

FM REYKJAVIK
TO PRIORITY FCO
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INFO ROUTINE
INFO

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BALTIC STATES: ICELANDIC DEBATE

SUMMARY

1. DEBATE ON THE RECOGNITION OF LITHUANIA CONTINUES. GOVERNMENT ACCUSED OF BACKTRACKING BUT THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS REFUTES THIS. CONCERN THAT ICELAND IS MAKING HERSELF RIDICULOUS.

DETAIL

2. INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LITHUANIA CONTINUES IN ICELAND. THE FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE ALTHING FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, EYJOLFUR KONRAD JONSSON, ONE OF THREE ALTHING MEMBERS WHO VISITED THE BALTIC STATES AT THE WEEKEND, HAS ACCUSED THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF BACKTRACKING OVER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LITHUANIA. ACCORDING TO JONSSON OTHER NORDIC COUNTRIES, NOTABLY DENMARK AND NORWAY, WOULD FOLLOW IF ICELAND GAVE A LEAD.

3. IN RESPONSE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, JON BALDVIN HANNIBALSSON, HAS SAID THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE ISSUE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL LAW. HE HAS REPEATED THE ICELANDIC VIEW (OF THE MFA LEGAL ADVISER) THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS SHOULD FOLLOW THE CONCLUSION OF A QUOTE CONFIRMED TREATY UNQUOTE BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND THE RUSSIAN REPUBLIC WHICH COULD ACT AS A MODEL. ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, THE LITHUANIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE ACCEPTED THIS REASONING. HANNIBALSSON REPEATS THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ICELAND TO AVOID PROVOCATION TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION.

4. REFUTING E K JONSSON'S CLAIM, THE MINISTER, MAKING A PARTY POLITICAL POINT, SAYS THAT JONSSON IS NOT HELPING THE LITHUANIANS BY QUOTE UNFOUNDED INSINUATIONS UNQUOTE THAT ICELAND IS BACKING OFF.

COMMENT

5. SEEN FROM HERE, THERE APPEARS TO BE LITTLE SUBSTANCE IN E K JONSSON'S CLAIM THAT OTHER NORDIC COUNTRIES WOULD FOLLOW WHERE ICELAND LEADS. THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION HERE ON 20 APRIL IS STARTING ALREADY WITH COMPETITION BETWEEN THE IP AND

THE SDP (HANNIBALSSON'S PARTY) TO POSE AS CHAMPIONS OF THE BALTIC STATES. BOTH HANNIBALSSON AND E K JONSSON ARE MUCH GIVEN TO STRIKING POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND MORE OF THE SAME IS TO BE EXPECTED. THORSTEIN PALSSON, THE IP LEADER, HAS ALSO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUSHING THE MINISTER A GOOD DEAL FURTHER ALONG THIS PATH THAN HIS OFFICIALS WOULD LIKE.

6. AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS GROWING CONCERN IN SOME QUARTERS HERE THAT ICELAND IS SIMPLY MAKING HERSELF RIDICULOUS PARTICULARLY TO OTHER NORDIC COUNTRIES BY OFFERING THE BALTIC STATES WHAT SHE CANNOT POSSIBLY DELIVER.

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