

## Iceland and NATO

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IN a statement made public on August 3, the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization announced that the Government of Iceland had formally requested the Council to review the continued necessity for the stationing of United States security forces in Iceland and "to make recommendations to the two governments concerning the continuation of the Defence Agreement between Iceland and the United States of America within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty".

Iceland is one of the original members of the North Atlantic Alliance and her then Foreign Minister, Mr. Bjarni Benediktsson, was among the twelve signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington on April 4, 1949. When Iceland joined the Alliance, it was recognized that it would not be necessary to have NATO forces stationed in the country in time of peace. By 1951, however, the international situation had seriously deteriorated and, following the outbreak of war in Korea, Iceland agreed that it would be desirable to play a more active role in NATO defences. At the request of NATO, she consequently concluded the 1951 Defence Agreement with the United States which provided for the stationing of United States security forces and the establishment of United States defence facilities in Iceland. The preamble to this Agreement noted that NATO had requested the two countries to make these joint defence arrangements "having regard to the fact that the people of Iceland cannot themselves adequately secure their own defences, and whereas experience has shown that a country's lack of defences greatly endangers its security and that of its peaceful neighbours".

From the first, the United States forces in Iceland maintained good relations with the Icelandic people. However, the recent relative improvement in the international situation led a number of Icelanders to question the necessity of having foreign armed forces remain in their country. This view was also expressed in the Icelandic Parliament which, in March of this year, adopted the following resolution:

"That the foreign policy of Iceland should as hitherto be formulated so as to ensure the independence and security of the country, that friendly relations be had with other countries and that the Icelandic people co-ordinate their defence matters with those of their neighbour nations, i.e. through co-operation with NATO. In view of changed conditions since the Defence Agreement of 1951 was concluded and in view of the declaration made to the effect that foreign armed forces should not be in Iceland in time of peace, revision of the system then adopted should immediately be initiated so that the Icelanders themselves would perform maintenance and security functions (other than military) connected with the defence installations, and that the Defence Force be withdrawn.

"If agreement is not reached concerning these changes, the Defence Agreement should be terminated in accordance with Article VII thereof."

On June 24, general elections were held in Iceland. The possibility that, as a result of these elections, Iceland might seek changes in the 1951 Defence Agreement led to a question in the Canadian House of Commons on June 28.