

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 26, 1968
Time: 4:30 pm
Place: Assistant Secretary's Office.

SUBJECT: Danish Government Request for Public Information on Thule Flights

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Torben Rønne, Embassy of Denmark
Mr. Johannes Føns Buhl, Second Secretary, Embassy of Denmark
Assistant Secretary John M. Leddy, EUR
Mr. David H. McKillop, Country Director, SCAN
Mr. Eugene Klebenov, Country Desk Officer, SCAN

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Ambassador Rønne opened the meeting by stating that Acting Prime Minister Krag had held a meeting earlier in the day with the chairmen of the Danish political parties. He said that a meeting of the Committee on Foreign Relations had been scheduled for January 24 but had been canceled because the January 23 elections had caused many committee members to be out of Copenhagen on the 24th. Dr. Fischer, Secretary General of the Foreign Office, had subsequently proposed a meeting of the Acting Prime Minister, the Acting Foreign Minister and the Acting Defense Minister with the party chairmen. Acting Minister for Greenland Affairs Jensen also attended.

Ambassador Rønne said that Acting Foreign Minister Tabor had given the chairmen all the information that he had on the B-52 crash at Thule, starting with the January 21 notification and carrying on to the latest information received. Ambassador Rønne said that because of the present uncertain political situation, the party chairmen were reluctant to make comments on the matter now. All of the chairmen, however, expressed the need for detailed information from the U.S. Krag had ended the meeting by stating that if the information received from Washington were not sufficient and satisfactory, he would send the Acting Foreign Minister to Washington.

Ambassador Rønne said that Krag's statement underscored the high degree of concern among the Danes. The Ambassador said that when he spoke with Dr. Fischer he had asked if the public concern in Denmark

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on this matter had abated. Dr. Fischer replied that, on the contrary, concern was growing. Ambassador Rønne said that what was needed was a small bit of information daily. Mr. Leddy suggested that with 40 journalists now at Thule, the flow of information should increase. As an example of the sort of announcement needed, Ambassador Rønne proposed a statement to the effect that there had been no B-52s in Greenland since the crash, or that those B-52s reportedly seen by Danes in Greenland had non-nuclear functions.

Ambassador Rønne said that Dr. Fischer had stressed the need for a response to the request made two days earlier and had said that such a response is in the common interest of our two countries. Dr. Fischer had also pointed out that the Danish question was not a difficult one; that there are worse questions that might have been asked. Dr. Fischer had ended his conversation by stating that if the U.S. can't or won't answer, or if the U.S. answer is unsatisfactory, the incoming Government of Denmark will have to consider taking very serious steps.

In answer to Mr. Leddy's question, the Ambassador said that he did not know when the new Government would be formed. He thought January 28 was the earliest possible date for a new government. He thought it likely that there would be a three-party government. The King, he said, had asked Radical Liberal Party spokesman Baunsgaard to form a government. There are, he noted, problems regarding cooperation between the Radical Liberals and the Conservatives. The Ambassador thought that there were two possible ways for a Baunsgaard government. One was a three-party majority government (Radical Liberals-Conservatives-Moderate Liberals). The second possibility was that of a minority government of the Moderate Liberals and the Radical Liberals which would govern with Conservative support. Ambassador Rønne explained that Baunsgaard had been asked to form a government because of the large gains scored by his party. The Ambassador added that he doubted that the choice of a new government would influence the matter under discussion between our two Governments.

Mr. Leddy asked if the Ambassador could meet with him at noon on January 27.

Ambassador Rønne said that he would be able to attend such a meeting and that he would call Copenhagen. He again stressed that his Government's need was only for a small amount of public information daily. He said such information was needed to stop the speculation then going on in Denmark. He added that he hoped not to be instructed to go higher in the Department; that we should be able to settle the matter without going to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Mr. Leddy agreed and pointed out that Mr. Rostow was very busy at the moment with the USS Pueblo seizure.

Ambassador Rønne said that the essential information needed was a statement on B-52s in Greenland, both before and after the crash, with a description of their non-nuclear purpose. He said that 1,000 Danes in Thule have seen these planes. The Ambassador asked if we couldn't say they were radar planes or in some other way demonstrate that there were no atomic weapons connected with the operation of Thule.

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