

**Letter from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to
the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, Władysław Gomułka**

March 28, 1961

To the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party
Comrade Władysław Gomułka.

The CC of the CPSU considers it essential to inform you about the activities of one of the members of the Warsaw Treaty – the government of the People's Republic of Albania – which are contrary to the principles of the Warsaw Treaty and which undermine the foundations of Albania's friendship and cooperation with other socialist countries.

These activities are especially unacceptable at the time when the world socialist system has entered into a decisive stage of peaceful coexistence with capitalism and when grand tasks, which will decide the fate of the entire mankind, lie ahead of us. Currently, when new, great possibilities of strengthening the position of socialism on the world stage have emerged, the fraternal parties of the socialist countries see their task in exploiting these new possibilities fully and as best as they can in the interests of peace and socialism. The consistent execution of the Leninist policy of peaceful coexistence – a daily necessity – allows communists all over the world to unify the masses in the name of the struggle to resolve the most important issues of the modern age.

Experience has shown that the socialist countries are capable and more successful at achieving better results in the struggle for strengthening peace and national security if they conduct a more unified policy on the international stage and if they are guided more consistently by the principles worked out jointly by all the fraternal countries. If any country of the socialist camp diverges from our joint policy, this will undoubtedly weaken our position and damage our struggle for peace and socialism.

The idea of unity and close cooperation lies at the basis of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and constitutes a significant source of our successes in the international arena. The spirit of friendship, equality, and mutual understanding is being consistently developed and strengthened internally within the Warsaw Treaty

Organization. These characteristics are typical of relations between socialist countries that are bound to each other not only by their obligatory alliances, but also by something greater – that is, common interests and goals in the struggle for socialism and communism, the unshakable principles of Marxism-Leninism, and proletarian internationalism.

Our relations with the People's Republic of Albania were based and conducted on these principles. The Soviet Union, along with the other socialist countries, have provided Albania with direct¹ assistance to develop its economy and culture, to raise the standard of living of the working masses, to strengthen its capability for national defense, and to cement the position of Albania's foreign policy on the international stage. During the years of people's government in Albania, the Soviet Union provided it with credits, direct economic aid, and other support in the amount of over 2 billion rubles. Over three thousand Soviet specialists worked in Albania between 1951 and 1960. Albania was provided with great assistance in training its national personnel and in creating its own people's intelligentsia.

The governments of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries supported, and will continue to constantly support, Albania in the area of foreign policy, which will help consolidate its position in the international arena. Thanks to the efforts of the Soviet Union, Albania had the opportunity to participate in the Paris Peace Conference in 1947. At this conference, the Soviet delegation actively defended the rights of Albania to receive reparations from Germany and Italy. The Soviet Union decisively opposed the claims of the Greek reactionaries to the southern parts of Albanian territory on several occasions. The socialist countries actively fought for Albania's admission to the UN and other international organizations.

The People's Republic of Albania became a member of the Warsaw Treaty Organization thanks to the Soviet government and the CC of the CPSU. This was especially important for Albania's national security and the strengthening of its foreign policy. Throughout its history, the Albanian state has never received such a dependable guarantee of its territorial integrity and national security as it did within the framework of the family of fraternal socialist nations, in the equal alliance of the Warsaw Treaty countries.

In the interest of securing the defense of Albania and all Warsaw Treaty

¹ Transl. Note: literally, "non-refundable" – i.e., the assistance was not in the form of loans and did not need to be repaid.

states, the Soviet Union, as the greatest socialist nation, provided Albania with significant military aid. It suffices to say that in the postwar period, the Soviet Union provided Albania with weapons and military technical equipment free of charge in the amount of 1 billion rubles, not including military supplies that were given to Albania at a discount price. The Soviet government, at the request of the government of the People's Republic of Albania, has also been training Albania's military personnel.

We have been doing and will continue to do everything in our power so that fraternal, socialist Albania continues to flourish and get stronger. Even the Albanian leaders themselves spoke on several occasions about the importance of the Soviet Union's huge assistance for the construction of socialism in Albania. "The Albanian nation owes its freedom and national independence, a happy life today and a bright future," Comrade Hoxha² said at the XXI Congress of the CPSU, "to a great degree to the fraternal Soviet nation and the beloved Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They have given the Albanian nation assistance and support in all of this from the bottom of their hearts."

Comrade Shehu³ also spoke about the importance of the Soviet-Albanian friendship during the visit of the Soviet party and governmental delegation in Albania in May 1959: "The visit of the Soviet delegation headed by Comrade Khrushchev – loyal son of the Soviet nation, a distinguished leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet government, a distinguished activist and leader of the international communist and workers' movement, a tireless fighter for world peace, a great friend of our nation who loves our country like his own – will be the most significant event in the history of our country."

For the past several years, including during our summit talks in 1957 and 1959, the Albanian leaders were in full agreement with the views of the CC of the CPSU and the Soviet government on all foreign policy issues and those of the world communist movement. They expressed on several occasions their loyalty to the Warsaw Treaty Organization, their readiness to carry out all obligations and duties stemming from this treaty. They promised to contribute to the cause of peace and international security, and to defend the interests of the entire socialist camp.

² Transl. Note: Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Albanian Workers' Party.

³ Transl. Note: Mehmet Shehu, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Albania and Albania's Prime Minister.

The facts demonstrate, however, that the Albanian leaders, despite their declarations, have embarked on the path of violating their duties as an ally, have begun to move away from our joint foreign policy line, and have assumed an unfriendly position toward the Soviet Union. The political and practical activities of the Albanian leaders in the recent past clearly prove that they have chosen a course that is contrary to the common interests of socialist countries and the Leninist policy of peaceful coexistence.

Recently, and especially since the Moscow Conference of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties in 1960, the Albanian leadership has sought to pursue a separatist line in foreign policy and has been spreading a war panic. The government of Albania has not only failed to provide active support for the concrete proposals of the socialist countries regarding Balkan cooperation and the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans and the Adriatic, but, in fact, has been obstructing the realization of these proposals through some of its own actions. At a working meeting of representatives from the socialist countries during the XV Session of the UN General Assembly, the Albanian delegate came out against the Polish draft resolution, accepted by all the representatives of the socialist countries, for the creation of conditions conducive to reaching an agreement on complete and universal disarmament. The Albanian delegate stated that he would not vote in favor of this resolution at the UN.

In a speech to a session of the People's Assembly in October 1960, Comrade Shehu publicly criticized the aforementioned proposal. In the same speech, and contrary to the established practice of consultation on issues between the socialist countries, he opposed the Bulgarian comrades' proposal for regional disarmament in the Balkans.

In a conversation with a representative of the Unified Command of the Warsaw Treaty in Albania, the Albanian Defense Minister, Comrade [Bequir] Baluku, spoke in an unfriendly manner about the initiatives in Soviet foreign policy with regard to the neutral states, along with the initiative for a peace treaty with Germany, an initiative approved by all the Warsaw Treaty member-states. He sought to call into question the ability of the Soviet Union to fend off the aggressive forces of imperialism.

At the IV Congress of the AWP [Albanian Workers' Party], there were many unskillfully concealed attacks in the statements of Comrades Hoxha and Shehu, as

well as in the speeches of the other Albanian leaders, against the general foreign policy line of the socialist countries (expressed in the Statement of the Moscow Conference of communist parties from November 1960).

They have sought to employ all possible means to create the impression among the Albanian nation that Albania has been allegedly threatened with a direct military attack. It was exactly with this intention that Comrade Hoxha stated, from the tribunes of the IV Congress of the AWP in February 1961, that Albania “was attacked” by Yugoslavia and Greece with the support of the 6th American Fleet some time ago. This statement was all the more clumsy since soon after this, the Albanian leaders had to actually straighten it out by explaining to the diplomats of the socialist countries that the reference in Hoxha’s statement was not to “an attack” but to “a threat of attack.” The delegates to the congress and the Albanian nation, one should note, were not informed about this correction.

If such an attack, or at least the threat of an attack, in fact existed, then why did the Albanian government keep silent for so long, and why did it not deem it necessary to inform the other Warsaw Treaty member-states about this incident in a timely manner, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Treaty? Why did the Albanian government, in revealing this fact, not consult with other states as stipulated in Article 4 of the Treaty?

Only after a series of questions from the diplomats of the Treaty’s member-states, as well as from representatives of the Unified Command, did the government of Albania provide them with delayed “explanations.” And in what sort of situation did the Albanian government put its own Warsaw Treaty allies by behaving in such a fashion?

The Treaty’s member-states, which have a collective responsibility for the security of each of our countries and the maintenance of peace in Europe, have the right to demand from the Albanian government the unconditional execution of its duties resulting from their membership in the Warsaw Treaty.

Also, one cannot deem as normal such a circumstance in which the leadership of the Albanian army, and most of all Defense Minister Comrade Baluku, actually ignores the Unified Command’s representative, General Andreeyev; avoids meetings with him, and stops informing him via the Unified Command’s liaison office about serious undertakings by the Albanian army. Such actions do not

contribute to the strengthening of the combat community of the Unified Armed Forces.

At the initiative of the Soviet Union and in keeping with the wishes of the government of the People's Republic of Albania, a naval base was established in Albania, which is an important strategic point for the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The Soviet government dispatched to Albania's Gulf of Vlorë twelve submarines, two aircraft carriers, twelve surface ships, and 24 support ships, and it also provided a large amount of arms, equipment, and materiel. In addition to the ships in Albania, there are also Soviet military officials and specialists who constitute a majority of the navy battleships' crew and who have provided aid and assistance to the Albanian leadership in constructing their navy and in training Albanian military specialists. On several occasions, even the Albanian leaders themselves have confirmed the great importance of this base to Albania's national security.

Nevertheless, the Albanian military leadership has created an unbearable atmosphere for the Soviet military officials and specialists at the navy base, an atmosphere that contradicts the interests of military cooperation between two fraternal nations. Albanian bureaucrats have voiced unfriendly attitudes regarding Soviet-Albanian relations and Soviet foreign policy in their conversations with Soviet people and have also obstructed the conduct of combat exercises by the crews of navy ships stationed in the Gulf of Vlorë.

Based on an oral order of Albania's minister of defense, the submarines with mixed Soviet-Albanian crews were in fact unilaterally removed from Soviet command. At the beginning of November 1960, the Albanian naval fleet and coastal artillery, clandestinely and without the knowledge of the Soviet command, were put into a state of combat readiness. Officers of the fleet were recalled from vacation, and the entire fleet was armed with personal weapons. On the island of Sazan, three torpedo boats were armed with combat torpedoes and two anti-submarine ships were supplied with depth charges. In the Gulf of Pasha Liman, where submarines are stationed, additional Albanian armed sentries were posted to protect the fuel depots, repair shops, and the port's pier. The sentries received instructions not to permit Soviet military officials, who had previously had free access to these military depots, to enter.

On November 10, 1960, when the commander of the brigade of Soviet submarines – Rear Admiral Yegorov – gave orders to disperse the submarines in the

face of a strong storm, a platoon of Albanian guards, armed with full ammunition, appeared and demonstratively spread out on the pier. Several days later, Albanian Rear Admiral Abdi Mati, in a conversation with the Soviet Rear Admiral Zagrebin, stated in a vulgar and threatening manner that not a single submarine would leave Pasha Liman to the shallow waters at Vlorë without his, Abdi Mati's, permission. During the planning of combat training, he also prohibited two submarines from going to sea with Soviet crews for the purpose of combat training. He demanded that the submarines go to sea one at a time and mandatorily with Albanian crews.

On November 15, 1960, the Albanian fleet's duty officer, Captain Second Rank Pali Zarapuli, tried to obstruct the loading of torpedoes onto the submarine and, in the presence of Soviet officers and sailors, offended the submarine commander – Bogdanov – without hesitating even to use physical force.

All of these and other similar facts can lead to outright dangerous consequences. It is impossible to ignore the fact that at a military facility, where people are armed, every such case could have a fatal result.

The Albanian fleet officers, and especially the battleship commanders, began to ignore the recommendations and assistance of the Soviet military specialists about improving the level of combat training of the naval forces. The Albanians seriously violated the rules and regulations for operating the battleships and other military equipment, and they did so against the recommendations of our military specialists. On September 28, 1960, a submarine commander – an Albanian officer named Payani – did not follow the recommendations of Soviet training officer Chernyshev while at sea; this act could have ended in the demise of the ship and its entire crew. On February 3, 1961, the Albanian crew of a free-floating dock began to fill the dock with water before the designated time in order to take Submarine S-360 to sea at a time when there was no Soviet crew or commander. Only thanks to immediate steps taken by the Soviet command was it possible to avoid a serious catastrophe. One could bring up other similar instances, as well.

The Albanian leaders have been informed on several occasions about the outright abnormal situation at the military base in Vlorë. However, they have not taken any steps to date to improve the situation.

Given these circumstances, the Soviet government would be forced to withdraw its ships from Albanian waters. However, taking into account our

common interests in defending all Warsaw Treaty member-states and Albania itself, [the Soviet government] considers it possible to leave the ships and vessels at the naval base in the Gulf of Vlorë on the condition that all the warships and the units serving them will consist of exclusively Soviet personnel. Such a move would undoubtedly contribute to the normalization of the situation and increase the combat ability of the warships based in the Gulf of Vlorë, a matter of great significance to all the Warsaw Treaty member-states.

These facts attest that Albania is conducting hostile propaganda against the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, which is contrary to the basic norms for relations between the fraternal countries. Accusations and fabrications that the Soviet Union allegedly supports plans for violating Albania's territorial integrity, taken from the Greek reactionary press, have been spread among the people of Albania. This awful fabrication was spread clearly with a calculation to undermine the Albanian people's feeling of deep trust toward the Soviet Union's international politics.

On March 12, in order to counter the Greek reactionaries, the *Pravda* daily published an article entitled "Greece in the Claws of NATO." It is interesting to note that the daily *Zeri i Popullit*, the organ of the CC AWP, republished this article while omitting exactly the part that decisively condemned the claims of Greek reactionary elements to Albania's territory and stressed that the borders of People's Albania are guaranteed by the full might of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Probably there are people in Albania who do not care whether the Albanian nation knows the truth regarding this matter.

Rumors are spreading in Albania that the Soviet Union allegedly denied Albania grain assistance at a difficult time for it. It is not considered necessary, however, to tell the Albanian nation the truth: that the Soviet Union has supplied Albania with grain and other foodstuffs every year, and that even in 1960, an adverse year for us, we not only fulfilled our commitments for grain deliveries to Albania, but even provided an additional 30 thousand tons of grain.

As you know, during the visit of a Soviet party and government delegation in 1959, the Albanian government turned to us with a request for assistance to realize their plans for expanding Albania's grape and citrus plantations. In agreeing to this request of the Albanian leadership, N. S. Khrushchev stated that the Soviet Union would help the Albanian nation in all areas so that Albania could fully exploit its

climate and natural conditions. At the time, the Albanian leaders emphasized on several occasions the great significance of this move for the development of their country. Now, one comes across people in Albania who are even trying to use this step of the Soviet Union against it. In January 1961, during a party conference in the town of Durres, Comrade Kapo shamelessly asserted that this proposal was allegedly made in order to make Albania dependent on Soviet grain.

Apparently with the goal of making clear that no Albanian citizen would doubt that their leaders have changed their attitude toward the Soviet Union, instructions were given not to raise Soviet flags at the military base in Vlorë.

All of these unworthy actions of the Albanian leadership created unbearable conditions for the Soviet citizens working in Albania. The Soviet workers have in fact been isolated and placed under observation. At the end of January 1961, a group of Soviet specialists working in the ministries of coal and geology were submitted to a humiliating inspection, almost a search. They were asked to return their keys to the workshops and safes. This was done in a brutally calculated manner in the presence of many Albanian workers.

At the Main Geological Board, in order to conduct a secret inspection while the Soviet specialists were absent, seals and locks were broken and drawers in the tables and cabinets were opened. For example, on the night of the 20th to the 21st, deputy director of the company Salia forced open the lock to the working room of the Soviet geologist Slautin and conducted an inspection of the things lying on his table and in his cabinet. On February 28, they opened the sealed room of the Soviet specialist Michalev. At the beginning of February this year, the Albanian government in fact stopped providing the Soviet specialists with reports regarding mining and exploration, thus making their normal work impossible.

On March 22, the Albanian police abusively treated five female Soviet citizens – the wives of brigade officers on the submarines. They demonstratively kicked them off a bus in the presence of a group of Albanian citizens and stated that they had no right to leave the grounds of the base without their passports.

One would have hoped that that the Albanian leaders would have drawn the proper conclusions from the constructive criticism to which they were submitted at the Moscow Conference of the communist parties in November 1960, and that they would have returned to the path of friendship and cooperation with the fraternal

parties. Instead, they have gone further down the path of worsening relations with the CPSU and exacerbating Albania's relations with the Soviet Union.

The leaders of the AWP incorrectly informed the Albanian communists and the entire Albanian nation about the stance of the AWP delegation at the Moscow Conference. In their statements, contrary to reality, they assert that the Moscow Conference supposedly approved their line completely. In this way, they have provided disinformation to their people and hidden the truth from them about the work of the Moscow Conference – namely, that the position of the AWP was severely condemned by the participants in the Conference.

All the aforementioned facts clearly attest to the fact that the Albanian leaders are guilty of worsening the AWP's relations with the CPSU. Currently, such a situation has developed that it depends above all else on the Albanian leaders themselves as to whether the divergences will continue to deepen; whether the Albanian leaders will understand how disastrous their current policy is; and whether they will make every effort so that the People's Republic of Albania returns to the path of fraternal friendship with the other socialist countries.

Some time ago, we voiced our fears that, by adopting this logic of fighting with us, the Albanian leaders could take things even further, and that, by embarking on a path of exacerbating relations with the CPSU, they might begin repressions against friends of the Soviet Union, as had taken place in Yugoslavia.

We are now compelled to state that, unfortunately, our fears have been confirmed. In seeking to shield themselves from the criticism of other communists, the Albanian leaders have created an unbearable situation in their own country. The distinguished comrades of the Albanian Workers' Party, comrades Liri Belishova and Koço Tashko, were not only expelled from the CC AWP but also, as we already know, they were arrested. They are now considered enemies of the Albanian Workers' Party and the Albanian nation. And this is only because comrades Liri Belishova and Koço Tashko had the courage to honestly and openly voice their disagreement with the policy of the Albanian leadership, which aimed at breaking Albania away from the socialist camp; supported the line of the CPSU and the other fraternal parties aimed at strengthening the unity of the socialist countries, and decisively spoke out against the attempts to undermine the principles of Soviet-Albanian friendship.

The atmosphere within the party and the nation was emphatically reflected in the threats made by Comrade Shehu at the IV Congress of the Albanian Workers' Party. "Those who encroach upon our unity," he said, "will receive only one answer: spit in the face, a muzzle, and if necessary, a bullet in the head."

These meanderings and threats, which have nothing in common with the real struggle of Marxists for the unity of the parties, remind us all too much of the those sad times when the imperialist agent Beria and his supporters did all their dirty work under the guise of hysterical cries to battle the enemies of the people.

Our party brought an end once and for all to the conditions under which Beria and his cronies could roam around unpunished. And, it hurts us to see that Beria's heinous methods, condemned by communists the world over, have been adopted by the Albanian leaders. The fraternal parties of the socialist countries have a right to deem the persecution of Lira Belishova and Koço Tashko, as well as other honest Albanian communists, as an issue of concern for the entire international communist movement, because such methods for dealing with those who hold different opinions undermine the prestige of socialism in the eyes of all upstanding people in the world.

The aforementioned actions of the Albanian leadership are contrary to the Marxist-Leninist principles governing mutual relations between socialist countries, and they seriously harm the Albanian nation which is vividly interested in strengthening all levels of Albania's friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist camp.

If, indeed, the Albanian leaders take to heart their nation's interests, the construction of socialism in Albania, the interests of the entire socialist camp, and those of the world communist movement, then they should draw the proper conclusions and return to the path of friendship and cooperation with all the countries of the socialist camp. The Soviet Union's relations with Albania will depend upon what position the Albanian leadership takes with regard to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

The Central Committee of the CPSU

March 28, 1961

[Translation by Margaret (Malgorzata) K. Gnoinska]