

FM REYKJAVIK
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 033
OF 271730Z FEBRUARY 91
INFO PRIORITY
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INFO ROUTINE
INFO ROUTINE

to) WRC 021/1
FOI 0139/15

ICELAND: RECOGNITION OF LITHUANIA

SUMMARY

1. ICELANDIC RECOGNITION OF LITHUANIA LIKELY TO COME SOON. NO REPLY TO ICELANDIC OFFER OF MEETING WITH SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER. OFFER OF REYKJAVIK AS VENUE FOR CONFERENCE ON BALTIC STATES. ICELAND STANDS TO LOSE.

DETAIL

2. THE PUS IN THE MFA, AMBASSADOR THORSTEINN INGOLFSSON, TOLD ME THIS AFTERNOON THAT A DECISION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH LITHUANIA COULD NOT BE DELAYED MUCH LONGER. THE OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT (INDEPENDENCE PARTY) WHO HAD INSPIRED THE ALTHING RESOLUTION OF 11 FEBRUARY AND WHICH HAD SECURED ALMOST UNANIMOUS SUPPORT, WOULD PUT HEAVY PRESSURE ON JON BALDVIN HANNIBALSSON TO ANNOUNCE RECOGNITION BEFORE THE PRESENT ALTHING IS DISSOLVED IN A FORTNIGHT'S TIME.
3. THE ICELANDERS HAD NOW ASKED THE SOVIET UNION FOR A MINISTERIAL LEVEL MEETING IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN THE RESOLUTION, WHICH HAD LED TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR AMBASSADOR FROM REYKJAVIK. DESPITE A REMINDER NO REPLY HAD BEEN RECEIVED. IF THIS WAS NOT FORTHCOMING FORMAL RECOGNITION OF LITHUANIA BY ICELAND WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY FOLLOW. THE ONLY FACTOR WHICH INGOLFSSON THOUGHT MIGHT CAUSE A DELAY WOULD BE ACCEPTANCE BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF REYKJAVIK AS THE VENUE FOR A CONFERENCE WITH LITHUANIA, LATVIA AND ESTONIA TO DISCUSS THE WHOLE BALTIC SITUATION. THIS SUGGESTION HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD BY PRIME MINISTER HERMANNSSON AT A PRESS CONFERENCE DURING THE VISIT LAST WEEK BY SAVISAAR AND MERI OF ESTONIA.
4. INGOLFSSON COMMENTED THAT THE SITUATION LOOKED SERIOUS. ICELAND STOOD TO LOSE AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO BACKPEDDLE FROM THOSE INDUSTRIES AND FIRMS WHICH DEPENDED UPON TRADE WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HE HIMSELF WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC.

3. OTHER COMMENTS WORTH NOTING IN THE STATEMENT SPECIFICALLY REFER TO THE INDEPENDENCE OF LITHUANIA, FIRST RECOGNISED BY ICELAND IN 1922. ICELAND HAS NEVER RECOGNISED THE ANNEXATION BY THE SOVIET UNION. IN ANY CASE, THE SUPREME SOVIET REAFFIRMED LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN DECEMBER 1989 WHEN QUOTE IT DECLARED NULL AND VOID THE MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT ON THE ANNEXATION OF THE BALTIC STATES UNQUOTE.

COMMENT

4. THE STATEMENT IS MORE MEASURED IN TONE THAN RECENT STATEMENTS BY ICELANDIC POLITICIANS AND MEDIA. IT ALSO EMPHASISES INTENSE ICELANDIC INTEREST IN EVENTS IN THE BALTIC REPUBLICS. THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT HERE IS THE CURRENT VISIT BY EMANUEL ZINGERIS, CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE LITHUANIAN PARLIAMENT. ZINGERIS IS MEETING A VARIETY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES. HE HAS BEEN REPORTED WIDELY TODAY (24 JANUARY) AS SAYING QUOTE ICELAND IS OUR WINDOW ON HUMANITY UNQUOTE.

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