

The intelligence services and the left wing political movements. The case of Iceland

Socialism in the Baltic Area – Sozialismus im Ostseeraum

University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg, 14-17 December 2007

Brief historical background



- 1920s-1930s: Debates over formation of 'state police' or auxiliary forces
- 1932: Street battles over pay reduction leave Reykjavík police force out of action
- 1939: Talk of establishment of 'security service'. Letters inspected
- PM Jónasson main proponent
- British and US forces in WWII



Hermann Jónasson, chief of police 1929-34, prime minister 1934-42 (and 1956-58)

Times of fear ...



'When the lackeys of the USA put the new act of treason before Parliament, the people of Reykjavík will gather in tens of thousands and protest, and prevent MPs – who the nation will get rid of – from passing it and ensuring that the case will be put to the whole nation.'

Socialist organ Thjódviljinn, 25 March 1949



Surveillance operations begin



'Since the quoted statements of Thjódviljinn indicate that Parliament is to be prevented by violence to perform its duties, the conclusion is reached that, for the time being, conversations in the following telephones here in town shall be observed, and the contents noted, for further use by the police.' Court order, 26 March 1949



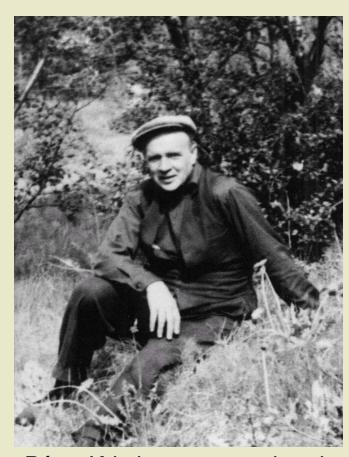


'Security Service' from 1950





Árni Sigurjónsson (extreme left), immigration officer (later head) and member of the 'Security Service'



Pétur Kristinsson, appointed to the 'Security Service' upon its formal foundation,1 March 1950

Tasks of the 'Security Service'



- Collect information about communists and communist sympathisers
- Special emphasis on employees at airports, harbours, telephone exchange, radio, customs, power stations, herring factories.
- Special emphasis also on Eastern bloc diplomats.
 Undated memorandum, probably from 1950-1951.
- 'There were no personal details there or anything like that ...
 [but rather] participation in politics and social activities. This
 wasn't unique in Iceland, it was all based on the precedent
 from Scandinavia where everything was on a larger scale
 than over here; one could easily see that.'

Interview with police officer B. Elíasson, 2004.

Odense, 11 Januar 2007

Tasks of the 'Security Service'



- Initially a small unit (Sigurjónsson and Kristinsson, sometimes other 'trustworthy' police officers)
- Two phone tapping operations in 1951
 - Dwight D. Eisenhower visit, January 1951
 - Return of US troops to Iceland, May 1951
 - Both cases, well-known socialists/communists and opponents of US presence
- Phone tappings permitted:
 - To investigate 'serious crimes'
 - When 'the security of the state' is at risk
 - Suspicions but no evidence of long-term phone tappings
- Legal basis of the 'Security Service':
 - No specific law on its foundation and existence, no observatory role
 - Secret funding, but costs examined by state auditer

The 'leftwing-regime', 1956-1958



'I told the [foreign] minister that the department had actually continued its work, albeit on a reduced scale, as it was unclear to me what the government wanted, since the ministers had not discussed these matters with me, but I did not want to be responsible all by myself or act solo in these matters.'

Sigurdsson memorandum, 23 January 1957



Sigurjón Sigurdsson, chief of police 1947-1985 (picture taken in 1972)

Unrest in 1968





Urban guerrillas in a land of no 'urbs'

- Tupamaros in Uruguay ...
- The small town of Kópavogur, near Reykjavík ...
- 'Kópamaros'
- The 'Wild Left'

DAGENS NYHETER.

Tisdagen den 21 April 1970



'Isländsk revolution' började i Stockholm Ambassaden ockuperad

måndagsförmiddagen av elva isländska studenter. Innan de gick till aktion meddelade de tidningarna i Stockholm sin avsikt, och väl och dömda kan de få bötesstraff. inne på ambassaden spred de flygblad från

Ockupationen genomfördes "som en protest mot Islands medlemskap i Nato och den ambassaden och bad de två ambassadtjänsteinrikespolitiska situationen på Island". I männen, ett skrivbiträde och ambassadens flygbladet bekände sig studenterna till världsrevolutionen på socialistisk grund".

Polisen kunde dock efter två timmar avhysa ockupanterna. Enligt en polisanmälan heller i telefonerna. från chargé d'affaires, Hannes Hafstein, hade

Den isländska ambassaden på Kommende burit ut honom från ambassaden. Studendörsgatan i Stockholm ockuperades på terna släpptes på måndagseftermiddagen. De hade då delgivits misstanke om olaga intrång och i något fall olaga tvång. Blir de åtalade

> Ockupationen av isländska ambassaden inleddes strax efter klockan 11 på förmiddagen. Studentgruppen trängde sig in på chargé d'affaires som fanns i lokalerna att försvinna. Därefter reglade de dörren och vägrade sedan att öppna. De svarade inte



Ester två timmars ockupation avhystes de elva studenterna en ester en utan protester. Ester förhör hos polisen slöpptes de.

Odense, 11 Jar

'Detailed and efficient card index'



'The "Security Section" collect what information they can about Soviet Bloc Diplomatic Mission Staffs, Icelandic Communists and Communist sympathisers. They keep a detailed and efficient card index of such names.'

'One of two lecturers at the University are known to be communist sympathisers as are a number of headmasters of schools. The Director of the News Department of the Icelandic State Radio ... is a well-known communist sympathiser, but there is surprisingly little evidence of this in the radio news programmes.'

'The State of Security in Iceland'. Report for the British Cabinet Security Policy and Methods Committee, 1972



Sources and public debate



- Situation during the Cold War and afterwards:
 - Suspicions and allegations but no confirmation or public knowledge of the existence and activities of the Icelandic 'security service'
- Revelations in 2006:
 - Sources on phone tapping, registration of subjects and surveillance of Warsaw Pact embassies
 - Lack of sources still a problem!
 - 'The "Great Fire" of 1976 or 1977'...

5/11-48

I slutningen af september måned holdt DKPs centralkomite et møde, hvor det bl.a. blev besluttet at nedsætte
et udvalg, bestående af MARTIN NIELSEN, f.d.12/12-1900 i Gödvad, SVEND NIELSEN, f.d.1/8-1909 i Kbhvn., PETER ALFRED JENSEN,
f.d.7/7-1903 i Århus og HARTVIG HØJSTRUP SØRENSEN, f.d.11/11903 i Nørresundby.

Dette udvalg skulle tilrettelægge sabotagen i Danmark under en evt. engelsk eller amerikansk besættelse, ligesom de skulle indkalde tillidsmænd til fortrolige møder i DKPs faglige sekretariet og mundtligt give dem anvisninger på sabotagens tilrettelæggelse og af tillidsmændene modtage planer over virksomhedernes mest sårbare punkter.

Den 28/10-48 indkældte ovennævnte udvælg følgende tillidsmænd til møde i det fæglige sekreteriæt: JOHAN HENRY NEBELONG, f.d.3/11-1902 i Ringkøbing, boende Hummergade 3,3.,tv.,Kbhvn, specialarbejder hos "B & W", HERLUF CHRISTIAN LYNGE HANSEN, f.d. 26/9-1912 i Nibe, boende Store møllevej 26,st.,Kbhvn., tillidsmand hos Schulstad og Ludvigsens brødfabrikker, boende strandlodsvej. VILLY CARLO ANDREASEN, f.d. 28/5- 1911 i Århus, boende Hessensgade 43.st.,Kbhvn., forman d for skibsværftsarbejdernes forbund, Nansensgade 30, GILBERT EMANUEL CARTENSEN, f.d. 8/9-1905 i Kbhvn., boende Ulvefodsvej 7, 1.,tv.,Kbhvn., tillidsmand hos "B & W", KAJ PETERSEN, ukendt, tillidsmand for skibstømrerne på Refshaleøen, og VOLMER SØRENSEN, tidl. kasserer i distrikt 4, nu på kommunistisk foranledning ansat på Holmen som arbejdsmand.

Disse tillidsmænd fik ordre til at forberede og indsende tegninger og planer over sabotageobjekter samt til at indkalde andre kommunistiske tillidsmænd til fortrolige møder om planlæggelse af sabotage. Det blev meddelt, at man efter ordre fra det sidst afholdte møde i Oslo skulle intensivere arbejdet ved fremkaldelse af uro og strejker, og at partiet måtte være forberedt på en evt. aggression fra politiets side.

Man var klar over, at engelsk og amerikansk indflydelse gjorde sig mere og mere gældende i Danmark, og at det antikommunistiske arbejde i Europa var forstærket. Som modvægt heroverfor måtte der træffes foranstaltninger af såvel økonomisk art som ved tilrettelæggelse af sabotage. Det blev i denne forbindelse oplyst, at det beløb på 300,000 kr., der for tiden indsamles til "Land & Folk", ikke som man officielt gav udtryk for, skulle bruges til bladet's almindelige arbejde, men skulle være et hjælpefond til brug under strejker og for partiets ledende mænds eventuelle illigalitet. Tillidsmændene fik ordre til at

forberede deres illigale bopæle og at indsende meddelelse herom til udvalget.

<u>HERLUF HANSEN</u> erklærede, at han på sit arbejdssted allerede havde udarbejdet planer, således at man straks var i stand til at afbryde enhver elektrisk kraft til fabrikken.

Udvalget beordrede HERLUF HANSEN til at søge kontakt med tillidsmændene inden for RIFFELSYNDIKATET, VÅBENARSENALET og HÆRENS TEKNISKE KORPS.

GILBERT CARSTENSEN oplyste, at han på Refshaleøen var i stand til med kort varsel at sætte alle vigtige maskiner ud af funktion, idet tro partikammerater var anbragt på de mest sårbare steder.

<u>VILLY ANDREASEN</u> skulle fra sit fagforeningskontor udsende informationer såvel af mere almindelig art som fortrolige meddelelser.

På forespørgsel om partiets stilling i tilfælde af russisk besættelse, svarede <u>ALFRED JENSEN</u>, at man officiel måtte tilkendegive et modsætningsforhold til enhver fremmed besættelse af landet, men at man i realiteten på enhver måde ville støtte en eventuel russisk besættelse af Danmark med våbenmagt og sabotage.



- 33. The keystone of U.S. interests in Iceland in the foreseeable future is awareness on the part of the government and people of Iceland of the communist threat and their willingness to: (1) continue the Defense Agreement under which NATO troops man the Keflavik Air Base, and (2) undertake appropriate measures to ensure Iceland's internal security. To this end the actions contained in the following paragraphs are recommended.
- - a. Reveal to the Icelanders the history of communism and its basic incompatibility with Iceland's culture.

Responsible Agency: USIA

b. Make clasr the potential communist threat, from within and without, to Iceland's continued independence and devotion to western traditions.

Responsible Agency: USIA

c. Demonstrate the non-imperialistic nature of U.S. political actions and the friendship and sympathy of the people of the U.S. towards Iceland.

Responsible Agencies: USIA, State

d. Renew the Icelanders' interest and faith in NATO by demonstrating its defensive nature and success in maintaining peace, by arousing the Icelanders' fear of Soviet aggression, and by stressing the non-military aspects of NATO.

Responsible Agencies: USIA, State, Defense

e. Discredit Soviet-manufactured products.

Responsible Agencies: USIA, State

 Establish and strengthen Icelandic organizations to resist the encroachest of Soviet economic, political and cultural pressures.

Responsible Agencies: State, USIA, ICA

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35. While resisting efforts of Iceland to the improvement of their security forces to a phase-out of U.S. forces in Iceland, the U.S. should:

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b. To the extent practicable, urge and support the expansion of the Icelandic police force, including police guards at U.S. installations, to the legal limit (320 men).

> Responsible Agencies: State, Defense Cost: 100-1200,000 by Defense as indicated in par. 35f. Timing: Immediate

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d. Arrange for training suitable personnel of Iceland Fisheries Fatrol and the Life Saving Society in appropriate U.S. Coast Guard schools and installations, utilizing this opportunity to indoctrinate them as to the communist threat to Iceland and ways in which they can assist in minimizing that threat.

Responsible Agency: U.S. Coast Guard (Subject to approval of Treasury Department)

Cost: Four trainees (20,000, not presently programmed Timing: Immediate

e. Arrange for training suitable personnel of the Iceland Civil Aviation Administration by the U.S. Civil Aviation Authority and in CAA approved schools, utilizing this opportunity to indoctrinate them as to the communist threat in Iceland and ways in which they can assist in minimizing that threat.

> Responsible Agencies: State, ICA Cost: 13 trainees 930,000 Timing: Now in progress

Summary and conclusions I



The Security Service was formed when the Cold War had begun, to protect the internal security of Iceland, to watch the activities of Eastern Bloc representatives in Iceland and to keep an eye on 'suspicious' individuals, that is communists and communist sympathisers. From the early Cold War period and well into the 1970s, the Security Service collected information of this kind. Furthermore, phone tappings were permitted on six occasions, based on fears for the security of Parliament or prominent visitors to Iceland. No written proof has been found of systematic long-term political phone tapping in the country.

Odense, 11 Januar 2007

Summary and conclusions II



The Security Service was small, a group of two to five individuals with a limited amount of the necessary equipment. The legal status of the Security Service was not obvious. Registration of citizens with certain political affiliations was not permitted by law and while requests and court orders for phone tappings look understandable from the authorities' point of view, they do seem excessive at times. Thus, there were cases in Iceland during the Cold War when the state's fear for its own security violated the rights of its subjects.

Summary



- 6 cases of authorized phone tapping:
 - 1949 (NATO membership)
 - 1951 (Eisenhower visit)
 - 1951 (Arrival of US troops)
 - 1961 (Cod War I)
 - 1963 (LBJ visit)
 - 1968 (NATO summit)

Summary



- Overall, phone tapping of 8 organizations and companies
 - The Socialist Party
 - Newspaper Thjódviljinn
 - Labour union Dagsbrún
 - Socialist Youth Organization
 - Organization against the Occupation
 - Icelandic Labour Union
 - Socialist bookstore 'Mál og menning'
 - Iceland-USSR Friendship Society

Summary



- Over 30 private phones tapped
 - -8 MPs
- On average, phone tappings probably lasted around 14 days
- Altogether, phone tapping for around 3 months in total during the Cold War?