



Frásögn af fundi Bjarna Benediktssonar og Mr. G. Knox varðandi norrænu og bandarísku sendinefndanna 11. nóvember.

Bjarni Benediktsson – Stjórnmal – Utanríkisráðherra – Utanríkismál – Mr G Knox – Sendinefndir –
Bandaríkin – Norræn Sendinefnd - 1948

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On Monday, November 11th, Mr. Gordon Knox of the State Department came to see me in my hotel, after having once previously tried to arrange a luncheon appointment with me, which I could not attend owing to a previous engagement. Mr. Knox is an officer of the State Department in Washington and told me that as he had been on a post in Sweden for four years, he had been appointed by the State Department as liaison officer between the Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish Delegations and the United States' Delegation.

Firstly, Mr. Knox asked me if the Icelandic Delegation, in its speech accepting the membership of United Nations, was going to make any reservation in connection with Article 43 of the Charter about military contributions which the Security Council might call for. I asked Mr. Knox what he thought the Swedish Delegation were going to do and he explained that they would make no such reservation. I told him that since Article 43 clearly states that any military contribution is subject to prior agreement with the State concerned, I felt that a reservation was unnecessary and of no importance. However, I mentioned to him that in our speech we would very likely refer to our agreement with the United States in 1941, whereby we freely allowed the United States' military forces to use Iceland for the Allied cause. At the same time we would announce that it had now, in an equally free and friendly way, been abrogated and that it was the desired policy of the Icelandic Government and the Icelandic nation that no foreign military forces should be stationed in Iceland from any nation at any time. Mr. Knox had no objection to this.

Then Mr. Knox mentioned the question about Franco-Spain, and pointed out that there were two motions before the Political Committee:

- (a) From the Polish Delegation that all U.N. members should break diplomatic relations with Franco.
- (b) From the Byelorussian Delegation that all U.N. members should put an embargo on all shipments to Spain.

Mr. Knox said that the U.S. Delegation and the U.K. Delegation were going to oppose both motions on the following grounds:

As regards (b), the question of embargo, he stated that an embargo on shipments to Spain would mean starvation for the Spanish people. He stressed that the U.S. Government was completely opposed to the Franco regime but the American people would not stand for it that the Spanish people were being starved by the United States, from where the flow of food had to come, at the same time as American money and shipments were feeding the people of Yugoslavia. He also pointed out that even if the majority of the United Nations put an embargo on Spain, Argentina might want to help feed the Spanish people and to keep such shipments away from Spain would mean actual naval action by the United States and United Kingdom fleets, which they were not prepared to take.

As regards (a), the breaking of diplomatic relations, the U.S. Government felt that such action would only help Franco inside Spain and would not bring about his ouster.

I then explained to Mr. Knox that if the U.S. and U.K. Governments only opposed these two measures, without any other measures or statements, it would be interpreted that they were actually supporting the Franco regime. Mr. Knox said that was clear to them, so that most likely they would give a definite statement that that was not their intention at all, and he further stated that both the U.S. and U.K. Governments were trying to make it understood to Franco that he should leave Spain immediately and at the same time they would establish a provisional government and try to arrange for political amnesty on both sides. Both of these Governments were most concerned with bringing this about without bloodshed in Spain, and he stated that the underground movement had not the slightest chance of a successful uprising against the Government under the present circumstances. They would simply be slaughtered by the Franco forces. Mr. Knox thought that there were some prospects that the U.S. and U.K. Governments might succeed in this.

I explained that the Icelandic Delegation had not discussed this matter yet, nor had the Icelandic Government given any instructions in the matter.

This question might be difficult for Iceland. Iceland owed its life and sovereignty to democracy and first and foremost would stand for that. We would, therefore, gladly see this dictator ousted and a democratic government established in Spain. On the other hand, for the last four decades, we had

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most important commercial relations with Spain and we would very reluctantly take part in measures that could only bring about bloodshed and confusion in that country. I therefore imagined that Iceland would take stand with those who could assure the ouster of Franco in the smoothest way for the Spanish people, but I stressed that our attitude was entirely undecided and mentioned that the attitude of the other Scandinavian countries might be of some guidance to Iceland. Mr. Knox explained that Norway would take a very firm stand, whereas Denmark and Sweden might be more lenient. Mr. Knox stressed that the attitude of the Northern countries was of the greatest importance for the United States in view of the high esteem that these countries enjoyed as democratic and cultured nations.

I mentioned that this question might be presented in the United Nations in such a way that Iceland might have to abstain from voting. Mr. Knox said that would be understandable but I had the impression that the U.S. Government would much appreciate it if we sided with them.

It now strikes me as a plain thing that we should abstain from voting on breaking diplomatic relations on the simple grounds that we have no diplomatic relations with the Franco Government. As regards the embargo, Mr. Knox further stressed that the starving masses of Spain would be forced to revolt, which would mean that they would be massacred by the Franco military machine and, therefore, military intervention by the United Nations would become inevitable, and he expressed that this might be the solution the Russians wanted.

I finally said to Mr. Knox that the Icelandic Delegation would think the matter over and would contact the Icelandic Government, but I understood that our decision was not required in any hurry. Mr. Knox said he thought the question might come up in Committee around the 22nd of November.

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