

April 1957

Handwritten Notes from Khrushchev's Talks with the Albanian Delegation

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Summary:

Khrushchev, speaking to an Albanian delegation, emphasizes that ideology cannot be divorced from practical economic realities. He suggests that Albania must develop its economy, with the support of the Soviet Union, in order to make its workers content, and give off an attractive image of socialism to Arab countries so that socialism may spread into these areas. Khrushchev criticizes Stalin for not recognizing the important link between ideology and economic practicality, and concludes with mentions of current situations in Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary.

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Albanian

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Translation - English

Khrushchev:

We are very happy to meet you. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the warm words about our party, our state, and our country. But allow me, comrades, to say a few words about the assistance that our country provides to the fraternal states of the socialist camp, including your country. By helping your country, our party, our government and our people also help themselves. Because we need to be very clear that ideological issues should not and cannot be divorced from material and economic issues. When tiny Albania develops its economy, when people can see that the socialist state increasingly makes their life better, then the party's standing and the state's standing is also strengthened, but so is our own standing, and the standing of Marxism-Leninism. If Marxism-Leninism is not based on a material basis, if it not guided by the purpose of strengthening the material basis, then it is difficult for people to comprehend it. We cannot afford to engage in theories and forget the everyday life of people. Some say we ought to develop our theories further, to keep theorizing, that we ought to avoid falling into practicism. But we need to understand that people cannot survive on theories. We ought to feed people well, we ought to clothe them, and we ought to create increasingly better living conditions for them. Without this "practicism," Marxism-Leninism cannot advance. People cannot be forced to live by the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. The dissemination of our ideas is a means for building a better life, not an end in itself. People say: "It is great that you are a Marxist-Leninist party, that you adhere to Marxism-Leninism, so help me obtain a coat, feed my children well and clothe them, and help me get good housing—only then will I believe in Marxism-Leninism and I will follow you."

Why is it so difficult for us, for example, to propel the American working class into action right now? Are American workers, perhaps, morons? No, the American working class is not any more moronic than the others, but the point is that the country is wealthy, far wealthier than others, and capitalists are able to throw some of their colossal profits at the working class.

Let us examine, on the other hand, the example of Russia. Over here, the poorest workers, who were paid nothing and who were on the verge of starvation, joined the revolution. Their conscience, it might be said, was activated and informed by capital itself—through hunger. Compelled by hunger and miserable living conditions, they threw their lot with the revolution.

We need to fully understand this. If we deny this connection between Marxism-Leninism, between ideology and the material basis, then we are not Marxist-Leninists, but merely loudmouths. We should never forget the people. We praise Stalin for his positive achievements but we also condemn him because he suppressed the people's initiative. He suppressed and failed to exploit our great opportunities. Under Stalin, the situation in the villages was very poor. People did not have enough bread, milk, meat, or vegetables. Stalin did not see any of this. Heavy drinking also took a toll on his leadership abilities. Now the situation is different. Now, we completely satisfy the country's needs for bread, milk, vegetables, and other products. Indeed, we produce more than we need. So we will have to lower prices, put some of the products in reserves, and export the rest. When we begin to export these products, capitalists will begin to tremble, especially countries like the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and others.

The situation in the Soviet Union has improved dramatically. The latest measures proposed by the party have found widespread support among the people. The whole population supports the measures on the state loan precisely because the situation in our country has improved. Otherwise, these measures would not be successful.

In the interest of bolstering and advancing Marxism-Leninism, we also provide assistance to Albania. We work from the objective of turning Albania into an

advanced [illegible] of our camp, of Marxism-Leninism, turning it into a blooming garden. It is necessary that other countries around Albania, countries that share commonalities with Albania, like the Arab countries and so on, can see how Marxism-Leninism is propelling Albania forward. You must invite as many guests from these countries as possible. I want to add that it is in our interest not to have Russians (specialists, etc.) in Albania, because, otherwise, they will say that the Russians are building everything, whereas they must see that you are building everything and that your people are doing it. This is an issue of utmost importance.

Thus, comrades, we are generous, but we also have to make calculations since we do not only provide assistance to your country but also need to protect the interests of our people, the interests of our cause. The higher the standard of living in your country, the stronger Marxist-Leninist ideas become. There are some retrograde individuals here, perhaps, who ask why we help other countries when we still have needs of our own. Nevertheless, these people are few and the progressive majority of our people fully understand this issue. So, we need to demonstrate our superiority with facts.

There are theorists who deliver speeches and lectures by repeating Marx, Engels, Lenin and others. But workers say: Marx and Lenin had it right, but can you tell me why there is no bread, milk, meat and so on? If you don't give me bread, clothes and housing, I have no use for those ideas and you can go to hell with them! I was a worker myself and I speak from experience. Thus, comrades, we must not blabber on but we must increase the living standard of our people. I can tell you that if Stalin had lived for three more years, who knows what might have happened—conditions were that tough.

Therefore, when it comes to the assistance we give to Albania, it is unclear whether we do this out of the love we have for you or out of the love we have for ourselves. This precisely is internationalist unity. Precisely in this unity of interests we base ourselves when offering assistance to one another.

I want to add one more thing. We ought to be mature and coolheaded. We should not concede when it comes to principles, we should not submit ourselves, but we should also not be stubborn. Every conflict can aggravate easily; the point is to find a way to overcome the conflict. Undoubtedly, we have strong disagreements with Yugoslavia. In fact, I do not know if we will be able to come to terms with each other because they have gone too far in adapting themselves vis-à-vis the Americans.

We also have disagreements with Poland. I think that we will have good talks with [Władysław] Gomułka. We can find many flaws, weaknesses, and sins in [Józef] Cyrankiewicz, but this is not the point; it is important to explain things to him and to others, to strengthen the leadership of the Polish party, which finds itself in an extraordinarily difficult situation in its own country now.

Thus, comrades, no emotions—let emotions be reinvigorated by thoughts, by reason.

This is what I wanted to say.

Notes kept by [translator and linguist] A. Kostallari.