

## Socialism in Iceland

Iceland is, after England, the largest island in Europe, but its population amounts to only 100,000. About a thousand years ago there was a population twice as large, but famine, earthquakes, epidemics, eruptions of volcanoes and the tyranny of foreigners (Danes) resulted in the fact that in 1783 there were only 18,000 inhabitants left on the island. No wonder that a people which had endured so much became stubborn and conservative. In spite of all this, literature flourished in Iceland and the Icelanders were always a cultural people, one of the most cultured peoples of Europe. Conservative and nationalist traditions are very firmly embedded in the environment of the Icelandic population, as the majority of them are descendants of immigrant Norman and Celtic aristocrats and heads of tribes. The Icelanders considered themselves the best and noblest nation in the world, because they were able to preserve the Old Scandinavian language, while the other Scandinavians, not proving able to preserve themselves against foreign and often harmful influences, forgot it.

In the beginning of the present century some young Icelandic idealists became imbued with socialist ideas in Denmark. Their preaching of socialism and communism, however, had no success in Iceland. Coming up against the fanatically-minded, the patriots, they suffered defeat.

Several years ago the workers in the towns and villages began to organise themselves, but their activity had nothing in common with socialism. All their politics, efforts and energy were exclusively directed against the Danish rule. They demanded independence and self-determination.

decided to raise the banner of socialism. They organised from the trade unions and workers' associations the United Labour Union of Iceland (Altusdusamband), and began to publish their own weekly paper. This did not have any particular influence, but all the same thanks to it the Union received several seats in some local councils.

In 1917 was founded the Socialist Federation (Jafnadarmannafielky). Its purpose was the guidance of the policy of the Labour Union. A large number of the members of the Federation were simultaneously members of the Union also. Financial difficulties arose for us, and members of the party of separatists (nationalists) fought against us as traitors and even demanded judgement on us for high treason.

It has not been possible in the last year to count the number of our members, but I think that without exaggeration it can be taken roughly as about four to five thousand. Taking into consideration the fact that the party has been in existence only five years, I think that this is a satisfactory result.

In October 1919 we founded a daily paper and some of the leaders of the party gave up their last money for the creation of the necessary fund. I should think that now (I left Iceland on June 20th) the paper is being printed in an edition of 2,000 copies. In addition, we publish a weekly paper in Akureyri, the chief town of the Northern coastal region. We have to struggle with money difficulties, and we fear that for this reason it will be necessary to discontinue the publication of the daily paper.

The organisations of Iceland do not belong to any International, but the Socialist Federation, at any rate, is revolutionary-minded, and its organ is fully communistic.

talism in Iceland is becoming stronger and stronger, and we lose votes at nearly every election.

Nevertheless, we hope for better times. When revolution breaks out in England, we too will raise the red banner of the revolutionary proletariat.

In the name of my Icelandic comrades I bring to their Russian comrades gratitude for the victory which they have gained. We are in complete and unconditional sympathy with you and with our communist comrades all over the world. Long live world revolution.

Kh. Simsen-Ottosson.

Moscow, July 28th, 1920.

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