

Enver Hoxha, **Two Friendly Peoples:**

Excerpts from the Political Diary and other documents Albanian-Greek Relations 1941 — 1984

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin Institute (Toronto, 1985)

POGRADEC, THURSDAY

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CONFRONTATION IN THE PRESENCE OF STALIN

I am looking over the materials which I'll include in the book(1) about my meetings with J.V. Stalin. I think I should include a special chapter (2) with the notes I have from my confrontation with the leaders of the Greek Communist Party in the presence of Stalin, over the disagreements on matters of principle between the leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania and leaders of the Greek Communist Party.

1 *With Stalin (Memoirs)*, published in Albanian and several foreign languages in December 1979, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Stalin's birth.

2 The fourth chapter, which carries the subtitle, «The Fourth Meeting», *With Stalin (Memoirs)*, «8 Nëntori» Publishing House, Tirana 1979, pp. 163-200, Eng. ed.

FOURTH MEETING

JANUARY 1950

Confrontation in Stalin's presence over disagreements of principle between the leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania and the leaders of the Greek Communist Party. Present were: Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov; Nicos Zaehariades, Mitsos Partsalides. On the strategy and tactics of the Greek Democratic Army. Var-kiza. The tactics of passive defence is the mother of defeat. Why the defeats at Vitsi and Gramos? On the leading role of the party in the army. The place and role of the commissar. Nicos Zachariades expresses his views. Stalin's evaluation.

During the talk I had with Comrade Stalin in Sukhumi, in November 1949, he asked me when we could meet the representatives of the Greek Communist Party to clear up the disagreements of principle between us and the leaders of that party. We were agreed on January, and after the Greek comrades agreed to this, the meeting took place in the beginning of January 1950 in Moscow, in the Kremlin. From the Soviet side the meeting was attended by Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov and a number of functionaries of the Central Committee of

the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, while from the Greek Communist Party Nicos Zachariades and Mitsos Partsalides. The meeting was held in Stalin's office.

Unpretentious and kindly as usual, Stalin welcomed us with a smile, rose from his desk and came to shake hands with all of us in turn. He opened the talk by asking me:

«Comrade Hoxha, what have you to say about the comrades of the Greek Communist Party?»

At the same time he addressed the Greek comrades by saying:

«Let the Albanian comrades speak first, then comes your turn to put forward your opinions on what they will say.»

Taking the floor I said:

«Comrade Stalin, we have sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union about the disagreements over matters of principle we have with the Greek Communist Party, especially with its main leaders. We have requested this meeting in your presence so that you may judge whether we are right or wrong in our views.»

«I am aware of the questions you have raised,» said Comrade Stalin, «but I would like you to repeat the problems you are concerned about here in the presence of the Greek comrades.»

«Of course I shall state here all the questions our Party has put forward in the letter we have

sent you. We have discussed these questions with the Greek comrades, too, especially with Comrade Nicos Zachariades, with Comrade Ioannides, with General Vlantas, with Bardzotas, and other comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party. I would like to begin by pointing out that we have had disagreements on a number of questions, but here I shall speak about the most important ones.»

«That is what we want, too,» stressed Stalin.

Then I began my expose:

«Our first disagreement with the Greek comrades was over the strategy and tactics of the war of the Greek Democratic Army. Both for us Albanians and for the Greek people, the war against Hitlerite and Italian fascists was a liberation war, on which the fate of our peoples depended. We had to and did base this war on the heroic war of the Red Army of the Soviet Union. Right from the start, we Albanians were convinced that we would come out victorious, because our entire people had risen in a great liberation war, in which they had beside them the great Soviet Union, which would smash German nazism.

«Our Party supported the Soviet-British-American alliance, because, through to the end, it considered this an anti-fascist coalition to crush the German nazis. But at the same time we never created the illusion that the Anglo-American imperialists would be the loyal friends and allies of the Albanian people. On the contrary, while sup-

porting the alliance in general, we made a radical distinction between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Americans from the beginning. With this I want to say that our Party, our army and the General Staff of our army not only never submitted to the dictate of the British and the Allied Mediterranean Command, but even when we allowed them to give us advice, we took it with very great caution. We asked for weapons from the British but we saw they sent us very few. As you know, we waged partisan warfare, from which we went on later to big detachments up to the creation of the regular National Liberation Army.

«The Greek people fought under the same conditions as we. They rose against the Italian fascist aggressors, drove them back, defeated them. The Greek monarchist army even entered Albania. Although our Communist Party was not founded at that time, the communists and our people helped the Greeks in their war against fascist Italy, although they were under occupation themselves. However, with the intervention of the Hitlerite army in the war against Greece, the Greek monarchist army was forced to withdraw to its own territory and was defeated. After that period, the Greek people, led by the Greek Communist Party, which created the EAM, organized the partisan units and other bigger units later, began the resistance and the National Liberation War.

«During the National Liberation War which

they waged, our two peoples developed even closer fraternal relations. Friendly ties have existed between the Albanian and the Greek peoples from the past. (3) As is known many Albanians participated and played a very important role in the Greek revolution of the 20's of the last century, led by Ypsilanti. However, this time the character of our war was the same and our communist parties were at the head of the peoples of our two countries. We established relations between ourselves, and even undertook military

3 In the letter which he sent Comrade Enver Hoxha on September 10, 1944, the Chairman of the National Council of Greece, said: «The Greeks and the Albanians are the two most ancient peoples of the Balkans, they are linked by blood and common traditions and have waged common wars. They have a common fate. Today their community of interests is tempered and strengthened with new bonds, with the endless bloodshed and countless sacrifices which the two peoples are making beside our great allies in the war to regain their national freedom.

«Even in the past no divergencies or contradictions have divided the two neighbouring peoples of Greece and Albania. Only the anti-popular policy of certain politicians, who have governed our two countries during recent decades, has kept the two friendly peoples aloof from each other. However, the prejudices and intrigues have been smashed through the joint struggle to expel the same barbarous enemy occupiers. Greece and Albania have emerged reborn from this common struggle. In the future, our two peoples will live not just in relations of good neighbourliness, but in an atmosphere of harmonious collaboration and unbreakable friendship. The primary condition for the rebuilding of the Balkans from the ruins which the invaders caused is close and cordial cooperation between them.»

operations with combined fighting units against the German armies on Greek territory. Just as in our country, reaction in Greece, too, was strong and the occupiers were very well organized. This, too, was a phenomenon in common.

«On our part, we made efforts and achieved some results in isolating the heads of reaction and in winning over elements that had made mistakes from its ranks. I cannot say with precision how they acted in Greece, but we have criticized the comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party because the EAM and they themselves committed a major political mistake of principle in subordinating the National Liberation War of the Greek people to the Anglo-American strategy and placing it virtually under the direction of the British and the Mediterranean Command. We addressed our criticism to Comrade Nicos Zachariades personally.

«The person mainly to blame for this situation was Siantos, who in the absence of Zachariades — at that time imprisoned in German concentration camps, was acting general secretary of the Greek Communist Party. When we pointed out this matter to Comrade Zachariades later, he did not give me a clear answer, and leaned more to the view that mistakes had not been made. I persisted in the opinion of our Party and, in the end, I told Comrade Zachariades that Siantos was a provocateur, an agent of the British. Had Siantos been in our country, I told Comrade Zachariades, our Party would have put him

on trial, and sentenced him to the punishment he deserved, while you did not act that way. Of course, that is your business, but this is our opinion on this matter.

«As a conclusion, Comrade Nicos Zachariades agreed that 'Siantos should not have acted as he did,' that 'the comrades had criticized him for this, however, they did not put him on trial, but only expelled him from the party', he said in the end.

«Pursuing this matter, I would like to point out that we have had a series of political, ideological and military talks with leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party, and this is understandable, because we were two communist parties and had the one strategic aim — the liberation of our countries from the nazi-fascist occupiers and the reactionary bourgeoisie of each country.

«We saw that, despite the outstanding bravery of the Greek partisans and their commanders, after Comrade Nicos Zachariades was released from the Hitlerite concentration camps, he occupied a leading position in 'liberated' Greece with the British army stationed there on the basis of the agreements signed earlier at Caserta and Cairo by representatives of the EAM, agreements which, in the end, led to the Varkiza agreement. Our Party did not agree with these actions of the Greek Communist Party, and considered them as a subordination of the Greek Democratic

War, as a failure of its policy of liberation, and capitulation to Anglo-American reaction.

«What is more, at a mass rally in the Athens stadium, at which the chiefs of the Greek bourgeois parties spoke in turn, Comrade Nicos Zachariades spoke, too, as leader of the Greek Communist Party, and declared among other things: 'If the other Greek democratic parties demand the autonomy of «Vorio-Epirus», the Greek Communist Party will associate itself with them'. (!) Our Party immediately protested publicly and warned that it would combat such views mercilessly. Following this event, we invited Comrade Nicos Zachariades to a meeting, at which I criticized him severely, describing his statement as an anti-Marxist and anti-Albanian stand, and I made it very clear to him that 'Vorio-Epirus' which was Albanian territory, would never become Greek territory. I want to say on this occasion that Comrade Nicos Zachariades acknowledged his mistake, admitted to us that he had made a grave error in this direction and promised to correct the mistake he had made.

«We may be wrong, but our opinion is that Marcos Vaphiades, whom they eliminated later, was a good communist and an able commander. (4) Naturally, however, this is only an opinion of

4 It is known publicly that while he was returning from the 5th Plenum of the Greek Communist Party, at which he was dismissed from all functions in the Party under the pretext that he was ill, General Marcos Vaphiades

ours, which may be right or may be wrong, therefore we do not pretend to judge this, because, in the final analysis, this is a question which is not up to us, but to the Greek Communist Party, to judge.

«Our opposition to the leadership of the Greek Communist Party, with Comrade Zachariades at the head, is based, in the first place, on Varkiza, where the Greek Communist Party and the EAM signed the agreement which is nothing but a capitulation, a surrender of their arms. The Party of Labour of Albania described this act as a betrayal committed against the Greek Communist Party and the fraternal Greek people. Not only should Varkiza never have come to pass, but it should be sternly condemned. I have expressed this view long ago to Comrades Nicos Zachariades and Mitsos Partsalides who was one of those who signed the agreement. We have respect for these two Greek leading comrades, Zachariades and Partsalides, but this action,

ran into an armed ambush near the border with Albania for which he was heading. He and the persons who accompanied him escaped certain death only thanks to the intervention of the Albanian border guards and their supporting fire which enabled them to reach Albanian territory alive.

It is said that Marcos was dismissed from his functions in the Party because of the political and military contradictions he had with Zachariades, the general secretary of the Greek Communist Party and the ambush near the Greek-Albanian border had been organized for the physical liquidation of Marcos.

inspired and carried out by them, was absolutely wrong and caused the Greek people great harm.

«Nicos Zachariades has defended a thesis which is the opposite of ours on Varkiza. He has always insisted that it was not at all a capitulation, or a betrayal, but 'an act which had to be done in order to gain time and allow us to seize power'.

«In connection with Varkiza, I asked Comrade Nicos Zachariades to explain the reasons for the condemnation and murder of Aris Velouchiotis, who, after the signing of the said agreement, set out to come to Albania in order to make contact with the Central Committee of our Party. Nicos Zachariades replied: 'Although Aris Velouchiotis was a courageous general, he was a rebel, an anarchist, who did not accept the decision of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party on Varkiza, therefore we merely expelled him from the Central Committee of the Party. But what happened to him later, who killed him, etc.,' Zachariades said, 'we do not know. We assure you that we are not the authors of his assassination,' he said. I have expressed to Comrade Nicos Zachariades our opinion that, without wanting in any way to interfere in their affairs and without knowing Aris personally, only judging from the fact that he was a valiant fighter of the Greek people, he should not have been condemned. 'As for his assassination,' I said, 'we believe what you have told us, but on this score, too, we have some

contradictions with you, because we are consistent on the Varkiza question.'

«As Marxist-Leninists, we were very sorry for the Greek people, with whom we had collaborated during the Anti-fascist National Liberation War, therefore, later, at the moments when they were again faced with the question of liberation or slavery, we wanted to continue this collaboration.

«I do not want to speak here about the internationalist support and backing which we gave the Greek Communist Party and the Greek National Liberation War, despite the very difficult conditions with which our country, just liberated from the occupiers, had to cope. Let the Greek comrades speak about this. (5) Despite our great poverty, when the time came, we did everything we could to provide food and shelter to help the Greek refugees who had entered our territory. The fact that Albania was a friendly liberated country, where the people and the Party of Labour of Albania had come to power,

5 In his book *Kapedan Aris* the Greek writer Costis Papacongos says: «Hoxha's partisans welcomed the Greek partisans very open-heartedly and displayed a fabulous respect towards their famous fighting leader [Aris Velouchiotis] and regarded as an honour that they were the first to welcome him to their People's Republic. They told him immediately that he could stay there as long as he liked, as their guest, to rest and return to his home country later. Indeed, if he wished, he could stay permanently as a guest in their country, like many of the fighting leaders who escaped the savage persecutions in Greece have done.»

a thing which enabled the Greek Democratic Army to feel secure and defended on its north-western flank, was of great assistance to the Greek Democratic Army.

«After the capitulation at Varkiza, the Greek National Liberation War was resumed. The Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party held its plenary meeting to which delegates from our Party were invited. On this occasion, changes were made in the leadership, however all these were internal questions of the Greek Communist Party. We simply rejoiced over and encouraged the fierce attacks launched all over Greece against the monarcho-fascists, who, seeing the danger of the situation created, went over from reliance on the British to reliance on the Americans. The United States of America sent the notorious general, Van Fleet, whom they considered a consummate strategist, to command its army in Greece.

«We have had contradictions with Zachariades, Bardzotas and Ioannides over the character of the war that the Greek Democratic Army should have waged against the numerous regular forces of Greek reaction, armed with most modern means of warfare by the American imperialists. Thus, there has been a contradiction over principles between our two parties on this question, too. On the basis of our National Liberation War we think that the Greek Democratic War should not have been transformed into a frontal war, but should have retained the character of a

partisan war, fought with small and large units. In this way, Van Fleet's superior forces would not have been able to liquidate the Greek Democratic Army, but, on the contrary, this army would have harassed and attacked these forces from all quarters with the tactics of partisan warfare, inflicted losses and gradually weakened them, until it had prepared the counter-offensive. We supported the thesis that the Greek partisan war should have been based on the people, while the weapons should have been captured from the enemy.

«Zachariades' views on strategy were in opposition to ours. The comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party not only described the regrouping of the national liberation partisan forces, which they managed to carry out, as a 'regular' and 'modern' army in form, but they also claimed that they had equipped it with the strategy and tactics of the frontal war of a regular army. In our opinion, the forces which they regrouped were, in fact, just a partisan army, which they did not succeed in equipping either with the partisan tactics, or with the tactics of a regular army. On the other hand, in their military operations the Greek comrades followed the tactics of passive defence which is the mother of defeat. This, in our opinion, was a grave mistake of the leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party, who have proceeded from the incorrect principle that partisan warfare has no final objective, that is, does not lead to the

seizure of power. From the talks we have had with them, we have formed the opinion that the Greek comrades conceive partisan war as a war of isolated guerilla units of 10-15 men, which, according to them, have no prospect of growth and development into brigades, divisions, army-corps, etc. This is not correct. As the experience of every such war has shown, and as our National Liberation War confirmed, provided it is well led, partisan warfare with small units grows gradually as the war develops, as the revolutionary drive of the masses gathers impetus, and thus reaches the stage of the general armed uprising and the creation of a regular people's army. But the comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party stubbornly defended their views and categorically excluded the necessity for the expansion and strengthening of partisan war in Greece. We have not accepted and do not accept these views of theirs.

«Allow me to express our opinion about how the situation presented itself at the time when the Greek Communist Party went underground and had to begin the war anew. At that time, the ELAS detachments had surrendered their arms, their bases had been destroyed, they lacked clothing, food, weapons; the morale of the ELAS fighters had declined, the movement was in retreat. From the outset, the Greek Communist Party described precisely these regrouped forces as a 'regular' and 'modern' army which, according to it, could fight with the strategy and

tactics of a modern army and withstand open frontal war with an enemy ten times its strength. We think that this partisan army should have fought according to the partisan tactics, as our teachers — Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, teach us. How can this regrouping of partisan forces which the Greek Communist Party carried out, be called a regular army when it did not have the necessary cadres, tanks, aircraft, artillery, means of communication, clothing, food, or even the most necessary light weapons?! We think that these views of the Greek comrades are wrong.

«While calling this regrouping of partisan forces a regular army equipped, according to them, with 'the fighting strategy and tactics of a regular army' (strategy and tactics which were never applied in reality), the leadership of the Greek Communist Party also did not think seriously, in a Marxist manner, about how this army would be supplied. The Greek comrades said: 'There is no possibility of capturing our weapons from the enemy'. But such views, in our opinion, are contrary to the teachings of Lenin, who said that in no instance should you wait for aid from abroad, or from on high, but you must secure everything for yourselves; that in no instance should the organization or re-organization of detachments be neglected on the pretext of lack of weapons, etc. The comrades of the Greek leadership, underrating the enemy, thought that the seizure of power was an easy

thing and could be done without protracted and bloody battles, and without sound, allround organization. These views of the Greek comrades brought other bitter consequences which caused their ultimate defeat, but the astonishing thing is that, even in the recent talks we have had with them, they consider their views correct.

«However, in our opinion based on facts, the tactics and strategy for the war which Comrade Nicos upholds are wrong. In the conversation I had with Comrade Zachariades, he claimed that the units of the Greek Democratic Army could not penetrate deep into Greek territory, because the monarcho-fascists and Van Fleet had burned the villages and had deported the population, so that, according to him, all the inhabited centres were deserted. I told him that such a thing could occur, but not to the proportions Zachariades claimed. This was my opinion based on the logic of facts, because obviously, the monarcho-fascists and the American army could not possibly clear the population from all the inhabited areas of Greece.

«Likewise we disagreed with the claims and views expressed in a letter of the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party addressed to the Political Bureau of our Party, in which the Greek leaders, wanting to avoid going deeply into their mistakes and wanting to hide them, claim that their defeats stem from their not being supplied with weapons, ammunition and clothing in the necessary quantities and that the enemy

had domination in the air and on the sea and was amply supplied by the Anglo-Americans. The truth is that the enemy was much better supplied and had superior strength in men and matériel. However, in such a case, when you are conducting a war against internal reaction and foreign military intervention, the best course is that the enemy should become the greatest source of supplies. The Greek Democratic Army ought to have captured its weapons from the enemy, but these weapons could not be captured by following the tactic of defensive warfare, of passive defence. Nevertheless, we think that the basic question is not one of supplies. We think that, in rejecting the tactics of partisan warfare and its development to the general armed uprising and the seizure of power, the leadership of the Greek Communist Party has applied a defensive and passive tactic which is unacceptable either in a partisan war or in a frontal war with regular armies. By pursuing such a tactic, the Greek Democratic Army, apart from other things, deprived itself of the possibility of extending to other areas of the country where it would certainly have found an inexhaustible source of supply of manpower in the sons and daughters of the people, and likewise deprived itself of the possibility of capturing its weapons from the enemy through ceaseless, rapid, well-thought actions, carried out where the enemy least expected them. Marxism-Leninism teaches us that there must be no playing at armed

insurrection, and the history of so many wars has confirmed that the defensive spells death for any armed uprising. If it remains on the defensive, the uprising is very quickly crushed by a more powerful and better equipped enemy.

«In our opinion, the very tactic the Greek comrades employed confirms this. The biggest active forces of the Greek Democratic Army were kept permanently within the fortified sectors of Vitsi and Gramos. These forces were trained for defensive trench warfare, and a frontal war with the enemy army was imposed on them at the wish of their leadership and they accepted it. The Greek comrades thought they would take power by means of defensive and passive war. In our opinion, power could not be taken by defending yourselves at Gramos. The only manoeuvre the Greek Communist Party made (and this was imposed on it by the circumstances) was in the battle at Gramos in 1948, where the truly heroic Greek partisans resisted for seventy days on end, inflicted losses in men on the enemy, but in the end, in order to escape encirclement and annihilation, broke out from Gramos and went over to Vitsi. However, this was still far from the seizure of power. The Greek Democratic Army should have carried out attacks to capture cities. This was not achieved. At that time, too, the Greek comrades, claimed that they lacked the forces. This may be true, but why did they lack forces and where should they have found them? The Greek com-

rades did not analyse this problem deeply and did not solve it, either at that time, or later, in the proper Marxist-Leninist way. The tactics of the Greek comrades, as they put it in the letter of their Political Bureau addressed to our Political Bureau, was to hold Vitsi and Gramos at any cost, as their base for the further development of the war, and they made success in war dependent exclusively on supplies, but without ever finding the correct way to secure those supplies by fighting.

«Thus, suffering defeat after defeat, the Greek Democratic Army was forced to retreat and entrenched itself again in the zones of Vitsi and Gramos. This was a very critical phase, both for the Greek Democratic Army and for our country. During this period we followed the activities of the Greek comrades with great attention. Before the final offensive of the monarcho-fascists against the Greek Democratic Army, the comrades of the Greek leadership were of the opinion that their political and military situation was absolutely excellent, whereas that of the enemy, according to them, was utterly desperate. According to them, 'Vitsi is extremely well fortified and impregnable to the enemy, if the enemy attacks Vitsi, it has signed its death warrant. Vitsi will become the grave-yard of the monarcho-fascists. The enemy has to launch this offensive because it has no other way out, it is on the brink of disaster. Let the monarcho-fascist army and the army of Van Fleet at-

tack whenever they like, we shall smash them.'

«Comrade Vlantas held that the enemy would direct the main blow against Gramos and not against Vitsi, because 'Gramos is less fortified, as it is situated on the border with Albania, and the enemy, after defeating us there, will turn back to attack us at Vitsi, because it thinks it can annihilate us there, since it borders on Yugoslavia. After fighting at Gramos and inflicting great losses on the enemy, we shall manoeuvre with our forces from Gramos in order to attack the enemy forces at Vitsi from the rear'.

«But a little before the final attack, we informed the Greek comrades that the enemy would launch their attack on the 10th of August on Vitsi and not on Gramos. This information enabled the Greek comrades to avoid being caught by surprise, and to take measures in time. However, even after this, they still believed that the main blow would be directed against Gramos. According to them, the enemy attack on Vitsi, and not on Gramos, 'changes nothing for us. We have taken all measures both at Vitsi and at Gramos. Vitsi is impregnable,' they thought, 'it is extremely well fortified. All the roads through which the enemy might attempt to pass have been made impassable. The enemy cannot bring his heavy weapons into the Vitsi zone, victory is ours.'

«These were the views of the Greek comrades two days before the enemy attack on Vitsi. Within one day the monarcho-fascists

captured the third line of defence at Vitsi and Vitsi was reduced in a matter of two or three days. There was very little fighting and resistance. This came as a great surprise to us. However, we had taken all measures for defence against an eventual attack on our territory by the monarcho-fascists. The Greek comrades, and Comrade Partsalides, who is present here, were not really convinced about the need for the defensive measures we had taken and called them hasty on our part. The Greek comrades were not realistic. Many refugees, among them democratic soldiers, who were routed, were forced to cross our border. What could we do?! We accepted them and accommodated them in allocated places.

«The analysis which the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party made of the defeat at Vitsi did not satisfy us. We think that a thorough analysis was required, because grave mistakes were made there. After the retreat from Vitsi, Comrade Zachariades based the prospect of victory on Gramos. 'Gramos' he said, 'is more favourable to us than Vitsi. The tanks, which were the decisive factor in the victory of the monarcho-fascists at Vitsi, cannot manoeuvre at Gramos,' etc.

«It must be said that at that time Tito's betrayal had become known. Later Zachariades claimed, 'The only ones who gave the Greek refugees asylum were the Albanians, the Yugoslavs not only did not permit the refugees to

cross into their territory, but even opened fire on them from behind.' Possibly this may have been so, we cannot say anything about it.

«In a talk with Comrade Zachariades about the retreat from Vitsi, I again raised the question of their mistakes and the inability of the Greek Communist Party, and in particular, of the commander of Vitsi, general Vlantas, to form an objective picture of the situation. 'His ideas,' I said to Nicos, 'have been proved wrong. The fact that the Greek Democratic Army was unable to defend Vitsi, proved this.'

«Nicos Zachariades contradicted me, saying that Vitsi fell because of the mistake of a commander, who had not placed the battalion allocated at one part of the front and failed to appear himself at his position in the fighting. Thus, according to Nicos, this commander was the cause of the defeat at Vitsi, therefore, he told me, 'We took measures and condemned him.' This was a very simplistic explanation on the part of Comrade Nicos for such a major defeat.

«I told him frankly and in a comradely way that I could not believe such a thing.

'Believe me or not, that's how it is,' Nicos said.

«'Nevertheless,' I continued: 'What is to be done now?'

«Nicos answered: 'We'll fight.'

'But where will you fight?'

'At Gramos, which is an impregnable fortress.'

«I asked the question: 'Do you intend to place the whole Greek Democratic Army there?'

'Yes,' replied Nicos Zachariades 'we shall send it all back to Gramos.'

«I said, 'You know your own business and it is you who decide, but our opinion is that Gramos can resist no longer, therefore all those brave fighters of the Greek Democratic Army of whom you are the leader, should not be sacrificed in vain. You must handle your own affairs as seems best to you, however, as we are your comrades and friends, we would like you to summon Comrade Bardzotas, the commander of the Greek troops at Gramos, and discuss this matter with him.' Nicos opposed this idea of mine and told me that this was impossible.

«We know what happened later. Gramos became the final defeat of the Greek Democratic Army.

«The forces at Gramos were routed in four days. In our opinion, the war was not organized there. A completely passive defence was maintained. We do not exclude that fierce fighting may have occurred at some places such as Polje and Kamenik, where some soldiers of the Greek Democratic Army resisted with heroism. With the exception of the Kamenik forces the whole retreat from Gramos was disorderly, like that from Vitsi. Among the officers and men of the Greek Democratic Army there was murmuring about the wrong defensive tactics employed at Gramos. Comrade Zachariades has confirmed this to us.

«We think that at the battles of Gramos and Vitsi the comrades of the Greek leadership did not keep in mind the Marxist-Leninist principles of people's war. The monarcho-fascist columns reached their predetermined positions with great speed and unmolested. They swept through the mountain crags and encircled the democratic forces, who stayed in their trenches and did not counter-attack; the enemy attacked, drove the partisans out of the trenches and occupied the fortifications. The command of the Greek Democratic Army had dispersed its forces in fortified positions and failed to use its reserves to counter-attack and smash the enemy offensive by means of continual attacks and rapid manoeuvring. We think that their erroneous views on the tactic of the war brought about their defeat. The men were capable of what was required of them, they were old partisans, tested in battle, with high morale, who fought heroically.

«On the other hand, by applying its tactics of passive defence the leadership of the Greek Communist Party allowed the monarcho-fascist army to regroup and reorganize, failed to attack in order to hinder the preparations of the enemy and bring about the failure, or at least, the weakening of its offensive, so as to allow the active forces of the Greek Democratic Army to manoeuvre on a large scale and strike incessantly at the enemy forces everywhere. These are some of the reasons which, in our opinion, caused the recent defeats at Gramos and Vitsi. In its analysis

of the defeat at Vitsi, the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party says, 'the leadership has grave responsibility,' but it says nothing about where this responsibility lies and, moreover, goes on to shed this responsibility in all directions. We think that this is not a Marxist-Leninist analysis.

«To achieve success in their war, the Greek comrades should not have followed the tactic of passive defence, but should have thoroughly applied the Marxist-Leninist principles on the armed uprising. The tactic that should have been followed, we believe, had to have the aim of damaging the enemy forces incessantly and in many directions, of making the situation insecure for the enemy at all times, obliging them to disperse their forces, striking panic and terror amongst them, and making it impossible for them to control the situation. Thus, the revolutionary war of the Greek people would have grown continuously, would have alarmed the enemy at first and then would have made it lose control of the situation, would have liberated whole regions and zones and subsequently gone over to the next objective, i.e., the general uprising and the liberation of the whole country. In this way, the partisan war in Greece had the prospect of development.

«In the talks we have had with them, we have frequently told the Greek comrades in a comradely manner that the Greek Partisan Army must try to capture its armaments from the

enemy in battle, must fight with the weapons of the enemy and secure its food and clothing from the people, together with whom and for whom it must fight.

«We have told our Greek comrades that, first of all, the Partisan Army must be linked with the people from whom it has become separated and without whom it cannot exist. The people must be taught to fight together with the army and to assist it and love it as their own liberator. This is an essential condition. The people must be taught that they must not surrender to the enemy, and the ranks of the army should be strengthened with men and women, the sons and daughters of the people, by Greece itself.

«Likewise, we have told the Greek comrades in a comradely manner that the leading role of the party in the Greek Partisan Army must be ensured more firmly; the political commissar of the company, battalion, brigade and division should be the true representative of the party, and as such should have the right to command, just the same as the commander. But we have noticed and have often pointed out to the Greek comrades that they have not taken a correct view of the leading role of the party in the army. On this problem I have expressed the opinion of our Party to Comrade Stalin previously and we deal with this again in the letter we have sent him. Failure to understand the leading role of the party in the army, we think, was one of the main reasons which led to the defeat of the Greek

Democratic Army in the war. We always proceed from the Marxist-Leninist teaching that the commander and the political commissar form an entity which directs the military actions and the political education of the units, that they are equally responsible for the situation of their detachment from every viewpoint, that both of them, the commander and the commissar, lead their unit, their detachment in the fighting.

«Without the political commissar we would not have had the Red Army, Lenin teaches us. We followed these principles in our National Liberation Army and follow them now in our People's Army. In the Greek National Liberation Army, ELAS, the joint command of the commander and the commissar existed, but this was not properly implemented in practice. The pressure of erroneous bourgeois views of career officers, who could not tolerate trusted people of the party in command alongside them, brought about that, at that time, the role of the commissar in command in the Greek Democratic Army was overshadowed and relegated to second place. This is a consequence of the views of the leaders of the Greek Communist Party on the 'regular army'. The comrades of the Greek leadership try to justify the elimination of the role of the political commissar by taking the army of some other country as an example, but we think that the Greek comrades are not realistic on this question.

«Such mistakes were noticed even after the

Greek National Liberation Army resumed the war. Since the dismissal of General Marcos this army had not had a Commander-in-chief. We think that such a situation was not correct. With us, the General Secretary of the Party has been and is simultaneously Commander-in-chief of the Army. We think this is correct. In time of peace perhaps it may not be so, possibly the Minister of Defence might fill this position, but in the conditions of the Greek Democratic Army, when it was still at war, there should have been a Commander-in-chief of the army, and we thought and still think, on the basis of our experience, that this political and military function belongs to the General Secretary of the Party. We have frequently expressed this view of ours to the Greek comrades. The reasons which the Greek comrades have given us to show why they did not act in that way are unconvincing. The Greek comrades have told us, 'Comrade Zachariades is very modest', or 'we had bitter experience with Tito who was general secretary, prime minister and supreme commander of the army simultaneously'. It seems to us that this is not a question of modesty; this has no connection, either, with what they say about Tito, behind which, it seems to us that something else is insinuated.

«We were astonished at a number of secret forms which the Greek comrades used, but we saw that the reality was quite different. We cannot explain these except with our impression that among the Greek comrades there was confusion,

opportunism, false modesty and hiding of the leading role of the party. Perhaps, the General Secretary of the Party need not be Commander-in-chief of the army, but that an army at war should not have a Commander-in-chief, as was the case of the Greek Democratic Army after the dismissal of Marcos, has always seemed wrong to us.

«The Greek comrades make no one responsible for this situation and for the subsequent defeats. They divide the responsibility, attributing it to both the guilty and the innocent. They unjustly put the blame on all the party members of the Greek Communist Party who have fought and are fighting heroically. We think that comrades of the Greek leadership are afraid to make a thorough analysis of these mistakes, which we consider grave ones, are afraid to put the finger on the sore spot. We also think that among some Greek comrades of the leadership there is lack of criticism and self-criticism, and that they protect one another in a 'comradely way' over the mistakes they have made.

«The comrades of the Greek leadership have been opposed to our opinions, which we have expressed to them in a comradely manner as internationalist communists who are fighting for the same cause, who have great common interests, and who were profoundly sympathetic to the cause of the Greek people's war. They have not welcomed our criticisms.

«Comrade Nicos Zachariades has raised many unpleasant things against us, which, of course,

we have rejected. His declaration over 'Vorio-Epirus', which I mentioned in the beginning, is already known. Apart from other things, he quarrelled with us, accusing us of allegedly having requisitioned the Greek trucks which were used to transport the Greek refugees and their belongings and demanded that we mobilized our trucks, too, for their needs. It is quite true that we used the Greek trucks to take the Greek refugees to the places allocated to them. We accepted the Greek refugees and sent them to Northern Albania, where, regardless of our own difficulties, we had to supply food for them, that is, to share the bread from our own mouths with them. As to our means of transport, our park of trucks was very small and we needed them to send supplies to all parts of Albania.

«The Greek comrades also criticize us for not giving priority to the unloading of the material aid, such as clothing, food, tents, blankets, etc., which came to our ports for the Greek refugees before they left Albania. This is not true. The aid which came on ships from abroad for the Greek refugees was sometimes stowed under the cargo that came for us. In such cases obviously we had to unload the goods on top first and then those below. It could not be done otherwise; we do not know of any method of unloading a ship beginning from the bottom.

«However, these were minor disagreements which could be overcome, as they were. The decisive questions were those relating to the polit-

ical and military line of the Greek Communist Party during the years of the war, about which I spoke earlier.

«Not only have the Greek comrades not accepted our views and criticisms, but we have the impression that they have taken them amiss, and indeed, in their letter to our Political Bureau some time ago, they make an impermissible and anti-Marxist comparison between our principled views and stands and the views of the Titoites. In their distortion of the views expressed by our delegation about the battle of Vitsi and Gramos, in order to adapt them to their own incorrect reasoning, the Greek leading comrades, in our opinion, have the aim of hiding the mistakes made on their part. We understand the grave moments the leadership of the Greek Communist Party has gone through following the defeat at Vitsi and Gramos, and the sense of frustration and anger which exists among them, but such grave and unfounded charges are unacceptable to us, and they should have been considered and weighed up well before they were made, especially by the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party.

«Following these accusations, which our Political Bureau considered dispassionately, we thought that the departure of the few Greek democratic refugees who were still in Albania had become even more necessary.

«Whether we are right or wrong in these stands and views we have maintained, let Com-

rade Stalin tell us. We are ready to acknowledge any possible mistake and to make self-criticism.»

Comrade Stalin interrupted me saying:

«You must not reject a comrade when he is down.»

«You are right, Comrade Stalin,» I replied, «but I assure you that we have never rejected the Greek comrades. The questions which we raised for discussion had great importance both for the Greek army and for us. The Central Committee of our Party could not permit the Greek Communist Party to have the centre of its activities in Albania, nor could it permit their troops to be organized and trained in our country in order to resume the war in Greece. I have said this, in a comradely way, to Comrade Nicos Zachariades, who had previously asked that the Greek refugees should go to other countries, which in fact is what has happened with the majority of the refugees. The reference was to a limited number of them who were still in our country. We have never raised the question of expelling the Greek refugees from our country. However, apart from the request made by Comrade Nicos himself, that the refugees go to other countries, logic forced us to the conclusion that, in the existing situation, even those who had remained absolutely must leave Albania.

«These were some of the problems which I wanted to raise, and which we have raised both with the Greek comrades and in the letter addressed to you earlier, Comrade Stalin.»

«Have you finished?» Comrade Stalin asked.
«I have finished,» I said.

Then he called on Comrade Zachariades to speak.

He began to defend Varkiza, stressing that the agreement signed there was not a mistake and expounded on this theme. He had expressed these same views to me previously.

In order to explain the reason for the defeat, amongst other things, Zachariades raised the question: «If we had known in 1946 that Tito was going to betray, we would not have started the war against the Greek monarcho-fascists.» Then he added some other «reasons» in order to explain the defeat, repeating that they lacked armaments, that though the Albanians had shared their own bread with the refugees, nevertheless they had raised obstacles, and so on. Zachariades raised some second-rate problems as questions of principle. Then he mentioned our request (which he himself had raised earlier) that those Greek democratic refugees who still remained should also leave Albania. According to him, this put an end to the Greek National Liberation War.

On this occasion, I want to express my impression that Comrade Nicos Zachariades was very intelligent and cultured, but, in my opinion, not sufficiently a Marxist. Despite the defeat they had suffered, he began to speak in defence of the strategy and tactics followed by the Greek Democratic Army, insisting that this strategy and tactics had been correct, that they could not have

acted otherwise. He dwelt at length on this question. Thus, each of us stuck to his own position.

That is what Nicos Zachariades said. He spoke at least as long as I did, if not longer.

Comrade Stalin and the other Soviet leading comrades listened to him attentively, too.

After Nicos, Comrade Stalin asked Mitsos Partsalides:

«Have you any opinion to express on what Comrade Enver Hoxha and Comrade Nicos Zachariades have said?»

«I have nothing apart from what Comrade Nicos put forward,» said Partsalides, adding that they were awaiting the judgement of the Soviet comrades and the Bolshevik Party on these questions.

Then Stalin began to speak in the familiar calm way, just as we have known him whenever we have met him. He spoke in simple, direct, and extremely clear terms. He said that the Greek people had waged a heroic war, during which they had displayed their courage, but that there had also been mistakes.

«As regards Varkiza, the Albanians are right,» Stalin pointed out, and after analysing this problem, added: «You Greek comrades must understand that Varkiza was a major mistake. You should not have signed it and should not have laid down your arms, because it has inflicted great harm on the Greek people's war.

«As regards the assessment of the strategy and tactics you followed in the Greek Democratic

War, although it was a heroic war, again I think that the Albanian comrades are right. You ought to have waged a partisan war, and then, from the phase of this war should have gone over to frontal war.

«I criticized Comrade Enver Hoxha, telling him that he must not reject a comrade when he is down, however, from what we heard here, it turns out that the Albanian comrades have maintained a correct stand towards your views and actions. The circumstances which had been created and the conditions of Albania were such that you could not stay in that country, because in this way the independence of the People's Republic of Albania might have been placed in jeopardy.

«We complied with your request that all the Greek democratic refugees go to other countries and now all of them have been removed. Everything else, including the weapons, ammunition, etc., which the Albanian comrades took from those Greek democratic soldiers who crossed the border and entered Albania, belonged to Albania,» Stalin emphasized. «Therefore, those weapons must remain in Albania,» he said, «because, by accepting the Greek democratic soldiers, even though it disarmed them, still that country endangered its own independence.

«As regards your opinion, according to which, 'If we had known in 1946 that Tito was going to betray, we would not have started the war against the monarcho-fascists', this is wrong,»

Stalin pointed out, «because you must fight for the freedom of the people, even when you are encircled. However, it must be recognized that you were not in a situation of encirclement, because on your northern flank you had Albania and Bulgaria; all supported your just war. This is what we think,» concluded Comrade Stalin and added:

«What do you Albanian comrades think?»

«We accept all your views,» we replied.

«And you Greek comrades, Zachariades and Partsalides, what do you say?»

Comrade Nicos said:

«You have helped us greatly. Now we understand that we have not acted correctly and will try to correct our mistakes,» and so on.

«Very good,» Stalin said. «Then, this matter is considered closed.»

When we all were about to leave, Molotov intervened saying to Nicos Zachariades:

«I have something to say to you, Comrade Nicos. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has received a letter from a comrade of yours, in which he writes that 'Nicos Zachariades is an agent of the British'. It is not up to us to solve this question, but we cannot keep it a secret without informing you about its content, especially when accusations against a leading comrade of the Greek Communist Party are made in it. Here is the letter. What can you say about this?»

«I can explain this matter,» replied Nicos Zachariades, and said: «When the Soviet troops released us from the concentration camp, I reported to the Soviet command with a request to be sent to Athens as soon as possible, because my place was there. Those were decisive moments and I had to be in Greece. At that time, however, your command had no means to transport me. So I was obliged to go to the British command where I asked them to send me to my homeland. The British put me on an aircraft, and that is how I returned to Greece. This comrade considers my return home with the help of the British command as though I have become an agent of the British, which is untrue.»

Stalin intervened and said:

«That's clear. This question is settled, too. The meeting is over!»

Stalin got up, shook hands with all of us in turn and we started to leave. The room was a long one and when we reached the exit door, Stalin called to us:

«Wait a moment, comrades! Embrace each other, Comrade Hoxha and Comrade Zachariades!»

We embraced.

When we were outside, Mitsos Partsalides remarked:

«There is no one like Stalin, he behaved like a father to us. Now everything is clear.»

Thus, the confrontation in the presence of Stalin was over.