

Cooperation with Other Governments: Other Countries: Iceland

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Mr. Peble
JEP

TICKET NEWS

WCNS

1:13 P. M.

June 14, 1944

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a resolution extending congressional congratulations to the Icelandic Althing (Parliament) on the establishment of Iceland as an independent Republic effective June 17.

The Committee discussed but deferred action on a resolution by Senator Gillette which would place the Senate on record as favoring temporary refuge in the U. S. for jews who escape from nazi-occupied territory.

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Iceland refugees

2 - *Jew Refugee*
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AIRGRAM

Reykjavik

Dated February 19, 1944

Rec'd 5 p.m., 22nd

Secretary of State,
Washington.

4-19, February 19, 10 a.m.

Reference Department's circular airgram of
January 26, 7 p.m.

The actual situation in Iceland as it exists today with respect to the rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy persecution is as follows:

1. According to official records, some 40 persons, most of whom are Germans and most of which Germans are thought to be Jews, have migrated to Iceland since the beginning of 1937, 13 coming in 1938, 15 in 1939, 6 in the first part of 1940 and none since. Prior to the outbreak of war there were no visa requirements for entry into Iceland, though permission of the Ministry of Industry to work on one's own account or to accept employment was required then as it is now. Since the outbreak of war, war refugees are permitted to enter Iceland on an equal footing with all other immigrants or non-immigrants, subject, of course, to special security considerations deriving from Iceland's strategically important military position.
2. According to the Permanent Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, there are "no Icelandic Jews" and no reason has ever existed for Iceland actually to encourage the entry of the Jews of Europe, or other victims of enemy persecution, into Iceland. The same official stated that he is unaware of any specific international plan covering this important, tragic and difficult matter, and that since Iceland has never been approached in connection with any such plan it has not been in a position to "cooperate" in their entry. He said that he did not know of any approach by official bodies or protective associations to the Iceland Government or to its representatives abroad looking to the acceptance of any numbers of refugees.

3. As far as this mission is concerned, it is

not.

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-2- A-19, February 19, 10 a.m., from Reykjavik

not in a position to ascertain the extent to which refugees are not able to enter Iceland because of the country's failure to cooperate in their entry. From what can be learned locally, it appears that Iceland has never had any reason to encourage such immigration; whether it has failed to cooperate might better be ascertained by discreet inquiry at the various points such as Lisbon, London, New York, et cetera, where there are understood to be large concentrations of refugees.

4. PERSONNEL FROM THE MINISTER: I talked at length with Mr. Vilhjalmur Thor, Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs. As a result Mr. Thor is aware of the grave import of the problem presented which, to tell the truth, is one that Iceland has been separated from and only knows of by hearsay. Mr. Thor said that he was not in a position to state at the present time what the attitude of his government and people would be towards cooperation and participation in the solving of the problem. He felt that governmental and national reaction could only be ascertained if concrete proposals were made to the Icelandic Government. He said that anything received would be examined attentively, as is always the wish of the Icelandic Government concerning any proposal received from the United States. Mr. Thor remarked that Iceland was a country of poor economical resources with a small homogeneous population who had lived in a state of semi-exclusion from other Europeans for centuries. It therefore could not be expected that the Icelanders could quickly adjust themselves to a basically different viewpoint in respect to foreigners. On the other hand, he felt that there was no anti-Semitic feeling here and that Icelanders in common with other decent free people sympathized with and deplored the fate of Jewish and other victims of Nazi and Fascist mistreatment.

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