



Bréfasafn, nóvember- desember 1949.

Bjarni Benediktsson – Stjórnámál – Utanríkisráðherra – Utanríkismál – Bréf - Guðmundur Grímsson -
Thor Thors - 1949

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LEGATION OF ICELAND
WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

- 2 -

5th November, 1949.

Ga'di vinur,

Then the First Committee will take a proposal about a peace treaty between the five big powers. The American and British have decided to answer the Russian propaganda proposals. They have not decided how their own proposals will be but I was allowed to write down their draft as it was contemplated yesterday and I am enclosing a copy of it. Let me first congratulate you on the elections. The other day when I spoke with Ólafur I said I was not sure if I could congratulate him but he sounded most cheerful and in any case I congratulated him on his personal victory. The same I can do in your case as the result in Reykjavík was favorable and particularly I can congratulate you because more than 80% of the nation endorsed the foreign policy of the three Government parties. That, of course, was most encouraging. However, it remains a fact that Iceland is the only country in Europe where the Communists hold ground and are even able to increase their votes. The fight must therefore go on especially in view of the municipal elections in Reykjavík in January, the outcome of which looms most doubtful.

I can well imagine that it will be difficult to form a new Government and that it will take a long time. I am most anxious to see a new and strong Government established as it will be devastating to Icelandic interests to have the country for a long time in a non-governmental state. It seems to me that the most natural thing would be that the biggest party forms the Government but I am afraid that Framsókn will never agree to that unless on absurd conditions.

I received a letter from Ólafur and he referred me to the article in Morgunblaðið on Sunday, October 30th, from which I can judge in what frame of mind both of you are. It is most unfortunate how weak the Social Democrats are. But let us await developments.

United Nations - I refer to the previous report forwarded and to the enclosed one, regarding the turn of events in the U.N. In the first Committee we are now discussing the Italian Colonies. The sub-committee that worked on this problem for about three weeks proposes that Libya shall become independent and united by January 1st, 1952, that Italian Somaliland shall become independent in ten years and in the meantime be under Italian trusteeship and further that a new Committee of Investigation shall be sent to Eritrea. I expect that this will be approved although only with a small margin owing to opposition to Italian trusteeship, and for us I think there is nothing to do but to follow the recommendations of the Sub-Committee which have the approval of the United States and the U.K.

*Vona
Kosninganna snúist til góðs
Lidi frá stjórnunni*

Then the First Committee will take up the Russian proposal about a peace treaty between the five big powers. The Americans and British have decided to answer the Russian propaganda with counter-propaganda. They have not decided how their ultimate proposal will be but I was allowed to write down their draft as it was contemplated yesterday and I am enclosing a copy of it here. This, however, is not definite and may change as they have been changing their draft several times during the last few weeks.

The American Delegation consulted me some three weeks ago how they should reply to the Russian propaganda and I strongly advised them to put forward a counter proposal in the most acceptable phrases to the most possible number of Delegations and that these proposals should be sponsored by only the U.S. and U.K. There may be some two weeks before this matter comes up before the First Committee and if you have any remarks about the present draft or any ideas you want to put forward, I should like to hear from you. We are having meetings with the Scandinavian Delegations to try to obtain a unified Nordic attitude toward this matter and possibly we will, although we have no intention of interfering in this delicate matter officially as we all agree that this is a fight that has to be fought out by the big powers.

Pjóðviljinn - I noticed that Pjóðviljinn had a friendly article about my fomenting murders in Greece. I have not seen that any declaration has come from the Ministry about this matter and therefore I am sending a short article only explaining what took place and I would greatly appreciate if you would have the Ministry immediately forward this article to all the papers in Reykjavík.

I could, of course, write much more about this matter but I do not have the time nor is it appropriate that I start quarreling with Pjóðviljinn or other papers. That will have to wait till later perhaps.

I have also noticed in Tíminn that among other things they say that I wanted to grant the U.S.A. bases in Iceland for 99 years. Sometime I may go into that matter but at the present I am happy to be out of Icelandic politics. But please have my article forwarded.

I am enclosing three letters regarding the frozen fish, the landings in Germany and grants from ECA, all of which explain my endeavours in these matters recently and particularly during my visit to Washington on November 2nd.

Kosninganna snúist til góts.
Vona að úrslit
Lidi þér atis sem best,
þinn einlaque
Thor Thors

Reykjavík, 10. nóvember 1949.

Góði vinur,

Ég þakka þér bréf þitt frá 5. nóvember.

Því miður fóru kosningarnar ver en skyldi. Samt ekki svo illa, að við höfum undan öðru verulega að kvarta en því, að tilviljanirnar gengu okkur illilega á móti.

Enginn veit nú hvað framundan er og er því sem bezt að segja sem minnst um það.

Almenn stemning er sú, að sterki maðurinn eigi nú að fá að sýna hvað kraftarnir dugi. Ekki skilst mér þó trú á, að honum muni takast að koma neinu saman. Sjálfur skal ég ekkert um það segja á þessu stigi. Ég hef heyrt, að síðasta hugmynd hans sé að fá Alþýðuflokkinn með Framsókn í stjórn og láta kommana vera formlega hlutlaus. Með því mundi stjórn hafa 24 atkvæði, Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn 19 og kommarnir því geta setið hjá við vantraust. Litlar líkur eru taldar á að þetta takist.

Ég skrifa þér í dag bréf og bið þig um að taka þýzkalandssamningana upp við Bandaríkin. Ég ætla ekki að fara mörgum orðum um hve þýðingamikið mál það er fyrir okkur, en einungis biðja þig um að gera það, sem þú fremst megnar til að ná góðum árangri. Vissulega er það þitt verk fremur en allra manna annara, að þýzkalandssamningarnir komust á í fyrstu.

Því miður hefur gengið stíðlega um framkvæmd Keflavíkursamningsins upp á síðkastið. Alveg rangur andi sýnist ríkja þar úti. Í stað þess að Bandaríkjamenn geri sig vinsæla af þeim, sem vinna hjá þeim, hefur raunin nú síðustu mánuði orðið sú, að flestum eða öllum, sem hjá þeim vinna, er illa við þá og bera þeim slæma sögu.

Ég hef rætt um það ítarlega við hinn nýja sendiherra, Lawson, að þessu þurfi að kippa í lag. Hann hefur tekið þessu liðlega, en segir sem satt er, að það taki langan tíma.

Því miður er forusta af hálfu Íslendinga úti á vellinum ekki svo góð sem skyldi. Agnar Kofoed Hansen flugvallastjóri er um sumt röskur maður en því miður ekki fastur í rásinni. Fulltrúi hans á vellinum er Haukur Claessen, beztu piltur en enginn skörungur. Svipað er um aðra íslenska starfsmenn, sem vinna þar úti. Af þessum sökum er erfitt að átta sig á hvað að er og enn erfiðara að fá gögn í hendur til að krefjast umbóta.

Nú vill Agnar Kofoed Hansen fara til Bandaríkjanna og eiga viðræður við ráðamenn í Washington um það, sem af-laga fer. Allt er það harla óákveðið, sem hann segir um þessi efni, eins og vant er. Þó tilnefnir hann nú, að treglega hefur gengið um framkvæmd að þjálfunarsamkomulagi, sem gert var í vor. Það mál höfum við í utanríkisráðuneytinu haft með höndum síðustu vikurnar og ég rætt ítarlega við sendiherra og heg ég trú á, að það komist í lag. Annað, sem hann tilnefnir er, að Bandaríkjamenn séu tregir að borga íslenska

kauptaxta og mun það rétt. Einkum hygg ég það að kenna hans eigin skrifstofu og því, að gögn eru ekki nógu ljóst lögð fram af hans hálfu, til þess að utanríkisráðuneytið geti tekið málið upp sem skyldi.

Aðalatriðið í máli hans er hinsvegar ^{lítt} ~~þó~~, að Bandaríkjamenn sýna of mikinn sýtingsskap og að ráðamenn þarna úti vantar annað hvort vald eða vilja til að hafa málin í því lagi, sem þau þyrftu að vera.

Núverandi ástand dugar ekki og verður okkur öllum til skammar, sem nærri koma.

Það sem á völlin vantar fyrst og fremst nú, hygg ég vera sé góður maður af hálfu Bandaríkjanna með verulegum myndugleik, sem hafi vald og vilja til að reka völlinn á þann veg, að Bandaríkjunum verði til sóma, en ekki til eilífs spillis á sambúð Íslendinga og Bandaríkjamanna.

Svo kann að fara, að við teljum rétt að láta Agnar Kofoed Hansen fara utan og mun það þá sennilega verða bráðlega. Ef þú hefur um það ákveðnar tillögur að gera, þætti mér gott, að þú sendir mér skeyti, eftir lestur þessa bréfs eða íhugun þess. Eins vil ég biðja þig, hvað sem líður komu Agnar Kofoed Hansens, að þú talir við Bandaríkjamenn, sem ráð hafa og þú hefur aðgang að, og brýnir fyrir þeim, hversu núverandi ástand flugvallarins sé athugasvert. Fyrst og fremst skorti á, að þar sé réttur andi af hálfu fulltrúa þeirra úti þar, enda ber öllum saman um, að aðstæður allar hafi stórlega versnað, frá því Lockheed-félagið tók við af AOA, sem áður annaðist rekstur vallarins.

þar sem þetta mál er mjög aðkallandi, vildi ég biðja þig að nota fyrsta tækifærið til að hreyfa því við kunningja þína vestur þar. Ég hef ítarlega rætt það við Mr. Lawson, sem virðist vera velviljaður og almennilegur maður, en gallin er sá að svo skjót skipti á sendiherrum, sem Bandaríkjamenn hafa haft hér að undanfögnu, hljóta að verða mjög til ílls, ekki sízt á slíkum umbrotatímum sem nú.

Ég læt þetta duga í bili. Í United Nation's málin hef ég ekkert til að leggja umfram það, sem þið hafið gert og ræði ég því ekki frekar um þau.

Ég bið kærlega að heilsa Hans Andersen og fjölskyldu þinni allri.

Með bestu kveðjum,

þinn einlægur,

ATION OF ICELAND
WASHINGTON 6. D. C.

12th November, 1949.

Ga'dvinur,

I was very pleased to receive your letter of November 10th, which came to my hands this morning.

I can well believe that no one can predict at the present moment who will form the next Icelandic Government. To me there seems, however, a certain danger that the strong man may succeed in having the Social Democrats join him and the Communists to be neutral. Thus, as you say, he would have 24 votes against 19 and the Communists could abstain in case of a vote of non-confidence in the Government.

I am sure that Gylfi and Hannibal will be eager to bring about such co-operation and I have heard rumours that the party is going to dispose of Stefan Jóhann by making him Minister to Sweden. It is difficult for that party anyhow to resist a radical socialistic programme, which the Communists would welcome as the best plan obtainable towards their aims.

The question seems to be how widely Framsókn would favour this co-operation and also in this case I am afraid that S.I.S. would favour such a programme in order to gain more power and to further their commercial and political interests. Therefore, to me this outlook seems dark and it is, in fact, terrible to think that such a combination might be possible and that Iceland should be governed by a Government leaning on the Communists and absolutely powerless against their claims. I am afraid that we would not under those circumstances be successful in seeking new favours and direct grants in money from the United States. It certainly would be difficult to try to tell the U.S. Government that such a set-up in Iceland was friendly towards the U.S.A. But let us hope that this danger can be averted.

Just for the sake of information, Johannes Bjarnason, son of Bj. Asg., who is here now was telling Hans the other night that Framsókn should form the Government but under the leadership of Eysteinn, and that his father did not expect to be in the Government.

It still seems to me that the most natural solution is that the biggest party forms the Government and it would be most preferable if the two other democratic parties would join in such a co-operation.

But the United States, the United Kingdom and France are all going to launch a big attack on Russia and call them to account for their lack of co-operation inside the United Nations and make them directly responsible for the existence of the two worlds in which we now seem to live.

The U.S. Delegation has hinted to me several times that they would like me to speak, as well as representatives from all the Atlantic Pact nations. Denmark and Norway have decided to speak but the question is whether we should enter the fight. We would please the United States if I delivered a speech friendly towards them, explaining how they had kept their agreements with Iceland and left our country in contradiction to what the Soviet has done in the Baltic countries and inside the Iron Curtain. I would be cautious not to attack the Russians too obviously but, however, the U.S. Delegation and the Government would like to see some teeth in all the speeches.

It seems to me that our foreign policy is crystal clear. We have joined the Atlantic Pact and we are siding with the Western democracies every day here in the United Nations. There would be no alternative but to join the Russian block, which 80% of the Icelandic nation at least has no desire to do. We have nothing to seek from the Russians but we cannot go on asking the Americans for favours if we are shy to stand officially as their friend and make it known to the world that we are on their side and appreciative of their friendship and favours. It is definitely my opinion that the Americans would resent it if we did not speak and it would be difficult for me to explain our silence.

However, I see the present political situation in Iceland and the possibility of a Government where perhaps Hermann would be the foreign minister. But still, the question is to be or not to be for or against the United States and we must take the consequences of this. I will think this matter over more thoroughly tomorrow and may ask you to call me one of the next days, primarily on account of this matter. I will be in a better position to judge the situation after hearing Vyshinsky's and Austin's speeches on Monday and perhaps also McNeil's.

There is no doubt that the U.S. draft resolution will be approved by some 50 votes against the usual 5 or 6.

Lid þeir atid sem best,

Þinn vinlega

Þorhórs

LEGATION OF ICELAND
WASHINGTON 6. D. C.

21. nóvember, 1949.

Hr. utanríkisráðherra
Bjarni Benediktsson,
Reykjavík.

Góði vinur:

Pakka bréf þitt frá 10. þ.m., sem mér barst þann 12. Í þessum pósti er formlegt bréf um Þýzkalandssamningana, og hefi eg að svo stöddu litlu við það að bæta. Eg sé þó mikla erfiðleika framundan í þessu máli, því að Þjóðverjarnir vilja vera sjálfum sér nógir. Hver á líka að borga fyrir þá, eða með hverju eiga þeir sjálfir að borga? Þetta verður allt að skýrast nánar áður en vitað er, hvert beri að beina árásinni.

Keflavíkurflugvöllur. Eg skýrði Hulley frá hinni miklu óánægju, sem ríkir og magnast út af framkomu Ameríkanana í Keflavík, og eg las fyrir honum nokkrar velvaldar klausur úr bréfi þínu. Var Hulley alveg sammála um það, að einhvernvegin yrði að ráða bót á þessu, og bað mig við tækifæri að skrifa sér aide-memoire, og skyldi hann byrja að vinna að málinu, en við síðan halda fund um það eftir að eg kæmi til Washington.

Af blöðunum sé eg, að Hermannisterka hefir verið falin stjórnarmyndun. Gjöri eg ráð fyrir, að það sé að yfirlögðu ráði til þess að láta hann springa á því. Þó óttast eg, að unnt sé að búa til nógu illkvitnislegt prógram til þess að bæði sósar og kommar komist ekki undan því að fallast á það, eða jafnvel að kommarnir fagni því. Það þarf ekki að segja annað en "drepa skal sjálfstæðisflokkinn og alla sjálfstæðismenn". Á þetta gætu þeir rauðu fallizt og að eg held, allur framsóknarflokkurinn. Spurningin er aðeins þora þeir að horfast í augu við erfiðleikana? Hafa þeir fundið ráð til að bjarga atvinnulífinu? Eg býst við að á þessu muni stánda.

Vandinn færist þá aftur aðallega yfir á sjálfstæðisflokkinn, og veit eg að þið verðið menn til þess að leysa vandann og afla ykkur nægilegs stuðnings til þess.

Eg sendi þér hér með ýmsar ræður, sem haldnar hafa verið í pólitísku nefndinni út af hinni svokölluðu "friðartillögu" Rússanna, sem vitanlega reyndist propaganda tillaga og ekært annað. Eg vil einkum vekja athygli þína á mjög sterkri ræðu Ambassador Austin, sem talaði strax á eftir Vyshinsky. Mikið má nota úr þeirri ræðu í blaðagreinum. Sama máli gildir um ágæta ræðu, sem McNeil flutti og fróðlega árás Júgóslavans, því að margt kemst upp, þegar hjú fara að deila á fyrri húsbændur. Ennfremur sendi eg þér snotra ræðu, sem Alsing Andersen flutti fyrir hönd Dana nýlega út af þessu máli. Lange kom frá Noregi í gær, og mun tala í þessari viku. Það fer svo að allar þjóðir Atlantshafssáttmálans tala, og er þá hreinasta skömm og ræfilsháttur fyrir okkur að þegja, enda væri það mjög illa séð af bæði Bandaríkjunum og Bretum, sem mundu líta niður á okkur sem óverðuga samherja. Eg hefi því samið ræðu fyrir nokkru, og mun eg flytja hana á morgun. Reyni eg þar að lýsa vinnu okkar í garð Breta og Bandaríkjanna, og að vegna trausts okkar á þeim höfum við tekið þátt í Atlantshafsbandalaginu, sem sé varnarbandalag. Er það mjög svipað því, sem þú sagðir í Washington við undirskrift sáttmálans. Eins og þú sérð, fer eg mjög hóflega í það að styggja Rússana, en kemst þó ekki hjá því að lýsa ótta okkar vegna landvinningsbróts þeirra. Eg vona að þið getið fellt ykkur við þessa ræðu. Eg tel hana óumflýjanlega. Verst er, ef Finnbogi Rútur skyldi vera orðinn utanríkisráðherra um það bil, sem eg sendi ræðuna heim í íslenskri þýðingu. Mundi þá líklega ræðan og eg verða samferða heim í sama póstpokanum, þ.e.a.s. ef Finnbogi mætti ráða, sem virðist aðal utanríkisérfræðingur hinna rauðu.

Eg sendi þér hér með útdrátt, sem tekinn var af símtali,

sem Magnús Vignir átti við ECA í Washington hinn 17. nóvember út af sölu frysta fisksins og þorskalýsinu til Þýzkalands. Það er eftirtektarvert einnig, að þýzkir innflytjendur láta í veðri vaka, að þeir vilji engan samning gera um fisklandanir árið 1950. Hinsvegar bjóða þeir íslenzku togurunum að sigla til Þýzkalands og selja fiskinn á uppboði. Vonandi reynist þetta misskilningur.

Bestu Kveðjur,

þinn einlegur

Þú Þórs

LEGATION OF ICELAND
WASHINGTON 6. D. C.

Sandi þetta til af-rles þra
og athugasemur. Hvað er að hirta
af því. Vona þin hversist þraitt.
Bjarnar

26th November, 1949.

God. vinnu

I am enclosing an Icelandic translation of the speech I sent you the other day about the Russian proposal and which I delivered in the Political Committee on November 22nd.

I am also enclosing Vyshinsky's remarks. He attacked everybody that he mentioned but mostly he went after the representatives from Chile and Lebanon, whom he accused of being everything from fools to gangsters.

I am also enclosing the remarks of the Polish delegate. As both mentioned military bases in Iceland, I thought it right to make a statement about our agreement with the Americans on the Keflavik airfield, which I did yesterday morning. This is enclosed, together with an English translation.

I leave it to you to decide if you want to publish my speech but I definitely desire to translate it myself, as I have seen such idiotic translations of my speeches by Bjarni Guðmundsson and I do not want to run such a risk in this respect.

The Americans and British, as well as the Scandinavians and India and many other friends have congratulated me on my interference. However, I feel that the Danes and the Swedes are a little jealous because Vyshinsky did not find their speeches worth replying to.

Handwritten notes at the top of the page, including the name "Bjarni" and some illegible text.

26th November, 1949.

Tonight I shall have to go to an Icelandic meeting and make a speech, so I must get prepared for that.

Will write soon again.

With kindest regards.

Blessed

from Lind.

Thor Thor

Faint, mostly illegible typed text forming the main body of the letter, including phrases like "the Political Committee on November 22nd" and "military bases in Iceland".

LEGATION OF ICELAND
WASHINGTON 6. D. C.

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3rd December, 1949.

God vinnur
You will remember that for the first quarter of the finance year from 1st July, 1949, to 1st July, 1950, we were You will find enclosed two letters to the Ministry, one about the landings in Germany and the other about ECA. About the landings in Germany, I understand that you will soon be sending a trade delegation and I am very much interested in being informed about the proceedings. I explained very distinctly to Mr. Perkins the importance of the matter for us and he was quite definite in his promise to assist us. However, he stated that the tactics to be followed must be decided on by McCloy and his men in Germany, who knew best how to deal with the Germans. Let us hope that favorable results can be reached in these negotiations. I also stressed the importance of immediate action regarding the landing of 5 to 7 thousand tons during the present month and I shall ask Hulley on Monday what has happened.

Regarding ECA, I was very happy that we are getting \$5 million as a grant, whereas only \$2 million have to be a loan. This is an exceptionally favorable proportion between grants and loan. I trust to hear from you about your desires regarding the use of the outstanding amount before I approach ECA again after the middle of December.

3rd December, 1949.

Good news
You will remember that for the first quarter of the finance year from 1st July, 1949, to 1st July, 1950, we were allotted \$2.2 million and for the second quarter \$2.7 million, or a total of \$4.9 million. Thus there remains \$2.1 million until the first of July, 1950. I understand, however, that we have only used \$2.5 million and therefore we have not disposed of approximately \$4.5 million. It is almost too good to be true that Olafur is forming a Government with his friends only. I am very sorry to hear that he has been ill. I hope he will soon recover and that the new Government will already be announced by the time this letter reaches you. I cannot wait, however, to congratulate you and I am very happy that you will continue as Foreign Minister.

regarding the landing of 5 to 7 thousand...
present south and I shall ask Hulley on Monday what has happened.

*Bestu kvæður
þinn eirl.*

Regarding ECA, I was very happy that we are...
\$5 million as a grant, whereas only \$2 million have to be a loan. This is an exceptionally favorable proportion between grants and loan. I trust to hear from you about your desires regarding the use of the outstanding amount before I approach ECA again after the middle of December.

Thorhildur

CHAMBERS OF
GUDMUNDUR GRIMSON
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

State of North Dakota

SUPREME COURT

BISMARCK

December 13, 1949.

Hon. Bjarni Benediktsson,
Foreign Minister,
Eiriksgata 19,
Reykjavik, Iceland.

My dear Sir:

May I, even at this late date, express my appreciation and thanks for the entertainment and kind treatment you showed us on our visit to Iceland last summer. Only rush of work occasioned by my promotion to the Supreme Court of North Dakota shortly after my return has caused my delay. I could not, however, go through a Christmas Season when thoughts return to friends and good will without expressly thinking of the many friends and much good will shown us on that visit. Nowhere in our life have we been shown so much good will and honor.

We were delighted with the people we met, with the knowledge we gained of Iceland, of its progress and high standard of living. We congratulate you especially on your conduct of its foreign affairs. We hope that you may continue to handle them in the future.

We have had many occasions and have been very happy to tell people here of Iceland and its importance in world affairs.

I hope that on some of your visits to the United States you will have the time to make the journey westward and give us the opportunity to show you something of the Icelandic settlements here.

Mrs. Grimson joins me in extending you and your wife our very best regards and best wishes for the Holiday Season and always.

Sincerely yours,

Gudmundur Grimson

G. Grimson.

GG/dw.

CHAMBERS OF
GUDMUNDUR GRIMSON
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

State of North Dakota
SUPREME COURT
BISMARCK

December 29, 1949.

Hon. Bjarni Benediktsson
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Reykjavik, Iceland.

My dear Friend:

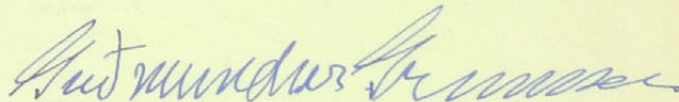
Just before Christmas I learned of the formation of the new Cabinet in Iceland. I was especially glad to see you retained as Foreign Minister. I congratulate you and the Icelandic nation upon that. I note that you are also in charge of the Department of Justice and many related matters. You will certainly have your hands full. I think, however, that your administration of justice is much simpler and more effective than our methods.

To my mind your administration of foreign affairs have been very fortunate for Iceland and it is well for all concerned that you continue in charge thereof.

I hope that even if this new Cabinet has only the support of a minority in the Althing enough members of the other parties will have the interest of Iceland at heart above everything else and will join with you in solving the difficulties that lie ahead.

Wishing you and your family a Very Happy New Year, I am,

Sincerely yours,



G. Grimson

GG-mjh