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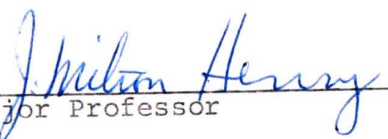
A Research Paper
Presented to
The Committee on Graduate Studies
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Education


by
John Clagget Trickey
March 1968

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by John Clagget Trickey entitled "American-Icelandic Relations, 1941-1942." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, with a major in History.


Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The strategic location of Iceland in 1941 was seen to be of vital importance to United States hemispheric defense plans. Iceland constituted a point from which an attack could be launched against North America should this island fall into unfriendly hands. Iceland had to be included within any plans devised for the defense of the North American continent, thus occupation of the island by armed forces of the United States was considered imperative. The resultant negotiations, the actual occupation, and their effects on American-Icelandic relations have never been fully commented on to the knowledge of this writer.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this survey to (1) indicate the strategic importance of Iceland to the hemispheric defense of the United States of America; (2) to outline the preliminary negotiations between the United States of America and the government of Iceland regarding the advisability of an actual occupation of the island by units of the armed forces of the United States; (3) to present some of the problems encountered by the United States in implementing occupation plans; (4) to outline some problems that were encountered by the United States, and its soldiers, during the earlier phases of the occupation; and (5) to present some of the reactions of the Icelandic people

to the presence of American military personnel in their midst.

Importance of the study. Iceland today is an active member in the family of nations that compose the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In recent years cooperation between member nations has not always been as close as the United States would desire. Relations between our government and the Republic of Iceland in 1941 and 1942 have had a lasting effect on our traditional friendship and alliance, yet little has been published on the occupation of this country by American forces and the reactions of the individual Icelander toward that occupation. This survey was undertaken, and is presented, with the intention of filling part of this void.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Axis. As of November 6, 1937, a term that included nations who had signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in Rome. These nations were Italy, Japan, and Germany, and the pact came to be referred to as the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. This same term even later came to be applied to these nations as a group.

Contingent. A military detachment, unit, or expedition, usually formed with a definite mission in mind.

Deploy. To spread out in battle order, or to station units in readiness for battle.

Division. A large battle unit of the United States Army. An infantry division of the American Army in 1941 consisted of some 14,000 soldiers who were grouped into regiments, battalions, and special units. The intention was

to make such a large unit semi-self-sustaining during long periods of combat.

ETO. The European Theater of Operations. A theater of operations is a designated area that is considered to be a combat zone when viewed strategically by the armed forces. When it was abbreviated as ETOUSA, it indicated the European Theater of Operations for the United States Army.

Garrison. The military force defending a fort, town, or station, or to man with troops by putting a force of soldiers into a fort, town, or station. As commonly used, this term can include even larger geographical locations where defense is the mission of the soldiers quartered there.

IBC. The Iceland Command. The headquarters of the United States armed forces stationed on the islands of Iceland.

INDIGO. The code name for the movement of troops to Iceland in 1941-1942.

Jokull. The Icelandic word for glacier.

PX. An abbreviation for Post Exchange, a PX is the American soldier's equivalent of an American drug store, or general store.

RAINBOW. The code name for various plans prepared between 1939 and the outbreak of hostilities to meet Axis aggression involving more than one enemy.

Secretary of War. Prior to the unification of the United States Armed Forces, the Secretary of the Army was known as the Secretary of War.

Strategic. Of long-range importance, (as opposed to tactical, which is of immediate importance), the results of which may not be decisive until some time in the future.

Theater. A zone of operations, (such as the European Theater of Operations), where units of the Army or Navy may be employed in waging war.

United Kingdom. The British Isles, consisting of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It was usually abbreviated as U. K. during the Second World War.

U. S. O. The United Services Organization. This organization was partly financed by private funds to bring entertainment to soldiers and sailors of the United States.

War Department. Prior to the unification of the United States Armed Forces, the Department of the Army was known as the War Department. The War Department was responsible for the entire military establishment of the United States Army and its personnel. This organization was headed by the Secretary of War who was a member of the President's Cabinet, a civilian.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much of what has been written in regard to the occupation of Iceland by American armed forces has been concerned with only the military necessity of stationing troops on the islands. Some books, published by the Office of the Chief of Military History of the United States Army, are strictly concerned with the mechanics of moving large units of troops to this island nation and sustaining them there. Few writers concern themselves with the human side, or an individual basis, of that occupation.

Iceland is a large island, and a few small islands, in the North Atlantic Ocean. The Arctic Circle touches the northernmost point of the main island. There are numerous geysers and hot springs to be found for the islands are of volcanic origin. The southeastern coast is unbroken, but the remainder is penetrated by bays and fjords.¹ The interior is a sandy, stony, high upland, having an average altitude of about 2,000 feet. Icecaps may be found in certain areas, ^{and} the greatest elevation on the island is 6,466 feet above sea level. The islands are treeless as a rule, ^{and} what few stunted types that can survive are carefully protected by iron-rail fences. The entire complex is about the size of the State of Virginia.

¹A fjord is a long and narrow arm of the sea having steep banks.

The population of Iceland in 1945 was recorded as being only 130,356; the capital, Reykjavik, had only 46,578 people in it. The other towns were quite small: Akureyri had only 6,144; Hafnarfjordur had only 4,249; and Vestmannaeyjar had but 3,588 persons. The population is made up largely of the Icelandic race. They were intelligent, well read, and temperate in food and drink. There were no extremes in either poverty or wealth in Iceland. The impact later of British and American troops was felt acutely by these people.

After Munich,² the prospect of a general European war, which had seemed imminent, had receded somewhat. But the military situation in Europe was quite threatening. President Roosevelt warned the American people that the danger of such a general European war would have a bearing on the security of the United States, and he warned the world at large that the United States recognized this danger and would meet it, specifically in the Western Hemisphere.³ His declaration carried little weight at home or abroad. The United States was quite weak militarily, as is the usual case with a nation that has never trusted its military leadership.

²The historic Munich Conference of 1938 at which the British Prime Minister committed the Western Powers to a policy of appeasement. This conference was attended by Neville Chamberlain, Edouard Daladier, Adolf Hitler, and Benito Mussolini.

³President Roosevelt's statement on hemispheric defense was made in a radio address on October 26, 1938.

In April, 1939, the United States felt that a European war might break out; if this happened, it could involve the United States as well. When it was felt that the United States might support, or be supported by, one or more of the democratic nations of Great Britain or France, some provisions had to be made. New plans were projected which were given the code name of RAINBOW, the most limited RAINBOW Plan, RAINBOW 1, provided for the defense of the Western Hemisphere to 10° south latitude and included the bulge of Brazil, the Azores, Greenland, (but not Iceland), American Samoa, Hawaii, and Wake Island, (but not Guam or the Philippines). RAINBOW 2 would extend the defense of the United States into the Western Pacific Ocean, while the RAINBOW 3 Plan called for the extension of American defense to the rest of South America. RAINBOW 4 was a composite of the first three plans and assumed that the United States would be involved in the war on the side of the British and French.⁴

As the war seemed more certain, the Departments of both our Navy and the War Department began working on a fifth RAINBOW plan. This would provide for the employment of land forces in a major offensive against Germany. These plans were being made without any specific predictions at this time. Shipping schedules were drawn up for the overseas transportation of American troops, *and* all planning was predicated on the assumption the Mobilization Day would not fall earlier than September 1, 1941. Our commitments to the British would not take place before that date.

⁴Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1941-1942 (Washington: The Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953), p. 6.

In the first few months under RAINBOW 5, some 220,900 troops and at least 666 aircraft would have to be transported to overseas garrisons, to include 26,500 to Iceland. The plan was not approved until the Joint Board met on May 14, 1941. This plan included within its provisions, the relief of the British garrison in Iceland as soon as practicable if the nation became involved in the war with Germany. We promised to cooperate with the British Royal Navy and Royal Air Force in the United Kingdom and in British Home Waters. There was even a provision for a token force of one regiment to be sent to England to take part in its defense.⁵

British-American staff talks opened in Washington on January 29, and continued until March 29, 1941. The meetings were conducted in secret; had news leaked out, it could have had a serious effect on the Lend-Lease Bill then before Congress. The British had complete authority to represent the British Chiefs of Staff, and thus could discuss freely the strategic position of the two powers and consider dispositions if we went to war.⁶

In June, 1941, a plan was being devised whereby a joint Army-Navy Expedition would be sent to the Azores as a part of the hemispheric defense of the United States. This expedition would sail from ports in the United States for the purpose of occupying the Azores and protecting them from a possible Axis movement into that area. June 22, 1941 was selected as a tentative date for the sailing of this American force.

⁵Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁶Ibid., pp. 32-33.

By early June, the plan to send troops to the Azores was deferred when President Roosevelt decided to take the first steps in deploying American forces to Iceland. In accordance with instructions received from the White House, General George C. Marshall directed his staff planners to prepare for the immediate relief of the British troops stationed in Iceland. The government of the United States was in contact with the Icelandic government concerning the quartering of American soldiers and elements of the United States Navy.⁷

Negotiations concerning an American occupation force in Iceland had been opened in 1940, on July 12, when the Consul General for Iceland had spoken to Mr. A. A. Berle, the United States Assistant Secretary of State. Mr. Thor had asked two questions at that time. The first was, if the United States would not include Iceland in the Western Hemisphere and under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine? The second was, if the United States would consider including Iceland in a customs union, and pointed out that now ^{it} ~~their~~ trade with the United States constituted the bulk of the means by which ^{the people} ~~they~~ could live. Our Assistant Secretary, Mr. Berle, pointed out that the fact that Iceland was then under British occupation had a tendency to hamper relations of this nature.⁸ On July 22, 1940, the offer was repeated by the Icelandic government, and on September 5, 1940, we find that the Icelanders were quite concerned with the fact that

⁷Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁸United States, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Europe (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 681.

British armed forces were in full occupation of the country but that the islanders needed to engage in trade with the United States.

The Prime Minister of Iceland, the Ambassador of Great Britain, and Sumner Wells of the United States agreed, on July 1, 1941, that occupation of Iceland by units of the United States armed forces would be desirable. The British needed troops elsewhere at the time, the Icelanders wanted a neutral power on the island rather than soldiers from a nation at war, while the United States was concerned with defense of the Western Hemisphere. The situation was ripe for an American expedition to Iceland in the summer of 1941.⁹

Upon receiving an invitation from the Icelandic government on July 1, 1941, the President directed Admiral Stark to move marines to Iceland at once, and told him to arrange with the Army to later relieve the marines. He was further instructed to arrange for sending whatever additional Army troops that would be needed, in conjunction with the British forces that remained, to guarantee the security of Iceland. By this time, the idea of immediately relieving the entire British garrison had been abandoned. On July 7, 1941, the marines landed in Iceland. Immediately thereafter, an Air Force pursuit squadron, with necessary service units, was ordered to Iceland as the first Army contingent.¹⁰

The initial problem facing the commander of the United States Marine forces was that of landing his unit and getting ^{his men} them quartered. The problems

⁹United States, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941, Europe (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1959), pp. 790-791.

¹⁰Matloff, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

of space needed to house several hundred marines were complicated by the fact that the Icelanders were dissatisfied with the British garrisons being placed within the limits of towns and cities. The measures taken by the British Army for the defense of Reykjavik included putting garrisons within the city limits. Storage and broadcasting facilities were requisitioned from the Icelandic government. Restrictions on the civilian population were too severe, the Icelandic authorities thought, and plans for evacuation in case of attack were considered inadequate. What the government of Iceland wanted in particular was a declaration that Reykjavik was an open, undefended city.¹¹

The whole matter of defense was complicated by Iceland's varied, never gentle, topography. The island is large, roughly oval in shape, with a bare and desolate clawlike peninsula jutting out to the northwest.¹² A rugged interior plateau, partly covered by great snow fields and glaciers, and capped with a chain of volcanic mountains dominated the tactical problem. In the southwest, there were two low-lying coastal plains, one at the head of Faxaflói and the other between the river Ölfusa and Myrdalsjökull.

From these coastal plains, narrow river valleys lead up into the central tableland, and elsewhere around the coast, deep fjords, separated by rocky promontories, penetrate some twenty miles or more into the interior. In the

¹¹Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild, Guarding the United States and Its Outposts (Washington: The Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1964), pp. 511-512.

¹²See Figure 1, Map of Iceland.

coastal lowlands and river valleys, comprising scarcely seven percent of the entire area, most of the island's inhabitants lived in scattered hamlets or on isolated farms. Communications across the barren central plateau were, in 1941, limited to one dubious road that was frequently snowblocked in winter.¹³

Because of the very nature of the topography of the main island, British forces were restricted to the coastal areas where most of the population of Iceland lived. The interior portions of the island were unsuited for defense, therefore, the armed forces of the United Kingdom had to occupy valuable terrain near the cities and towns of Iceland. But the presence of foreign troops within the civilian communities constantly irritated the intensely nationalistic and proud Icelanders. They felt that they were under a form of "protective custody."

The initial British forces had been made up of Canadians largely, and these were often from the French speaking portions of Canada. The British later withdrew most of these troops but replaced them with soldiers born in the United Kingdom, but the Icelanders failed to find any improvement in relations with the British garrisons. One of the first moves that the French Canadians had made was ^{to disarm} ~~disarming~~ the entire police force in the city of Reykjavik. The Icelandic police were still without arms in 1943. These British troops had been landed on May 10, 1940 in a move that caught the government of Iceland by surprise. A year later, the Icelanders were still under British occupation. The Icelandic people were tired of having foreign troops in and about their population centers; they were a constant source of friction between the inhabitants and the occupation

¹³Stetson, op. cit., p. 498.

powers. It was expected that the Americans would respect the local authorities and customs to a greater degree than the British had done thus far.

Under the provisions of the RAINBOW Plan, the Americans wanted to permit local civil governments to function in a normal manner. The idea was set out that this expedition was to allow the Icelanders a degree of freedom similar to that enjoyed by the French during the First World War when the American Expeditionary Force was in that country. For the purpose of maintaining close cooperation with the Icelandic government, a liaison section of the Force Headquarters was to be established and officers assigned to duty with various agencies of government. Failure to obtain this desired close cooperation would result in the Americans having to establish a military government there, and this was highly undesirable from the point of view of the United States.¹⁴

Supplementary instructions later clarified the American position. The State Department felt that the establishment of a military government would actually impede the defense of the island. On specific instructions from the State Department, all Americans were enjoined to pay due respect to local institutions and to scrupulously refrain from interfering with the prerogatives of the civil authorities and to handle through the Consul of the United States, Mr. Kuniholm, all matters involving any political questions.

The advice of the Department of State was confirmed by the stipulations set forth in the agreement of July 1, 1941 between President Roosevelt and the

¹⁴Stetson Conn, *op. cit.*, p. 511.

Prime Minister of Iceland. By this agreement, the United States promised that its military activities in Iceland would be carried out in consultation with Icelandic authorities as far as possible. There was also the distinct understanding that American military forces would in no way interfere in the slightest degree with the internal and domestic affairs of the Icelandic people. The position of the United States forces vis-a-vis the local government was incorporated into the subsequent INDIGO plans.¹⁵

Prior to the inclusion of the abovementioned provisions to the INDIGO plans, the Second Echelon of American fighting men arrived in Iceland. With no formal understanding as yet between the two governments, General Charles H. Bonesteel, (who had assumed command of the Fifth United States Infantry Division on August 18, 1941), arrived in Iceland. General Bonesteel thus not only had to organize, in collaboration with the United States Legation and the local authorities, the machinery through which co-operative action could be taken, but he also had to make palatable to the Icelandic authorities the unilateral decisions of policy which in a broad area were his own. In the bases acquired in British possessions, the position of the United States garrisons was carefully and specifically defined by the agreement with the British government of March 27, 1941; no such agreement had been signed with the Icelanders when the Second Echelon of INDIGO arrived in Reykjavik.¹⁶

¹⁵Stetson Conn, *op. cit.*, p. 511.

¹⁶*Ibid.* p. 512.

For more than a year the British military forces had been coping with the problems that now faced Major General Charles H. Bonesteel, and they had worked out some fairly satisfactory procedures through which some of the more important problems were being handled. A joint Anglo-Icelandic committee had been organized to adjudicate and settle claims against the British forces; a similar committee handled all questions regarding the employment of Icelandic labor. This machinery, already functioning rather well, was available to the American forces. As early as July 18, 1941, both the British and American Consuls had urged that the United States become a party to the existing arrangements.

After the Second Echelon arrived, the Icelandic government lost no time in bringing up the question of settling claims. During a conference with General Bonesteel on September 23, at which Generals Marston and Homer, and Consul Kuniholm were present, Prime Minister Jonasson, (of Iceland), spoke of it as one of the most important problems, and to be sure, it was. He assumed that the American forces would follow the British procedures, and would set up a joint committee which, Jonasson suggested, might consist of one member from the American military staff, one appointed by the Icelandic government, and a justice from the Icelandic Supreme Court as arbitrator. A committee of this size, the Prime Minister felt, would be less cumbersome and no less impartial than the British joint committee made up of three Icelanders and two British members.¹⁷

¹⁷Ibid. p. 513.

The final plan that General Bonesteel devised was a rough compromise. On September 28, 1941, a Primary Board, consisting of one officer who would attempt to reach an agreement with the claimant, was established in accordance with appropriate Army Regulations; and if the claim was unjustifiable, or agreement impossible, the matter would then go to a Joint Claims Board. This board was a committee of three, as had been suggested by the Icelandic Prime Minister. The new board did not hold its first meeting until December 12, 1941; of eight claims presented, all arising out of traffic accidents, two were disallowed and two were deferred for future consideration. The payments it agreed to make were scaled down from two hundred and thirty-five dollars to some one hundred and five dollars.¹⁸

These traffic claims were due to more than one cause, but the worst two were the accidents that happened because the Icelanders drove on the left side of the streets, as do the British; and the fact that, in September, the winter rains and darkness had begun. There was a great rush to get the transport vessels and supply ships unloaded in the shortest possible time, and supplies were unloaded on to the docksides as fast as the soldiers, who were acting as longshoremen, could handle them. The Army had gotten its trucks unloaded first and began to haul supplies to any facility with which the driver was familiar. Most of the drivers worked from sixteen to eighteen hours daily and driver fatigue quickly set in among them. The accident rate was quite low only through the grace of God, not because of the procedures required.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 514.

The Icelanders were astonished at the mounting piles of supplies that came off the ships and were heaped on the docksides awaiting transportation. The American soldier himself was amazed at the sight of these piles. Everything was quite confused when the Second Echelon began to unload the convoy. In the absence of regular longshoremen available to the American forces, troops of the Regular Army performed this function. The average work day fluctuated because of the tides and bad weather at the harbor of Reykjavik, and some crews worked as long as eighteen hours without relief.

American soldiers lived aboard the transports that lay at anchor in the harbor for the first week. Billets were made available at the start of the second week and the transfer was made to established camps that were near the city of Reykjavik. The standard type of housing for troops was, at that time, the British made Neisson hutments which, in cross-section, were semicircular. Windows were found in only the cement block ends and the rest was corrugated steel bows that were bolted together. While few Regular Army personnel in 1941 had electrical appliances, the personal radios and the like were quite useless in Iceland since the electrical systems operated on 220 volts and a cyclic rate of fifty, (rather than the sixty we use in the United States).

Men who were assigned to the various "dock details" that worked in such places as the Main Quai in Reykjavik, quickly found that Icelandic money has a distinct relationship between size and value; the larger the bank note, the higher value the note has. The same applied to coins then in circulation. The Icelanders

seemed to assume that the same applied to American coins as well, thus when an American soldier paid for a sweet roll and a cup of coffee in American coins, the Icelanders would give more change for a five cent piece than they would for a dime. This writer is sure that the practice did not continue for long, but there had to be some ill-will built up shortly after elements of the United States Army landed in Iceland. Before too long, the American forces were paid in Icelandic money and they saw no more United States currency for the next two years.

At first there was too much to do in getting ready for the onset of winter. Exposed supplies had to be gotten under some form of protection after they had been sorted following the hectic two weeks required to off-load them from the supply vessels in the harbor. Equipment that was peculiar to an Army that was to be garrisoned in the Arctic had to be issued to the soldiers and airmen. Quarters had to be straightened out and made ready before the winter set in; this included building parapets around the base of the huts to keep the gale force winds from ripping out the flooring, which it would do if it could get under the huts.

By the end of November 1941, the troops that had landed in Iceland were granted passes into town. Many of the units were stationed within the city limits of some of the towns and villages, and most were within a few miles of the civilian communities. No one had had time to visit any civilian establishments other than those located on the docks in Reykjavik and most of the soldiers wanted to see what sort of country they were in. The American

soldier soon found that he was not welcomed by the Icelanders, and he also quickly discovered that Iceland laws prohibited any alcoholic beverage stronger than one-half of one percent beer, (labeled under the brand name of "Polar Ale").

When the American Regular is denied strong drink, he, like his civilian countryman, soon discovers a way around legal moves established to keep him separated from alcoholic beverages. One of the greatest problems faced by the American occupation forces throughout the years 1941-1943, while this writer was in Iceland, arose from violations of the "Icelandic Liquor Laws." Sailors from British vessels that docked in Reykjavik harbor never came ashore unless they smuggled a bottle or two of strong drink under their coats to sell to the thirsty, (and to the British seamen - rich), Americans stationed in Iceland. Some of the enterprising Icelanders also concocted a devilish fluid that the Americans quickly named "Black Death." Some of it could, and did, render the consumer blind. Still, American servicemen never failed to try to purchase a bottle of whiskey when they visited Reykjavik, yet possession of any alcoholic beverage other than the undrinkable "Polar Ale" was illegal and the military police had the thankless task of apprehending the soldier caught with this whiskey.

During the period of September 1941 and August 1943, no troupe from the famed U. S. O. ever played in Iceland for the entertainment of American soldiers, sailors, or airmen stationed there. There was a serious morale problem that did not take long to develop, and men were starting to brood. The towns offered very little that could be thought of as recreational by an American

serviceman, and the local population lacked any warmth toward the American troops; instead, they almost regarded them as invaders. It grew worse after the United States became one of the belligerents in the war. We were then officially an ally of the hated British who had invaded the island in May 1940.

To bring the garrison up to peak efficiency and to keep it there, (as well as for morale purposes), Major General Bonesteel instituted a thorough-going program of training, including "basic," weapons, and winter warfare. A distinctive feature of the program was the "Acting Officer" schools. These were designed to provide continuity of leadership at the small unit level should enemy action result in heavy attrition in the ranks of the company grade officers of the command. Specially selected noncommissioned officers were designated to act as lieutenants, captains, and even field grade officers during field exercises with the troops.¹⁹

The problems of morale were not really separate from the problems of the defense of Iceland. There were other problems faced by the Iceland Base Command that were inherent in the mere presence of American troops on foreign soil. The welfare of the troops and their relations with the Navy, Marine Corps, State Department personnel, the British, and the local population all involved basic fundamental questions of human intercourse. Whether in Iceland, Newfoundland, Bermuda, or Trinidad, these problems were much the same.

That the welfare of the men would present a problem was recognized early. Concern over it had been responsible to a very large extent for the insistence

¹⁹Ibid. p. 507.

upon the American troops being stationed in the vicinity of Reykjavik and it was an important factor in the desire of the Navy Department in wanting to bring home the marines as quickly as possible.

Iceland was, according to American standards, woefully lacking in places devoted to public entertainment; and since this island was held to be a theater of operations, (it was a part of the ETO), the U. S. O. was excluded by the existing policies of the War Department. The Army found itself responsible for providing its own recreational facilities beyond that normally expected or provided for under the current regulations. With what assistance the American Red Cross could give, a makeshift program was instituted during the first winter in Iceland.

In the fishing village of Hafnarfjordhur, just ten miles south of Reykjavik, the "Red Cross Hut" was the principle source of recreation available for nearly one thousand men. After the first winter ended, the United States Army began to receive the latest films from Hollywood for showing to the servicemen then in Iceland. These films were presented free to any soldier or sailor in the Allied Armed Forces who would walk to the "Hut." A regular movie schedule was posted on company bulletin boards in the many camps in and around Hafnarfjordhur by the spring of 1942.

The Red Cross workers who had come to Iceland expecting to set up a canteen and recreational center in the city were thus forced back upon the makeshift arrangements that had been improvised within the various camps. Furthermore,

the Red Cross, as an organization, was quite inexperienced in operating recreational facilities, for relief, not diversion, had been its traditional role. Improvements, as already mentioned, were made during the summer of 1942; but until then, the rigorous training program and hard physical labor had to serve as a substitute for these facilities.²⁰

Equally important to the well-being of the troops was the question of the length of the tour of duty in Iceland, and the solution was equally delayed. A lengthy staff study devised by the IBC Headquarters was sent to the War Department General Staff on October 4, 1941. In it the recommendation for rotation of personnel in Iceland was set at fourteen months for the men of the First and Second Echelons, while men who arrived later should be rotated at the end of one year. The War Department was in general accord, but with the bombing of Pearl Harbor the rotation plans, like so many other ideas, came to be revised. A side effect to the problem of morale was directly connected with this plan. It was supposed to be confidential but the enlisted men knew all about the fourteen month rotation plan; what they did not know was that the plan died on December 7, 1941, so many soldiers were bitterly disappointed when the fourteen months passed and they were still in Iceland.

Certain services did much to improve conditions for the garrison of Iceland, for mail was given a high priority in the load of a ship bound for Reykjavik from an American port. The service was poor initially, but like everything else it

²⁰Ibid. p. 507.

quickly improved; where shipment of perishable foodstuffs had been haphazard for several months, by midwinter the delivery was rather good. Often the food tasted of gasoline where the packages had been stored near petroleum products, but a few minutes on top of a "pot bellied stove" cooked the fumes out as a rule.

Palatable rations never seemed to achieve the same degree of efficiency in delivery as did other things. The troops in Iceland subsisted on field rations, (commonly referred to as "C-Rations"), for months at a time. The IBC was supposed to be on a thirty-day cycle foodwise, but with shipping losses in the North Atlantic Ocean in 1941-1942, this cycle was often extended beyond thirty days. The soldiers stationed in a camp near a town would sometimes take a twelve hour pass and go to a local cafe to eat "eggs and chips,"²¹ washed down with "Polar Ale." For many troops, this was the only reason for going into a civilian establishment. Even then, many of the younger Icelanders resented the intrusion; they feared that the Americans - with their vast wealth - might prove to be competition in courting the local girls.

As to the Icelandic women, most detested the Americans and shared the views of their men; we were invaders as far as most were concerned. Few would associate with an American, and then only if they were liberally plied with whiskey. Since the possession of alcoholic beverages was prohibited, this involved a high degree of risk and was quite expensive. It was hardly worth six months in the stockade to "date" the type of woman who sold herself for a fifth of whiskey.

²¹"Eggs and chips" were an Americanized version of the English "fish and chips." The humble "chip" was a French fried potato. Most Americans were sick of the sight of fish in Iceland and they refused to eat fish at all.

There were some men who could not restrain themselves; however, since the risks were great, most men hired a taxi cab and had it driven into the countryside. Because of the illegality of the entire situation, the cab driver charged twice the normal fare for such a trip. There were even cases where the driver refused to return the couple to the city unless another highly inflated fare was paid. Needless to say, this provided grounds for yet another case of "hard feelings" between the American serviceman and the civilian population.

During the initial phase of the occupation when new camps were being constructed, and old ones being improved, many of the local citizens found change come into their lives. When a detail began to string barbed wire about the camp, they were sure to cut across the path of a sheepherder who had used that path for years. The fact that it was now cut off by a barbed wire fence did not deter some of them. These men would carry wire cutters with them as they left their homes so when they saw their return barred by American barbed wire, they would begin to cut a path through for themselves and their sheep.

At first there was enough daylight for the guards posted about the camp to be able to determine who these men were. Then, too, we were not at war; the British were at war but not the United States. Later, after the bombing at Pearl Harbor, it was another case entirely. The sentinels were nervous, and in December the long Arctic nights made it impossible to see who was cutting wire after three o'clock in the afternoon. The guards, who then walked their posts with a bullet in the chamber of their rifles, would challenge and then fire.

The fact that only one man in five thousand knew Icelandic, and perhaps only one Icelander in twenty knew English, complicated matters.

This situation did not improve rapidly either although the IBC Headquarters issued orders that every man going on guard duty had to be instructed in certain Icelandic words, and have a copy of these words, spelled phonetically, given to him. This was supposed to reduce the number of shootings, some of which had proved to be fatal. Yet, even when challenged in Icelandic to halt, some young Icelanders refused to do so. It seemed to amount to a deadly game of nerves -- would the American use his rifle, or could the Icelander come close enough to mock him?

General Bonesteel issued orders after several of these contests of will had resulted in dead or badly wounded Icelanders; in the future, no man would fire except in the last extreme, and then only if he knew his life was at stake. As soon as the young Icelanders heard of the order, the nightly visits increased sharply and guards were nearly helpless in the face of the harassment they received from these Icelandic youths. Most American soldiers were dangerously displeased with the attitude of Icelanders in general, and these tactics enraged them even further. Since all infantrymen carried bayonets as a part of their uniform for guard, many walked post with the bayonet fixed and ready for use. When the Officer of the Day would ask a sentry why he had stabbed an Icelander with his bayonet, the usual reply was, "He wouldn't halt. I thought he was a German, and since I was not allowed to fire, I gave him a long thrust to stop him!"

This game did not end even here. When orders came out of IBC Headquarters

at Camp Pershing to stop running Icelanders through with bayonets, it too was perverted. The Icelanders persisted in their silly games of sentry-baiting, while the guards fumed. If an Icelander made the mistake of coming too close, the sentry would not hesitate to use the butt end of his steel-shod rifle. After several jaws were broken, the Icelanders seemed to realize that they were still losing and the incidents began to grow fewer in number.

The Germans, prior to the start of the war in 1939, had tried to woo the Icelanders, both collectively and individually. There were many Icelanders who became interested in Hitler's National Socialist Movement, and some even joined the Nazi Party. These people tried to influence the others to do harm to Americans and their installations at every possible chance that presented itself. Active sabotage was carried out by some Icelanders in the period of 1941 to 1943 to the personal knowledge of this writer. Telephone lines would be cut in several places, or even long stretches would be cut and removed. Boards with exposed nails would be placed near the entrances to American camps in the hope that drivers would not see them in time to stop before puncturing the front tires of military vehicles. Again, this is from personal knowledge.

One observation post manned by men of the Intelligence Platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the Tenth United States Infantry Regiment, overlooked a schoolhouse in the town of Harnarfjordhur. In the summer, when school was not being held, the town would rent out the classrooms as apartments to people who lived in the interior and wanted to vacation at the coast. In the summer

of 1942, one of these apartments was rented to an Icelandic member of the Nazi movement, and his window was directly in the full view of the observation post. On every German holiday, this Iclander would hang a swastika in that window. He also refused to "black-out" his windows during air raids until one night when permission was granted to shoot out his light with a machine gun.

The original idea of sending troops to Iceland to relieve the British garrison there had been devised by Roosevelt and Churchill. Trained British troops were badly needed for duty elsewhere, yet the vital location of Iceland astride the life-line of the British Isles required a force strong enough to keep it out of the hands of the Nazi war machine. By early 1942, it played another vital role as well; it furnished protection to the convoys that sailed to the Soviet Union carrying necessary munitions and equipment to the Russian, (who were then allies), soldiers. Aircraft flying out of Icelandic bases could patrol north of Jan Mayen Island and give additional air cover to the harried convoys sailing to the White Sea.²²

Churchill asked that American soldiers take over the role of defending the island of Iceland in December 1941 as he told Roosevelt that British troops were desperately needed in both the Middle East and in the fighting in North Africa. Churchill even sought to have American troops stationed in Northern Ireland and to join with Britain in the common cause. General Marshall and Admiral

²²To better appreciate the strategic location enjoyed by Iceland in the North Atlantic, see Figure 2, "The Strategic Importance of Iceland in Early 1942." Iceland and the Orkney Islands completely dominated this portion of the North Atlantic Ocean through air bases located there.

Stark were in complete agreement on the proposition he advanced, respecting the role of the United States in keeping the routes of communication open between the United States and the British Isles and the actual protection of those British Isles themselves from attack by the Axis powers.²³

The existing airfields at Reykjavik and Kaldadharnes, jointly used by the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Force, were overcrowded and unsuitable for heavy bomber (B-24) operations. Dispersal areas for the aircraft and housing for the men were limited. Runways, hastily built in the first place, had rapidly deteriorated under constant use and heavy frosts; and on one occasion, a B-24 of the Ferry Command that had parked overnight on the runway at Reykjavik was found the next morning to have broken through the paving.

Overcrowding was the chief problem. It was possible to develop Reykjavik airfield only to the extent of taking care of an additional light bomber squadron; by building more parking and dispersal areas at Kaldadharnes; and by providing housing, another squadron could be accommodated there. Again, there was a decided problem with the Icelanders.²⁴ There simply was not enough room that could, or would be made available to the Allies.

The solution recommended by both General Bonesteel and General Tinker, (of the American Air Force), and eventually adopted, was to construct an entirely

²³Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall : Ordeal and Hope New York: The Viking Press, 1966, p. 268.

²⁴Stetson Conn, op. cit., pp. 503-504.

new air field, suitable for heavy bombers, in the neighborhood of Keflavik. This air field, vastly expanded since 1942, is still in service today. It is the largest air field in this part of the world and it serves the Republic of Iceland by commercial flights. The Tenth United States Infantry Regiment was initially responsible for the security of this new air field, but later it became the responsibility of the Eleventh United States Infantry. The first German prisoners of war were captured near this area when an airplane of the German Air Force was shot down over Keflavik.

Visits from the German Air Force had been rather regular until the new air field was constructed on the Keflavik peninsula. This was another area where the policies of the United States Army varied with the desires of the Icelandic Prime Minister. The Iceland Base Command felt that local air raid precautions were the responsibility of the Icelandic local governments once the Americans had alerted them to the danger. The only positive device contributed by the United States Army in the town of Harnarfjodhur, to the direct knowledge of this writer, was the installation of an air raid siren. This was one of the chief complaints the Icelanders had had about the British forces. Most Icelandic officials felt that the Americans were as unfeeling about the safety and welfare of the people as the British had been.

The odd thing about most Icelanders regarding air raids was their approach toward the possibility of personal injury. They were entirely passive toward visits made over Iceland by the Luftwaffe, to be sure these German airmen were

usually on reconnaissance missions only, when they flew over the island, yet bombs were dropped on occasion. Still, to the knowledge of this writer, at no time did the civil authorities ever order the construction of air raid shelters to protect the population. The reasons for this attitude were never made clear.

Passive measures insisted on by General Bonesteel as to the civilians were few, yet important. The thing most strongly insisted upon was the "black-out" since Iceland was quite far from the European mainland, and the Luftwaffe seldom flew over the island in the winter, Iceland had no regular "black-out" schedule such as one found in the British Isles where it was a regular feature in the daily lives of the people. Once the sirens were sounded, however, the civilians were supposed to darken all lights outside their homes and draw heavy drapes across their windows. Many Icelanders failed to do this unless soldiers on patrol insisted on it. One sometimes felt that the average Icelander saw this neutrality of his as a sort of personal body armor. He was a noncombatant, therefore, he could not be injured by the war.

While in Iceland, this writer often heard of Icelanders being involved in fake accidents with trucks of the United States Army. While all cases can be considered as hearsay by this writer, nonetheless, there were too many incidents reported for all of them to be mere inventions. The usual story regarding an accident found an Icelander parked off the road until he heard an American two-and-a-half ton truck coming. He would then deliberately drive his vehicle in front of the truck at a point where the driver could not swerve to miss him. The

Icelander would then file a claim against the government of the United States asking for damages. For awhile the Americans replaced the old truck with a new one. The news must have spread fast because the rash of accidents increased at an alarming rate. As mentioned, this is largely hearsay, yet there seemed to be a solid foundation for the stories circulated.

Shipping priorities were strongly affected by operations elsewhere; Iceland, while its strategic importance in the North Atlantic was never minimized, often found that supplies could not be delivered at the rate desired by the garrison. When the Allied staff planners began to plan the invasion of North Africa, Iceland was allocated a low priority on shipping. Operation TORCH, (the invasion of North and Northwestern Africa in November, 1942), saw precedence being given to TORCH first, then to United States forces in the United Kingdom and to China secondly, Iceland received third place in shipping priority. As a consequence, the United States government was forced to buy many items on the local economy, especially foodstuffs.²⁵

Sometimes the need for buying from the local civilians was predicated on other factors however. One incident involved the purchase of over a dozen sheep from a shepherd near Selfoss. The Tenth United States Infantry was conducting a training exercise that involved the use of "live fire," (i.e., using real bullets rather than blank ammunition commonly employed in training), from fifty caliber machine guns. Even though the range had been clearly marked off by barbed wire

²⁵Maurice Matloff, op. cit., pp. 308-309.

and signs painted in both English and Icelandic, suddenly a herd of sheep came across the brow of the ridge in front of the gunners. Before firing could be halted, many sheep had been shot. The American Army paid for the dead sheep and mutton was featured on the menu for several days afterwards. Needless to say, the men of the Tenth Infantry were quite disgusted with the whole affair since the Iclander was clearly at fault, yet the Army had to buy his sheep. Also, the smell of that mutton lingered for many days throughout the camps.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Most Americans had come to Iceland in the years between 1941 and 1943 feeling as if they were contributing something toward maintaining the national integrity of that government. This attitude underwent a radical change before the troops had been in the country very long. While most Americans were not unacquainted with civilian scorn in the United States before the attack on Pearl Harbor, still there was not the degree of open hostility in the United States that one found in Iceland. Nearly every soldier in the Tenth Infantry was a "Regular." He had known civilian apathy "back home," however, the soldiers all felt the American Army was in Iceland to keep the Nazis out, as well as to guard a vital supply route. Yet the impression that the average Icelander displayed seemed to be that they would welcome the Germans should they invade the island. This, however, was only a feeling; there is nothing specific that this writer can point to for confirmation. Still, the feeling persists even to this day that the Icelandic people would not have resisted an invasion by the Germans.

Many soldiers came away from Iceland with a strong dislike for the country and its people. Several grew to hate the Icelander more than the Germans, even though the Icelander was supposed to be an ally. As recently as 1958, the writer talked with servicemen stationed in Iceland, and the general opinion was that the

Icelanders still disliked Americans as much as ever. The attitude of the people spoken to in 1958 was almost the same as the attitudes that were found fifteen years earlier when the author was part of the garrison in Iceland.

The average serviceman felt that the Icelanders were taking advantage of everything that the United States did to protect these islanders from the Nazis, yet they would do nothing to contribute to their own defense. In fact, the people seemed to deeply resent anything that the Americans might do to keep the Germans out. While this might be unjustified, still that was the impression that many of the men had during the Second World War. All of the efforts made by the United States government to convince the American serviceman to the contrary was overcome by the attitude of the Icelandic people. The American government spent thousands of dollars trying to instill a feeling of mutual trust and respect, but the effort was a waste when the men of the Iceland Base Command could see about them evidence of hostility daily. Some men even went so far as to declare that when they returned to America if someone mentioned to them that he was an Icelander that they would instantly begin fighting with that person.

The general conclusion that can be made is that Americans like to be liked, and he feels that an American should be accorded respect. Since he is naturally friendly toward people of a host country, he expects the same treatment. Not finding this in Iceland, the American responded in the same coin. Much of the trouble between the occupation forces was not on the level of government. In

fact, the Prime Minister of Iceland did try to be most cooperative, but this hostility was on an individual basis. The Icelanders and Americans, as a people, as individuals, disliked each other on a person-to-person level.

Few historians mention that relations between Iceland and the United States were other than excellent, and the rest might say they were merely good. This is due to the propaganda that the United States circulated during the Second World War for our government never admitted that there was any friction with the Icelanders. The fact is that, from personal observation, there was more ill-will than good between the two nationalities during this period. The Icelandic never lost the feeling that he was being held captive by the Allies, even though the government of his country had invited American occupation.

APPENDICES

TABLE I

SHIPPING PRIORITIES AFFECTED BY TORCH
AUGUST, 1942

On August 4, 1942, shipping priorities were revised for troops and materiel leaving ports in the United States bound for overseas stations. TORCH was to take precedence over any other shipping while this operation was being mounted.

On August 13, 1942, the following priority on shipping was approved:

1. TORCH:
 - a. Middle East
 - b. Pacific Ocean
 - c. Russian supplies shipped by way of the southern route
2. U.S. Army Air Forces to the U.K. and to China.
3. Relief of Iceland.
4. BOLERO (the "build-up" of U.S. supplies and forces in the U.K. for a cross-channel attack).
5. India and China.
6. Russian supplies via the northern route.

TABLE II

UNITED STATES ARMY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT
AS OF OCTOBER 17, 1941

(EXTRACT)

ICELAND

	<u>Now</u>	<u>End 1941</u>	<u>After 1941</u>
Officers and Men	5, 900	6, 600	30, 000
Airplanes:			
Pursuit	31	30	30
Miscellaneous	3	0	-

NOTE: Figures shown as "After 1941" are predictions for the end of 1942.
Dashes would have indicated "unknown."

TABLE III

THE BRITISH DEFENSIVE STRUCTURE IN 1941

The British had provided for the defense of Iceland by sectors. Under the plan then current, the island was divided into five sectors, four of which contained areas of strategic importance requiring ground, anti-aircraft, and coastal defenses.

The Southwestern Sector: Comprising the Reykjavik-Keflavik Peninsula area, was the smallest but most important. To its defense, the British had assigned some 10,500 troops.

The Western Sector: Immediately adjoined the Southwestern Sector, about 7,300 troops covered the land and air approaches to Reykjavik and manned the defenses of the naval anchorage in Hvalfjordhur and the air field at Kaldadharnes.

The Northwestern Sector: Was so organized as to protect the only road connection with the north coast, on a line running from Borgarnes in the south to Blonduos in the north, and for this purpose some 1,350 soldiers were assigned to the sector by the British.

Eastwards from Blonduos, a road led to the port of Akureyri. Beyond Akureyri, a road of sorts extended about sixty miles to Lake Myvatn, but after that, land communications became virtually nonexistent. Except for short stretches in the extreme eastern end of the island near Seydhisfjordhur and Budhareyri, and equally short stretches on the southern coast, roads became mere bridle paths and even these disappeared in places.

The Northeastern Sector: Therefore comprised two widely separated centers of defense relatively inaccessible to each other and epitomized this aspect of the defense problem of the whole island. Some 3,500 men were stationed in the neighborhood of Akureyri for the protection of the port and seaplane anchorage, and for the defense of the landing field at nearby Melgerdhi. Another 1,800 troops were assigned to the Northeastern Sector and stationed in the Seydhisfjordhur-Budhareyri area, which included a potential landing place for seaplanes on Lagarfljot, (a deep, wide fjord located in the east-northeastern part of the main island), near Seydhisfjordhur.

The Central Sector: Had no troops assigned to it. An attack by hostile forces getting into the interior would have been quite difficult and the British felt that such an assault would have led nowhere.

By looking at the dispositions of approximately 24,000 British soldiers, one can easily see that nearly seventy percent of these forces were stationed within a thirty mile radius of the Reykjavik docks.

TABLE IV

THE U.S. DEFENSE PLAN IN 1941

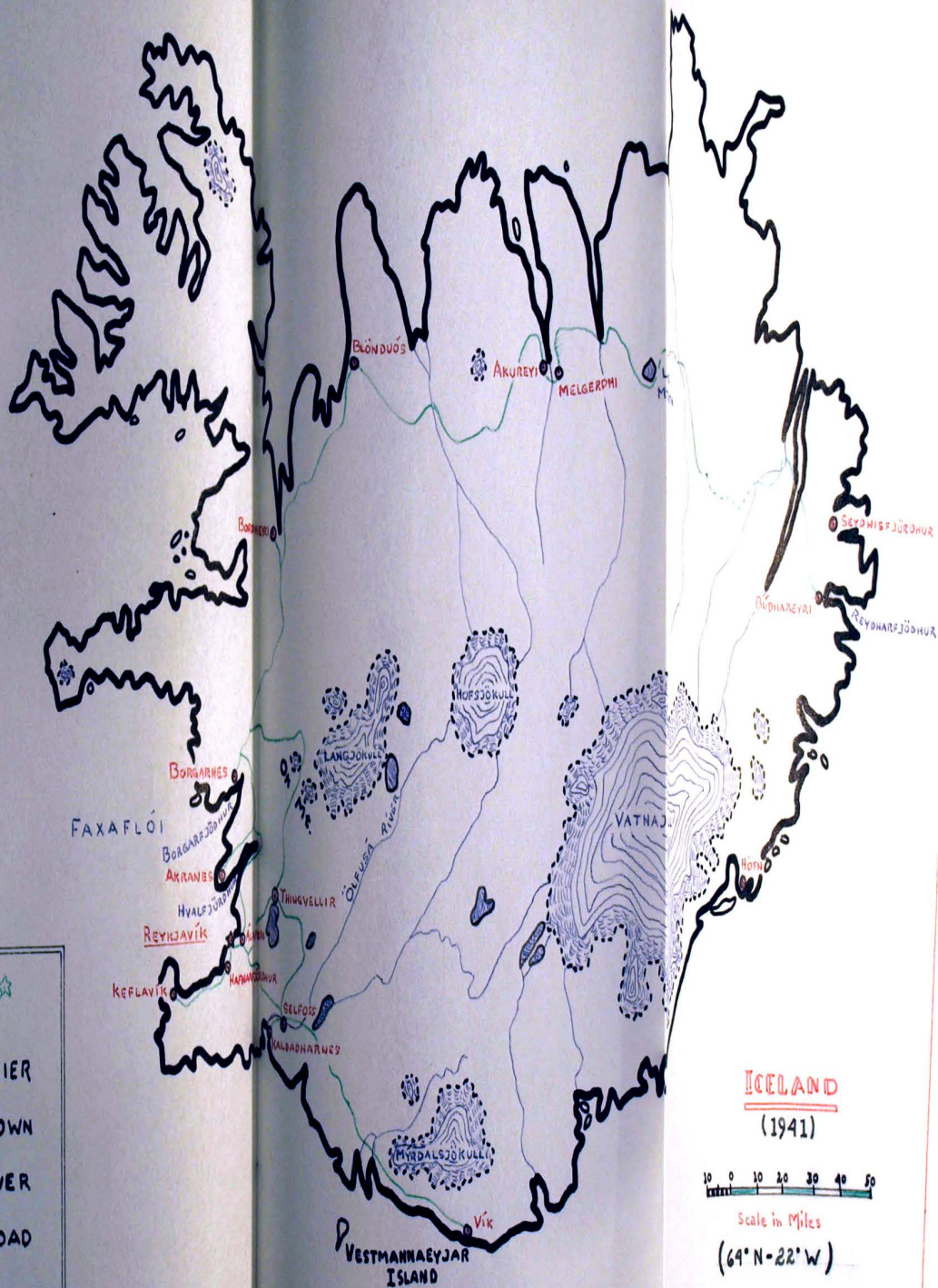
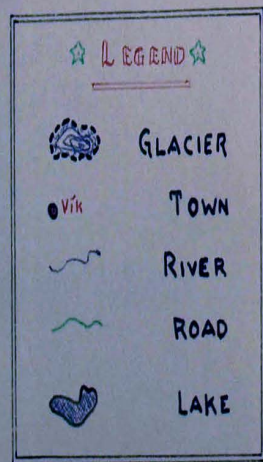
While similar to the British plan, the most striking difference between the two lay in the disposition of the ground forces. The American defense plan assigned 21,131 troops, nearly eighty-two percent of the total planned garrison, to the Reykjavik Sector; 1,372 men to the Borgarnes-Bordheyri-Blonduos area; 1,555 personnel to Akureyri; and 1,638 troops to the Seydhisfjordhur-Reydhafsfjordhur area. This was a much greater concentration in the Reykjavik area, compared to the British arrangements, and a much thinner spread of strength in the northern and eastern parts of the island.

Shortly after General Bonesteel's arrival, General Curtis, commander of the British garrison, outlined his strategic and tactical views to General Bonesteel. The Key to the defense of Reykjavik, as General Curtis saw it, was the Vatnsendi Ridge, five or six miles east of the city. This ridge commanded the roads north to Alafoss and Hvalfjordhur; south to the small port of Hafnarfjodhur and the Keflavik Peninsula; and eastward along the road to Kaldadharnes and Selfoss. Control of this ridge, according to the British commander, would permit rapid counterattacks in any of three directions.

From its position around Alafoss, the American mobile reserve was most suitably located for action in the direction of Hvalfjordhur; but should the British reserve behind Vatnsendi Ridge be forced to move out to counter a threat to the east, the American troops, General Curtis continued, should be prepared to take the place of the British in support of the Ridge. The Major responsibility of the American force would clearly lie, however, in the area to the north and northwest, toward Hvalfjordhur.

Whatever the theoretical needs, the fact was that the countryside about Reykjavik was approaching the saturation point in the matter of accommodating troops; for within a dozen miles of the city, there were crowded nearly a hundred camps and installations ranging upwards in size from platoon strength, (i.e., in 1941, the authorized strength of an infantry platoon was one officer and fifty-one men. Most platoons, however, were about twenty percent understrength).

Ibid., pp. 501-503.



ICELAND
(1941)



Scale in Miles

(64° N - 22° W)

FIGURE 1

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF
ICELAND IN EARLY 1942.

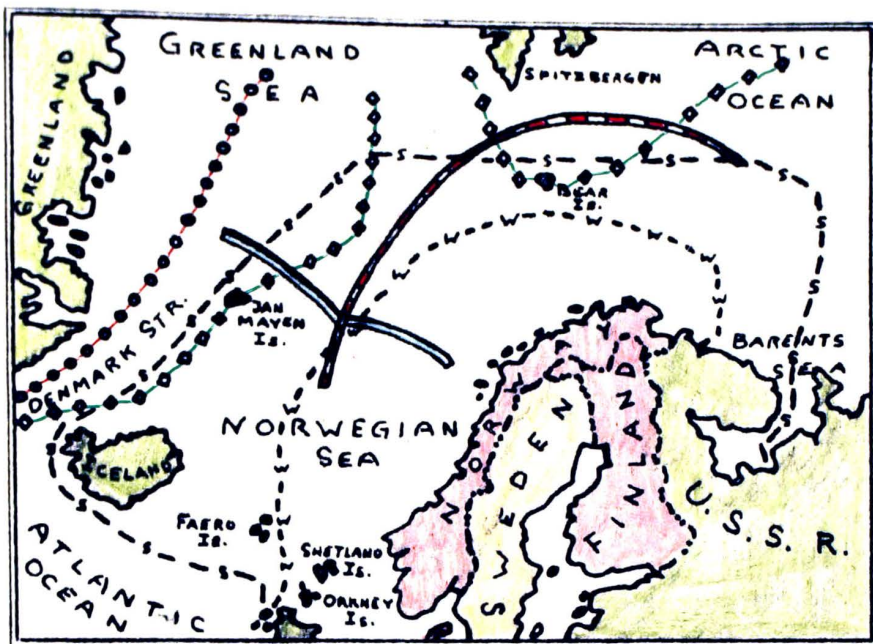





FIGURE 2

* LEGEND *


Southern limits of sea ice;


March , and September 

Limit of Allied air cover from Iceland and the
Orkney Islands 

Radius of action of the Luftwaffe 

Sea routes, Loch Ewe to the White Sea;

Summer  (approximately 18 days).

Winter  (approximately 10 days).

(From The Second World War : A Military History. p. 287)

John C. Trickey
224 Downer Drive
Clarksville
Tennessee, 37040.

November 3, 1967

The Honorable James K. Penfield
United States Ambassador to Iceland
The United States Embassy
Reykjavik, Iceland

Sir:

By way of introduction allow me to say that I am a student at Austin Peay State University, located in Clarksville, Tennessee; and enrolled in the Division of Graduate Studies. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education I am required to submit a research paper to the Faculty of the Graduate School.

Since I served in Iceland with the Tenth United States Infantry Regiment from September 1941 to August 1943 I asked for, and received permission to, write on the subject of American-Icelandic Relations, 1941-1942. Preliminary research into materials available to me leave some questions unanswered, I would be most grateful if you could assist me in this matter.

While I am acquainted with individual Icelandic reaction toward the presence of American soldiers in Iceland during this period, I do not know what the attitude of the Icelandic government was. I am sure that the news that the United States had become a co-belligerent had a great impact on the Regent and his government. I cannot know, from the sources available, what the reaction of the Icelandic government was to the news that the United States was unable to completely relieve the British forces stationed there.

Preliminary research has disclosed that the Icelandic government, in mid-July, 1940, was in communication with our State Department concerning a possible relief of British units by elements of the Armed Forces of the United States. Could a copy of this communication be furnished to me? A second exchange took place the following year when President Franklin D. Roosevelt received an invitation to send some units of the American forces to Iceland. This message was acted upon within a week when elements of the United States Marine Corps were dispatched to Iceland. I am most interested in getting a copy of this document as well.

Any information you can give me in answering my questions as to the attitude of the Regency toward the United States, or copies of the two documents mentioned would be greatly appreciated. Data, as to disciplinary problems by American soldiers that were of concern to the Icelandic government would be most helpful. Contacts between the Iceland Base Command and the Regent, or his government, might also shed light on the status of our relationship with the government of Iceland.

I thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I am fully aware that what I ask is an imposition but I hope that you may find the time to assist me in this paper. It is an area where little research has been done in the past.

Respectfully,





EMBASSY
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Reykjavik, Iceland

November 29, 1967

Mr. John C. Trickey
224 Downer Drive
Clarksville, Tennessee 37040

Dear Mr. Trickey:

There has been referred to me for reply your letter of November 3 addressed to Ambassador James K. Penfield, who has departed this post.

You ask for information regarding events which took place more than 25 years ago. Our records here at the Embassy do not go back that far. We do not, therefore, have any material that might be of use to you in preparing your paper on American-Icelandic Relations, 1941-1942. I would suggest that you consult the appropriate documents which have been published. You might, for example, find it useful to consult the volumes entitled Foreign Relations of the United States for the years 1941 and 1942. These are published by the Department of State.

I regret that I cannot provide you more helpful information.

Very truly yours,


James G. Sampas
Second Secretary

ICELAND

775

611.59A81/100e: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Minister in Iceland (MacVeagh)

WASHINGTON, November 26, 1941—11 p. m.

133. On Friday, November 21, the Lend-Lease Agreement between the United States and Iceland¹⁷ providing, in substance, as follows, was executed: ✓

(1) The United States will procure defense articles for Iceland insofar as both Governments deem such procurement in their mutual best interests.

(2) Iceland will pay for such articles before delivery, except when the United States deems prior payment necessary to protect its interests.

When the agreement was signed, the Secretary handed a note¹⁸ to the Icelandic Minister, stating that the United States would consent to distribution of the material procured under the agreement by usual distributing agencies within Iceland, subject to certain specified conditions.

The Delegation was also handed a memorandum¹⁹ which set forth the basis upon which products within Iceland would be purchased by the United States for ultimate transfer as Lend-Lease aid to the British. A telegram dealing with this memorandum and related questions follows.

A copy of the Lend-Lease Agreement and the related note is being sent to you.

HULL

[In January 1942, at the request of the Icelandic Government, negotiations for a trade agreement were transferred to Iceland. With instruction No. 41, March 19, 1942, proposed schedules and general provisions were sent to the Chargé in Iceland. The subject, however, received only intermittent attention and the reciprocal trade agreement was not signed until August 27, 1943. For text of agreement, see Department of State Executive Agreement Series No. 342, or 57 Stat. (pt. 2) 1075.]

¹⁷ For text of agreement, see Department of State Executive Agreement Series No. 429, or 58 Stat. (pt. 2) 1455.

¹⁸ Not printed.

¹⁹ Not found in Department files, but see letter to the Chairman of the Icelandic Trade Delegation, *supra*.

AGREEMENT WITH THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT FOR SENDING OF
AMERICAN TROOPS TO ASSUME PROTECTION OF ICELAND*

859A.20/17

The British Embassy to the Department of State

The British authorities have been informed by Admiral Ghormley²¹ that the United States Government have decided to send a force to Iceland in the very near future. ✓

The British authorities are not clear whether the United States Government have as yet made any communication on this subject to the Icelandic Government but on the assumption that the latter have so far been left in ignorance of the United States Government's intentions, the British authorities feel that it would be preferable, for military and tactical reasons, that no advance information of the proposed despatch of United States forces should be given. The British authorities would suggest that the best course would be for the Icelandic Government to be presented with a *fait accompli* as was the case when the British troops occupied Iceland.

If the United States Government equally feel that it would be undesirable to disclose their intentions beforehand to the Icelandic Government, it would nevertheless seem necessary for the Icelandic authorities to be informed and for some public announcement to be made, either when the United States troops actually land or very shortly before the landing takes place. Furthermore, it seems very important that in any action which may be taken in this direction, the United States and British Governments should speak with the same voice. The United States Government have no doubt already taken this aspect of the matter into consideration and His Majesty's Government would be very grateful to learn how the United States authorities feel that the question should be dealt with.

The British Government venture to suggest for the consideration of the United States authorities that one method of dealing with the matter—based on the analogy of what was done when the British forces occupied Iceland—would be for the United States Consul^{22a} and the British Minister^{22b} in Reykjavik to make oral communications to the Icelandic Prime Minister^{22c} and for simultaneous statements on the subject to be issued to the press in the United States and in Great Britain. These statements, it is suggested, might perhaps be somewhat on the lines of the following paragraphs, the first of which is

* For previous correspondence on the attitude of the United States toward taking Iceland under its protection, see *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. II, pp. 679 ff.

²¹ Vice Adm. R. L. Ghormley, Chief of Special Mission to the United Kingdom.

^{22a} Bertel Eric Kunholm.

^{22b} C. Howard Smith.

^{22c} Hermann Jonasson.

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based on various passages in the President's radio address of May 27th.²²

"It is the declared policy of the United States to keep Hitlerism away from any points in the world which could be used and would be used as bases of attack against the Americas. Iceland constitutes one of these points and its occupation by the Nazis would involve an immediate threat to the United States. It would also gravely menace the delivery of supplies to Britain which the United States in conformity with the ancient American doctrine of freedom of the seas and the declared intention to render all possible aid to the democracies in the fight against Hitlerism, are determined shall be delivered.

"For these reasons and in order to relieve Britain of the task of protecting a friendly and neutral country from being added to the list of victims of Nazi aggression, the United States Government have decided, in concert with His Majesty's Government, to assume direct responsibility for the defence of Iceland and gradually to relieve the present British garrison by stationing United States troops in the island."

The British authorities also suggest for the consideration of the United States Government that it might be desirable to add to the above-mentioned statement something to the effect that the United States Government declared it to be their intention not to interfere in the internal administration and economic life of Iceland beyond what might be necessary to ensure the security of the garrison, which would be withdrawn when the democracies had won the war against Hitlerism. A similar assurance was given by His Majesty's Government at the time of the British occupation and it might be desirable for it to be repeated again in order to relieve any possible apprehensions on the part of the Icelandic population.

[WASHINGTON, June 16, 1941.]

859A.20/17

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Welles)

[WASHINGTON,] June 18, 1941.

Mr. Butler ²³ of the British Embassy called to see me this morning at his request.

I stated to Mr. Butler that the President had requested me to inform the British Government that the plan of procedure concerning Iceland which was set forth in the secret memorandum ²⁴ handed me by Lord Halifax ²⁵ two days ago and which I had submitted to the President yesterday was entirely unacceptable to the President.

²² For text of address, see Department of State *Bulletin*, May 31, 1941, p. 647.

²³ Neville M. Butler, British Minister.

²⁴ *Supra*.

²⁵ British Ambassador.

The President desired to inform the British Government that the plan of procedure he envisaged was as follows:

The necessary American forces, ships and troops, would be concentrated at either Newfoundland or Bermuda, or both. The President estimated that approximately four days would be required for these forces to reach Iceland from the point of concentration. As soon as the concentration had been completed, the President believed that the British authorities should state to the Prime Minister of Iceland that because of their own defense requirements and military requirements in other parts of the world, it had become inconvenient for the British Government to maintain any longer their forces of occupation in Iceland and that, consequently, they were prepared to withdraw. The British authorities would likewise state to the Prime Minister of Iceland that the British Government was informed that the Government of the United States, because of its determination to defend the Western Hemisphere against any danger of attack by Germany, would be prepared to send forces to Iceland in replacement of the British forces in order to assist in the defense of the integrity and independence of Iceland and that, consequently, the Prime Minister of Iceland should send a message to the President of the United States requesting the United States to undertake the task of defending Iceland. Immediately upon the receipt of such a message from the Prime Minister of Iceland, the President would reply stating that American forces would immediately be sent for that purpose and would likewise state that the United States had no intention of impairing in any manner whatever the independence or sovereignty of Iceland and that as soon as the present emergency was passed, all American forces of occupation would be withdrawn. As soon as these messages had been exchanged, the American forces would be dispatched to Iceland to take over from the British forces.

I further stated that the President did not approve the suggested statement to be made by him as contained in the British memorandum and did not agree that any statement to be made by him should give the unfounded impression that the steps taken by the United States were taken "in concert with His Majesty's Government."

I stated that Ambassador Winant²² had been fully instructed by the President along the lines I had just indicated to Mr. Butler, but that in view of my belief that time is extremely important in this matter now, I felt the President wished his views to be conveyed without delay to the British Government.

S[UMNER] W[ELLES]

²² John G. Winant, Ambassador in the United Kingdom.

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859A.20/101: Telegram

The Consul at Reykjavik (Kuniholm) to the Secretary of State

I have conveyed to the Prime Minister today the substance of your strictly confidential message⁴⁴ delivered to me last night by the USS *Goldsborough*. The Prime Minister, on behalf of the Icelandic Government, made the following observations: Since the President is prepared to accept in principle the conditions and reservations transmitted to the British Government by Prime Minister, there remains only the announcement to be made by the President.

The moral effect on Icelanders of a change in military occupation from troops of a belligerent to those of a neutral country will be considerable. This effect might be lost if the wording of the President's public statement were to read "supplement and perhaps eventually to replace" instead of "relieve at once" in connection with the transfer of military control. The Icelandic Government would prefer that the interchange take place as quickly as possible.

The Icelandic Government is particularly anxious to avoid any semblance of a condominium in military control as between Great Britain and the United States. It is felt that joint occupation would be worse than the existing *status quo*.

KUNIHOLM

859A.20/201

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State

[WASHINGTON,] July 1, 1941.

The British Ambassador called me on the telephone this morning to say that he had information for me with regard to the Iceland question. I consequently arranged to see the Ambassador at eleven o'clock.

The Ambassador came in with two messages for me which are attached herewith. He read to me likewise additional telegrams he had received from his Government which made it entirely clear that the Icelandic Government and the British Government approved entirely of the texts of the messages proposed by the President to be exchanged between the Prime Minister of Iceland and himself and likewise with regard to all of the other steps, including the timing of publicity to be given to these messages as specified in the last conversation I had with the Ambassador on this subject. The sole reser-

⁴⁴ This telegram was sent in naval code to the Secretary of State. It is undated but probably was sent on June 30, 1941.

⁴⁵ *Supra*.

vation made was that the Icelandic Government, for the reasons expressed in the memorandum handed to me by the Ambassador, hoped that the President would agree to use the phrase "to replace" instead of the phrase suggested by the President "to supplement and perhaps eventually to replace" in the penultimate sentence of the first paragraph of the message to be sent by the Prime Minister of Iceland to the President. I said that this suggestion had been made by the President himself and that I doubted very much that the President would feel able to modify his decision in that regard, but that I would submit the matter to the President and let the Ambassador have the President's decision in the matter.

It was further clearly stated by the Ambassador that the Prime Minister of Iceland agreed that the agreement now reached between him and the President as to the texts of the two messages to be exchanged should be regarded as sufficient and that no texts need actually be telegraphed.

I subsequently spoke with the President on the telephone and he authorized me to state to the Ambassador that he was willing to omit the word "perhaps" from the suggested message but that he would have to insist upon the retention of the phrase "to supplement and eventually to replace" in lieu of the mere phrase "to replace".

I then called Lord Halifax on the telephone and communicated to him the President's decision. Lord Halifax said that I was to understand that this was entirely satisfactory to the Prime Minister of Iceland and that the two texts of the messages were now to be regarded as finally approved.

S[UMNER] W[ELLES]

[Annex 1]

The penultimate sentence of the first paragraph of the text of the message which the Iceland Prime Minister originally suggested that he should send to the President ran as follows:

"He also called my attention to the declaration of the President of the United States to the effect that he must take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the Western Hemisphere—one of President's measures is to assist in the defence of Iceland—and that the President is therefore prepared to send here immediately United States troops to replace the British force here."

This paragraph was redrafted by the President to run as follows:—

"He also called my attention to the declaration of the President of the United States to the effect that he must take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the Western Hemisphere—one of the President's measures is to assist in the defense of Iceland—and that the President is therefore prepared to send here immediately United States troops to supplement and perhaps eventually to replace the British force here."

The Iceland Prime Minister has now replied through the British Minister in Reykjavik that the Iceland Government would greatly prefer the original wording which they themselves suggested.

This is important from the point of view of their own internal political position. They had counted on being able to defend their action in the Icelandic Parliament by saying that Iceland would now be accepting the protection of a non-belligerent power instead of that of a belligerent. The wording desired by the President suggests, however, that in theory, at all events, Iceland may be under a joint occupation for an indefinite period. The Iceland Government do not understand the necessity for the President's amendment since they feel that it is already provided that it should be left to the judgment of the United States and British Governments to decide when the British forces should leave.

One of the "reservations" or "conditions" asked by the Iceland Government from His Majesty's Government, and accepted by the latter, ran as follows:—

"Great Britain promises to withdraw all her armed forces as soon as the transport of the United States forces is so far advanced that their military strength is sufficient for the defence of the country. The defences of the country while the change is to be effected never to be less than they are now."

The Iceland Government hope that if the President feels unable to withdraw his proposed amendment and return to the text originally suggested by the Iceland Prime Minister, he will be prepared to have the word "perhaps" in his draft omitted.

The Iceland Government agree to the President's proposal that once the texts of the two messages have been finally agreed upon "this agreement shall be regarded as being equivalent to the two notes having been exchanged and it will not be necessary for them actually to be telegraphed. The Iceland Government also agree that as soon as the draft messages have been finally settled the United States forces should start."

JULY 1, 1941.

[Annex 2]

The Foreign Office are anxious to be informed as long as possible in advance of the date and hour of publication in Washington of the exchange of messages between the President and the Iceland Prime Minister. They are also anxious to know whether the President proposes to publish any other material at the same time. In that event they would like if possible to be informed of the text of this additional material in advance.

JULY 1, 1941.

"The final texts of the two messages, dated July 1, are printed as Department of State Executive Agreement Series No. 232.

"United States Forces arrived in Iceland on July 7, 1941."

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DISINCLINATION OF THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE ICELAND UNDER
ITS PROTECTION FOLLOWING GERMAN INVASION OF DENMARK
AND BRITISH OCCUPATION OF ICELAND

859A.01/45

The British Ambassador (Lothian) to the Secretary of State

No. 201

WASHINGTON, May 10, 1940.

SIR: On instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs I have the honour to inform you that since the German seizure of Denmark it had become necessary for His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to reckon with the possibility of a sudden German descent upon Iceland. It was clear that in the face of an attack on Iceland, even on a very small scale, the Icelandic Government would be unable to prevent their country falling completely into German hands.

His Majesty's Government accordingly decided to preclude this possibility, which would deprive Iceland of her independence, by themselves landing a force in Iceland; and that was done this morning.

They have explicitly assured the Icelandic Government that they are acting solely to ensure the security of Iceland against a German invasion, that the force will be withdrawn at the end of the war and that they will not interfere with the administration of the Island. They are also prepared to negotiate an agreement on trade matters which should bring material advantages to the inhabitants of Iceland.

I have the honour [etc.]

LOTHIAN

859A.01/46: Telegram

The Chargé in Germany (Kirk) to the Secretary of State

BERLIN, May 11, 1940—5 p. m.

[Received 7:35 p. m.]

1302. My 1176, May 1, 1 p. m.* Yesterday's and this morning's press published reports of the British occupation of Iceland which is pictured as an unprovoked aggression against a small and utterly defenseless people and thus as demonstrating the hypocrisy of England's righteous indignation against Germany for its action to protect the neutrality of other small nations from British encroachment. The DAZ* this afternoon publishes a brief editorial which argues that Iceland is closer to Greenland in which the United States has manifested interest than to Scotland and therefore is to be regarded as in the Western Hemisphere and as falling within the scope of the Monroe

* Not printed.

* *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.

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Doctrine. The British action which is described as a side show to divert public attention from British failures on the Continent is said accordingly to be of primary interest to the United States and not to Germany.

KIRK

859A.01/48

The Secretary of State to the British Ambassador (Lothian)

WASHINGTON, May 15, 1940.

EXCELLENCY: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of May 10, 1940 stating that in order to preclude the possibility of a German seizure of Iceland, the British Government landed a force in Iceland on the morning of May 10.

I am pleased to note that assurances have been given to the Icelandic Government that the British Government is acting solely to insure the security of Iceland against a German invasion and that the British forces will be withdrawn at the end of the war and that they will not interfere with the administration of the island.

Accept [etc.]

For the Secretary of State:
SUMNER WELLES

859A.01/49: Telegram

The Consul at Reykjavik (Kuniholm) to the Secretary of State

REYKJAVIK, May 29, 1940—11 a. m.

[Received May 31—3:34 p. m.]

British occupation of Iceland proceeding without resistance. Prime Minister* estimates troops at 4,000. Other officials put figure as high as 7,000. Heaviest concentration at Reykjavik where German air raid is expected. Radio station, harbor entrance, bridges, piers, and principal public buildings occupied. Warships in hiding Alfjördur [Hvalfjördur] Bay mouth of which has been mined.

Iceland Government feels that capital is now a defended city and a legitimate object for total bombing. Feeling generally is that military occupation is necessary evil not only to prevent Germans from establishing air base but more particularly submarine base which could be used with Norway to break blockade of North Atlantic.

Officials disturbed over meager British defensive measures. They state only two airplanes on island and that heavy machine guns but very little anti-aircraft setup as yet.

All telegrams and mail abroad must pass via England through censor. Our consular correspondence and radiograms may be sent directly to New York without censoring.

* H. Jonasson.

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British Legation established with Minister to Copenhagen in charge.

KUNIHOLM

710.11/2551

*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State
(Berle)*

[WASHINGTON,] July 12, 1940.

The Consul General for Iceland, Mr. Thor, came in to see me today, at his request. Mr. Cumming⁷ was present.

Mr. Thor asked two questions. The first was whether the United States would not include Iceland in the Western Hemisphere and put it under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine.

I said that this question could not be answered casually, since it involved very grave considerations. The political Western Hemisphere did not turn altogether on the theoretical meridian of division; historically, the Monroe Doctrine had been fairly close to the American continent; I could not give assurance, though I should be glad to study it.

He then asked whether perhaps Iceland could not be included in a customs union, pointing out that now their trade with the United States constituted the bulk of the means by which they could live.

I said that that also raised some very grave questions. I pointed out that we had had every friendship for Iceland, as was evidenced by the fact that the Export-Import Bank had made them a loan of a million dollars. At present, however, Iceland was occupied by foreign troops and I was not clear what policy our government would adopt towards it.

A. A. BERLE, JR.

859A.20/2: Telegram

The Consul at Reykjavik (Kuniholm) to the Secretary of State

REYKJAVIK, July 22, 1940—4 p. m.

[Received July 24—6:50 p. m.]

Department's July 19, 6 p. m., received today.⁸ Full report was sent to the Department some time ago. Please confirm receipt.

Total complement of troops in Iceland over 20,000. Forces consist of one division plus coast defense troops and small naval units. One brigade covers north from northwestern peninsula to Hofn with major concentration at Akureyri and smaller one at Seydisfjörður. Main

⁷ Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., of the Division of European Affairs.

⁸ Not printed; It instructed the Consul to submit to the Department reports on the developments of the military situation in Iceland (859A.20/1a).

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divisional strength is around Reykjavik in west and south. Several fighter planes are at airfield north of Eyrarbakki. Motor transport, tanks and anti-aircraft recently augmented.

No naval vessels here now except armed trawlers. Attack feared daily. German forces in Norway believed to number 10 divisions and ready to move at any time.

German bomber sank fishing boat off east coast of Island on July 12.

KUNIHOLM

858A.014/9

*Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., of the
Division of European Affairs*

[WASHINGTON,] September 5, 1940.

Participants: The Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull,
Mr. Vilhjalmur Thor, Retiring Consul General of Iceland,
Mr. Thor Thors, Newly Appointed Icelandic Consul General,
Mr. Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., Division of European Affairs.

The Consul General called on the Secretary of State by appointment to take his leave before returning to Iceland to become Managing Director of the National Bank of Iceland, and to present his successor, Mr. Thor Thors.

After an exchange of amenities, during which Mr. Hull wished Mr. Thor success in his new position, the newly appointed Consul General, Mr. Thors, presented his Commission to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Thor explained at some length the desire of his Government for a more intimate relationship, both economic and political, between Iceland and the United States. From time to time Mr. Thors acquiesced in Mr. Thor's remarks and supplemented them with observations of his own.

The substance of Mr. Thor's remarks was that all Icelanders were concerned over the position of Iceland in a war-torn world, and over the difficulties which would face his country in the event of a German victory. He said that he had already discussed with officers of the Department the question of facilitating the sale of Icelandic goods to the United States. He understood the difficulties in the way of obtaining any tariff concessions through trade agreement or otherwise, but he still hoped that a solution would be found.

Mr. Thor then said that speaking informally and unofficially, but with the knowledge and consent of his Government, he wished to repeat the inquiry which he had previously made of Assistant Secretary

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