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Translation

TO THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE UNIFIED ARMED FORCES OF THE  
WARSAW TREATY COUNTRIES, MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION  
A. GRECHKO

Moscow

Dear Comrade Marshal,

I received your letter responding to my letter of 25 February 1961 yesterday on 27 March 1961 at 23:00.

First, I deem it necessary to point out with regret that your letter does not answer the fundamental questions raised in my letter of 25 February 1961; instead, it contains a number of untruths and inadmissible threats, which I – in defending the honor of my people, the Albanian Labor Party and the People’s Republic of Albania, as well as the eternal Albanian-Soviet friendship and the highest interests of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and all socialist countries -- cannot possibly accept.

The government of the People’s Republic of Albania has never underestimated the assistance provided by the Soviet Union. On the contrary, it has always valued it very highly and with the most profound acknowledgement. The attempt to cast doubt on the friendly fraternal relations between Albania and the Soviet Union has no basis in fact. I point out that this friendship, forged by our Party of Labor and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on Marxist-Leninist principals in the fire of the joint struggle against common enemies, is eternal. There is no force in the world that could disrupt this friendship.

The People’s Republic of Albania is a socialist state, a loyal member of the glorious socialist camp and the Warsaw Treaty - which it joined precisely because it is such a state. It struggles (and will continue to struggle) fearlessly for the victory of socialism and communism and for the implementation of the noble principles that constitute the foundation for the socialist camp and the Warsaw Treaty. The government of the People’s Republic of Albania will continue, despite all the obstacles and the pressure that it will have to withstand, to always remain loyal to the Warsaw Treaty. It will always carry out with honor its duties to preserve and consolidate this Treaty and to further strengthen the defensive capabilities and unity of the socialist camp.

By no means can I agree with your incorrect assessments of the report regarding the plot, organized by Yugoslavia and Greece in collusion with the American Sixth Fleet, against the People's Republic of Albania, which was recently uncovered by the Albanian state security forces. I would like to stress that nobody can question the statement of our party's Central Committee regarding this issue at the Fourth Congress of the Albanian Labor Party. We already informed you through your representative in Albania that the Albanian government has collected all the necessary facts regarding this plot. However, it did not deem it necessary to request help from the Unified Command of the Warsaw Treaty since all of the enemy's secret agents were caught in time, and the government was convinced that the looming threat had thus been eliminated.

With respect to the questions in your letter pertaining to Vlorë Naval Base, I deem it appropriate to point out that the incidents regarding an unacceptable attitude on the part of Albanian officials toward Soviet servicemen are untrue. In this regard, it would be advisable to refer to the memorandum that the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Albania Comrade Mehmet Shehu submitted to your representative in Albania, Colonel-General A. M. Andreev, on 22 March 1961. This memorandum provides a comprehensive explanation and highlights the real facts and responsibilities. I would like to emphasize again that from the very beginning and all along the Albanian government did everything it could so that relations between Albanian and Soviet personnel were quite brotherly, at least on the part of the Albanian personnel.

In your letter, Comrade Marshal, you state that if the Albanian government is interested in the deployment of Soviet submarines and other military vessels at this base, all the Soviet ships and service units should be staffed with Soviet crews. Otherwise, you may report this issue to the Political Consultative Committee and advise the Soviet government to recall all Soviet military vessels, servicemen, and experts from Albania.

In response, I consider it necessary to state the following:

First, Vlorë naval base, the only naval base of the socialist camp in the Mediterranean - something that is very important to the defense of both Albania and the entire socialist camp - was established at the initiative of the Central Committee of the Albanian Labor Party. The responsibilities of the Albanian government and the Soviet government were identified in a joint agreement. A precise implementation of these commitments on the part of the Soviet government -- as we have previously pointed out - would make this military base quite combat-ready.

Second, accompanying your demand to staff the military vessels at the naval base with exclusively Soviet crews is the threat that you will otherwise recall them -- i.e., dispose of Vlorë naval base. This not only clearly contradicts existing agreements but also would represent an unacceptable infringement upon the sovereignty of the People's Republic of Albania, in direct violation of Marxist-Leninist principles of relations among

the countries of the socialist camp countries and the Warsaw Treaty. The government of the People's Republic of Albania deems such intervention unacceptable and declares that if, based on your proposal, the Soviet government does decide to liquidate the Vlorë naval base, it will be committing a very serious and dangerous act and will be assuming a very heavy burden of responsibility, not only with regard to the people of Albania, but also with regard to all the peoples of the Warsaw Treaty member-countries and the entire socialist camp. While I consider the threats in your letter to be unacceptable, I deem it appropriate to point out one more time, Comrade Marshal, that such actions on your part are harmful only to the common cause of the Warsaw Treaty countries and the entire socialist camp. It would be better if you hadn't adopted this dangerous and rather arduous path, which is fully incompatible with the great responsibility entrusted to you by the governments of all the Warsaw Treaty member-states.

It is the opinion of the government of the People's Republic of Albania that the most correct and logical solution to this extremely critical problem would be for the Soviet government to recant its wrongful stance – the one relating to the further fortification of Vlorë naval base – and to consolidate cooperation through the common efforts of both parties to eliminate all misunderstandings in the spirit of fraternal friendship that should characterize relations between our two countries. Such a stance regarding this issue would undoubtedly serve the interests of the Warsaw Treaty member-states, as well as the interests of the entire socialist camp.

Respectfully,

Minister of People's Defense  
People's Republic of Albania  
Colonel General Beqir Balluku  
Moscow  
28 March 1961

*[Translation by Julia La Villa Nossova]*