

FM REYKJAVIK
TO DESKBY 231000Z FCO
TELNO 015
OF 230935Z JANUARY 91
INFO PRIORITY
INFO

F01 d39/3

REYKJAVIK TELNO 10 (NOT TO ALL): BALTIC STATES: VISIT BY
ICELANDIC FOREIGN MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BRIEFS NORDIC AND NATO HEADS OF MISSION ON THIS VISIT TO THE BALTIC STATES. FAMILIAR ACCOUNT OF EVENTS. BALTS WANT VISITS FROM WEST, CSCE ACTION, CONSIDERATION AT UN, STOP TO AID FOR SOVIET UNION. RECOGNITION ONLY IMPORTANT FOR LANDSBERGIS. HANNIBALSSON GOES ALONG WITH MOST OF THIS. FORTHRIGHT CONDEMNATION OF GORBACHEV.

DETAIL

2. FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO THE BALTIC REPUBLICS JON BALDVIN HANNIBALSSON, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, BRIEFED NORDIC AND NATO HEADS OF MISSION ON 22 JANUARY. HE GAVE A GRAPHIC AND AT TIMES MELODRAMATIC ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE HAD SEEN AND HEARD. MUCH OF HIS BRIEFING, INCLUDING THE REASONS FOR THE LULL AND NON-OCCURRENCE OF THE MILITARY ATTACK IN LATVIA ON 15 JANUARY, CORRESPONDED CLOSELY WITH WHAT WAS REPORTED IN MOSCOW TELNO 129.
3. HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE EVENTS IN VILNIUS ON 13 JANUARY AND IN RIGA ON 15 JANUARY WERE PART OF A PLAN THAT WAS TO LEAD TO THE RESTORATION OF SOVIET CONTROL IN THE BALTIC REPUBLICS. THE PLAN (DOUBTLESS FAMILIAR TO MOSCOW AND THE DEPARTMENT) HAD BEEN DEVISED JOINTLY BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, THE ARMY, THE KGB AND THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR. ITS IMPLEMENTATION WAS TO BE IN THREE STAGES, BEGINNING WITH THE DISCREDITING OF BALTIC LEADERS, FOLLOWED BY THE CREATION OF A SEMBLANCE OF ANARCHY THAT WOULD CULMINATE IN THE INTERVENTION OF THE MILITARY.
4. THE BALTS TOLD HANNIBALSSON THAT THEY WOULD LIKE:
- WESTERNERS, AND IN PARTICULAR PARLIAMENTARIANS AND OFFICIAL DELEGATIONS, TO CONTINUE TO VISIT THEM.
 - APPROPRIATE ACTION TO BE TAKEN AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION FOR ABUSING ITS CSCE COMMITMENTS. CONSIDERATION TO BE GIVEN TO A REDEFINITION OF THE PSD ASPECTS OF THE PARIS CHARTER.
 - STEPS AT THE UN TO RAISE SOVIET BEHAVIOUR AND TO SET UP

A UN SPONSORED CONFERENCE ON THE BALTIC REPUBLICS.
- AN IMMEDIATE END TO FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC AID TO THE SOVIET UNION. THE LATVIANS SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR FARM EQUIPMENT AND FUNDS FOR FURTHERING AGRICULTURAL REFORMS.
- YELTSIN AND THOSE AROUND HIM TO BE REGARDED MORE SERIOUSLY. THEY WERE THE REAL REFORMERS AND NOT GORBACHEV.

ONLY LANDSBERGIS SAW RECOGNITION OF HIS STATE AS A PRIORITY. OTHER BALTS DID NOT BELIEVE THIS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE AT THIS STAGE.
5. HANNIBALSSON WAS HAPPY TO GO ALONG WITH MOST OF THE BALTS' REQUESTS. BUT HE WAS ESPECIALLY KEEN ON THE IDEA OF VISITORS AND ON THE SETTING UP OF A UN SPONSORED CONFERENCE. NATO AND THE EC HAD CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE WITH GORBACHEV AND SHOULD BE USED IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE TO PUT PRESSURE ON HIM. ON GORBACHEV HIMSELF, WHOM HE SAW AS A QUOTE SPENT FORCE UNQUOTE, HE SAID HE BELIEVED SHEVARDNAZE HAD BEEN RIGHT ABOUT HIM. HE SAID HE WOULD GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO THE RECOGNITION OF LITHUANIA BUT THERE WERE MANY PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES TO BE CONSIDERED. HE WAS INCLINED TOWARDS SOME SORT OF INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONNECTION.

COMMENT

6. WHEN HANNIBALSSON TOOK UP THE INVITATION TO VISIT THE BALTIC REPUBLICS, THE POTENTIAL PUBLICITY AND KUDOS (WITH AN ELECTION SOME THREE MONTHS AWAY) WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN LOST ON HIM. FOR ALL THAT THERE IS A GENUINE AND WIDESPREAD INTEREST IN THE FATE OF THE BALTIC REPUBLICS IN ICELAND. THE SYMPATHIES OF POLITICIANS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM LIE WITH THE BALTS. IN THE AFTERMATH OF HANNIBALSSON'S VISIT, THEREFORE, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT HAVE SOUGHT TO OUTDO EACH OTHER ON WHO CAN COME UP WITH THE HARSHEST RESPONSE TO THE SOVIET UNION OVER THE BALTIC. WHILE MOST OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE GULF, WHERE ICELAND HAS LITTLE INFLUENCE OR INVOLVEMENT, THE BALTIC IS PERHAPS SEEN BY MANY ICELANDERS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREEP INTO THE INTERNATIONAL LIMELIGHT. ONE MFA OFFICIAL HAS SUGGESTED TO ME THAT HANNIBALSSON MAY EVEN SEE HIMSELF AS A POTENTIAL MOUTHPIECE FOR THOSE (SUCH AS THE US AND UK) WHO WOULD PREFER NOT TO ANTAGONISE THE SOVIET UNION JUST AT THE MOMENT.

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