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I have been trying to describe the influence of your
Declaration of Independence for all of us especially here in Iceland.
My conclusion is this that the best teacher of all, human experience
has shown, that mankind never has designed a better rule of
government than the famous words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".

But we must always remember that those are not only beautiful words but a declaration which claims more from those who adhere to it than any other form of government. He who believes in freedom must not only stand on his own freedom, he must also support the freedom of others - also from his own will-, he must remember that formal freedom is not enough, he must help to shape the facts of life in such a way that every human being can in reality enjoy his life, his liberty and pursue his happiness according to his own will inside the rule of law.

All this is not an easy task and no nation has yet been able to fulfill it completely, but our aim must be high. The better we show our will in deeds the better we convince others of our sincerity and in this fight for freedom there is no place for laggards nor neutralists. It is a fight for the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of all of us, either we belong to the smallest or most powerful nation on earth.

Honourary President,
Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

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F.

I extend a warm welcome to all our foreign guests on their visit to this country, where we Icelanders have now been living for almost eleven hundred years. During these centuries we have had our material ups and downs, and for a long time we were subject to the rule of others. But despite our smallness, and limited economic resources most of the time, the people always retained a feeling of separate nationality and fostered a strong sense of liberty. Now this longing for political freedom has found its fulfilment. And even though we Icelanders may disagree internally over our aims and aspirations, we are all agreed that we must never again lose our independence.

It may be expected that people will ask whether a nation consisting of a ^{only} ~~mere~~ two hundred thousand individuals can really maintain an independent society and state, particularly in a country as extensive in size, and in many ways as challenging as, Iceland. The best answer to that is: seeing is believing. Thus it is a source of particular pleasure for us that so many influential people as are gathered here today should make a visit to our shores and become acquainted with the fact that we have, in spite of various shortcomings, succeeded in creating and maintaining a society which can stand comparison with that of other western nations.

It must be admitted that one of the reasons why we can keep up a standard of living comparable to that of other countries in Western Europe is that we have never spent our financial resources on military needs, not even for the defence of our own country. There is a number of explanations for this, not least that in earlier times the location of the country, its distance from others, out in the middle of a vast ocean, far from the highways of the seas, was its best form of defence. But these are conditions of the past. The hard reality of present day life is that our numbers are so small that our own defensive potential would, in isolation, be of little value if the country became the subject of aggression. On the other hand, the events of World War II gave unmistakable proof ~~to~~^{of} the strategic importance of this island, and nothing has since occurred which in any way serves to diminish this. On the contrary. As a consequence we Icelanders, no more than others, cannot avoid taking measures to ensure the security and defence of our country, as indeed is the duty of all sovereign states.

Immediately following the War, we hoped that such security could be achieved through membership in the United Nations. Experience soon showed this to be a false hope, and as a result we became one of the signatory states of the North Atlantic Treaty. I considered it then and still

consider it today - a great personal honour to have signed the Treaty on behalf of my country.

Of course many things have changed in the world during the almost twenty years that have gone by since the North Atlantic Treaty was signed. And of course the member-states will want to re-examine their attitude towards the Treaty when the twenty year tenure of membership approaches completion. The Treaty itself provides for this. But it can hardly be a subject of disagreement that the North Atlantic Treaty has achieved the principal aim which it set out to accomplish, namely that of securing peace in the Treaty area. Not only has it succeeded in this, but also in reducing the tension which was previously so apparent in Europe. Despite persistent uncertainties, considerable progress has been witnessed recently in reducing hindrances of communications between the countries of the whole of Europe, and mutual understanding is growing, step by step. There is particular reason to rejoice over the growing co-operation, and now the successful conclusion of direct agreements, between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, for the welfare of us all depends upon what possibilities exist for co-operation between these mighty powers. The improved outlook in our area is all the more noteworthy for the fact that the third quarter of the 20th century has rightly been called a time of unparalleled and almost continuous violence,

during which wars have been waged repeatedly. There can be no doubt that the security and balance of power, which the North Atlantic Treaty has created, is a major factor in the more successful turn of events in the area.

This does not necessarily mean that the Treaty should prevail for ever, and even less that all changes in its structure are out of the question. But it would be very unwise to abolish it, or for countries to give up membership of it, unless and until some better alternative were offered to take its place. And it would be still more disastrous and misguided if someone had the idea, after the bitter experiences of two world wars, both of which were caused by internal conflicts in Europe and initial lack of concern by the United States, that it would be possible to solve questions of security for Europe in the foreseeable future without American support and participation.

As far as my own country is concerned we have entered into a special defence agreement with the United States, within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty, ~~It is conceivable that the continuation of this agreement could be considered unnecessary, even though adherence to the Treaty would remain unaltered, on the premise that such membership and the guaranty implied therein, would be sufficient to ensure our security.~~ Such a decision would depend entirely

but:

but it

how long American
troops remain
in Iceland.

upon our own evaluation of the world situation at the given time. And I want it to be clearly known that, in all the manifold relations which the Icelanders have had, for over a quarter-century now, with the Americans, over the defence of our country, they have never used the difference in strength which exists between the two countries to their own advantage, even though they are the greatest power in the world and we one of the smallest, and utterly without the means to defend ourselves. Despite its overpowering strength the United States has always, both in word and in deed, fully respected Iceland's formal equality and sovereign rights.

We realize full well that we, no less than others, have, according to our capacity, the duty to contribute our share to the maintenance of peace in the world. Those of us who have lived through two world wars have, alas, no reason at all ~~to hold the optimistic view~~ to believe that peace may be maintained without some concerted effort. Our experience of the first ^{two kinds} ~~half of the~~ 20th century can only serve to convince us that enduring peace is something which does not happen of itself, but can only be achieved and maintained by combined and constant, deliberate and patient effort.

May the work of this Meeting serve to enhance the unity and strength of our organization and make its contribution to the prospects of peace in the world.

I must begin this few words with excusing myself because I am not able to speak in the french language. My knowledge of that noble tongue is just sufficient to allow me to ~~read~~ understand it if I read it and know beforehand what it all is about. If I had asked someone else to translate my words into French I therefore might have had some idea about the content of the speech ~~understood~~ myself, but I am sure nobody else would have understood a word of what I said or tried to say, so I have chosen the more commonplace but surer method to speak in the English language.

on account of my pronunciation

The president of Iceland has today bestowed ~~bestowed~~ the grand cross of the Falcar order ~~to our guest of honour~~ because he is ^{considered} a ^{foreigner} the foreign ministry of Iceland was asked ^{for} its ^{advice} ~~its assistance~~ ^{that} ~~to this~~ and I can assure you ^{that} ~~it~~ is no empty diplomatic phrase ^{when} ~~you~~ ^{believe} ~~me~~ I tell you that I have never ~~recommended~~ such an honour with ^{grater}

- as you can more easily understand when you bear in mind that I am no diplomat but belong to the truthful politicians of whom so many happen to be in our party -

pleasure than in this inst

The reason is not only that the Icelandic authorities wish to honour M. V. as the representative of the great and noble French nation, but also our wish to show how much we appreciate him personally and the work ~~that he has done here~~ he has done here.

M. V. has himself related in an interview in the Morgunblaðið, how he felt on the 17. June 1940. At that time I was professor of law at the University and I certainly never will forget, how impressed I was by the composure and the dignity of M. V. when he ~~th~~ on that memorable day read his felicitations to our university. Some people may think it was a small affair but I understood ~~it~~ as a sure sign of the unbreakable spirit and high culture both of the man himself and the nation to whom he belonged.

Since that time I have learned to know M. V. better than I did ~~at~~ then, and I must say that the impression ~~I~~ got that day has been strengthened ~~the more~~ better I got to know

his behaviour
on that occasion
where this report
was made (for
the powerful state
which had sent
him, ~~was~~ deeply
impressed
by his

I have most fortunately had
to observe him also in the
of joy, both for his country and
mine. I remember the moderation
and sincere happiness on the day
Paris was liberated and I remember
too his heartfelt congratulations
on our great day of freedom
the 17. June 1944.

~~And these are not only~~ These are
the great occasions we never will forget,
but we have also learned to appreciate
the good work M. V. has done in
every-day life. Never before have
there been so many ties that bind
together the little Icelandic nation
and ~~the~~ French nation. Nobody
has been more industrious or more
interested in breaking those ties
than M. V., both in the fields
of culture, economics and politics.
I am no prophet but just the
same I venture to say that this
(the course) is only the beginning
and we will have more and more
collaboration in the coming years
to our mutual advantage. ~~That~~
of ^{the} reasons for that is the great si

that bearer of
the torch of
culture the great

M. V. will no doubt
say that

Ladies and Gentlemen, especially Ladies of the Press.

I welcome you to our country and hope you will enjoy your stay here. I regret that you are only staying here one day. At a quick glance there are probable not very many interesting things you can see here. Of course I hope you have already noticed that we produce the best fish in the world, that the weather is not so cold as you might conclude from the name of the country and later on I hope you will see how we utilize the hot water that flows from the bowels of the earth.

Those may be interesting facts, but I assure you that the most interesting fact ~~is~~ *is about* Iceland is how the small Icelandic nation has for more than thousand years lived in this blessed but difficult and ^{relatively large} ~~large~~ country, established here the oldest Parliament in the world and proved with its history how the freedom from

oppression, be it external or internal, can work wonders in every walk of life.

I am afraid that your stay here now is too short for you to understand this adventure of the Icelandic people, but just the same I hope that when you travel in more fertile lands you will remember this barren country and the people who have learned from their life there that freedom is the most valuable possession in life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are gathered here this evening to take leave of our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter.

They have now stayed in this country for three years.

Those three years have been of great importance for Iceland, especially in the foreign affairs of the country. Iceland is now a much more active member of the international community than before. Most of that activity has brought the country closer to Great-Britain. Our participation in the North-Atlantic Pact and the Council of Europe are only two instances, although the most remarkable, of our new cooperation with Great-Britain and the other nations among whom the United Kingdom is such an outstanding leader.

Of course there have arisen difficulties between Great-Britain and Iceland in those years, particularly in the field of trade.

But we realize that those difficulties chiefly arise from Great-Britain's own difficulties and we know that the leaders of that mighty country want to cooperate with us and be as helpful as possible.

In all matters concerning the relations between Iceland and Great-Britain Mr. Baxter has been an active and interested participant and
We have learned to value his goodwill and intelligence.

One of the foremost writers on diplomacy in Great-Britain, Mr. Harold Nicholson, has strongly advised against using too many words in diplomatic

negotiations. He indeed thinks that the best results are obtained if the negotiators keep to written memoranda, then no misunderstanding and quarrels can arise about what was in fact said.

I must confess that I have too often in my dealings with the foreign diplomats here been too lazy to prepare in advance such memoranda. But in dealing with Mr. Baxter this has not done any harm. He has often *at* the end of our discussions summed up so accurately what I was trying to say that I could not have done it better myself even if I had spent a long time in preparing it in advance.

It is not only in our official work that Mr. Baxter has been so helpful. We have also many reasons to appreciate his hospitality and friendliness in personal intercourse.

In this he has of course enjoyed the help of Mrs. Baxter, who is not only an excellent hostess but highly read in literature, politics and also, according to the testimony of the bishop, in theology. They are both fine ^{representatives} ~~types~~ of the British culture which has been of such importance for the whole world.

And in conformity with the best British tradition they are also eager to learn about the country in which they are staying. They have brought all their children to Iceland and they have travelled extensively inside this country and Mrs. Baxter has taken the trouble to learn our difficult but beautiful language so she can read our old Icelandic sagas and knows everything about Njál, Egil, Eirík blóðöx and other prominent figures in our old literature.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Baxter are averse to any show and extravagance. I will therefore not say more

on this occasion.

I only want to state how much we miss
thank them for everything they have done for us
these good friends of ours and express our hope that
they will enjoy happiness and success wherever they
may go.

great that the bare fact of the overwhelming British sea-power was protection enough. In the last war all this was changed. Then the distances were already vanishing so it was impossible for Great Britain to defend Iceland without having bases in the country herself.

Of course it was difficult for some of us to understand this and all its implications at once. And of course we knew that Great Britain wanted to defend Iceland, not primarily because her rulers had so high regard for the Icelandic people, but because it was of the greatest value for the successful fight for the freedom of Great Britain herself that her enemies got no foothold here.

But the behaviour of the British authorities and the soldiers left us in no doubt about the fact that although they had been forced to occupy our country they did^{it} not as conquerors but as protectors and real friends.

They convinced us with their deeds that when they were fighting for their own freedom they were fighting for the freedom of all. We realised that their victory would be our victory. In helping them we were helping ourselves. I doubt if there is a better testimony of real feeling of friendship between a little nation and a great ^{our conviction} than this. Therefore we are sincerely glad today that our great friend has shown this appreciation of our attitude in those difficult years.

When speaking of Law and Order in International Relations it must first be observed that people's ideas of law, and therefore the order it prescribes, differ a great deal. ^e Each individual State makes its own laws.

By virtue of its sovereignty, All ~~the~~ States, ~~are~~ at least in name, bound by international law, it is true, but ~~those~~ ^{are} rules ^(of international law) are still young and undeveloped when compared with the laws of ~~the~~ individual States, and guarantee of their enforcement is, ~~slender~~ indeed, *very slender.*

But people's ideas of the nature of law are not as dissimilar as one might conclude, for many ~~of the~~ States follow the same main rules ^{despite} ~~in spite of~~ different solutions of countless individual questions. And it is just here that the main difference ^{lies} ~~is to be found~~ between ~~constitution-~~ ^{enjoying the Rule of Law,} ~~a~~ States including modern democracies, and totalitarian States, including communist States.

Many definitions have been given of the difference between the two. I shall not attempt any originality in this respect, but rather refer to the ^{well known} ~~noted~~ organization International Commission of Jurists, which passed the following resolution at its meeting in Athens, Greece, in 1955:

"We free jurists from forty-eight countries, assembled in Athens at the invitation of the International Commission of Jurists, being devoted to the Rule of Law which springs from the rights of the individual developed through history in the age-old struggle of mankind for freedom; which rights include freedom of speech, press, worship, assembly and association and the right to free elections to the end that laws are enacted by the duly elected representatives of the people and afford equal protection to all.

Being concerned by the disregard of the Rule of Law in various parts of the world, and being convinced that the maintenance of the fundamental principles of justice is essential to a lasting peace throughout the world,

Do solemnly Declare that:

1. The State is subject to the law.

2. The Government should respect the rights of the individual under the Rule of Law and provide effective means for their enforcement.

3. Judges should be guided by the Rule of Law, protect and enforce it without fear or favour and resist any encroachments by governments or political parties on their independence as judges.

4. Lawyers of the world should preserve the independence of their profession, assert the rights of the individual under the Rule of Law and insist that every accused is accorded a fair trial.

And we call upon all judges and lawyers to observe the principles and

Request the International Commission of Jurists to dedicate itself to the universal acceptance of these principles and expose and denounce all violations of the Rule of Law."

So as to understand the difference between these main rules and the communist doctrines and actions, it is well to make a comparison with the four above-mentioned points:

1. With the communists the State is not subject to the law, but to the Party.

2. With the communists the individual is defenceless against the State if the rulers see fit.

3. With the communists the independence of judges is not recognized in the same way as in ^{States enjoying the Rule} ~~constitutional~~ ^{of Law;} ~~States.~~ on the contrary, it is maintained that impartiality

of judges is a perilous capitalistic absurdity which has no support in reality.

4. With the communists it is still less conceivable that the legal profession should enjoy independence; on the contrary, it must serve the State, that is ^{to say} the rulers, in one and all, and according to their instructions.

This comparison shows the abyss between the two ^{systems} of government. Thereby it is not said that we, who associate ourselves with ~~constitutional and democratic~~ ^{and the Rule of Law} government, have been entirely successful in fulfilling the demands ~~of the Rule of Law~~ ^{that} of Law. In this respect individuals and States have made unequal progress. But our object is entirely different from theirs, and among other things, these dissimilar ideas or objects, ^{is} ~~are~~ exactly what makes international relationship difficult and therefore a danger to peace.

It is ^{only} natural that international law should develop slowly, ^{as long as} ~~while~~ this state of affairs exists. But has not international law grown a great deal stronger in our days? What about all the international agreements that have been made? What about the United Nations itself and all its resolutions?

Far be it from me to belittle all this. As a result, countless problems arising from closer intercourse between ~~the~~ ^{improved} nations, and ~~changed~~ ^{changed} conditions, owing to the advent of modern technology, have been solved. But the most difficult and important problems still await solution.

~~It is also easier to issue rules than to enforce them.~~ It must be admitted that many agreements and international resolutions have proved to be only worthless

~~pieces of paper~~ } This is not only true of some international resolutions, but also of legislations of individual States. Elaborate statutes of law, passed enthusiastically, have often come to ~~nothing~~ ^{nil, have} or worked in ~~the opposite~~ ^a direction *quite opposite to* of the good intention that inspired them. It is enough to mention, as an example, the liquor prohibition laws enacted by various nations 50 to 60 years ago, which proved ineffective everywhere.

Or who remembers now how many elaborately written constitutions the French have adopted since the Revolution of 1789, or the lifetime of each? ^(one) And do you know, my young listeners, that ^{some time} ~~in due course~~ after the first World War, the Weimar ~~Constitution~~ ^{documents} of Germany was considered to be one of the most perfect ^{documents} ever drawn up for the preservation of freedom and democracy?

~~However,~~ Its protective strength proved to be ~~no greater~~ ^{lamentably weak,} than so that simply by ~~offering it as a plan,~~ ^{contesting its form} Hitler succeeded in establishing his tyranny.

*however, and
Hitler even
could use
its form*

Let us compare these laboriously conceived written constitutions with the British Constitution, which never has been written, and consider which has had the longest life and which has proved to be the most ^{effective} ~~important~~ for freedom and democracy, for The Rule of Law.

The Constitution of the United States is, indeed, written and formally a great deal better safeguarded than the British Constitution, especially by the right of the law courts

to disregard laws, which ^{the} courts ~~think~~ ^{consider} contrary to the Constitution. But it is just this flexible interpretation, practised by the law courts, that has given the Constitution the decisive influence it has in the United States, and facilitated its life for over a hundred and fifty years.

The letter of a statute, not to speak of whole codifications of law, may be very important, but more durable are often the rules which have gradually come into being in the community for the fulfillment of prevailing needs and conceptions. Law based on usage and enforcement by law courts, limiting itself to adjustments of current irregularities, often proves to be more enduring than even well prepared statutes drawn up for the fulfillment of ideals which enjoy insufficient public understanding or support.

~~This applies no less to international law than to the laws of individual States.~~ Experience also ^{even though it has not proved} shows that ~~in instances where international resolutions on issues, have been unobtainable,~~ ^{major important} important progress has nevertheless been made. We Icelanders are particularly mindful of the rules respecting the size of fishery jurisdictions. Here it was The International Court of Justice at The Hague which paved the way by its judgment in the dispute between Britain and Norway for more natural and flexible rules than previously had enjoyed general recognition, and two international conferences, which in form produced no positive results ^{on} in the main issue, nevertheless served to show that obsolete doctrines could no longer be sustained against the vital interests of those living by the resources of the sea. We Icelanders hope that this development has by no means ^{come to an end,} ~~finished,~~ although ^{obviously} ~~clashes~~ of interest will be the greater, the farther the seaward ~~extension.~~ ^{out to sea these limits are extended} extension.

it is obvious that the further you extend these limits, the greater the clash of interests will be.

On the other hand frequently

In this instance the nature of the matter has led to rapid changes, ~~similar to those we know from the laws of individual States,~~ and without general international resolutions having been passed. ~~But~~ we also ~~often~~ see examples of solemn obligations having little practical meaning. Many of the provisions of the

Charter of the United Nations are held for little or nothing. The reason is, among other things, that many of its main rules are unreal. The rule on equal rights of States, large and small, - leaving out the provisions about the Security Council - looks ^{good} ~~well~~. And we Icelanders, the smallest member of the United Nations, should be the last to find fault with or criticize it. But it is certain that if this rule is to be a lasting one, then it will demand great ^{on the part} moderation of the smaller nations, and forbearance ^{on the part} of the larger ones.

little will and less

It is unavoidable that people should ask what use and for ^{whose} ~~the good of whom~~ it is when States sign ^{high flown} ~~painstaking~~ declarations of human rights, which they have ~~no~~ means of fulfilling in their home countries. I recall when an old and venerable friend of mine, an Icelandic Supreme Court Judge, said to me about Stalin's constitution for the Soviet Union just about ^{when} the infamous Moscow trials ~~stood highest~~, ^{were in their climax}, that it seemed to him that human rights and democracy had become pretty well established in the Soviet Union. I understood these words of my excellent friend as a ^{sign} ~~mark~~ of the fact that he was no longer in sufficiently close touch with reality. But since this happened to an experienced, highly intelligent and ^{so benevolent} ~~beloved~~ judge, then what would happen to those less qualified for factual evaluation?

Now it is said that hypocrisy is evidence of the respect ^{that} ~~vice~~ has for virtue. We should neither belittle that respect, nor the ^{hope} ~~fact~~ that ^{good thoughts} ~~improved habits~~ make ^{for} a better man. ~~But this also involves~~ the danger of falling into the belief, that lip-service alone will ^{suffice} ~~be enough~~, when by contrast loyalty in deed is ~~all im-~~ ^{portant.} ~~of paramount importance.~~

But we should also remember that the road to hell is paved with good intentions and ~~they~~ avoid ~~that~~

^{it for granted that} Gradually people begin to take ^{be applied} ~~two yardsticks~~ ~~for granted~~. We all remember the molestation the United Kingdom and France received in the Suez dispute in 1956. But at the same time the Hungarian tragedy ^{in Hungary} was being played. What became of human rights, and what happened to the United Nations delegation ^{in Hungary} which ~~was never~~ allowed to enter Hungary? One gathers that

it is no longer proper to mention this at the United Nations Assembly, ~~where~~⁵ the representatives of the Hungarian puppet Government are no less acceptable than others.

The August issue of the British monthly Encounter contains a description of a so-called "teach-in" on Viet-Nam that was organized at Oxford University, where Professor Max Beloff is quoted as follows:

"(As chairman for the first two and a half hours) I was...in a position to note the extreme hostility of a large part of the assembly to the point of view of the Government, and their unwillingness to hear that side of the argument stated. Indeed, ~~when~~ when I made the rather mild suggestion that the cause of peace might be assisted if similar open discussions of the question of Viet Nam could be held in Moscow and Peking, this was enough to evoke hisses from the floor and protests from some (not all) of the organisers."

I quote this as a striking instance of the two yardsticks many use, not only on the other side but also on ours.

My words must not be understood to mean that I consider that the world would be better off without the United Nations, ~~or~~^{the} participation of the communist States in that Organization. That is far from being my opinion. But the United Nations is also far from having solved all problems, and the defects will only be rectified when we know them.

This autumn an international convention of jurists is to be held with the words "Peace through Law" as a motto. But ~~peace through Law~~^{peace through Laws} will only be attained, if the main rules of law are the same for all and ~~peace~~^{peace} will only be worthwhile, if those main rules conform to the "Rule of Law".

And although the greatest danger stems from the communists, then others are far from being free of sin. According to the Charter of the United Nations all Member States undertake, for instance, to settle disputes

peacefully, among other things by submitting ^{disputes} ~~quarrels~~ with other States to the International Court of Justice. In spite of this solemn undertaking the States usually reserve the right to decide what disputes shall be ^{referred to} ~~placed before~~ the Court. How could law and order be maintained by individual States, if the citizens themselves had the power to decide at what stage their suits should be placed before the law courts? In this matter the leading democracies should certainly ^{show} ~~show~~ the way, abandon their reservations, and actually obligate themselves to submit to the International Court of Justice all disputes, with States which undertake a similar obligation. Some reservation may be necessary, but the present state of affairs is a discredit and shows the limited intent behind the fair words about loyalty to the Rule of Law. Those in possession of power are certainly reluctant to relinquish their use of it, and even the weaker sometimes seem to think that just their smallness will make it possible to press claims they believe would not be sustained before the International Court.

Even with an improvement of this situation, there is still a long road to be travelled before laws alone will do to keep order in the world. Unfortunately the outlook is that might and power will mostly prevail for the unforeseeable future. Therefore let us exert ourselves, ^{in the endeavour to let} ~~that~~ the decisive power ^{rest} ~~shall remain~~ in the hands of those, who despite all their failings, are most loyal to the Rule of Law.

It is only natural that strangers wonder whether two hundred thousand people, living on one hundred thousand square kilometres of land just underneath the arctic circle, surrounded by the ocean on a treeless, sandy, volcanic island, partly covered by eternal ice, can justifiably be called a separate nation maintaining an independent, modern society. Nevertheless this is the fact, and no single Icelander has the slightest doubt about his separate nationality nor the fact that his nation can least of all exist without its independence.

The time is now fast approaching when the Icelanders have been living on their island for 1100 years. With a considerable degree of certainty we know that the first settler who established his permanent abode in Iceland, first arrived there in the year 874, and preparations are now already starting for the celebration of the eleven hundredth anniversary of this event. The early settlers came most from the western districts of Norway, while many of them had spent longer or shorter periods in the northern regions of the British Isles and Ireland before continuing their journey to Iceland. Anthropologists have now reached the conclusion that the origin of the nation is Nordic-Celtic. The language of the Icelanders has, from the very outset, been purely Nordic, the same as that which 1000 years ago was named the "Danish tongue".

After the period of the settlement, that is in the course of the past one thousand years, the Icelandic nation has remained practically unmixed of any

outside elements, and the language has changed so little that every Icelander to-day can easily comprehend the literature, which was recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and a considerable part of the so-called Eddic poetry, which in their material origin are a good deal older and preserve ancient historic traditions and experiences of the Germanic, and consequently the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon race.

The isolation of the island, of course, was largely responsible for the fact that an ancient culture and language was preserved longer in Iceland than with other closely related nations. Apart from that this isolation served as a hard task-master for the people of Iceland; conditions of living were oftentimes extremely rigorous and little help was to be expected from elsewhere. As a result the people of Iceland at one time came very close to becoming extinct, and we know for certain that much fewer people, probably less than half the number of individuals were living here around 1800 as compared to five or six hundred years earlier.

In the first decades of the settlement the Icelanders established their own state and democratic form of government. This event is frequently associated with the establishment of the Althing in 930, which among other things had legislative powers for the entire island. The Icelanders maintained their independence until 1262, when they pledged allegiance to the king of Norway, and later on the

country became in actual practice a part of the Norwegian kingdom, at first, and later on the Danish-Norwegian and finally the Danish kingdom. In the 19th century the Icelanders began to seek their constitutional independence which they acquired by degrees with Danish governmental consent. This movement for independence culminated in the re-establishment of the republic in 1944, as a natural sequence to the provisions of the Union Act of 1918, which stipulated that at any time after 1943 the Icelanders could unilaterally complete the separation of the two countries.

Simultaneous to the winning of independence in the last decades of the 19th century, and to the present time, favourable developments have gone hand in hand: Greater political freedom, improved weather conditions as a whole, dwindling isolation and rapid progress in the technological field for better utilization of the country's resources. It is difficult, therefore, to decide which one of these factors is primarily responsible for the enormous improvements that have taken place. It is indisputable that in the course of these years Iceland has been transformed from a thousand year old state of stagnation, or deterioration rather, into a modern society where living conditions are fully comparable to those in other western democracies. One tangible proof of this is the normal population growth in recent decades, contrary to what was true earlier on.

Since ancient times agriculture has been the principal field of economic endeavour of the Icelanders, while fishing was pursued simultaneous to this, with varying results, largely because of inefficient fishing craft. Abroad the country was nevertheless best known for its fishing industry. A flattened cod-fish was the emblem of Iceland in the Danish royal coat of arms, and foreign fishermen frequented Icelandic waters in large numbers, also at the time when the Icelanders themselves had nothing but small, open fishing boats.

To-day the Icelanders make their living in equal measure from agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing industries. The agriculture is limited mostly to the production of sheep produce and dairy farming. In these respects the output is enough for home consumption, with some surplus left over for exports, but at a price which is far below the cost of production. Other agricultural sectors are of little significance. The growing of grain is not pursued to any appreciable extent because of the short summers, the potato crop is sometimes good, forestation is still at an experimental stage.

The fisheries support between 90 and 95 per cent of the export trade. But because of the lack of diversification in its economic field Iceland, more than most other countries, is highly dependent on imports of goods and services which accounted for 42,7 per cent of the gross national product 1967. The enormous economic significance of the fisheries

explains what an indispensable need it is for the Icelanders that the fish stocks in Icelandic waters, particularly cod and herring, not be overexploited and cut too far into. This is the explanation of the struggle for the recognition of an extension of Icelandic fisheries limits, larger areas of protected fishing grounds and the control of fishing rights over the entire Icelandic continental shelf. It is hard to see, and sounds like strange logic, indeed, why a coastal state should have the right to control the bottom of the ocean off its shores, but not the right to control the fish swimming over that ocean floor. This is especially true when a coastal state may depend on fisheries for its livelihood.

The truth of the matter is that the uncertainties inherent in all fishing operations because of the forces of nature involved, are sufficient in themselves without the added injury of overexploitation by those who have more than enough of other resources at their disposals. Fluctuations in the fish catch from one year to the other can best be seen by the fact that the overall catch in 1967 was 28 per cent smaller in quantity than in 1966. On top of this came a sharp fall in export prices and increased difficulties of sales of fishery products, with the result that the value of goods exports for 1967 fell by 30 per cent. Furthermore it is practically impossible to find an export market for a considerable part of the dried stockfish which is now available for export, as this unsold stock was produced for the

markets of Eastern Nigeria, a country now ravaged by civil war.

The Icelanders have admittedly grown used to fluctuations in their principal export industry, but this is by far the most serious of such developments since the advent of the great world depression of the 1930's, and even then the collapse was spread over a longer period of time. In consequence of this the Icelanders are now encountering economic difficulties of the most serious nature. Rapid economic growth in recent years has created a standard of living, and aroused hopes which are not easily abandoned. Economic retrogression takes the place of rapid progress, and the final solution to this state of affairs is not yet in sight. The inevitable arguments over this development have sharpened the political struggle and found an outlet in extensive strikes, and even though the trade union movement has recognized that wage earners will have to be satisfied with a lower standard of living, for the time being, it is not certain whether this concession will suffice to solve the problem.

A major task of the future is obviously that of making the nation less dependent upon the exports of fish products, even though the fishing industry will for an unforeseen number of years continue to form the main foundation of its export trade. With the growing availability of electric power in recent decades various types of small manufacturing industries have developed to an ever increasing extent.

Still the manufacturing industry produces primarily for domestic consumption. The country possesses an abundance of unharnessed water and steam power. Iceland now utilize the natural hot water for the heating of homes, including the capital city of Reykjavik. The supply of heat now obtained from the hot water sources of Reykjavik alone equals 130.000 tons of fuel oil p.a. for a population of 75.000. This is a great treasure, which will not be wasted. This development must be pursued along the same lines, and the potential power of geothermal heat and rivers must be harnessed for the creation of new export industries.

The beginning of such a programme of development is the co-operation with the Swiss aluminium concern, Alusuisse, for the construction of the company's aluminium smelter, purchasing electric power from the Icelanders, thus enabling them to undertake the construction of a much larger electric power project than would otherwise be possible.

Many of us are convinced that this type of international co-operation will point the way to greater economic security of the future, although such a development is bound to take a good deal of time. By the same token we believe that Iceland's affiliation with EFTA is required to ensure more stable markets, and some sort of agreement with the EEC for the same purpose. But all of this is a source of contention in Iceland, the same as the question of whether Iceland should continue its membership in NATO, and more particularly the continuation of the

Defense Agreement between Iceland and the United States.

One of the reasons, and not the least important one, why the Icelanders have succeeded in creating and maintaining a modern society in Iceland, is the fact that they have never had to expend their financial resources for the defense of their country. As a result they have been in a position to use their tax revenue, which on a proportional basis is on par with the tax burden in the neighbouring countries, for other social needs. How is it that the Icelanders have, in this respect, become a complete exception among the nations of the world?

Because of the relative shortage of natural riches and resources the country itself has constituted little temptation as a possible territory to be ruled over by other nations. For centuries Great Britain could, with the greatest of ease, have seized the island and declared it part of its overseas territories, but never showed any real interest, even though the Danish-Norwegian king made them an offer to this effect. In the same way Bismarck practically ignored the salery put out by the Danish Government as to whether Denmark could reach better terms in 1864 over the Schleswig-Holstein issue if Iceland were handed over to German rule. It is indeed not likely that Britain would have looked upon such a transaction without lifting a finger, for it is hardly sheer coincidence that an influential British diplomat, who previously had participated in peace negotiations

between Great Britain and Sweden, was in Kiel in 1814 when the Danish representative there arranged without any specific instructions from the Danish Government, that Iceland, the Foroe Islands and Greenland should not be placed under Swedish rule along with Norway which they had belonged to through centuries. No doubt the British looked upon it as a highly precarious business if these islands were to be placed under the sovereign rule of Carl Johan, who at that time was on the friendliest of terms with the Czar of Russia, rather than to let them remain a part of the Kingdom of Denmark, which already then had greatly declined in power and influence. One thing is certain that during the Napoleonic-wars Gr. Britain showed much greater interest in Iceland than before, and frequent visits and charting expeditions, both British and French, during the latter half of the 19th century, showed the interest which the governments of these countries had in possible naval bases in Iceland. Throughout World War I Gr. Britain kept close naval control off the shores of Iceland, and along the sea routes between Iceland and Western Europe.

With dwindling isolation and shrinking of distances the position of the island took on a new meaning. Even so one can argue that the location of the country, the respect which others had for the Danish Crown, and the power of the British Royal Navy had, until 1918, accounted for the fact that it was not ^{considered} necessary to take any particular measures for the defense of Iceland. With the enactment of the Act

of Union the Danes formally recognized the independence of Iceland, with the King of Denmark as the Head of State of both nations. Simultaneously Iceland declared its eternal neutrality, and that it had no flag of war. No further measures were taken for the defense of the island. Although several people to-day feel that this showed great lack of precaution and security, one must remember that these declarations were made at the very time when the war was drawing to a close, which was to be end of all wars and make the world safe for democracy.

Only two years passed, however, until Lenin in a meeting of the Soviet Komintern held in 1920, declared that Iceland would have a strategic role to play in future wars, particularly as regards air and submarine warfare. A little later a German strategist made this comment about the country's strategic importance: "Iceland is like a revolver aimed at the British and the Americans."

The Icelanders themselves did not realize the military significance of their island country until the British occupied it in 1940, and again in 1941 when the Agreement about the military protection of Iceland was reached with the United States.

In direct continuation of the events of World War II, and because of the insecurity and dangerous state of affairs in the post-war years Iceland first became one of the nations which formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and later on, in 1951, Iceland signed the Defense Agreement with the United States within the framework of the North Atlantic

Treaty. All these events, and the developments immediately preceding them, are so well known that there is no need to recount them here at length. From the very outset, however, there were no plans afoot to create an Icelandic military force, despite the country's affiliation to the North Atlantic Treaty, and a foreign military attachment was not to be stationed in Iceland in times of peace. The idea was that NATO, in case of war, would be granted similar facilities in Iceland as Gr. Britain and the United States had from 1940 to 1945.

The unbroken state of international tension and hostilities in various parts of the world, however, has led to the stationing of an American defense force in Iceland since 1951. Nevertheless the Icelanders hold firmly to the position of not creating their own military defense force. The Icelanders have never carried arms against any foreign people, military discipline is to them a completely strange and unknown phenomenon; the population is so small that their own military strength could never reach a degree of any significance, and the expense of maintaining a defense establishment would be a crushing burden for the country's economy.

For these reasons it is the overwhelming opinion of the Icelanders that the country's defenses should be secured through continuing membership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. All of those who adhere to the communist ideology, however, are strongly opposed to this policy, and they along with their supporters have recently only enjoyed a little

more than 15 per cent of the electoral support. Then there are a new who sincerely believe that Iceland should be entirely neutral, and that neutrality and isolation is the best form of defense.

But as already stated the others are in great majority who believe isolation to be a thing of the past, and a neutrality without some sort of military defense, equally absurd for Iceland as for all others - and in effect equally useless for Iceland now as it was in 1940 to 1945. However, some of those who hold this view are of the opinion that diminishing hostilities in the world will make it unnecessary to maintain military defenses in the country itself any longer, and that as a logical consequence of this it would be safe to terminate the Defense Agreement with the United States. But they also maintain that Iceland should remain affiliated with NATO as a matter of course, with the organisation providing sufficient guarantees that the country would not be subjected to an attack.

Other hold the viewpoint that now, after distances have become practically non-existent, and that as a consequence there would frequently be very little or no time to make important decisions, then Iceland cannot remain without any sort of military defenses, any more than other countries. Furthermore they point out that there is now a constant stream of traffic by all types of craft on sea, in the sea and in the air surrounding Iceland, and that thus there

is, in effect, very little difference than if the country were placed somewhere in Central Europe, or in some other similar position, which no-one would dream of leaving open and defenseless.

These and similar questions will undoubtedly be the subject of heated debates in Iceland during the next months and years, and it is of major importance that dependable information be then available so that, in the light of the real facts, the people of Iceland can decide what their contribution to their own security, and that of others, should really be.

As far as can be ascertained the overwhelming majority of the public has from the beginning been in favour of Iceland's participation in the ERP.

The Communists have indeed from the beginning opposed this participation violently. Their opposition never did gain great support in spite of the fact, that people in the beginning did not realize that Iceland could derive great immediate benefits from her participation but supported it from a general willingness to cooperate with Western-Europe and the United States and in the hope that Iceland would derive indirect benefit from the reconstruction of Western-Europe.

Nevertheless it was to some extent apparent when the agreement with the United States was being concluded, last summer, that some people were afraid that certain provisions in that agreement, notably those of Article V, concerning industrial rights, might jeopardise the interests of Iceland. All these doubts seem to have disappeared during the last months.

Shortly after the Althing was convened, in the middle of October, these matters were thoroughly debated there. The conclusion of the agreement was explained by the Government and for the first time statements were made concerning possible projects in Iceland during the next few years if the people of Iceland were to receive ERP assistance as anticipated. About the same time the first important production machinery, purchased through an ERP loan, arrived and simultaneously an extensive sale of Icelandic products through ECA was announced.

There is not the slightest doubt that the Government's reports and the ensuing debates have resulted in a considerable setback for the Communists. Many members of the Althing from all other political parties took part in the debates in support of Iceland's participation in the ERP and of the Government's policy. Among those were some members who previously had been rather critical of or even directly opposed to close cooperation between Iceland and the United States. During the debates not one non-communist member criticized the conclusion of the agreement in principle.

On the other hand, the Communists maintained a strong opposition to Iceland's participation in the ERP and in that connection made violent attacks upon the United States and upon the Government for its willingness to cooperate with them. It is generally considered that the communists were completely thwarted in these debates. Those who are most familiar with political opinion also are convinced that the communistic propaganda against the ERP has turned directly against the Communists themselves, particularly since the publication of the Government's report on anticipated projects through ERP financing. The public strongly support the plans for the continued development of the country and the endeavour to make the industries more varied and more secure.

It is noteworthy that the Communists who are in the habit of getting resolutions passed regarding current affairs in societies, such as labour unions, in which they have influence or power - resolutions that might advance the Communist propaganda, have not felt themselves strong enough to propose such resolutions against the ERP. It is indeed generally believed that the Communists during

the last months have been on the defensive and that they at least have not increased their following in spite of general dissatisfaction due to scarcity of merchandise and other reasons.

It is of course impossible at the present time to state with any assurance whether this is a fact or not, since no general elections have taken place. But in elections to the Federation of Labour Congress, which were held from the middle of September to the middle of October, the Communists lost the majority of seats which they had possessed since 1942.

The chief reason for this loss was without doubt the fact that the opponents of the Communists who at similar elections before had been divided, now generally joined hands against them. In spite of this cooperation the Communists are still strong in many unions, including the largest Union, i.e. the "Dagsbrún" in Reykjavík.

It is therefore not likely that the Communists have suffered a general loss of support. On the other hand it can safely be said that their position has been weakened. For instance, it was commonly believed about two years ago when the Communists left the Government that it would be very difficult if not impossible during the impending period of difficulties and unrest to govern the country without their participation. Of course, the possibility remains that, if the present coalition does not last, some factions might join hands with the Communists. The temptation to do this would grow if the financial situation got quite out of hand or labour unrest greatly increased. It must also be borne in mind that influential circles inside some of the present governmental parties are against the coalition and want it dissolved at the first opportunity. But in spite of this and the rather lukewarm attitude towards the Government in many

quarters the Communists have become isolated for the time being.

This isolation has to a great extent been brought about by the Communists' blind obedience to the Soviet point of view and particularly their attitude towards the ERP which as stated above enjoys increasing support by the politicians and the public. It cannot therefore be doubted that the ERP and Iceland's participation therein have exerted a beneficial influence in Icelandic politics.

On the other hand it is considered by some people that this situation may be endangered if the hopes which have been inspired by the Government's reports are not fulfilled. There are also those who fear that assistance may be provided subject to such conditions concerning changes in the financial matters of Iceland that they will be considered prohibitive by Icelandic politicians or at least that they might be of such a nature as to enable the Communists to gain support for their anti-American propaganda. Others believe that no real danger is involved since the program is based entirely on cooperation; that the intention of the United States is to assist Iceland in its difficulties; that, therefore, the representatives of the United States will take into account special circumstances prevailing in Iceland and, finally, that it must be taken for granted that no conditions will be made which would nullify the beneficial results which already have been attained and most likely will increase to a great extent through the continued execution of the plans involved.

If you are to understand a former age, you must try to live in those times and identify yourself with the people then living. The name of your gathering shows that you are indeed striving for this. But luckily you are reliving the Viking-age only in your own mind or imagination, because if you had succeeded in taking us all thousand years back in time and the people of Iceland had heard, that the Vikings had decided to do their work in this country this year, I am afraid you would not have found here the same spirit of welcome. I am sure you will everywhere find. ~~But~~ After all there is some difference between those committing acts and those who describe the same acts a thousand years later. But even if your work is

different from the work of the old Vikings and a little more peaceful, I think that some of the spirit of those old gentlemen is most useful in your occupation. ~~It~~ The same qualities of daring, patience and imagination that were needed to sail the ^{ever changing} ~~unstable~~ and not always friendly northern oceans in the way the vikings did, are also needed in the adventures of the human mind in its quest for new knowledge. I indeed hope that all the people taking part in this Viking-congress are endowed with this Viking-spirit.

It is my earnest hope that your conference may be successful. I wish you cordially welcome on behalf of the people and government of Iceland and declare the third Viking Congress to be opened.