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Bjarni Benediktsson – Stjórnmal – Ræður – Blaðgrein – North Atlantic Community - 1957

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Iceland is a small country sparsely populated. This ~~small~~ ^{though small in number,} people have through the centuries had their own culture and a strong feeling ^{of} for independence. For many centuries Denmark had sovereignty over the island but according to an agreement in 1918 Iceland got its independence and right to sever the remaining ties with Denmark unilaterally in 1944, if the population so decided. In conformity with that ^{agreement} the republic was constituted in 1944.

The British occupied the country in May 1940 and in 1941 an agreement was made with ^{the} U. S. A. about the military protection of the country, during the war. Until the war most people in Iceland had thought very little about the strategic importance of the country. The realities helped them to a new understanding but of course all people thought or at least hoped, that the foreign troops, both British and Americans, would leave the country, when the war was over.

The British went away but in 1945 the Americans asked for a lease of certain bases for 99 years. This

was done against the strong advice of the ^{then} Prime minister and other responsible politicians, who were consulted. As they had ^{but since then} fortold the request was declined ~~and later~~ on some people have always pointed to this request and said, that there the Americans had shown their true intentions.

In 1946 a temporary agreement was made which allowed the Americans ^{a limited} use of the Kéflavik-airfield. That agreement fell out of force when the defence agreement of 1951 was ^{reached} ~~done~~.

When Iceland signed the The North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 it was stated by the then foreign minister, that it neither had nor could have an army and its participation in the pact showed that ^{IN CASE OF A NEW WAR IT WANTED ARRANGEMENTS MADE SIMILAR} ~~it wanted similar arrangements in case of a new~~ ^{TO THOSE REACHED UNDER} ~~war as were according to~~ the agreement of 1941 with the U. S.A. over the military protection of Iceland. This implied, that no military forces were contemplated inside the country in peacetime.

The Korea-war ^{so} changed the situation ^{that} ~~so~~ the defense-agreement with the U.S.A. was made in May

2. 1
1951. It has since been in force and the resolution of the Althing (Icelandic Parliament) of March 28th 1956 and declaration of the Government formed in July the same year that the military forces should go away has never been carried out, although the ~~official position is~~ ^{some maintain} that the resolution is only in abeyance. *The official position to this is in fact not quite clear.*

As may be seen the position in Iceland is in some ways unique. Just when a small, formerly isolated nation, gets its full independence, which it had strived for through a century, ^{it} it must suddenly take in a number of foreign troops. Even if that number is not high it is so in relation to the small population of the country.

Some incidents are bound to happen both with girls and in drunken brawls ^{and} they are inflated out of all proportion by a relatively strong communist or communist dominated party (about 20% of the votes ^{which} which has been approximately ^{unchanged} ~~the same~~ since before the American question arose). A flow of money comes with the Americans, chiefly from the military

installations they are constructing. This has a good side but also a bad side. Inflation grows and it is sometimes difficult to get people to do work necessary for the life of the country. All this is used against the Americans. Also well intentioned people who worked for the American [△] out at their ~~six~~ chief base, found them high-handed and did not like the inevitable feeling of the Americans that they ^{DID NOT THINK} ~~thought not~~ Iceland the most desirable country of all to live in.

The Icelanders are immensely ^E proud of their country and culture and ^{many} do not ~~realise~~ realise ^{they think} that neither is so universally known as it ought to be. At the same time this is the first generation ^{that} ~~who~~ has to think about foreign affairs - except ^{for} the former quarrel with Denmark - and to realise that international happenings have something to do with Iceland. The problems now are therefore quite new and there is no old tradition in those matters to follow.

Of course the overwhelming majority ^{abhors} the thought of the Russians ^{OVER} ~~over~~ taking the country

But some - not all left-wingers - say; Why do you talk of the Russian danger? It is far a way, but here on the spot we have the Americans, they have already forced their way into our country, and it is their influence that is the great danger.

It is also pointed out, that the Russians and other nations behind the iron curtain are good customers of Iceland, while the Americans are indifferent and the British for a time put a ban on our fish - practically our only export.

In fact there is ^{CAUSE TO} ~~no~~ wonder, that ~~not~~ more difficulties have ^{NOT} arisen out of the defence-agreement of 1951. It was a forgone conclusion~~ed~~ that the supporters of the resolution of March 28th 1956 would together get the majority of votes in the general election of June 1956. This was obvious from the structure of Icelandic politics. No party has in modern times even~~d~~ got a majority of the votes. And this question was only one of many at the elections. The remarkable thing is that the only party, which was against the resolution~~x~~ was the one ^{that} ~~who~~ gained chiefly in votes. It increased from 37,1% in 1953 to

42,4% in 1956. Many other reasons were involved, but it is noteworthy that the gain was most in the close neighbourhood of the chief American Base at Keflavik. ~~Of course the Americans did not interfere - nor would their interference have helped anybody but their opponents - but at least~~ ^{This} the result showed, that anti-Americanism ^{did} ~~was~~ not prevail among those, who had most to do with them.

One of the reasons the present Government - including the communists - did not carry ~~our~~ out their declarations of fullfilling the resolution of March 28th no doubt was, ~~that they~~ knew that even before the happenings of Hungary it was against the wishes of ^{many of their supporters} the large majority of the people and feared the resulting dissatisfaction.

therefore the Government.

Nobody wants foreign troops inside his own country, but even some of those, who talk ~~like as if~~ ^{wanted to} they ~~could~~ get the Americans away, would not in reality stand for it, in the present situation if they had themselves to make the decision. This does

most critical

see

not at all mean, that the resolution of March
 28th '56 may not be carried out at the ~~most~~ ^{most critical (?)}
 moment. In the present political setup the
 Communists are in a ~~log~~ ^{heavy} position of the Government,
 but they have already got the promise that the
 troops shall go away, and it is impossible to
 say, ~~if~~ ^{WHETHER} they will, when they so decide, be able to
 get that promise fulfilled or not.

But if the pro-Western parties, which between
 them have about 75% of the votes, could again
 agree on a common foreign policy as they did from
 1949-1956, Anti-americanism would be of very little
 importance in the country, as the last elections
 showed that it ~~is~~ has a very limited appeal to
 the voters.

But of course the Americans must show tact,
 they must educate their own men about the country
 they are being sent to, they must try to understand
 the peculiarities of the situation. This ought to be
 easy, because they have already to a large extent

been successful, not least because in my
experience ~~the~~ ^{their} ~~Government,~~ ^{OFFICIALS} the representatives of the
most powerful of all states, have always met the
Icelanders ^{, REPRESENTING} ~~the~~ smallest of all inde-
pendent nations, as equals.

That is the reason ~~x~~ why anti-americanism
has no serious roots in Iceland.

Iceland is a small country sparsely populated. This people, though small in number, have through the centuries had their own culture and a strong feeling of independence. For many centuries Denmark had sovereignty over the island, but according to an agreement in 1918 Iceland got its independence and right to sever the remaining ties with Denmark unilaterally in 1944, if the population so decided. In conformity with that agreement the republic was constituted in 1944.

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The British went away, but in 1945 the Americans asked for a lease of certain bases for 99 years. This was done against the strong advice of the then Prime minister and other responsible politicians who were consulted. As they had foretold the request was declined, but since then some people have always pointed to this request and said that there the Americans had shown their true intentions.

In 1946 a temporary agreement was made which allowed the Americans a limited use of the Keflavik-airfield. That agreement fell out of force when the defence agreement of 1951 was reached.

When Iceland signed the The North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 it was stated by the then foreign minister, that it neither had nor could have an army and its participation in the pact showed that in case of a new war it wanted arrangements made similar to those reached under the agreement of 1941 with the U.S.A. over the military protection of Iceland. This implied, that no military forces were contemplated inside the country in peacetime.

The Korea-war so changed the situation, that the defense-agreement with the U.S.A. was made in May 1951. It has since been in force and the resolution of the Althing (Icelandic Parliament) of March 28th 1956 and declaration of the Governⁿment formed in July the same year, that the military forces should go away has never been carried out, although some mainⁿ-tain that the resolution is only in abeyance. The official position to this is in fact not quite clear.

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The Icelanders are immensely proud of their country and culture and many do not realise, that neither is so universally known as they think it ought to be. At the same time this is the first generation that has to think about foreign affairs - except for the former quarrel with Denmark - and to realise that international happenings have something to do with Iceland. The problems now are therefore quite new and there is no old tradition in those matters to follow.

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have not arisen out of the defence-agreement of 1951. It was a forgone conclusion, that the supporters of the resolution of March 28th 1956 would together get the majority of votes in the general election of June 1956. This was obvious from the structure of Icelandic politics. No party has in modern times even got a majority of the votes. And this question was only one of many at the elections. The remarkable thing is, that the only party which was against the resolution was the one, that gained chiefly in votes. It increased from 37,1% in 1953 to 42,4% in 1956. Many other reasons were involved, but it is noteworthy, that the gain was most in the close neighbourhood of the chief American Base at Keflavik. This result showed that anti-Americanism did not prevail among those, who had most to do with them. *Americans*.

One of the reasons the present Government - including the *Communist*s - did not carry out their declarations of fulfilling the resolution of March 28th no doubt was, that even before the happenings of Hungary it was against the wishes of many of their supporters and therefore the Government feared the resulting dissatisfaction.

Nobody wants foreign troops inside his own country, but even some of those who talk as if they wanted to get the Americans away would not in reality stand for it in the present situation if they had themselves to make the decision. This does not at all mean, that the resolution of March 28th '56 may not be carried out at the most critical moment. In the present political setup the Communists are in a key position of the Government, they have already got the promise, that the troops

shall go away, and it is impossible to say whether they will, when they so decide, be able to get that promise fulfilled or not.

But if the pro-Western parties which between them have about 75% of the votes, could again agree on a common foreign policy as they did from 1949-1956, ~~Anti-Americanism~~ would be of very little importance in the country as the last elections showed, that it has a very limited appeal to the voters.

But of course the Americans must show tact, they must educate their own men about the country they are being sent to, they must try to understand the peculiarities of the situation. This ought to be easy, because they have already to a large extent been successful, not least because in my experience their Government officials, the representatives of the most powerful of all states, have always met the Icelanders, representing the smallest of all independent nations, as equals.

That is the reason why ~~anti-Americanism~~ has no serious roots in Iceland.

20/8, 1957

Mr. Ladislav CERYCH,
Executive Secretary
Conference on North Atlantic Community
College of Europe
Bruges, Belgium
Secrétariat: Naaldenstr., 22A
B e l g i e .

Dear Sir,

Enclosed I send you the paper on anti-americanism in Iceland you asked me to write. I have been rather busy, but I hope this is not too unlike what you had in mind. If you send copies to the participants of the Conference I hope you correct mistakes in language and type-writing.

Your sincerely