioned, as if it did not
exist for them.

The talks and consultations went on for two,
three or four days on end, whole dossiers were
filled with speeches, requests, decisions, balances,
but socialist Albania was treated with disdain by
the others as if we were a nuisance. We were well
aware of the situation in our country, were conscious that our economic potential was nowhere near that of the other countries; we knew also that these countries had their own big problems and difficulties, but these should never have served as a reason for them to underrate and ignore us. With great efforts, after many meetings and talks, we managed occasionally to squeeze some aid or credit out of them. We thanked them whole-heartedly for what they gave us, thanked the fraternal peoples, first of all, and for our part, not only did we fully repay the credits on time, but with what we had, we honestly fulfilled every other obligation of ours towards our friends. It was precisely sincerity, the genuine internationalist spirit, that was lacking amongst them. When it came to practical fulfilment of their commitments to provide aid for our country, each of them would make excuses:

«We have shortages and needs ourselves,» said Ulbricht, «we have pressure from Federal Germany, therefore we are unable to help Albania.»

«The counter-revolution caused us damage,» was Kadar’s justification. «We cannot fulfil our commitment about aid.»

All of them, one after the other, acted in this way. And in the end the «solution» was found:

«The Council of Mutual Economic Aid recommends to the Albanian comrades that the prob-
lems raised by them here should be solved with
the Soviet government through bilateral meet-
ings.»

Among many such meetings of the Comecon
countries, the one that was held in Moscow in
June 1956 has stuck in my mind. Now Khrush-
chev was going headlong down his road of be-
trayal, but the others, too, were galloping after
him. The 20th Congress of the CPSU, about which
I shall speak later, was having its effect. Lack of
unity, division and contradictions are the natural
outcome and concomitants of revisionism.

This was apparent at this meeting, 3 or 4
months after the 20th Congress.

Ochab, who had become first secretary of
the Polish United Workers’ Party, got up and de-
clared:

«We have not fulfilled the obligations with
which we have been charged for coal and are not
going to do so. We cannot fulfil the plan, its targets
are set too high and must be reduced. The coal
workers live badly, they work to exhaustion.»

As soon as he finished, Gerö, Ulbricht and
Dej got up, one after the other, and levelled every
kind of charge against the Poles. The atmosphere
was very heated.

«If you want coking coal, invest in Poland,»
replied Ochab. «We must improve the standard of
living. Things have reached such a state that the
Polish workers are about to go on strike and abandon the mines...»

«Where should we invest first?!» replied the others. «In the steel plants of the Soviet Union or in your coal mines?!»

«We must examine these things,» said Khrushchev, trying to cool the tempers. «As for the question of workers, if you Poles have insufficient, or those you have walk out, we can bring workers from other countries.»

At this Ochab jumped up.

«It is not fair,» he shouted. «You must help us. We are not going back to Poland without settling this matter. Either reduce the plan or increase the investments...»

«Once taken, the decisions must be carried out,» interposed Dej.

«The decisions are not being carried out,» said Gerö, adding fuel to the flames. «We have several factories in which we have been told to produce arms and special equipment, but no one is buying the products from us.»

«They don't take them from us, either,» said Ochab, jumping up again. «What are we to do with them?!»

«Let us not speak here like factory managers,» said Khrushchev to Ochab. «Things can't be discussed in this way. You must look at the profitability. We, too, have changed direction in many plants. For example,» continued Khrushchev,
we have turned some arms plants into plants producing water pumps. I have some suggestions about these problems,» continued Khrushchev, and he began to bring out those «gems» which he had on the tip of his tongue:

«In regard to a number of special products of industry,» he said among other things, «we must do as Hitler did. At that time Germany was alone and he produced all those things. We must study this experience and we, too, must set up joint enterprises for special products, for example, weapons.»

We could not believe our ears! Could it be true that the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union wanted to learn from the experience of Hitler and even recommended it to others?! But this is what things were coming to. The others listened and nodded approval.

«You must provide us with designs,» said Ochab.

«You don’t deserve to get them,» shouted Khrushchev angrily, «because the West steals them from you. We gave you the patent of an aircraft and the capitalists stole it from you.»

«That occurred,» admitted Ochab, and pulled in his horns a little.

«We gave you the secret report of the 20th Congress and you printed it and sold it at 20 zloty a copy. You don’t know how to keep secrets.»
«Right!» whispered Ochab, and drew in his horns even further.

«We have given you another four top secret documents and they have flown from you,» added Bulganin, numbering them off one by one to his face.

«Yes,» said Ochab, and now his voice could hardly be heard. «Someone stole them from us and fled to the West.»

«The situation in Poland is not good,» continued Khrushchev. «You are following an opportunist policy towards the Soviet Union and the countries of people’s democracy, let alone within your own country.»

«In the context of collaboration,» interjected Ulbricht, «we must collaborate with all, especially with the social-democrats.»

For a moment Khrushchev was at a loss for words. «Collaboration with all», rehabilitations, a gentle policy towards enemies, were his ideas, the continuation of his opportunist and pacifist policy, the very policy which he was following in the Soviet Union. The others were not lagging behind, indeed, some of them were trying to outstrip him.

«Agreed, collaboration,» shouted Khrushchev, «but not to rise against the Soviet Union and our camp. This is what is happening in Poland.» He turned to Ochab and Cyranckiewicz, who during the whole time had sat smoking French
Gauloises, without saying a single word. «You must improve the situation. You must build up the people's trust in you.»

«We have released all the imprisoned social-democrats,» said Ochab.

«You should have kept some of them,» said Saburov ironically. «To whom are we going to drink the toast today, to the social-democrats?!»

Khrushchev provided the answer:

«Let us drink to collaboration!»

It was quite obvious that things in the camp were taking the wrong road. The «demons» which Khrushchev released from the bottle were stirring and poking out their tongues even at their liberator. He tried to manoeuvre, to get them on side, to set the others on to one (this time Ochab was in the dock), and then, when he saw that the quarrel was not dying down, he poured out threats and warnings to all. And as the inveterate trickster he was, he knew how to find the best means of pressure. This time he used the weapon of bread. One of the Soviet chinovniki* of Comecon reported briefly on the state of agriculture in the camp and sounded the alarm about the deficits in bread grain.

Khrushchev got up at once and exploited the opportunity:

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* bureaucratic functionaries of Czarist Russia (Russian in the original).
«Bread is a vital problem,» he said in a grave tone, in which both the pressure and the threat were clear. «We have given you what we had to give. Now we have no more to give you. Therefore, think well about bread, there is no other way...»

After continuing for several minutes to wave the whip of bread, suddenly his face brightened and he hopped with great pleasure to his favourite theme — maize! I cannot remember any of the meetings I have had with him, even those purely for political and ideological problems, in which Khrushchev did not eulogize the plant so dear to his heart.

«In recent years,» he said, «we have given importance to maize and have achieved marvellous results. With maize,» he continued, «we solved the problem of meat, milk and butter.»

«Without meat, milk and butter there is no socialism,» put in Mikoyan to sweeten up his «chief».

«No, there is not!» replied Khrushchev and continued, «Every leader must give importance to maize! Look, I took my native village under my patronage, and allow me to report to you the results: I found 60 pigs in the first year, increased them to 250 two years ago, and now there are 600 of them.»

And after this «colossal» report, imagine how befitting this was in the mouth of the number one
leader of the Soviet Union, he hurled criticism at all of them — Ulbricht, Hegedüs, Cyrankiewicz in turn.

«As to Albania,» he added, «I have nothing to say because I do not know it.»

I seized the opportunity and interjected:

«Come for a visit and get to know it.»

«I can’t give you an answer now, we shall meet separately,» he said, and pressed on with his lecture, afraid that the inspiration might escape him.

He spun out the problem at great length, brought up examples, made criticisms, and finally added:

«In regard to Bulgaria and Albania, which are countries with a large peasantry, but especially about Albania, we must think somewhat more deeply and help them.»

As usual, the Council decided that we should solve the problems we raised there with the Soviets. A few days later we met Khrushchev and talked for about an hour.

«First of all,» I said, «we would like you to visit Albania. Your visit will have great importance for enhancing the authority and prestige of our country.»

«I, too, would like to come,» he told me, «but there are certain difficulties. How far is Albania from Moscow?»

He deserved to be told, «Just another twenty
minutes beyond Belgrade,» since he had become accustomed to that line long ago, but I bit my tongue. I told him that on a TU-104 the flight from Moscow to Tirana would take about 3 hours, and added:

«Let us establish this line.»

«But the TU-104 has many seats. Would there be enough passengers to fill it?!» he asked me, quick to catch at the «profitability».

«Our comrades and yours are always travelling from Moscow to Tirana and back and there is no reason for the aircraft to travel empty,» I said.

«I would like to come,» he repeated to excuse himself. «Indeed I told Tito that I wanted to visit Albania, but first I must take a holiday.»

«You can have your holiday in our country,» I said. «We have very fine beaches, as well as mountains.»

«Oh, if I come I won’t be able to rest!» he said to close this question.

There was no reason for me to persist any further.

«As you wish,» I said, and went on into economic matters. I gave him a brief outline of the situation and presented some of the problems, which were causing us most concern.

«The problem is,» said Khrushchev, «that from now on we must think how to find sources of income so that Albania can advance. This is how the friends, also, should look at this prob-
lem. The question of Albania has great importance," he continued, "because by means of your country, we want to attract the attention of Turkey, Greece and Italy, that is, to have them take you as an example. Now this matter must be well thought out and we must find the proper ways."

He was silent for a moment, apparently in order to find one of these roads, and I thought that he would come up with maize. But I was wrong. «Do you grow cotton?» he asked me. «What area do you employ for this crop? What yield do you get?»

I replied to his questions.

«That is nothing,» he said to me, and went on: «We think that you should develop the cotton crop, and in such a way that it will become a great asset, because it brings in a handsome income for you and our friends, for the countries of people's democracy which do not have cotton. Hence, you have great possibilities to profit from cotton. This is the first thing,» he said, and raised one finger.

«Secondly,» he continued, «the question of sheep raising is a problem for you,» and he asked me about the number of sheep, the yield of wool, milk, meat, etc. After my replies he continued:

«Sheep must become another great asset for you. You must breed fine-woolled sheep. You have pastures and the sheep can be developed. Therefore you must find the most suitable breed,
commence artificial insemination on a broad scale, and increase them.»

After giving us his «second road» of development, Khrushchev began on the «third road» that would lead us to salvation. This had to do with fish.

«Fish,» he said, «is another great asset for you. In the Scandinavian countries, in Norway, for example, they have created such a great wealth with fish, that not only do the people eat plenty of it, but they also export large quantities. They catch fish not only in their territorial waters, but also in the open seas. This is what you must do, too,» instructed Khrushchev, «so that fish becomes a great asset for Albania. You must do these things without fail, and we shall help you, and send you specialists, a fishing fleet, etc.»

Since the first three «roads» were leaving my mind boggling, all curiosity I awaited a «fourth road» and he did not fail to make this clear to me also.

«The question of citrus fruit is important for you,» he said. «They, too, should become a great asset for you, because lemons, grape fruit, oranges, etc., are in great demand.»

These were his instructions for the «construction of socialism» in Albania! Finally he added:

«Thought must be given to other assets, too, for instance, to minerals, but the main ones are those I mentioned.
«We will assist you to develop cotton, fishing, citrus fruit and sheep. Both you and we must study these things,» he concluded, «and we are convinced that in this way Albania will quickly become an example for Greece, Turkey and Italy.»

It was useless to enter into discussion about the «gems» of wisdom he presented to us. I thanked him for his «advice» and we parted.

Now everything was becoming more clear. The Council of Mutual Economic Aid recommends that we solve the economic problems with Khrushchev. Khrushchev recommends that we solve them with cotton, sheep and with... «the miracle of fish».

All these stands and actions, seen in the complexity of political, ideological, military and other problems, were making us more than ever convinced that in our camp, first of all in the Soviet Union, things were on the decline. Other events were to follow and we, living through them intensively, would learn and would prepare ourselves more for the coming battles.