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**British and U.S. post-neutrality policy in the
North Atlantic area 09.04.1940-1945: the role of
Danish representatives.**

Hanna í Horni

Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

Swansea University

2010

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SUMMARY

Following the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940 Danish representatives were left to their own devices and their positions in their respective host-countries became very much dependent upon the goodwill shown to them by their host-governments and, in the case of the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland, the governments and officials of the occupying forces. With their connections with the Government in Copenhagen severed the main task of the Danish representatives was to secure Danish interests in the North Atlantic Territories as well as elsewhere.

The fact that Denmark had not put up a fight to defend her neutrality and the subsequent collaboration of the Danish Government with the German occupiers counted against the Danish representatives abroad. However, the Danes were able to exercise a remarkable level of influence on the British and Americans with regard to their policies towards the North Atlantic Area. The extent of influence was mainly due to the entrepreneurship of each individual, the constitutional status of the territory as part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and also due to strategic importance attached by the occupying forces' governments to the occupied territories in question. This latter point became especially apparent in the power struggle amongst the Danish representatives that emerged from the lack of a Danish Government in exile. It became important to the British and the Americans that it was the Danish representative in their country, who emerged as the victor of this power struggle, because that would help to secure their future interests in the North Atlantic territories. The Danish representatives were thus in some cases shown more goodwill and attention than their Norwegian colleagues, although the Norwegians had put up a brave fight against the Germans and had joined the allied side.

The North Atlantic area proved very important to the general war policy of the British and Americans during Second World War. British policies were much dependent upon the Americans and Greenland and Iceland became instrumental in the increased involvement of the Americans in the war.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree

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Date..... 01.06.2010

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Alan Collins, who was kind enough to take over as my supervisor, when my firstly appointed supervisor, Clive Ponting, retired one year into my PhD. The gratitude I have for the support, advice, help and guidance Alan has provided, both academically and privately, cannot be justified by a few lines. I will forever be grateful.

I would also like to thank the staff at the Department of Politics and IR at Swansea University, both present and past, for always making me feel at home in the department. A special thank to Dr. Mark Evans and Dr. Jonathan Bradbury, who have always been ready to provide additional assistance, when needed. My fellow PhD-researchers also need recognition for making, what could have been a lonely and dreary work, highly enjoyable. I will miss the good humour of Room 017.

My gratitude to Granskingarráðið for funding this project; I also want to thank my bosses at the Mission of the Faroes to the European Union for the support and understanding, so that I could finish the thesis in time.

At last, but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and patience.

TEXT AND REFERENCES

Throughout the thesis the reader will notice that there is some inconsistency in the spelling of Danish, Faroese and Icelandic names of people and places. This is due to the fact that there are some letters in the Danish, Faroese and Icelandic languages, which do not appear in the English alphabet. Subsequently, most references to place names or people's names in the British and American documents appear slightly different than in the rest of the text. The confusion, however, should be minimal, since the difference in the English writing rarely changes the names substantially.

There are also occurrences, where the titles of the Danish representatives are being referred to differently by the various departments and countries, mainly because there is no English or American equivalent for the Danish title. For example, there is no English term for the Danish title 'landsfoged', which is the title of the position that Svane and Brun hold in Greenland. In some documents they are referred to as 'county chiefs', in others as 'governors'.

The reader should also be made aware of the fact that throughout the thesis the term "Home Rulers" is used as a common term to describe those politicians in the Faroes, who wanted increased Faroese independence from Denmark prior and during the war. The reason for this is that in their documents related to Faroese matters the British officials use the term "Home Rulers" as a common term for both the moderate and the extreme independence party, the People's Party, who wanted full independence like Iceland. However, it needs to be pointed out that after the war the term "Home Rulers" became a term for those only, who wanted increased Faroese influence on Faroese matters while remaining under the Danish Crown.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to examine US and British policies towards the Danish North Atlantic territories during Second World War and the extent to which the Danish representatives were able to influence these policies.

The hypothesis begs two questions. The first one is: How were the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories, London and Washington DC able to exert influence on the British and the Americans in their policies towards the North Atlantic territories, when they were representing a Government, which was under the influence of the enemy (Germany)? The second question is: What were their actions and policies in achieving this?

In order to answer these questions a number of multifaceted relationships need to be examined:

- The relationship between Copenhagen and the North Atlantic territories, because as the thesis will show, the level of action and influence of each Danish representative in the North Atlantic, London and Washington DC corresponded to the level of constitutional dependency between Denmark and the territory – each territory differed from the other in this respect ranging from Greenland being a colony to Iceland being semi-autonomous with a Home Rule Government.
- The relationship between the Danish representatives, the occupying powers and the US/UK respectively (if either not an occupying power); also the relationship between the local Danish and Norwegian representatives often moulded the role of the Danish representatives and thus needs to be examined.
- The relationship between Danish representatives in London and Washington DC with the Danish representatives in the three territories, their respective host governments, with Copenhagen and with each other.

In addition to the constitutional status of each of the North Atlantic territories within the Danish Kingdom, there were events, which affected the relationships questioned above. The most important of these events was the German invasion of Denmark on

April 9th 1940. Another was the Danish signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact in June 1941, which placed Denmark firmly in the hands of Germany. The state of emergency in Denmark in August 28th 1943, which marked the end of Danish submission to German suppression and the formal entry of Danish subjects to the Allied cause, also had its effect on these relationships. The entry of the Soviet Union and then the US into the war, and the “Battle of the Atlantic” were also important events as these augmented the importance of the North Atlantic area to both the US and UK.

This thesis’ aim is thus to examine, uncover and compare the role of the Danish representatives, who were in charge of the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland during Second World War. These areas in the North Atlantic were occupied by the British and the Americans respectively and thus this thesis not only examines those representatives situated in the North Atlantic territories, but also those in Britain (London) and the United States (Washington DC, and New York).

The role of the Danish representatives and the extent to which they were able to exert influence on the British and Americans during the Second World War was very much dependent upon the attitude of their host governments towards the situation in Denmark. The fact that Denmark, unlike Norway, had not defended her neutrality did not help the Danish cause in the allied world. Nor did the fact that the Danish King and Government remained in Denmark and to some extent collaborated with their occupiers, while their Norwegian counterparts went into exile and joined the war on the Allied side, help the attitude towards Danish subjects abroad. As this article from a Tennessee newspaper reveals,

There is a striking difference in the bearing of two royal brothers, King Christian X, of Denmark, and King Haakon, VII of Norway, toward the invasion of their country by Hitler. The Danish ruler, when the Nazis seized Copenhagen in a surprise move which paralysed court, populace and the miniature army, issued an appeal to the nation in a few hours which ended: “Any undignified word or action might have dangerous reactions. God protect you all. God protect Denmark.” Ruler and people accepted the situation without even protest. But the Norwegian King was made of sterner stuff. Getting a hint as to what was coming a few hours before German troops, smuggled into the port of Oslo, appeared on the

streets of the capital, Haakon and a few followers escaped from the city, and entrenching themselves in a not distant village, beat off a Nazi band.¹

The Danish representatives were, nevertheless, to a varying extent able to influence British and U.S. policies towards the North Atlantic area, and thus succeeded to a large degree in securing Danish interests in the territories, despite having no government in exile to confer with.

The questions that have to be asked in order to address the hypothesis have been listed above; but how do I come to the answers to these questions? How can, for example, influence on policy be determined? How can I determine the presence and effect of influence? What evidence is needed to determine this influence, in particular, as shown in the section above, when other outside factors, often “events”, are also present?

As the hypothesis begs the question to what extent did the Danish representatives succeed in influencing the British and the Americans in their policies towards the North Atlantic territories, the question ‘how influence is to be determined’ must be raised. Determining what is evidence of ‘influence’ can be difficult. An obvious evidence of influence is when it is explicitly stated in a correspondence, as was the case in the attempt of Hilbert and Rewentlow to influence the Norwegians in London to have Thorstein Petersen and Nils Ihlen removed from the Norwegian Consulate in the Faroe Islands. Another way of determining influence is when a player changes his or her attitude during a course of time. One good example is the British authorities in the Faroes’ attitude towards Hilbert, which changed over time and with the arrival of new personnel.

METHODOLOGY

This is a thesis in diplomatic history. What diplomatic history sets out to do is to explain the origins and the effects of foreign policies. Its focus is on each country’s policy-making elite and the representatives of that country. Diplomatic history thus requires analysis both of the domestic political system where the representative’s authority derives from and the international system in which he represents his state.

¹ Nashville Banner, Tennessee, “A contrast in kings”, 22.04.40

What I set out to do is not to write a historical piece, which I claim to be the absolute truth, because no reading of a document by two persons will ever be the same. Nevertheless, my aim is to uncover a piece of history of the North Atlantic area during Second World War, which in parts has remained uncovered.

Keith Jenkins argues that “one cannot recount more than a fraction of what has occurred and no historian’s account ever corresponds precisely with the past.”² Like Jenkins points out, I know the limits of anyone undergoing a research into the past. I cannot know everything, but access to documents, primary sources, in all languages involved, and accounts from different people in different positions and different countries on the same issue makes it in some cases possible to make cross-references and hence substantiate the reading of the documents. Thus, although Roland Barthes argues that “the past *per se* cannot act logically as a check on the historian’s free play because, constituted by discourse, as an effect of discourse, it cannot be made to function as a cause of discourse or as a pre-discursive check (on itself)”³ I can but only be aware of these methodological limits, which research in history poses on my thesis.

Being aware that when writing a historical piece, one cannot do so utterly neutrally, I have nevertheless tried to strip my presentation of what happened from anything, which can resemble biased. Nevertheless, in writing this thesis I retell what has happened and therefore it will always be my interpretation of the findings I have uncovered. As my research rests mainly on primary sources, it is only in a few cases where I use secondary literature that I also have to take into account that these accounts of what happened are the interpretations of the authors of the events. Thus, for the most part of the thesis, it rests on my own readings and understanding of the documents.

To substantiate the information retrieved from the documents I have tried to build up an understanding of the environment they were written in and when it comes to the

² Jenkins, Keith. Rethinking History. Routledge, London, 1991, p. 11

³ Barthes, Ronald, in D. Attridge et al, ed., Post-Structuralism and the Question of History, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 3

key-persons, the personality of the author. However, I can never obtain full empathy with the authors of the documents, because I cannot know for definite what their thoughts were, when they wrote them. Also, because I was not present at the time the documents were written, I can never have a full understanding of the setting they were written in or the atmosphere surrounding the situation they were written in. Nevertheless, it helps keeping in mind that documents have to be read within the context of the discursive they were written in. Thus, it is important to keep in mind when uncovering the parameters of the situation, they were written in. However, this is not to say, that any set of parameters would produce the same document under the same conditions. Thus, the personality of the author has to be taken into account as well.

Some documents had several comments on the sleeve. This was particularly the case with the British documents. Others, especially the Danish documents, were mere accounts, stripped of any personal opinion. These are, I assume, reflections upon the different nature of practise in each country's Foreign Affairs Department. For the purpose of this thesis, where the emphasis is on the attitude of the actors involved and whether or not they were influenced in the course of time, the more additional comments on the documents, the better.

Whether or not a statement in a document is the truth one can never be sure, however, when possible, the accuracy of the statement can be substantiated by cross-referencing between documents from different sources regarding the same subject. Keith Jenkins argues that "as the past has gone, no account can ever be checked against it but only against other accounts."⁴ Having had access to documents in all five languages involved, I was able to do this to a large extent. However, in many cases, as mentioned above, matters relating to these small territories and this relatively small theatre of war, at least in the first two years of the Second World War, has resulted in some difficulty finding references on the same subject/case in more than one of the countries examined.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

⁴ Jenkins, Rethinking History. 1991, p. 11

Primary Sources

This thesis is primarily an historical one and is thus dependent upon primary sources, mainly those from the governments involved. Hence, the research conducted for this thesis took place at the national archives of the countries involved, holding the Government records, i.e. PRO (Kew, London, UK), NARA (Maryland, US), Statens Arkiver (Copenhagen, Denmark), Riksarkivet (Oslo, Norway), Þjóðskjalasafnið (Reykjavik, Iceland) and Landsskjalasavnið (Tórshavn, the Faroe Islands) and also the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (Hyde Park, New York, US).

The main practical challenges at the archives were not of a linguistic nature, as I understand the written language of all the parties concerned, i.e. English, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic and Faroese. The indigenous Greenlanders have their own language, but none of the records concerning Greenland were written in Greenlandic, only in Danish. Rather, the problem was scrutinizing the archival indexes for references to the North Atlantic territories.

As the North Atlantic territories for the main part of the war played a very little role relative to the war as such, finding documents, which concerned the North Atlantic territories, proved difficult. Much time was thus spent on searching through other categories, which did not have any references to any of the North Atlantic territories in their titles, but where there was a chance of a periphery inclusion of aspects relating to the North Atlantic territories. Searches of this nature often gave results.

Only on very few accounts did I not succeed in getting access to a file requested. In the case of Statens Arkiver in Copenhagen, 4-5 files were lost or unaccounted for, and in PRO I experienced two files, which I had applied for, being retained by the Foreign Office. This I found very peculiar, because on the notice of withdrawal I could see, that the withdrawal had taken place two weeks into my stay at PRO, although the file had been released some years previously. Also, the titles of the files were very specific about the Norwegian Consulate in the Faroes, and thus not files most likely to have had many requests of access since their release. The decision to retain the documents was based on Section 3 (4) of the Public Record Act from 1958, which read:

Public records selected for permanent preservation under this section shall be transferred not later than thirty years after their creation either to the Public Record Office or to such other place of deposit appointed by the Lord Chancellor under this Act as the Lord Chancellor may direct: Provided that any records may be retained after the said period if, in the opinion of the person who is responsible for them, they are required for administrative purposes or ought to be retained for any other special reason, and where that person is not the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chancellor has been informed of the facts and given his approval.⁵

In other cases the documents had never been accessible, that is they never reached an archive. Especially in the case of Iceland, documents from the Danish side have been few. Some have disappeared, others destroyed, and unlike other Danish representatives, i.e. Hilbert, Reventlow and Kauffmann, little or no personal details or accounts are available of the Danish representative in Iceland, Fontenay. Thus, creating a profile of him has been difficult, as only sporadic comments have been made on his personae by his colleagues in London, Washington, Nuuk and Tórshavn and the Americans and British in Iceland.

⁵ Section 3 (4) of the Public Record Act, 1958

Existing literature on the North Atlantic Area during Second World War

Some aspects of this thesis have been dealt with previously, in particular the role of Kauffmann, in Finn Løkkegaard's PhD Thesis, Det Danske Gesandtskab I Washington 1940-1942⁶ (turned into a book) written in 1968, on the Danish Legation in Washington 1940-1942, while Bo Lidegaard's Henrik Kaufmann. I Kongens Navn⁷ deals more specifically with the Danish Ambassador to the United States during the Second World War. Whereas the former does not devote any attention to Danish representatives outside the United States, the latter, Bo Lidegaard's book, does. However, the attention paid to Kauffmann's colleagues in Lidegaard's book is limited.

Whereas three PhD thesis have been written about the occupation of Iceland, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942⁸ by Donald F. Bittner, The United States Occupation of Iceland 1941-1946⁹ by John J. Hunt, Georgetown University, 1966, and Thor Whitehead's Iceland in the Second World War¹⁰, none pay much attention to the Danish representatives; their main focus is on the military and economical aspects of the British and American occupation of Iceland. An article by Solrun B. Hardarson, however, examines the British and American role in Iceland's independence course, and makes references to the roles of Fontenay, Kauffmann and Reventlow. However, as with the rest of the literature mentioned, no one has yet examined the Faroe Islands and the role of the Danish representatives there during the Second World War.

Apart from two articles written by Danish historian, Nils A. Sørensen titled "Militære aspekter af den britiske hærsættelse af Færøerne", ("Military Aspects of the British Occupation of the Faroe Islands"), and "Storbritannien og Det færøske Styre 1940-45" (Great Britain and the Faroese Administration 1940-45) no research has been made into British foreign policy in relations with the occupation of the

⁶ Finn Løkkegaard, Det Danske Gesandtskab I Washington 1940-1942, Udgiverselskab for Danmarks nyeste Historie, Copenhagen, 1968

⁷ Bo Lidegaard, I Kongens Navn. Henrik Kaufmann i Dansk Diplomati 1919-58, 2nd ed. WSOY, Finland, 1999, p. 29

⁸ Donald F. Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-1942, University of Missouri, 1974

⁹ John J. Hunt, The United States Occupation of Iceland 1941-1946, Georgetown University, 1966

¹⁰ Thor Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, Pembroke College, Oxford, March, 1978

Faroe Islands. The most extensive work on the British occupation of the Faroe Islands is a historical overview of the period 1940-45 Stríðsárini 1940-45, Vol. 1-5,¹¹ written by local journalist Niels Juel Arge. Arge has done a thorough research into war documents and interviewed people on the islands, in order to outline all events that took place during the war both on land and at sea. His books have provided a beneficial background knowledge into how the occupation was experienced by the Faroese people, and hence the events that took place in or near the Faroes during the Second World War.

Thus, less than a handful of academic studies of a lengthier volume have been written on the situation of Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland during the war; most often these island groups are only briefly mentioned in context with a broader study, or just ignored. The non-existence of the Faroes is, for example, illustrated in a passage by Helge Ø. Pharo in The Origins of the Cold War in Europe, edited by David Reynolds, where he mentions overseas territories during Second World War belonging to Denmark and Norway that were strongly affected by the war, then informs the reader that “Greenland was the one remaining Danish colonial possession, a remnant of the Dano-Norwegian empire in northern waters.”¹²

In his comprehensive work on British foreign policy during the Second World War, Sir Llewellyn Woodward only mentions the Faroe Islands twice, once to mention that the British occupied the islands, and once to indicate that amongst neutrals in south-eastern Europe the occupation of Narvik and the Faroes was “merely a sign of our inability to deal with the main problem of turning the Germans out of Norway”.¹³ Also Winston S. Churchill’s “The Second World War” only mentions the Faroes briefly.

The period of British occupation does though have great interest amongst Faroese historians, because of the political and national separation from Denmark it caused. In a study of the evolution of political relations between Denmark and the Faroes,

¹¹ Niels J. Arge, Stríðsárini 1940-45, Vol. 1-5, Forlagið Hvessingur, Tórshavn, 1985-1990.

¹² Helge Ø. Pharo, “Scandinavia” in Reynolds, D., ed., The Origins of the Cold War in Europe, Yale University Press, London, 1994, p. 204

¹³ Sir L. Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol. I, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, London, 1970, pp. 121-2

Ólavur Christiansen's book "Villinistíggir upplýstir" (roughly translated "Tracks Revealed") embraces some incidents of British, Danish and Faroese relations during the occupation, especially personal relations between authorities from all three parties.

DANISH DIPLOMACY

The purpose of this short introduction to Danish diplomacy is to give the reader an understanding of the institutional background of the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories, London and Washington, that is, an understanding of the allegiance to the King at the time the ties with Copenhagen were severed as a result of the German occupation of Denmark. As the reader will discover, the sense of loyalty towards the King varied a great deal amongst the Danish representatives abroad. In some cases it was almost the overriding notion, when they were pushed to take a personal stance with respect to where their loyalties lay.

Gordon A. Craig argues that "for professional diplomats, wartime is the most uncongenial of atmospheres. The institutional forms within which they are accustomed to work and the distribution of responsibility for the definition and executive of foreign policy are subject to pressures and demands to which they are not accustomed."¹⁴ In the case of the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories, Britain and the United States during Second World War, on top of the added pressures that war placed their institution under, their communications with the Foreign Ministry in Copenhagen were severed. An added factor to the situation of the Danish representatives in allied countries was, that because Denmark was occupied by the enemy, they were dependent upon the goodwill of their host government to remain in their position and uphold Danish interests.

An additional aspect to the situation, which the Danish representatives found themselves in, was that according to the Danish Constitution paragraph 19 it is the King, who represents and acts on behalf of the Kingdom in international matters. This is still the case today. However, at the turn of the century, the impact of this

¹⁴ Gordon A. Craig "Diplomats and Diplomacy During The Second World War," in The Diplomats 1939-1979, edited by Gordon A. Craig & Francis L. Loewenheim, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, p. 11

paragraph had a wider scope since it would be the King along with his Government, and not the parliament, that were in charge of Danish relations with other countries. As a consequence Danish foreign affairs policies were formed by the King together with his Government, and traditionally most of the Danish representatives sent abroad were employed by the King. Bo Lidegaard thus points out that the Danish diplomatic service was very much attached to the King and had a strong feeling of loyalty towards him.¹⁵

OMISSION OF CANADA

There is one country's presence in the North Atlantic area during the Second World War which does not get any attention in this thesis, and that is Canada. The reason for the omission is that the Canadian interest and presence in Greenland and Iceland had very little, if no effect on the situation of the Danish representatives or their role in the respective territories.

In Iceland the Canadian presence was of no importance to the relationship between the Danish representatives and the occupiers. And, in general the Canadian presence in Greenland was not very much wanted by either the Danes or by the Americans and not much consideration was shown the Canadian Consul in Godthaab by either party. Only some of the native Greenlanders seemed to prefer the idea of a Canadian protection rather than an American one, as the Canadians "were perceived as more knowledgeable about the Arctic than the Americans."¹⁶ Even the Canadian Government paid little attention to their consul in Greenland as American Consul Penfield noted. "The Canadian Consul continued to reside peacefully in Godthaab more or less ignored both by the local authorities and by Ottawa."¹⁷

STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

The structure of the thesis is geographical, in the sense that each occupied North Atlantic territory is dealt with in separate chapters. Because of its structure being subject based, that is the chapters are divided into each territory and the Danish

¹⁵ Bo Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn*. 1999, p. 29

¹⁶ SA, Ministeriet for Grønland (Grønlands Styrelse/ afl. 1988/Direktør K.H. Oldendows papirer. Grønland under krigen. 1940-45/pk. 3, memorandum of conversation with Miss Balle, 11.01.41

¹⁷ ¹⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/29, Quarterly Political Report by Penfield, January-March, 1941, sent from Godthaab to Secretary of State, 07.04.41

representatives in charge of that area, there are no fixed start- or end dates to the thesis, as no territory's occupation time-span was the same. The first two chapters, however, are chronologically based on the period up till the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940. The thesis is divided, apart from the Introduction and Conclusion, into five chapters. The first chapter looks at the North Atlantic protectorates and its mother country, Denmark, and the issues that were dominating these territories in the eve of the war and in the first period after the outbreak of war.

The first chapter's aim is to provide a historical background for the answer to one of the main questions set in this thesis: "How were the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories, London and Washington DC able to exert influence on the British and the Americans in their policies towards the North Atlantic territories, when they were representing a government, which was under the influence of the enemy (Germany)?" The position of the Danish representatives in the occupied North Atlantic territories was dependent upon the goodwill of the British and the U.S. How could the Danish justify their country's lack of resistance to the Germans (enemy) and her feeble attempts to uphold her neutrality prior to the German occupation? The chapter provides the historical parameters for understanding the position of the Danish representatives during the war as well as the historical relationship between Denmark and the North Atlantic territories and Denmark's relationship with Britain, U.S. and Norway.

The second chapter also sets the parameters for the answer to the questions set in Chapter I, only in this chapter the focus is on the British and the U.S. The chapter deals with the policies and aims of the British and Americans with regard to the North Atlantic territories and the Anglo-American relationship with regard to the hostilities in Northern Europe. What is of interest in this chapter is the aspect of neutrality and how it affected British policies towards Scandinavia, the North Atlantic territories and the United States. Although the British attitude towards the smaller neutral states had undergone a change in late 1939 – early 1940, their policies towards the North Atlantic remained influenced by the fact that the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland were part of the neutrality declaration issued by the Union of the Kingdom of Denmark and Iceland at the outbreak of war in September

1939. With the German occupation of Denmark the British attitude towards the neutrality of the North Atlantic changed.

Chapter III focuses on the British occupation of the Faroe Islands and the role of local Danish Governor, Hilbert, and Danish Minister in London, Reventlow, in the formation of British policies towards the Faroes. The chapter focuses on the time-span from when the British first arrived on April 13th 1940 till they left in 1944. The aim of this chapter is to examine how the Danish representatives with respect to the Faroe Islands were able to influence the British in their policies towards the Faroe Islands. The chapter examines the positions of Hilbert in the Faroes and Reventlow in London, the means they managed to acquire and utilise in order to attain this influence. This despite the change of status quo of Hilbert's and Reventlow's statuses following the German occupation of Denmark. The chapter also focuses on the relationship between the Danish, Norwegian and the British in the Faroes and in London, as this highlights the extent of influence the Danish were able to exert on the British, despite representing a government under the influence of the enemy. The chapter also examines some events, for example external factors, such as the 'Flag incident', the 'Battle of the North Atlantic', the Danish signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact and the state of emergency on August 28th 1943 which also had an influence on British policies towards the Faroes and their attitude towards Denmark and Danish subjects abroad. The question asked is whether or not these events made any difference to the influence Hilbert and Reventlow exerted on the British authorities in the Faroes and in London. The level of influence exerted by the Danish representatives is also compared to that of the influence exerted by the local Faroese and the Norwegian consulate, which were the strongest opponents to the Danish representatives in the Faroe Islands.

Chapter IV deals with the British and American occupation of Iceland and concentrates on the period from when the British occupied the island on May 10th 1940 till Iceland left the Union with Denmark on May 17th 1944. Because Iceland declared herself in charge of foreign affairs immediately after the German occupation of Denmark, the role of Danish Minister in Iceland, Fontenay, was limited. However, he too was able to exercise some influence on the British and Americans when it came to Icelandic constitutional matters. Unlike the Faroe Islands in Chapter III,

where there only was one country occupying the islands, Iceland had two occupying forces, first the British and then the Americans. Three major events took place in Iceland during the Second World War: the occupation of Iceland by the British, the American take-over, and the Icelandic decision to leave the Union with Denmark. Of these, the Icelandic plans to leave the Union with Denmark was the most critical point in the relationship between the 4 countries involved. Did the change in the occupying forces make any difference to the level of influence exerted by the Danish representatives? Did the events in Denmark, mentioned in Chapter III, have the same effect on the relationship between the occupying forces and the Danish representatives with regard to Iceland?

Chapter V is divided into two parts. The first part concentrates on Greenland and the politics of all parties involved surrounding the American presence in the island. The second part examines the power struggle that arose amongst the Danish representatives abroad from the lack of a Danish Government in exile. Greenland turned out to be a key issue in this power struggle. Thus, firstly the chapter examines the situation of the Danish representatives who were in charge of Greenland, that is both of the Danish Governors in Greenland and the Danish Minister in Washington D.C. Since Greenland still plays an important role in Danish and U.S. relations, the end-date with regard to the chapter on Greenland in this thesis is the end of the German occupation of Denmark, when the anomaly of Danish representatives abroad in general ceased to exist. The focus in this chapter is on the two Danish representatives in Greenland, Svane and Bruun, and their relationship with the State Department, American forces occupying the island and the Danish Minister in Washington DC, Kauffmann. However, as the Greenland Agreement, which facilitated the U.S. take over of the protection of Greenland while Denmark was occupied by the Germans, had been signed by the Kauffmann, he was the Danish representative the State Department had most of its correspondence and relationship with. Therefore his role and his level of influence is also examined.

Whereas the previous chapters demonstrated that there was more or less harmony between the ideas and aspirations of the Danish representatives in the Faroes, Iceland and London, this was not the rule in the case of the Danish Governors in Greenland and the Danish Minister in Washington. The Greenland case thus, unlike the case of

the Faroe Islands and Iceland, saw a contest for influence over and support from the occupying power amongst the Danish representatives, rather than between Danish representatives on the one side and the natives on the other, as was the case in the Faroes and in Iceland. The Greenland case saw a shift of power taking place from the Greenland Governors to Henrik Kauffmann and this was very much down to who had more success in influencing the Americans. How did this come about and what were the decisive factors causing this shift of power?

The late entry of the U.S. in the war and the American interest in Greenland meant that the State Department, to a much lesser degree than the Foreign Office in London, was affected by the events in Denmark. This makes a distinction in the relationship between the Danish representatives in Greenland and Washington DC and their occupiers and host country compared to that of the Danish representatives in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and London. This chapter examines how this affected the extent of influence exerted by both parties on the Americans.

The extent to which the role of Greenland played in the level of influence Kauffmann was able to exercise on the Americans, and the extent to which this was an instrument in gaining the status he subsequently achieved amongst the Danish representatives in exile, is also of interest. This because of the fact that during the German occupation of Denmark there was no Danish Government in exile, as was the case with the Norwegian Government in exile. Subsequently a power struggle between the Danish Minister in London and the Danish Minister in Washington DC emerged, which to some extent affected the representatives in the North Atlantic territories, as Reventlow and Kauffmann did not always agree upon which policies should be followed, while the connection with the Government in Copenhagen was cut off.

The conclusion of the thesis is that the Danish representatives all in all were very successful in gaining influence on the occupying powers and succeeded in most cases to maintain status quo with regard to Danish interests in the North Atlantic Territories or in those cases, where change was inevitable or unavoidable, to secure Danish interests to the utmost degree in such a way that when the war was over, as little damage was done as possible.

The thesis shows that, although the prerequisites were different for each representative in charge of his respective territory, they all managed to influence the occupying power to some degree. In each case the Danish representatives had to compete with at least one other party for influence on the occupying power. Each chapter introduces those particular prerequisites present in each respective territory and demonstrates the different ways or means, which the Danish representatives applied in order to be able to influence the occupying power.

In the case of the Faroe Islands, Hilbert and Reventlow's experience and resourcefulness as compared to that of the Faroese independence movement proved a strong tool in securing Danish interests in the Faroes.

In Iceland Fontenay acknowledged that there was little he could do to prevent Iceland from leaving the Union with the Danish Kingdom. He therefore carefully chose his battles and concentrated on maintaining good relations between Denmark and Iceland and in that way secure Danish interests in an independent Iceland. He therefore did not cause much trouble when the initial plans to leave the Union surfaced. But when Iceland contemplated leaving the Union prematurely he stepped in alongside with Reventlow and influenced the occupiers to try to halt the Icelandic plans as he foresaw that such a move by Iceland would seriously damage Danish-Icelandic relations.

In the case of Greenland the main problem was the divergence in the policies and aims of the Governors in Greenland and the Danish Minister in Washington with regard to the situation of Greenland. Being the most resourceful of the three, Kauffmann succeeded in influencing the Americans to his advantage; an advantage which he would use in his greater strategy of securing future Danish interests on a world basis rather than just locally.

The thesis demonstrates that it was not only external factors such as events or the constitutional status of the territory that determined the differences between the representatives and their handling of the situation, they found themselves in. The

differences also lay in their personality and the way they each interpreted their role after they lost contact and hence guidelines from the Government in Copenhagen.

CHAPTER I: DANISH AND NORTH ATLANTIC AIMS AND POLICIES WITH REGARD TO THEIR NEUTRALITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR AND TILL APRIL 9TH 1940

The position of the Danish representatives abroad in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940 was much dependent upon the goodwill of the host countries. The conducts of Danish affairs and in particular her neutrality policy prior to the German invasion weighed heavily against the Danish representatives abroad. This was especially the case in those territories that were occupied by the Allies following the German invasion of Denmark. One of the main critiques of Denmark's policy during the war by opponents to the Danish representatives was the lack of resistance and subsequent submission to German rule. This criticism was, however, not only limited to external observers, but was also present in Denmark at the time, even within the military ranks. Recently the debate, which has more or less lain dormant for all these years, was rekindled by Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in his 60th-anniversary speech for the August-rebellion of 1943 where he criticised the decisions taken by the Government in the early stages of war, the quick capitulation in April 1940 and the co-operation with the Germans during the occupation.¹ The aim of this chapter is thus in the first instance to uncover the reasons behind the decisions that resulted in the lack of resistance put up to the breaches of her neutrality and the subsequent invasion by German. This, as mentioned earlier, was a decision that was to mark the Danes, both at home and abroad, throughout and in the aftermath of the war.

An associated question is on which basis the Danish Government decided not to rearm in order to defend herself and what the justification for this decision was? This latter aspect is important to the thesis, because the justification given back in the early stages of war was to form the main argument in the campaign to restore the Danish image in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark, and also the morale of the Danes.

¹ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "60-året for bruddet med besættelsesmagtten", DR Nyheder, 29.08.2003, <http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/htm/baggrund/tema2003/60%20aaret%20for%20brudde/22.htm>

Throughout the thesis the situation of the Danish representatives and their success in influencing the British and Americans is at times compared with that of the Norwegian representatives in the same respective countries and territories. The Danes were, namely, given a too favourable treatment, compared to the treatment the Norwegians received, it was felt by some Norwegians. They deemed that the difference in the effort put in by each country in defending their neutrality, freedom and democracy should be reflected in the attitude of the host countries towards the representatives.

The focus is then set on the situation the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland found themselves in at the outbreak of war and up till the German occupation of Denmark, which broke off the connection with the Government in Copenhagen, and thus marked a shift in the history of the territories and the roles of the representatives of the Danish Government in those territories. What were their thoughts, aims and prospects with regard to the escalating hostilities on mainland Europe? And how did they prepare for the prospect of being cut off from Denmark like they had been during the Great War?

The purpose of this chapter is also to get an understanding and historical background to the relationship between Denmark and the three North Atlantic territories.

While Iceland was well underway in the process of breaking away from Denmark and had achieved independence within the Union of the Danish Kingdom and Iceland, the Faroe Islands, although they had their own parliament, was on par with a Danish county, while Greenland was a colony; the different stages of independence of these territories was reflected in their aims, hopes and policies towards the belligerents.

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1380 King Haakon died and his son Olav Haakonson inherited the Norwegian Kingdom, which also by then comprised Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, The Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. Four years earlier Olav had inherited the Kingdom of Denmark from his mother, who was the daughter of King Valdemar "Atterdag" of

Denmark, who died the previous year, in 1375.² Although part of a joint kingdom, these islands were still seen as belonging to Norway throughout the period.

In 1468-1469 the Orkneys and Shetland Islands were handed over to the Scottish King, while the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland remained part of the Danish-Norwegian Kingdom until 800 years later when, at the peace negotiations in Kiel in January 1814, a deal was signed between Sweden, who had joined the winning side against Napoleon, and Denmark, who, after fighting against Britain, had lost most of its navy and was economically in a dire state. The result of these negotiations was that the Danish King Frederic VI handed Norway to the Swedish King, but the negotiators manage to draft a deal, which stated, that this hand over did not include Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland.³ Due to lack of historical knowledge amongst the Swedish negotiators, this clause was not questioned, and thus Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands became parts of the Danish Kingdom.

Denmark was occupied by Germany on April 9th 1940. In the beginning it was officially only a military administration, under which the Government was acting free and undisturbed. Thus, although the German invasion of Denmark did not mean a clear cut-off in communications between the Government in Copenhagen and the representatives abroad, the representatives, and especially those serving in allied countries, were conscious that orders from Copenhagen were given under the influence of the occupying power, despite the Government 'officially' acting on its own terms. April 9th 1940 thus marked a change in the role of the Danish representatives abroad. Because of the absence of a government in exile they would have to get by on their own. Therefore an insight to the period of Danish foreign policy and history leading up to the war is needed in order to understand the state of affairs of their home country on which their new position was founded upon.

² Hans J. Debes, *Føroya søga. "Norðurlond og Føroyar"*, Vol I, Føroya Skúlabólagrunnur, Tórshavn, 1990, pp. 204-5

³ Hans J. Debes, *Føroya søga. "Frá kongligum einahandli til embætisveldi"*, Vol III, Føroya Skúlabólagrunnur, Tórshavn, 2000, p 219

B. DENMARK

In the annual Political Review of 1939, the British Minister in Copenhagen described the Danish attitude towards the international situation as being swayed by two conflicting emotions. The first, was the fear that the Western democracies would prove unwilling or unable to call a halt to Nazi aggression. The second, was the fear that if a stand was taken against Nazi aggression, the result would be a war in which Denmark could not fail to suffer severely economically, and in which her political neutrality and territorial integrity would be hanging by a thread.⁴

Because of her geographical location, Denmark would always be worse positioned as a neutral in comparison with her other Nordic counterparts in the event of a European conflict. With Germany as her neighbour on her southern border, her fate would constantly be at the mercy of her stronger neighbour, and this fact was always present in the foreign policies conducted by Denmark. Also, with regard to her political and economic situation, the Danish situation as compared to the position of other neutrals, was atypical, since owing to her intensive agricultural production she was probably further from self-sufficiency than any other European country, and moreover because all but an insignificant part of her export on which her economic life was based were sold to Great Britain and Germany.⁵ Nevertheless, these factors, which counted against her upholding strict neutrality towards the belligerents, also proved to be her strongest card with regard to maintaining her position as a neutral in a European conflict. These factors consisted of her exports to both Britain and Germany, upon which both belligerents were reluctant to lose out on, in the case of the British the idea of being cut off by their biggest supplier of bacon was an unthinkable thought to most British people, and ironically this was the first reaction of the public and newspapers when the possibility of a German occupation of Denmark was looming. The Germans imported wheat from Denmark, but to them the most benefiting result of Danish neutrality was free passage through her straits, on which the German fleet was quite dependent (upon). Danish neutrality thus suited both belligerents, but only as long as her neutrality was respected by the other and

⁴ PRO, FO 371/24782, Political Review for the Year 1939 by Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, 18.01.39

⁵ PRO, FO 371/24782, Political Review for the Year 1939 by Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, 18.01.39

she upheld a fairly even neutrality policy towards both belligerents. This latter aspect will be touched upon later in the chapter.

1. Defending her sovereignty

The situation Denmark found herself in meant that she had to rely upon the goodwill of her neighbours to secure her sovereignty. Another option, which presented itself after the Great War, was joining the League of Nations. However, despite the fact that Denmark found the League as a good forum to correspond with the Germans on foreign relations matters, such as the issue of the border, the Danes did not find that the League served the defence problem in a sufficient way. The last option thus, was a return to neutrality.

1.1 League of Nations

When the League of Nations hit the Italo-Abyssinian crisis, the confidence of the Danes, along with other small member states, in the League's ability to perform collective security vanished. Hence the decision of Denmark and other former neutral states to sign the Pact of July 1st 1936, which was to distance themselves from Article 16 (sanctions against belligerents) and therefore was the first step in the direction away from the League. Denmark was thus back with her problem of how to deter Germany from violating her sovereignty. Although the Danish Foreign Affairs Minister, Munch, ideologically believed in world peace being achieved through international systems, like the League of Nations, he nevertheless acknowledged that the League had its faults. The main one being that some of the major states had not adhered to it, amongst them Germany, and therefore the system would not work to its fullest degree. It would certainly not solve Denmark's problem with Germany if the latter decided to invade the former. Economically, Denmark would face problems with regard to her exports to both belligerents, but this time she was prepared and had struck deals with her Nordic neighbours as well as with other fellow small neutral states, for example the Dutch and Belgians, on the matter of supplies, which she might be short of, in the case her imports from Britain or Germany were cut off.

In 1938, when it was evident that Britain and France would only stand by and do nothing in the wake of German aggression against Czechoslovakia, the Danes still thought that there was a good chance that Denmark would succeed in maintaining

her neutrality, as she did in 1914. Their reasoning was based on the fact that from a geopolitical perspective there was no reason for the conflict to spread into Kattegat and the Baltic Sea since the German fleet rearmament was superior to the Russian fleet in the area, and both the British and the French fleets were based in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. The Danish waters therefore would not be in a worse position than in 1914.

1.2 Neutrality

In 1939 the faith in the League began to falter. At the Nordic Radical Meeting held in Copenhagen in February 1939 former Norwegian Prime Minister, Mowinckel, who also was president of the League of Nations in the late 1920s and Norwegian Foreign Minister Koht's Liberal predecessor as Foreign Affairs Minister, was reported to have said that "Scandinavian faith in the League of Nations had been destroyed when the British Prime Minister declared that small nations must look after themselves if they got into difficulties. They [the Scandinavians] were still faithful members of the League, but they must be free to decide issues of peace and war themselves."⁶

Following the realisation that the League of Nations would not secure her sovereignty in the event of war, Denmark along with other small states fortified neutrality policy, the aim being to maintain Danish independence and to lead Denmark through the hostilities without being involved in any dispute. However, with tension building up in Europe following Germany's rise to power and the subsequent reaction in France and Britain, it seemed that it was only a matter of time before a war broke out.

After a momentary sigh of relief, coupled with warm approbation of Mr. Neville Chamberlain's part in the Munich Agreement on September 29th 1938 Denmark came to view the settlement as a diplomatic defeat for Great Britain and France, which virtually placed Denmark at the mercy of Germany. Denmark's sole policy was thus to maintain an honest and unconditional neutrality towards all sides. This aim, it was argued, would be best achieved by the Rigsdag (Danish Parliament), the

⁶ PRO, FO 371/23663, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO 09.02.39

press and the population observing a complete impartial attitude towards the Powers engaged in the conflict.

The Danes realised that they would never be able to put up a sufficient defence against their stronger neighbour to the South. When the Germans began to revive their power, the defence question became the overriding issue of the Governments of the 1930s. Susan Seymour argues that in the years after 1933 there was a

very gradual change of attitude among the originally pacifist Social Democrats and their leader, Stauning. Where the working class had once felt unwilling to fight for a state which was hostile to them, now, with a left-wing Government, they had something worth defending.⁷

Stauning, who was the Danish Minister of Defence from 1933-35, thus advised the Government from going ahead with their program of disarmament, but this was not equivalent to suggesting that Stauning neither then nor later, when he was the Prime Minister, had moved as far as to advocating rearmament. There was still a strong pacifist element within the Social Democrats and the Radicals, with whom the Social Democrats cooperated. The leader of the Radicals, Munch, was a pacifist, who believed that "military means could never give Denmark security."⁸ To him it was not the size of the military forces that was important, but only that they were adequate enough to observe and defend Danish neutrality from accidental breaches. As long as the defence policy would not depart from this attitude, Munch was happy for small changes to occur in the defence budget. Thus, when the Government passed a law, which meant a small increase in the number of troops, this did not jeopardise the coalition with the Social Democrats. This law was passed after much criticism from the opposition and especially the military. Commander-in-Chief of the Danish Army, Lieutenant General With, was one of those voicing strong opposition to the state of the Danish defence, however, prior to the law being passed by the Government, he was given the feeling that he at last was making some progress with his talks with the Social-Democrats, referring to a recent talk with the Prime

⁷ Susan Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-45, Odense University Press, 1982, p. 53

⁸ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-45, 1982, p. 53

Minister, Stauning, where the latter agreed on the point that the Social-Democrats were now willing to allow a larger military force.⁹

The British, however, were sceptical with regard to the Government's plans to step up the rearmament in order to provide Denmark with adequate defence; they felt sure that the Government would only pass a bill on rearmament, which was so insignificant that it would make little difference to the actual defence matter, in order to quieten the opposition:

Since the fate of Czechoslovakia has lent force to the old opposition criticism of the neglect of the defence forces by the Socialist-Radical Government of M. Stauning, it seems probable that the military service Bill mentioned by General With will be passed after the elections in April; and its present discussion is doubtless intended rather to deprive the opposition of one of their main planks in the election campaign than to deal effectively with the problem of the defence of Danish neutrality in the event of war, as it can hardly be seriously thought that the increase from 8.000 to 12.000 men in the Danish army would appreciably alter Denmark's military position as against Germany.¹⁰

To the dismay of General With and the Conservatives, the British seemed to be right.

The position of Denmark at the time of the outbreak of hostilities was set forth in a speech made by the Prime Minister in the Rigsdag on the 1st September. After announcing to the House that the Privy Council had decided to issue a declaration of Denmark's neutrality on that day and to notify by Royal Decree the application of the rules of neutrality promulgated on May 31st 1938, he stated that the necessary measures had been taken to enable the Army and the Navy to perform their tasks for the assurance of the country's neutrality. The required military forces would be provided in the course of the next few days. The Fleet was manned, and deficiencies would now be made up.¹¹ However, although the Prime Minister gave the impression that the Danish military was adequate to defend her neutrality, the reality was quite different.

⁹ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3941/64/63, August 1939, Conversation between Ramsay and With

¹⁰ PRO, FO 371/23637, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO, "Danish Defence," 04.03.39

¹¹ PRO, FO 371/23637, Howard Smith, Copenhagen, to FO, "Effect of the war on Danish internal life," 11.11.39

2. Defence policy

“Of their desire for neutrality there was no doubt but would it be permitted to them? That was the question,”¹² Ramsay wrote in a report to FO in the beginning of 1939. Although Danish Prime Minister Stauning, his Foreign Affairs Minister, Munch, and their followers, believed that Danish neutrality would be permitted by the belligerents, and therefore refrained from strengthening her defences, there was much discontent both within political and military circles with the Government’s defence policy; the strongest coming from their political opponents, the Conservatives¹³, and from General With.

The belief that the Germans actually would occupy the country was not present within the military. Instead the conviction was that the Germans would like to establish aerodromes in Denmark in order to gain better control over the sea-passages to Norway and South Sweden.¹⁴ However, that did not diminish the feeling that the defence measures taken were inadequate. Munch was not much thought of within the Danish General Staff, who were in strong opposition to the policy the Government was taking on defence; it was far from adequate should Danish sovereignty come under threat by the belligerents. To the British it was even being suggested within military ranks that Munch very much was influenced by the Germans; “In answer to a query whether the influence of German propaganda was noticeable in Denmark, he replied: “Of course. The Government is riddled with it, and Dr. Munch is being whispered to all the time from behind the curtains””¹⁵

General With’s verdict on Denmark’s state of affairs, should a European war break out, was that the Danish army was ‘absolutely defenceless’ and that it was both pitiable and ridiculous to talk of the Danish Army. “It does not exist”¹⁶, General With stated, and he continued to pronounce that the dire state of the Danish defence was due to Munch, who in the previous Government under Prime Minister Zahle had been appointed the post as the Minister of Defence, and in his time there had

¹² PRO, FO 371/23637, Report from Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO, “Defence question in Denmark,” 02.02.39

¹³ PRO, FO 371/23637, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO, 03.05.39

¹⁴ PRO, FO 371/23637, R. Sutton-Pratt, Military Attaché, Copenhagen, to FO, 02.03.39

¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/23637, R. Sutton-Pratt, Military Attaché, Copenhagen, to FO, 02.03.39

¹⁶ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3941/64/63, August 1939

discouraged any idea of rearmament.¹⁷ General With's open criticism, through public speeches where he attempted to arouse public opinion for some pretence at national defence, prompted Munch to bring up the question of dismissal of General With in the Cabinet.¹⁸ The General remained in his post, but his criticisms were not dampened as will be evident in the section on the Danish signing of the Non-Aggression Pact later on in this chapter.

Not everyone in the Danish Military shared With's attitude that Denmark should put up an adequate defence to meet an eventual attack on her. Even amongst the Danish General Staff the despair, felt by many in political circles with regard to the situation Denmark found herself in, was detected. In a report from Copenhagen in the Spring of 1939, the Military Attaché R. Sutton-Pratt wrote:

He [Major-General von Stemann, Chief of Staff]¹⁹ appeared somewhat of a defeatist, arguing that nothing Denmark could do could improve her position if she fell out with Germany. He scoffed at the idea of constructing defences across South Jutland, saying that Germany would merely "bypass" them by sea, and that Germany would herself erect a mighty line across her own frontier, though he did not elucidate why this need agitate Denmark. He expressed the view that Germany would find more advantage in using Denmark as a larder and keeping her as a contented neutral.²⁰

The divide in Denmark with regard to the defence policy was clear. Reporting from Copenhagen, Ramsay, pointed out that in a leading article in Nationaltidende, published in August, the socialist press attacked the agitation for increased defence measures as being injurious to the nation. The paper expressed the opinion that this was scarcely the moment to seek cheap advertisement for a government, which had no control for the situation, whether calm or agitated. "Denmark", it concluded, "is the only country where nothing has been done to protect the country in the event of a catastrophe".²¹ Although there was disagreement amongst the political parties

¹⁷ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3941/64/63, August 1939

¹⁸ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3941/64/63, August 1939

¹⁹ Major-General von Stemann was regarded as the successor to Lieutenant-General With as Commander-in-Chief of the Danish Army.

²⁰ PRO, FO 371/23637, R. Sutton-Pratt, Military Attaché, Copenhagen, to FO, 02.03.39

²¹ PRO, FO 371/23437, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO, 30.08.39

regarding the extent of the Danish defences, all responsible parties were determined to keep Denmark outside the military conflicts of other nations.²²

After the country had been occupied by the Germans, the defence-policy chosen, or rather the lack of it, was defended on the grounds that it was evident that no matter how much the Danish Government rearmed, she would not be able to prevent a German invasion, if the Germans set their minds to do so, and therefore the Government would rather try to strengthen the other areas of Danish society, so that in the event of a German occupation, the Danish identity, society and constitution would survive despite being under the duress of another power. It has later been argued by Palle Roslyng-Jensen that despite the absence of a free government and some of its politicians, who fled the country after the Germans invasion, the Ministries kept functioning and hence the infrastructure of the country continued as normal. Also, Roslyng-Jensen argues that perhaps the Government only is a symbol of a sovereign state. Thus, with the King remaining in the country and with the rest of the institutions in place, the daily life of the Dane was practically unchanged by the occupation²³, which was what Stauning and Munch hoped to achieve with their chosen policy of non-resistance. So in one sense, the policy chosen by Stauning, Munch, and their Government was a success. However, their inability, or unwillingness, to resist a German invasion was to prove a disaster in their relation with Great Britain.

a) Scandinavian alliance?

Stauning chose to ignore the attacks of the Conservatives over the defence question, and he concentrated instead on arranging for common neutrality laws and mutual economic exchanges with the other Scandinavian States to meet the probability of the outbreak of another European war. However, despite the common notion of a Nordic Community amongst the Scandinavian states, when it came to crucial issues, such as a common defence policy, they were unable to reach an agreement, which indeed remained the case after the war had ended.

²² PRO, FO 371/23656, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, 03.07.39, speech by Mr. Alsing Andersen, the Danish Minister of Defence at a Nordic Labour meeting 02.07.39

²³ Palle Roslyng-Jensen, "Befrielsesjubilæet og den nyeste besættelseslitteratur. Idealister og "Materialister" i besættelsesforskningen", *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 95:2, 1995, p. 397

The British expressed the wish that the Scandinavian states would form an alliance to withstand the German threat and thus relieve the British in that area. However, in Scandinavia talks of such an alliance had mixed reviews. In a memorandum in February 1939 Lieutenant-Colonel Mjöllner, head of the Air Defence Bureau of the Danish Ministry of Defence, presented his views on the probable effect on Scandinavia of a war between the UK and Germany. He was

personally....strongly of opinion that the Scandinavian States ought to enter into a defensive alliance. On...asking whether in speaking of Scandinavia he included Denmark, he replied that he did and that, although the Danes had officially repudiated the idea of such an alliance, they had done so because they thought feeling in Norway and Sweden was against it. In other words, the grapes were sour.²⁴

An alliance of this kind was in his view the only thing, which could cause the Germans to hesitate to occupy Denmark, as a war with all three countries would engage a considerable number of German troops and would mean the loss of all supplies from Norway and Sweden, including Swedish ore. It would also mean that their submarines could no longer use the deep channel in Norwegian waters on their way to the Atlantic.

In the absence of a Scandinavian alliance Germany would, he said, overrun Denmark at once. When I [Military Attaché at the British Legation in Copenhagen] remarked that the Danes did not seem to think so, he answered that they knew very well it would happen, but dared not admit it. It was an absolute fact that Denmark was under Germany's thumb.²⁵

3. Relations with Norway

Mjöllner's comment about 'sour grapes' amongst the Scandinavian states comes as no surprise, because relations between the three states had been strained since the turn of the century. The cause was the Greenland dispute between Denmark and Norway, which had to be resolved at the International Court in the Hague, the return of the archives, and the less voiced, but nevertheless noted, Norwegian claim to the Faroes.²⁶ Despite the effort to emphasise the notion that at national level both nations had put their differences behind them, and that with cooperation on several levels

²⁴ PRO, FO 371/23654, Memorandum by C.L.P., Conversation with Mjöllner, head of Air Defence Bureau of the Minister of Defence, 10.02.39

²⁵ PRO, FO 371/23654, Memorandum by C.L.P., Conversation with Mjöllner, head of Air Defence Bureau of the Minister of Defence, 10.02.39

²⁶ Politiken, "Danmark og Norge," 21.07.39

relations were officially good, there was no denying that under the surface all was not yet resolved. This was especially the case with the dispute over Greenland, a dispute that was still fresh in peoples minds, and felt particularly by the Norwegians, who felt wrongly done by in the Hague verdict.²⁷

4. The Non-Aggression Pact

Another aspect of the pre-war period, which shook the foundation of a strong Nordic common stance on neutrality, was when Denmark, as the only Scandinavian state, signed the Non-Aggression Pact. Following pleas from the European neutrals for the United States Government to assist in their quest to have their neutrality respected by the belligerents, Roosevelt sent a message to the belligerents demanding non-aggression pledges to the neutral states.²⁸ The reaction from Hitler was an offer of a non-aggression pact to the neutrals. Stauning subsequently indicated that the Danes had been forced into signing the Non-Aggression Pact as a result of events that were outside their control. He said that it became “necessary for the Danish Government to answer affirmatively when, as a result of President Roosevelt’s message and of Reichschancellor Hitler’s reply to it, negotiations were offered us in respect of a so-called pact of non-aggression.”²⁹ Stauning tried to play down the impact of this pact in his speech and pointed out that it was no different from treaties the Danes had signed with other countries relative to the use of arbitration and not of force should disputes arise, and as members of the League of Nations, the Danes had a pact of non-aggression with all the other great powers belonging to the League, namely, Russia, France and England, but not with Germany who was not in the League.

Munch also ‘blamed’ President Roosevelt for the non-aggression pact, and like Stauning he too pointed out that the pact was in exact conformity with the policy of impartial neutrality.³⁰ Although this fact was acknowledged both by the British and sceptics in Denmark, they nevertheless feared the further implications of the pact, that is, the actions it would entail even though in words it conformed to impartial neutrality. It turned out that this fear was not unfounded. It was stated in a protocol

²⁷ Politiken, “Danmark og Norge,” 21.07.39

²⁸ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1982, p. 43

²⁹ PRO, FO 371/23655, Speech by M. Stauning at Kolding, 18.05.39

³⁰ PRO, FO 371/23655, Speech by Dr. Munch on the island of Langeland, 18.05.39

annexed to the pact that Germany would not undertake to place any obstacle in the way of the maintenance by Denmark of normal trade in time of war, even with a State at war with Germany. However, although this assurance was repeated verbally to the Danish Government immediately before the outbreak of war by a special emissary from Berlin, it was not long before Germany sought to evade them on the ground that Britain, by placing food-stuffs on the list of conditional contraband and by making no practical distinction between conditional and unconditional contraband, had introduced a new element into the situation.³¹

4.1 Reactions in Denmark to the Non-Aggression Pact

The Non-Aggression Pact spurred new criticism from General With towards the Government. However, this time he voiced his concerns to the British. It can only be guessed what the motive behind this move was, but by making a point of telling the British that he was 'forced' by Munch to attend the great military celebrations in Berlin in connection with the signing of the Pact, he made a firm point to the British that he not only disapproved of the Pact, but also did not support the policy chosen by his Foreign Affairs Minister; "I did not want to go but Munch forced me,"³² he said. It could also be argued that With was trying to arouse the British to be more vigilant and take a firmer policy with regard to coming to the rescue should Denmark be invaded by the Germans. To Major Kirkman, the Military Attache in Copenhagen, General With called attention to several strategic points in Denmark, which, if they fell into German hands, would harm British interests in Scandinavia. He also mentioned the iron ore traffic and how this would be secured by German bases in Denmark and Southern Norway. General With had also suggested that there was a chance that the Germans would bomb Swedish vessels to hinder iron ore reaching Britain, however this idea was dismissed by the British in a later file³³ since such an action would harm the German need for Swedish iron ore more than they would gain by denying the British the little ore they receive.

³¹ PRO, FO 371/24782, Political Review for the Year 1939 by Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, 18.01.40

³² PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3941/64/63, August 1939

³³ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3981/64/63, letter from Major Kirkman, War Office, to Lascelles, FO, 28.08.39

Judging from the comments made to the talk with General With, it seems that the British were content with finding that his account of the situation of the Danish defence corresponded with their intelligence. However, if General With had hoped that his comments would impel the British to take action, he would have been disappointed. In the comments by Lascelles of the Foreign Office on the cover to the file of Major Kirkman's talk with General With it was apparent that With's accounts corresponded to the British views of the Danes:

This melancholy account of Danish material and moral weakness contains little that is new to us.....the frontier is undefended, the army negligible and public opinion defeatist.....Meanwhile it is the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff that we could not prevent Denmark from being overrun. All we could do, it seems, is to cut off the supply of fertilisers to Denmark and thus in time reduce her value to Germany as a larder.³⁴

In the end of his notes Lascelles also pointed out that it may well be that With was pro-British, however, he would soon step down from his post, and his successor, General von Stemann, was thought to be much less well-disposed towards the British.

General With's comments were followed up by the Foreign Office with a report from General Kirkmann, who had been travelling around in Scandinavia, where he found a good deal of difference in opinions as to what actions were expected by the Germans towards Scandinavia. In Norway he found that certain officers there, who had recently been attached to the German army, were of the impression that the Germans would walk into Denmark as soon as the war broke out. According to H.M.'s Minister in Oslo, M. Koht had heard from the Danish Government that they did not expect such an action from the Germans, however, General von Stemann had considered it "quite possible".³⁵

Despite their differences due to historical disputes the Norwegians rated the Nordic community and solidarity higher and were not ready to alienate Denmark from it although she signed the Non-Aggression Pact, whereas the rest of the Nordic countries including Norway refrained from doing so themselves:

³⁴ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3941/64/63, August 1939

³⁵ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3981, M.I.2/723, from Major Kirkman, War Office, to Lascelles, FO, 28.08.39

...he [Norwegian Minister at Berlin] remarked, [that] it was desirable to make the best of the Danish decision to accept the offer of a pact from the German Government and to represent this as fully compatible with Nordic solidarity.³⁶

The nature of the Non-Aggression Pact and the change it would bring to the Danish situation with regard to the other Scandinavian countries, and Britain, was played down by the Danes. It was argued that “those who tried to make out that Denmark’s co-operation minus an active military league in the North was valueless were doing the cause of Nordic co-operation a disservice...”³⁷ and it was also strongly pointed out that the pact did not entail any alteration to Denmark’s position as a neutral and independent state. It was also, however, stressed by the Danish Minister of Defence that those who thought otherwise were not ‘responsible statesmen’³⁸, thus trying to undermine the critics.

a) Dr. Munch’s position to the Non-Aggression Pact

If the Defence Minister was uncertain, it did not change the Foreign Affairs Minister’s belief in the Pact. Munch felt secure that the Non-Aggression Pact would save the Danish from being attacked by the Germans. When Ramsay raised the point of Germany not having mentioned Denmark amongst those countries, which were given assurance against attacks, Munch replied that such an assurance was “superfluous after the signature of the non-aggression pact”.³⁹ However, Munch had said that there was only

one point on which the Germans did not feel quite comfortable and that was the question of the flight of aircraft over Danish territory. They did not mind flights along the Belts and Sound, which were provided for in the new Danish neutrality regulations, but they could not tolerate flights over land, viz., Jutland and Zealand, and they expected the Danes to prevent it. Munch had replied to Herr von Renthe-Fink that Denmark would do her best to defend her neutrality, but to me [Ramsay] he remarked that at night aircraft flying at a great height would be almost impossible to detect and quite impossible to deal with. The German Minister had admitted that this was a difficult question.⁴⁰

³⁶ PRO, FO 371/23655, Collier, FO, to Dormer, Oslo, 24.05.39

³⁷ PRO, FO 371/23656, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, 03.07.39, speech by Alsing Andersen, Danish Minister of Defence, at a Nordic Labour meeting 02.07.39

³⁸ PRO, FO 371/23656, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, 03.07.39, speech by Alsing Andersen, Danish Minister of Defence, at a Nordic Labour meeting 02.07.39

³⁹ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 4037, letter from Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, F.O., 28.08.39

⁴⁰ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 4037, letter from Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, F.O., 28.08.39

Ramsay was not convinced by Munch and in his comments to the report of the talk he wrote:

I think it would provide a very convenient excuse if at any time the German Government want to withdraw their assurance and invade Denmark. I asked Dr. Munch whether he felt confidence in the German assurance. He said he did. I said I gathered the military officers seemed to hold other views. He waved that remark aside with a, for him, unusual gesture of the arms.⁴¹

Unsurprisingly the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact also sparked off criticism abroad, especially in the Allied Press. In France the national papers Le Temps and Le Soir suggested that Denmark had signed the pact in a panic. They were also critical with regard to the fact that the act could not be construed as neutrality.⁴² Defending their deed the Danish newspaper Social-Demokraten, the organ of Stauning's party, argued that "not only does the pact in no way threaten Danish exports but it even specifically guarantees that Germany in the event of war will not regard exports to a third party as an unneutral act."⁴³ It was acknowledged that "in regard to Danish military policy it was necessary to maintain a neutrality defence also after the conclusion of the pact in order to show the world that they, like the other Scandinavian countries, would insist on their neutrality."⁴⁴

5. Neutrality and the awareness of belligerents' views on Danish neutrality after the outbreak of war

At the opening of the 92nd Ordinary Session of the Danish Rigsdag on October 3rd 1939 Stauning gave a picture of the state Denmark found herself in.

There was no ground for alarm in the country, as Denmark's neutrality had been recognized and her relations were friendly with all powers, but this fact made it all the more necessary to maintain the most complete impartiality towards the belligerent nations. While they were thus spared the serious worries with which others had to contend, they had good reason to be dismayed at the difficulties brought upon them by the war. Their present stocks, although considerable, would only last a limited time if new supplies were not assured. The possibility of a shortage of

⁴¹ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 4037, letter from Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, F.O., 28.08.39

⁴² PRO, FO 371/23656, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 05.07.39

⁴³ PRO, FO 371/23656, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 05.07.39

⁴⁴ PRO, FO 371/23656, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 03.07.39, speech by Alsing Andersen, Danish Minister of Defence, at a Nordic Labour meeting 02.07.39

fuel and raw materials which had to be reckoned with in the event of normal supplies being interrupted, had already necessitated the stoppage or restriction of various undertakings, and they must undoubtedly be prepared for increased unemployment in the event of their being unable to maintain trade with the outside world. He hoped, however, that the negotiations now being carried on with the belligerent powers would lead to satisfactory results.⁴⁵

From his public statements it seemed that Stauning still genuinely believed that Danish neutrality would be respected by the belligerents, but he acknowledged that the time ahead would be difficult, and to preserve their neutrality the Danes would have to walk a tight rope and be vigilant not to offend either of the belligerents. Despite this official conviction that Danish neutrality would be respected, it was suggested by his critics that this was just a front, because Stauning and his followers did not dare to think otherwise.⁴⁶

Whilst Stauning and Munch were confident that Danish neutrality would be respected by the belligerents their Minister in London was not so sure. From discussions amongst British officials and politicians mixed messages were received as to the value of the neutrality declarations made by the smaller states in Europe at the outbreak of war. The further the war advanced the stronger and more widespread was the notion, even within the juridical community, that neutrality no longer was applicable. Reventlow, therefore, was anxious that the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were made aware of these sentiments, so that this aspect would be taken into account in future considerations.⁴⁷

In Copenhagen, British Minister, Howard-Smith was left with the impression that Munch's attitude to neutrality in practice was not far from that in London. In response to the criticism and accusation of German violations of Scandinavian

⁴⁵ PRO, FO 371/23637, British Legation in Copenhagen to Halifax, 06.10.39. Speech made by the Danish Prime Minister at the opening of the 92nd Ordinary Session of the Danish Rigsdag on October 3rd, 1939

⁴⁶ PRO, FO 371/23654, Memorandum by C.L.P. 10.02.39

⁴⁷ SA, 10.D.4/1961/372, Reventlow reporting on two articles in the Times 03.04.40, one where Lord Macmillan argues that the Law of Neutrality is not applicable anymore, followed by another article by lawyer A.M. Sullivan in the Times 05.04.40 on the same subject. Reventlow thinks that the Danish Government should be acquainted with these views, as they can be said to represent the way of thinking within the juridical community: "Gesandtskabet har ment at burde gøre opmærksom paa disse Udtalelser, der kan tages som Udtryk for Tænkemaaden i juridisk dannede Kredse her, til trods for de Brist i Tankegangen de lider."

neutrality prior to the British rescue of prisoners of war held in a German vessel in Norwegian territorial waters, known as the 'Altmark' incident (which will be discussed later in this chapter) Munch merely replied that he did not pay much attention to criticisms made in newspapers, neither at home or abroad, and that in any case, international law was "always altered during a war".⁴⁸ From these statements Howard-Smith gathered that Munch "did not consider that this indiscriminate sinking of neutral vessels was any more illegal than our stopping German exports."⁴⁹

Although the Danish approach and attitude to belligerents' breaches of her neutrality was being criticised by both the British and the Germans, there is evidence that the Danish officials, in each incident, looked in the Neutrality Act to see what action should be taken.⁵⁰ However, as was noted earlier, owing to their difficult position the Danes found it troublesome to make a firm stand, especially towards Germany, because Danish neutrality depended upon the belligerents' goodwill.

5.1 Danish yielding to German pressure to mine the Straits

The British were right in feeling dismayed over Danish neutrality⁵¹. One example of the Danes complying to German demands was the mining of Danish straits, which the Germans demanded after submarines were sighted passing through the straits on their way to the Baltic Sea. Whether or not the submarines were British, or in fact German, which many believed, was never revealed, but the essence was that the Danish yielded to the German pressure to uphold their neutrality by controlling the passage through the straits. Letting submarines pass through the passages was not in compliance with Danish neutrality, the Germans pointed out.⁵²

There were controversies surrounding the incident. Passing through the Danish straits deep under water was against the neutrality rules as stated by the Danish and since the passage of the submarines had not been sighted by the Danish Marine, and only by the German Navy, there was only the German's word that it had taken place (they also claimed that their ships had been shot at by one or more submarines).

⁴⁸ PRO, FO 419/34, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 14.02.40 (46)

⁴⁹ PRO, FO 419/34, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 14.02.40 (46)

⁵⁰ SA, 10.D.42e/1909-45/0002, Fortolkning av Danmarks neutralitetsregler

⁵¹ PRO, FO 371/24782, Political Review for the Year 1939 by Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, 18.01.40

⁵² SA, 6.P.5a/1961/372, Royal Legation in London, to UM, 21.11.39

Nevertheless, since the passage had occurred in Danish territorial waters, it was their neutrality which had been breached, and therefore the Germans were entitled to put forward an accusation that the Danes did not fully control their waters, hence the necessity of mining the straits. This was a clever move by the Germans to stop the British from entering the Baltic, because the move would be contested by the British, however the Danes did not find that the German allegation of being shot at by the submarine would be a substantial argument to base the case on.⁵³ The fact, that the Danish refer to the incident as an ‘allegation’⁵⁴ gives a good indication that they were not too convinced that there was any basis in the German story, but nevertheless they found themselves unable to withstand the German pressure.

5.2 Neutral’s view of the belligerents’ attitude

The attitude in the Danish Press by the end of 1939 was that it was the neutral states, that were the victims in the war because of the measures taken by the belligerents. Socialdemokraten, the paper of the Social Democrats, wrote: “The war now appears to be assuming a special form by the threatened intensification of the blockade and what we may term the unrestricted mine warfare... Modern war seems to us treacherous and unchivalrous, in addition to which it hits those who are not participating.” (emphasis in original) And it was also stated that:

...Neutral ships are torpedoed now if there is anything in the cargo which can be termed contraband. There will always be disagreement as to the justification for this.....This new war, this remarkable war, affects the neutrals most of all. And they can do nothing! They can protest here and there but it is felt that in the last resort the belligerent Powers will do what it is primarily in their best interests to do, and only that.⁵⁵

5.3 Criticism of the Danish policy by Danes

In an open letter addressed to Christmas Møller, the leader of the opposition and the chairman of the Conservative party, Colonel Giersing, Commanding Officer for the Life Guards, violently attacked the Government’s foreign policy. He blamed Stauning and Munch personally for “having carried neutrality to such an exaggerated length that Denmark was now completely isolated with her defences so weak that she

⁵³ SA, 6.P.5a/1961/372, Memorandum from UM regarding the decision of November 20th, 1939, to mine Danish territorial waters south of the Straits.

⁵⁴ SA, 6.P.5/161/372, Memorandum from UM regarding the decision of November 20th, 1939, to mine Danish territorial waters south of the Straits

⁵⁵ PRO, FO 371/25660, Howard-Smith, British Legation, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 02.12.39

was incapable of protecting herself.”⁵⁶ Despite protests from the leader of the Conservative Party, who refused to “believe that the Prime Minister had meant the words he had said in the New Year’s speech, namely that Denmark was incapable of resorting to arms, was certain that any violation of Danish neutrality or infringement of her independence would be resisted by armed force.”⁵⁷ He nevertheless concluded that “the Prime Minister’s speech, however, had been so unclear, that it gave rise to doubts, both at home in Denmark and abroad, concerning Denmark’s true position.”⁵⁸

Colonel Giersing’s outburst was followed by reactions in the national newspapers the next morning, bringing the Government and especially the Minister of Foreign Affairs under fire; National Tidende wrote:

It is Dr. Munch’s responsibility that Denmark finds herself in her present position. While Sweden builds up her defences, Denmark demobilises her troops. While Finland continues her heroic struggle, the Danes are told by their Prime Minister that they can do nothing, dare not do anything and consequently have no wish to do anything.⁵⁹

Weeks after the outbreak of war Stauning stated the Danish policy with regard to the war as being to

maintain an honest and unconditional neutrality towards all sides. It must be their aim to maintain Danish independence and to lead Denmark through the conflagration without being involved in any dispute. This aim would be best achieved if the Rigsdag, the press and the population observed a completely impartial attitude towards the Powers engaged in the conflict.⁶⁰

Danish attempts to uphold an appearance of strict neutrality were in vain. Unlike their neighbour to the East, Norway, their situation, due to their geographical location, dependence upon trade with the belligerents and near absence of an army, did not allow them to follow the laws of neutrality to the full. Danish neutrality was,

⁵⁶ PRO, FO 371/24782, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to FO, Report on Political Situation in Denmark, 20.01.40

⁵⁷ PRO, FO 371/24782, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to FO, Report on Political Situation in Denmark, 20.01.40

⁵⁸ PRO, FO 371/24782, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to FO, Report on Political Situation in Denmark, 20.01.40

⁵⁹ PRO, FO 371/24782, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to FO, Report on Political Situation in Denmark, 20.01.40

⁶⁰ PRO, FO 419/33, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 11.11.39

nevertheless, to be judged in comparison with Norwegian neutrality for the remainder of the war. Danes in exile, therefore, were in a constant struggle to restore the Danish reputation in order to get some goodwill from their host countries.

C. NORWAY

While Denmark's neutrality policy was based upon the goodwill of the belligerents and the aim to ensure that the goodwill would continue once her territorial neutrality inevitably was violated, the Norwegian neutrality policy was based on different grounds. Their first and foremost task "was to make sure that Norway was still intact and its citizens alive at the end."⁶¹ Unlike Denmark, who had a long history as a sovereign state, Norway had just recently, in 1905, left the Union with Sweden. Thus, although the Norwegian neutrality policy was not indifferent to the political and ideological aspects of neutrality, and Norway politically and culturally was closer to the Allies, the policy adopted by the Norwegian Government was a strict policy of "neutrality in deed,"⁶² which meant that overall the policy favoured Germany, since the traffic in Norwegian waters of German vessels carrying iron ore from the north of Sweden was much greater than that of British vessels.

1. Reactions to British violations of Norwegian neutrality

From the outbreak of war till mid-February Norway was encountering a fair share of violations of her neutrality, in her territorial waters in particular. These incidents, however, were mainly of a minor scale, since both the British and the Germans were interested in keeping the Norwegian territorial waters neutral. However, as the war progressed the belligerents became more and more assertive and used the Norwegian territorial waters to test each other's nerves and the Norwegian conduct of neutrality, to see if she was more favourable to one of them.

While Denmark found it difficult to maintain a strict neutrality policy, Norway succeeded for the most. In one instance, however, the Norwegians interpretation of the laws of neutrality was put to the test: the 'Altmark' incident.

⁶¹ Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, 2nd ed. BasicBooks, United States of America, 1992, p. 242

⁶² Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, 1992, p. 242

a) The 'Altmark' incident

On February 14th, 1940, a German vessel, 'Altmark', entered Norwegian territorial waters on its way home to Germany. Aboard the vessel were about 300 British seamen, who had been taken as prisoners from vessels captured and sunk by the German battle cruiser 'Admiral Graaf von Spee'. The 'Altmark', a former merchant vessel but now a naval auxiliary flying the German official service flag (*Reichsdienstflagge*)⁶³, which was distinct from the war flag, was hailed thrice by Norwegian torpedo boats. The first time the 'Altmark' was let go, because she had dismantled her anti-aircraft guns before entering Norwegian territorial waters. The second time, however, she was asked by the Norwegians whether she had any persons onboard belonging to the armed forces or the merchant marine of any belligerent country, to which the captain falsely denied. Again, no action was taken by the Norwegians. The third time she was stopped by the Norwegians the captain would not let the Norwegians search the vessel on the ground that she had already been visited. By this time the British were aware of her presence in the territorial waters of Norway and forced her into Jøssing Fjord by the British destroyer 'Cossack' where they released the 300-odd prisoners and took them back to England.

In the context of the argument developed in the thesis, the question of whether or not Norway was negligent in the 'Altmark' incident is not so important. Rather it is the consequences of the incident on Anglo-Scandinavian relations and the change of British attitude towards neutrals that is of interest. The 'Altmark' incident turned out to be the redemption the British had been waiting for. From the outbreak of war both the British and the Germans had, with relations to Scandinavia, constantly been watching each other's move in Scandinavia, testing the neutrality and the vigilance of the Governments in Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm. Although Scandinavian neutrality *per se* suited both the British and the Germans, the situation got out of hand for both parties and soon they could not tolerate the slightest violation of Danish neutrality by the other, and were quick to reprimand the Danes, if they felt that the other was shown more favour.

⁶³ E. Borchard, "Was Norway Delinquent in the Case of the Altmark?", The American Journal of International Law, (34) No. 2, April 1940, p. 289

The importance of the 'Altmark' incident to the thesis is in the change of British attitude towards the neutrals, of which the incident became a milestone. Beforehand, as will be evident in Chapter II, the British had been held back in their plans for the North Atlantic because the islands belonged to the Kingdom of Denmark and Iceland and were thus included in the neutrality declarations made by Denmark and Iceland at the outbreak of war. The impact of the 'Altmark' incident on British policy of war and policy towards the North Atlantic will be examined more thoroughly in the next chapter.

The British were well aware of that they, in the eyes of the neutrals, were in the wrong in the 'Altmark' incident. They tried, therefore, to fend off the Norwegian protests by highlighting the long-standing highly appreciated friendly relationship between the two nations. The British also argued that the points the Norwegians were protesting were merely technical, and thus should be looked upon with a "sense of proportion." The British also thought that the Norwegians should try to distinguish between substantial breaches of neutrality and plain mistakes, which nevertheless did not mean that they should not be looked in to by the British,⁶⁴ but the Norwegians were not persuaded. They pointed out that firstly, the iron-ore transport was not a Norwegian issue but a matter between Sweden and Germany, and secondly, that the British should not be so quick at judging the Norwegians' defence of their territorial waters, when the British themselves were not able to hinder German u-boats sailing into Scapa Flow.⁶⁵

In a memorandum discussing how Danish Ministers abroad should be instructed as to how the Danish Government perceived the 'Altmark' incident it was advised that the representatives should show a certain, yet indirect, support for the Norwegian cause. This attitude was adopted because in the end Denmark found herself in the same situation as Norway with regard to belligerents' neutrality breaches within their territories. The Danes, however, were not so sure that they would have reached the same conclusion and understanding of events, had they been faced with the same

⁶⁴ SA, 10.H.35a/1909-45/0002, Reventlow, London, to UM, Copenhagen, Ges. No. 717, 29.03.40, citing an article in the *Times* 28.03.40

⁶⁵ SA, 10.H.35a/1909-45/0002, Oxholm, Oslo, to UM, Copenhagen, Ges. No. 305, 26.03.40

situation.⁶⁶ Despite their instructions it appears that Danish authorities found that the British had some point in their reply to the Norwegian authorities regarding the Altmark incident. This was, however, based on the actual juridical interpretation of Article 10 in the XIII Haag-Convention (le simple passage).⁶⁷ As was repeatedly suggested by the British representatives in Denmark, the Danes would go to great lengths to remain neutral and stay out of the conflict; realising the change of the British mood towards the neutrals, it is therefore not surprising that they showed understanding for the British argument.

Despite their protestations the Norwegians could also make sense of the British actions as they realised that it must have been frustrating to stand by and see an enemy vessel go by with 300 countrymen onboard, and the Norwegian Press exclaimed understanding to the moral indignation and psychological factors of the British action.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, although there were some discrepancies in the reactions to the 'Altmark' incident within Scandinavian countries, the overall policy was to show support and draw a similar line on breaches of their neutrality, in order not to provoke an escalation of belligerent activities in their waters. However, as it turned out, they were not successful. Shortly after the 'Altmark' incident, Danish Minister in London, Reventlow, informed his Government in Copenhagen that the British tone towards the neutrals had changed. A clear signal was given that patience with the neutrals was up, and this made Reventlow certain that the 'Altmark' incident would not be a 'one off' incident⁶⁹ and quoted the Daily Mail stating that "hopefully the World would understand by now that Britain in the future would act in the exact same way under similar situations",⁷⁰ (translated) and the Yorkshire Post for stating that what happened in the 'Altmark' incident would show the World that the British would not be bluffed, neither by the Nazis nor the neutrals."⁷¹ (translated) The realisation in Denmark of the change of mood in Britain was noted and the effect it had on the Danes was applauded by the British Minister in Copenhagen:

⁶⁶ SA, 10.H.35c/1909-45/0002, Memorandum discussing how Danish Ministers abroad should be instructed as to how the Danish Government perceived the "Altmark" incident, and hence give them guidance as to how to respond to it in their respective countries, 29.02.40

⁶⁷ SA, 10.H.35c/1909-45/0002, Correspondance note 06.04.40

⁶⁸ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Danish Legation in Oslo to UM, 19.02.40

⁶⁹ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow, London, to UM, Copenhagen, 19.02.40

⁷⁰ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 19.02.40

⁷¹ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 19.02.40,

it is apparent that various factors, such as the Altmark incident...[has] tended of late to bring home to Danish opinion more fully than before Britain's determination to see the war through to a victorious end and her refusal to allow Germany to break all the rules of international law without taking effective counter-measures. Although the Altmark incident...at first gave rise to some criticism of Great Britain in the Danish press, a more favourable tone prevailed after the first excitement was over, while public opinion was divided between a genuine fear that the incident might prove a dangerous precedent for further belligerent operations in territorial waters, Danish and Swedish, as well as Norwegian, and sympathy with the humane aspects of the British exploit. There is no doubt that as a result of this episode German prestige suffered a serious blow in Danish eyes and that British prestige was considerably enhanced.⁷²

The Danes got further indications that the mood in Britain towards the neutrals had changed since the 'Altmark' incident when Chamberlain gave the British Press free run and said that there would be no more censorship on articles dealing with the neutrals and he more or less encouraged the press to be more vigorously in their writings about the neutrals.⁷³ It was also reported that although Chamberlain was very critical of the Norwegians handling of the 'Altmark' incident, he nevertheless did not give any juridical motive for his criticism, and that was very much in line with what his Minister of Foreign Affairs Halifax, told Reventlow's Norwegian colleague the previous day.⁷⁴ From a Danish correspondent with connections within the Foreign Office in London he depicted the impression that within the FO it was openly believed that the British action taken in the incident had very weak grounds in international law, but strong grounds in the humanitarian aspect. The humanitarian aspect was also stressed by the head of the Northern Department at the FO in a conversation with the Norwegian Minister in London,⁷⁵ Reventlow reported to Munch.

The British had achieved what they set out to do and the Danes and Norwegians were right to fear that the incident would create precedence, especially since the reactions

⁷² PRO, FO 419/34, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 04.03.40 (59)

⁷³ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to Munch 22.02.40, quoting Chamberlain: ... "Til Slut tillader jeg mig at anføre, at det er mig bekendt, at Mr. Chamberlain den 17. ds. udtalte sig til ledende britiske Pressemænd i Retning af, at der intet var til Hinder for at Bladene behandlede det norske incident med Energi og Udførlighed, og at "han selv vilde sørge for, at der ikke skete nogen Indgriben i artikler desangaaende fra Censors eller Regeringsmedlemmers Side."

⁷⁴ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to Munch, UM, 21.02.40, Reventlow to Munch, UM, 20.02.40

⁷⁵ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to Munch, UM, 20.02.40

reported from the United States to the incident were in favour of the British actions.⁷⁶ Reventlow pointed out that it was being put forward that the British through the 'Altmark' incident in a matter of 24 hours had achieved more prestige worldwide and had managed to calm American critics of the British warfare, than 6 months of political statements had managed so far. Reventlow also brought to attention a statement made by Churchill in a speech at the Guild Hall the previous day, where he referred to Norwegian neutrality as 'one-sided neutrality'.⁷⁷

The Daily Mail wrote in the aftermath that if German warships were allowed to make use of Norwegian territorial waters then there should be no reason why the British could not do the same. The communist paper, Daily Worker, had a completely different take on the incident. The romantic notion, of the British handling on humanitarian grounds, which the British Government was trying to attach to the incident, was far from the reality of the situation, the paper argued. Rather it was a carefully calculated move by the British to show the Scandinavian countries that the British had lost their tolerance towards them, following the Scandinavian adamant wish to stick to their neutrality and not letting allied troops use their territory for transit, and now wanted to teach the Scandinavians a lesson and show them that their neutrality was worth much to the British. The paper also accuses the British of bringing the war to the neutrals, then causing havoc, complaining and threatening the neutrals for not complying to British demands, in order to conceal the fact that they breached international law.⁷⁸ The British arguments were thus questioned by the Danes, and looking in hindsight the Daily Worker, was probably not that far from the truth.

D. THE FAROE ISLANDS, ICELAND AND GREENLAND

On the eve of the Second World War a joint declaration of neutrality⁷⁹ was made by the so-called 'Oslo states', which included the declaration of neutrality of the three

⁷⁶ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to Munch, UM, 20.02.40

⁷⁷ SA, 10.H.35c/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 24.02.40, accompanied by the Whitehall Letters No. 103 containing remarks to the 'Altmark' incident.

⁷⁸ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to Munch, UM, 21.02.40

⁷⁹ This declaration was primarily based upon the 1912 Declaration made by the so-called 'Oslo powers', which again pledged the signatories to act conforming to the provisions of the Hague Conventions, especially V and XIII. However, due to developments and technical changes in warfare,

island regions in the North Atlantic, Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands. Thus, when the war broke out these islands in the North Atlantic were neutral territories and this clearly posed some manoeuvring problems to those powers wanting control over the North Atlantic.

Iceland had already gained much independence at the outbreak of the Second World War and was internationally recognised as a sovereign country. The Faroese independence movement, meanwhile, had not advanced as quickly as it had in Iceland prior to the war, and had therefore, in the late 1930s, reached the same point as the Icelandic movement had been in late 1910s, that is, that there were heavy debates as to whether the Faroes should follow Iceland and break away from the Danish Constitutional Rule and thus have the opportunity to break with the Union or stay as part of the Danish Kingdom.

1. Danish concerns about their territories in the North Atlantic

On the eve of the outbreak of war the Conservative members of the Parliamentary Committee of Twenty-One, which was formed the previous autumn to consider questions relating to Danish defence, addressed an open letter to Stauning pointing out that no steps had yet been taken to call the Committee together, criticising the failure of the Government to take measures of preparedness during the present crisis and demanding “rapid and resolute action and the calling up of increased forces for the army and navy if Denmark in a rapid maintenance of neutrality in her territory”.⁸⁰ However, whether that would include the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland it did not say, but it would be tempting to guess that it would not, because the territories in the North Atlantic were very seldom mentioned in considerations regarding the Danish situation in a possible war, and it seems that they were not at all included in

which had appeared in the meantime, some adjustments or additions had to be made, but as a whole, the declaration was not much different.

Article V of the Hague Convention: Rights and duties of Neutral Powers and persons in War on Land, which laid down the code of conduct, in article (I) of the rights and duties of neutral Powers; (II) of belligerent interned and wounded soldiers attended to in neutral countries; (III) of neutral persons; and railway material. § 1, Inviolability of Neutral Territory: “This principle is the most basic of all. It is absolute. It must be respected by the belligerents and defended by the neutrals...), § 2, Abstention from lending Assistance to the Belligerents, § 3, Requirement of strict impartiality in other cases.

Article XIII: Neutrality Law in time of Naval War.

⁸⁰ FO 371/23437, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO, 30.08.39

the definition of 'Danish defence,' because there were no references made to the fact that they would need defence against enemy attack.

In an article in the Danish Communist paper, Arbejderbladet, in March 1939 the Icelandic refusal to meet the German request for airbases on their island was noted, but the Danes were not sure whether that request also included a naval base. The Danes were thus aware of the increased interest in Iceland shown by the Germans. According to the Icelandic Prime Minister, the German demand for airbases was based on some old Most-Favoured-Nation treaties between the two countries, however the Icelanders refused to let the Germans use these rights as an argument, as no other nation was enjoying these rights. The Danes were also worried that this move by the Germans was a confirmation of the rumours that she was planning on using Iceland as a operational basis for planes and submarines to attack the North of the British Isles. It was also acknowledged that the Faroes, because of their strategic position north of Scotland, were in immediate danger.⁸¹

In June 1939 the magazine Greenland worried that while the rest of the world was hastily preparing for war nothing had been heard of whether the Danish Government had taken the situation of the Faroe Islands and Greenland into account and made sure that these areas also were provided with enough provisions and security in the event of war breaking out.⁸²

2. The Faroe Islands

In 1816 the Faroe Islands became a county of Denmark and the old Løgting, possibly the oldest parliament in Europe, was reinstated, but only as a county council to the Danish administration in the islands, which was represented by an Amtmand (Governor). The Løgting, however, exercised power over a wider area of county issues than other counties in Denmark, while the Governor only exercised the same powers as his colleagues in Denmark. At the outbreak of war the Rigsdag, the Danish Parliament, put into force a law, that gave the county administrators increased authority over issues, which otherwise were under Parliamentary jurisdiction. In

⁸¹ Arbejderbladet, "Naziregeringen kræver Flyvebaser paa Island", 22.03.39

⁸² Grønland, Nr. 26, 3. Aargang, Juni 1939, p. 6, "Har Grønland og Færøerne Reservelagre hvis der udbræder Krig?"

relations to this move to spread out the power in the event of a war crippling the central administration in Copenhagen, the Governor in the Faroe Islands, was given similar powers. This meant that he would be able to exert authority, in line with recommendations from the Løgting and Landsnevnd (County Committee), to pass laws, such as ban of exports and restrictions on goods, if needed.

In the 1880s an independence movement arose amongst Faroese students in Copenhagen, which was later to be run from the Faroes. Jóannes Patursson was the front man of this movement, the same man, who in 1906 founded the 'Home Rule Party', demanding independence from Denmark. Although the independence movement in the Faroes had not progressed as far as that in Iceland by the outbreak of war, the Faroes had not been completely untouched by the liberal and nationalist movements in the rest of Europe. One example was the status of the Faroese language, which in 1910 was allowed as a supplementary language in the schools. In 1918 a law was passed by the Løgting that Faroese orthography should become an obligatory subject in the schools. In the following decades the language was given further eminence, but by the outbreak of war the Faroese language was still not recognised as the legal language in courts, despite the proposal being passed by votes in the Løgting in 1938⁸³ – the obstacle being the Danish Governor, who was reluctant to pass any legislation with regard to the Faroese language.⁸⁴ The language question became one of the issues that created tension between the Faroese and Danish during the occupation; another one was the flag issue, which became the most potent issue between the islanders and the Governor, which the British got involved in during their occupation of the Faroes.

2.1 Reactions in the Faroes to the hostilities (pre-occupation of Denmark).

The immediate worries amongst the Faroese at the outbreak of war were the aspect of supplies and the islands neutrality.

⁸³ Edvard Mitens, Eg minnist. Skrivstovustjóri Løgtinsins, H.N. Jacobsens Bókhandil, Tórshavn, 1969, 248

⁸⁴ Mitens, Eg minnist. Skrivstovustjóri Løgtinsins, 1969, p. 252

a) Supplies

Mitens, who was the chairman of the Løgting from 1939 to 1949, points out in his diary, that when in 1938 there was a momentary danger for war breaking out, the Landsnevnd (County Committee) decided to stock up on wheat supplies. However, the Faroese believed that they, along with the Nordic countries, would be able to stay neutral in the conflict, as they had successfully done in World War I. Therefore no further immediate actions were taken in response to the looming conflict, until in 1939 they made additional moves to assure that enough supplies were in the island, should war break out.⁸⁵ In 1939 there were 158 sloops and schooners and 10 trawlers. Faroese fisheries took place predominantly in waters around Iceland and Greenland. Thus despite the outbreak of war, the Faroese continued their fishery.

At a meeting in the Governor's office (participants were members of the Landsnevnd and the Governor himself) on Friday September 1st 1939, and the following couple of days, the looming war situation was discussed, but only in terms of the supply matters. A proclamation was made on the situation in which, amongst other things, it was stated that since Denmark had declared her neutrality there was nothing that indicated that she would be drawn into the war. Therefore there was no reason why the Faroes should fear losing her supplies from Denmark, so there was no need to worry. It was calculated that supplies on the islands would last for 3-6 months,⁸⁶ but, to be on the safe side, there were some goods, which would be barred from being exported and hoarding was banned.⁸⁷ Making withdrawal of more than DKK 300 was also banned.⁸⁸ On October 16th 1939 the British consul informed the governor that he had received a message from Britain stating that a new rule regarding supplies to the Faroes was put in order. This rule stated that goods could only be sent to the Faroes if the receiver signed a statement that they would not export the goods on to Germany.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Mitens, Eg minnist. Skrivstovustjóri Løgtinsins, 1969, p. 27

⁸⁶ Mitens, Eg minnist. Skrivstovustjóri Løgtinsins, 1969, p. 237

⁸⁷ SA, Privatarxiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1. Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939. (A.II.) 1939-4000/10, Bilag nr. 1.

⁸⁸ Mitens, Eg minnist. Skrivstovustjóri Løgtinsins, 1969, p. 237

⁸⁹ SA, Privatarxiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1. Udskrift af Færø amts dagbog. (A.I.). p. 23

Although there are few records of concerns amongst the Faroese politicians with the outbreak of war, apart from the supply situation, there are suggestions that the authorities in the Faroes did take the war situation and the subsequent rules that followed seriously. When in doubt, as to whether some goods could be exported and where they could be exported to according to the contraband rules of the British, the matters were seriously dealt with, and there is a strong indication that they did not want to make any mistakes. The reason for this probably was that they knew that they would lose the cargo, if everything was not in order. The Danish Governor, however, downplayed the gravity of the British contraband rules. To one of the chairmen of the Faroese shipping company he stated that he only saw these rules as a piece of information and it was his belief, that the shipping company first and foremost should follow the Governor's advice rather than the British Consul's advice, because he, the Governor, would always put the safety of the voyage first and not the contraband rules of a third country. This, the governor remarked, was his own decision and not the decision of the Danish Foreign Affairs Ministry, however the latter knew of his standpoint.⁹⁰ This episode gives an indication of the character of Governor Hilbert and his lack of ability to cooperate with other authorities, and his manoeuvres to diminish the authority of others, especially rivals. This characteristic will become clearer and examined further in Chapter III.

b) Relations between the Danish Governor Hilbert and the British Consul Lützen

This attitude of the Danish Governor prior to the British occupation of the Faroes is interesting taken into account that he would be their closest cooperative partner during the occupation. However, it is more likely that it was not the British *per se* which the Governor had a problem with. In Chapter III we will see that the Governor mainly kept himself to a close group of people, mainly other Danes in important positions on the islands. He was subsequently accused for having little regard for the locals, because of this elitist attitude.⁹¹ Thus, the attitude of the Governor towards the British Consul was probably due to the fact that the British Consul in the islands was a local businessman. Or, it could be speculated, that in the British Consul the Governor saw a rival in terms of authority over the islands.

⁹⁰ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1. Udskrift af Færø amts dagbog. (A.I.). p. 24

⁹¹ PRO, FO 371/32761, Memorandum by Mr. Turville Petre of the Royal Institute of International Affairs

In a separate incident, the Governor again showed lack of respect for the British Consul Lützen. On September 24th 1939 the Governor was informed by the Tórshavn Radio telegraph that he has received a message from Wick Radio concerning a submarine sinking an oil-tanker near the Faroes. Hilbert decided (pointing out that this decision was taken in accord with the telegraph personal) that it was not necessary to inform the British Consul of the incident. As to why he did not inform the Consul, the Governor did not expand on, but it created a situation between the two. Whether or not this was part of a power-struggle between the two, one can only guess, but after the arrival of the British, relations between Hilbert and Lützen turned sour. It certainly is interesting that Hilbert chose to withhold this information, because he had as such nothing to gain by withholding it. Hilbert's remark, however, to the Consul, when the latter confronted him about the incident and said that he would appreciate that the governor would inform him of incidents like this in the future, does give a sense of some kind of battle between the two of them:

[the Governor] did not see it necessary to inform the Consul, since the matter was taken care of by the local authorities – and the Governor assumed that the British Admiralty would contact the Consul himself, if his assistance was wanted.⁹²

This is again an example of how very resourceful in guarding his power and subsequently Danish interests in the islands Hilbert was. Although he was not a popular man, he nevertheless was highly successful at influencing the British and thus almost without error succeed in being in control over internal affairs despite the presence of a foreign power on the islands and despite being cut off from his home Government.

c) Neutrality

Local politician Jóannes Patursson pointed out to the Løgting that although the Faroe Islands were included in the Danish neutrality declaration, it was worth remembering that while the Scandinavian states had national services, the Faroe Islands and Iceland in accordance to the national defence law of Denmark from 1848 had no defence at all. While Iceland, owing to their dependent signature of the neutrality

⁹² SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1. Udskrift af Færø amts dagbog. (A.I.). pp. 15-6.

declaration, was master of their own fate, the Faroes were tied with the fate of Denmark in the conflict, and therefore would be dragged into the war, if Denmark was attacked. This reality concerned Patursson, and he hoped that the other members of the Lagting would bear it in mind.⁹³

After the outbreak of war the Governor informed the population of what the neutrality declaration entailed, the guidelines and rules to be followed, and if breached, what the punishment or fines were; for example, passing on information, which might be to the advantage of one belligerent state against the other, would be penalised with jail up to 6 years. However, depending on the circumstances, the fine could be much less and jail could be avoided. Openly offending a foreign nation's flag would also be fined or in extreme cases punished with a jail-sentence. Subjects should also refrain from making comments in larger groups of people or arrange demonstrations against any belligerent.⁹⁴

3. Greenland

In the aftermath of the decolonisation of South America, the July Revolution in France, and the rise of the free trade movement the Danish King decided to lift the monopoly on Iceland and in the West Indies colonies. This decision consequently prompted questions regarding the situation of Greenland, which remained a closed territory to the outside world with all trade going through the "Enehandelen" (Royal Greenland Trade Company), which was established in 1776 introducing a state-administered trade monopoly fully supportive of the Danish colony policy. In Copenhagen there were certain circles of businessmen and other influential people with strong finances, who saw the opportunity of having Greenland 'opened up', because she was rich in natural resources. Their argument was also that the indigenous population, who lived a basic life based on their hunting, should be brought to a civilized stage. These demands were met by the Royal Greenland Trade Company's assertion that open trade on Greenland would lead to the exploitation of the Greenlanders and also the argument that the introduction of and subsequently the

⁹³ SA, 8.H.1a/1909-45/0002, Færøerne: Indre forhold og forholdet til Danmark I-III, Jóannes Patursson to Føroya Løgting, 05.09.39

⁹⁴ FL, Fútin, *II Verdenskrig 1940-45*, 7.A., Neutralitetsbestemmelser, militære forhold, "Bekendtgørelse, Færø Amt, 04.09.39"

influence of the European way of life would damage the Greenlanders and their natural adaptation to living in such a hostile physical environment. The Danes were thus faced with a dilemma whether to open up Greenland to free competition and let the Greenlanders make it on their own at their own risk, with the possible chance of much trouble and direct danger to their livelihood; or should the Danes continue their 'protection-policy' and ward off the blows of the side-effects of free competition and modern civilisation, and help when help was asked for, with the risk of creating helplessness and lack of initiative amongst the Greenlanders.⁹⁵

Discontent with how the island was run, and the subsequent problems it caused for the local population, resulted in an early 20th century proposal from those, who wanted the best for the Greenlanders, recommending changes in the structure of Greenland. It proposed that district councils should be established as well as a 'Landsråd' (Greenland Council) for North-Greenland and one for South-Greenland, which then should meet regularly. In 1908 a proposal was passed in the Danish Parliament, where the 'Enehandelen' and the administration of Greenland were separated and district councils and Landsråd established. The role of the district councils was to take care of social and general matters and to administrate the allocation of social means and goods. In the Landsråd the inspectors were 'born' leaders, while the other members were selected by the district councils. To the local Greenlanders, the establishment of these Landsråd meant that it provided them with a forum, where they had the opportunity to meet with fellow Inuit from other districts and discuss common issues that affected their daily lives. Although this system had its weaknesses, especially because the separation of Trade and Administration was impracticable, this set the basis for how Greenland was governed locally, while the main authority lay with the Greenland Committee (Grønlands Styrelse) in Copenhagen.

3.1 Reactions to U.S. interest in Greenland

A leading article in Greenland in March 1937 put the question as to whether Denmark seriously was contemplating selling Greenland to the Americans. It

⁹⁵ Mads Lidegaard, Grønlands Historie, Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck A/S, Gullander, Skjern, 1991, p. 139

mentioned the sale of the West Indies Islands and connected the American goodwill, that stemmed from that sale, with the moral back-up the Americans put behind the Danish case when the Dano-Norwegian dispute over Greenland was fought out at the International Court at the Hague. Also, the article questioned the apparent rise of American interest in the island, for example Charles Lindberg's flight to Greenland and his extensive flights over the island, of which the public learned little; hence suspicions arose as to the purpose of these reconnaissance flights. Moreover, a sudden interest of the American Minister to Denmark, Mrs. Bryan Owens, in Greenland fuelled suspicions. So did a 3 month long expedition that took place simultaneously as the U.S. Government sent a ship of war to the waters of Greenland 'on a scientific expedition' with several experts within the fields of geology, engineering and military, onboard, caused concern in Denmark. The Danish public was only given a 'laconic' notification about this, and it was explained that it was a result of the 'warm affection' the American Minister felt towards the island. The author, the editor of the magazine, was also suspicious of the invitations that several Danish ministerial officials along with Prime Minister Stauning had received from President Roosevelt inviting them to Washington. Stauning, however, was never able to go in the end. His plans to go were put back three times, due to illness and extensive workload at the Rigsdag. The article, however, questioned what the real reason for the sudden reluctance to meet up with Roosevelt was. The reason, it was believed, was that in the meantime, the rumours of the intended sale of Greenland to the U.S. had spread and had aroused great interest within diplomatic circles as well as amongst the public. Also, the editor believed that Stauning was afraid of further attacks and accusations from the association "Luk Grønland op" (Open Up Greenland), which was very critical of the Danish policy of monopoly in Greenland. In the end the editor nevertheless reassured the reader that at the present moment the Danish Government had been able to verify that no form of negotiation of a sale of Greenland has taken place whatsoever.⁹⁶

Two years later, in 1939, the issue re-emerged. The news that Senator Lundeen proposed to Congress that the United States should buy Greenland from Denmark in order to use the island as a naval base caused much uproar in Denmark. Danish

⁹⁶ Grønland, Nr. 3, Marts 1937. Redaktør: Th. Damsgaard Schmidt. A/S I. Ihrich. Kbhvn.

Prime Minister Stauning's only comment was that the Danish Government was unaware of the existence of such a proposal. The Chairman of the "Luk Grønland Op" society, Damsgaard Schmidt, was, however, not too convinced by the Prime Minister's reply and in an article in the society's paper reminded the reader that it too was a Radical-Socialist Government which in 1917 claimed to know nothing of any negotiations with the United States regarding the Danish West Indies, and only few days later the Danes were informed that the islands had been sold.⁹⁷

3.2 Relations with the Faroe Islands

The vast unexploited natural resources of Greenland also aroused interest in the Faroes during the 1920s. Since the Greenlanders only conducted their hunting from traditional kayaks the rich fishing grounds outside the Greenland coast laid practically untouched. The Faroese fishing vessels therefore exercised their rights as associates of the Danish Kingdom to access the Greenland waters, as they practically were part of the common waters of the Kingdom. The Danes found it difficult to deny the Faroese trawlers the right to fish in Greenland, because they were aware of the increased support the independence movement gained in the island, and therefore wanted the Faroese to recognise the benefits of being an associate of the Danish Kingdom. The Greenlanders, however, did not take well to the Faroese presence in their waters, because they feared that the Faroese, with their advanced trawlers would clear the waters and leave nothing for the Greenlanders, who were confined to coastal fishing in their small boats. Thus, despite the fact that they were offered work, both on land and on the ships, by the Faroese, who also taught the Greenlanders how to progress from small coastal fishing to trawling the high seas, the Greenlanders wanted the Faroese presence to be contained. The Faroese, however, were more successful in their negotiations with the Danes and were granted some natural harbours on the East-Coast from where their fishing was conducted during the summer months.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Grønland, Nr. 25, 3 Aargang, Maj 1939, p. 2 "Grønlands skæbne allerede beseglet?"

⁹⁸ Lidegaard, Grønlands Historie, 1991, pp. 177-8

4. Iceland

Like the Faroe Islands and Greenland, Iceland had spent the last 1000 years under the rule of another country, first Norway, then the kingdom of Denmark-Norway and since 1814 the Danish Kingdom. The early period of Danish rule in particular saw an extreme economic exploitation of the island and political domination by the Danes. Coupled with the longstanding wish for reforms and the nationalistic movement in the 20th century, this resulted in a strong independence movement in the island and amongst Icelanders abroad. In 1918 a temporary solution was reached with the Government in Copenhagen, which granted Iceland sovereignty over all aspects except foreign affairs, which would remain in the hands of Copenhagen. This was the Act of Union, which was to be revised in 1940, and if neither the Althing or the Danish Rigsdag could come to a joint decision on the future of the Act by 1943, either party could unilaterally sever the union, provided its decision had a two thirds majority in the respective assembly and was ratified by three/quarters of the voters in a national referendum.⁹⁹ To the Icelanders the Act of Union thus was an important step towards their independence.

According to this Danish-Icelandic Act of Union of November 30th 1918 Iceland was a free and sovereign state united with Denmark by a common King and by the agreement embodied in the Act. One of the provisions of this act was that Denmark was entrusted with the safeguard of Iceland's foreign affairs. According to paragraph 1 of the Icelandic constitution it was a limited monarchy, and the King had the highest power in all affairs of the state subject to the reservations set forth in the constitution.

a) Icelandic situation at the outbreak of war

The Great War showed that because of her dependence on the sea-lanes to Denmark, which were easily cut off by the belligerents, Icelandic neutrality could not rely on the connection with Denmark in time of war; instead it showed that "within the limits set by her neutrality, Iceland was firmly placed in a British sphere of influence."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The Act of Union is printed in full in translation in British and Foreign State Papers 1917-18, CXI, London, 1921, pp. 703-06

¹⁰⁰ Thor Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, D. Phil. Thesis, Pembroke College, 1978, p. 12

Iceland's three main objectives in the late 1930s with the looming war in sight were to a) expand their export market and credits, b) to deal with the German threat, and c) to solve the danger of wartime privation.

By the end of March 1939 the Danish Minister in Reykjavik reported to Copenhagen that concerns were voiced at the Althing regarding the situation of the island in the event of war breaking out and what preparations/precautions were in place. Especially the question as to what Denmark would do in order to secure the safety of the island was voiced.¹⁰¹ With the lack of British willingness to meet Icelandic wishes on these areas,¹⁰² the Icelanders thus looked to the West to the United States in order to break out of their difficult position.

4.1 Icelandic relations with U.S.

In the United States the American-Icelandic arctic explorer, Dr. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, whom most Icelanders considered as their international icon, did his best to arouse American interest in the island. It was his enthusiastic pioneering of the idea of a northern air route which made him a "natural advisor to the American aviation industry,"¹⁰³ and upon whose expertise the U.S. military later relied.

Throughout the 1930s Iceland began steadily to grow her trade with the United States. This was, as mentioned before, a direct result of the British unwillingness to meet Icelandic needs and by 1938 US share in Icelandic exports had risen from 2.6 per cent to 9.1 per cent.¹⁰⁴ In an attempt to further their relationship with the Americans, the Icelandic Government decided to participate in the 1939 New York World Fair. The importance of this move and the economic motivation behind it was expressed by Jonas Jonsson in an article in Timinn:

With the great market difficulties in Europe the Icelandic nation places its hope on America...the great free continent which has all the products we need, and which can buy everything we have to offer. It [the Icelandic nation] knows that America is the future market for the Icelanders and one-third of the [Icelandic] kin live there.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ SA, 9.D.44/1909-45/0002, From Fontenay, Reykjavik, to the Prime Minister's Office, Copenhagen 31.03.39

¹⁰² PRO, FO 371/23656, FO to the Secretary of Treasury, 29.07.39

¹⁰³ Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, p. 19

¹⁰⁴ Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, p. 30

¹⁰⁵ Timinn, Jonas Jonsson, 13.06.39,

The New York World Fair turned out to be a turning point in Icelandic-American relations. The Icelanders had appointed Vilhjalmur Thor and Thor Thors as commissioners to the Fair, and this was a symbolic move in more than one sense. While Vilhjalmur Thor “was a brilliant executive of the self-made type and an influential member of the progressive/co-operative hierarchy which in earlier times had initiated the economic relationship with Britain,” his colleague, Thor Thors, was “a high-ranking parliamentarian and brother of the industry minister, Olfaur Thors, the leader of the Independence Party.”¹⁰⁶ They therefore represented not only the move to greater economic independence and self-sustainability, but also the move towards greater political independence and the move away from Denmark.

The Icelandic Government was well aware that the war could sever all seaways eastward and that the Icelanders thus could only rely upon their trade with the United States. During their stay in the United States in connection with the World Trade Fair the commissioners explored all possibilities for exports and raising loans in the United States. Their hard work did not go by without result and they were able to establish lasting contacts with the State Department, with whom they urged to open an American consulate in Reykjavik. That was not established until after the war broke out though, because the State Department found that the trade with the island was too insignificant for a consular post.¹⁰⁷

In the meantime an Icelandic National Union was set up in the United States to further cultivate the bonds between the Icelandic-American community and the ‘old country’. The Icelandic community in the U.S. was at the time numbering about 40,000 people.¹⁰⁸ Its chairman was the aforementioned Dr. Vilhjalmur Stefansson. For the World Trade Fair Stefansson wrote, at the request of the Icelandic Government, what would be one of the more influential pieces of work in their relations with the United States, namely the booklet Iceland, The First American Republic. It argued that Iceland geographically belonged to North America and

¹⁰⁶ Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, p. 31

¹⁰⁷ Cordell Hull, Memoirs, (2 vols.; New York; The Macmillan Company, 1948), I, p. 754

¹⁰⁸ ÞS, Utanr. Db 4/174, IV-V: Skýrsla framkvæmdastjóra heimssýningar, July 1939. Editorial, Timinn, 14.01.39

Stefansson would later use this booklet to illustrate his theory to the State Department in association with the Monroe Doctrine. This will be elaborated on in Chapter IV.

4.2 German interests in Iceland

The increased German interest in the island was of concern of the Icelanders, and especially the activities of the new German Consul-General, who within his first few weeks, had covered most of the roads in Iceland. To respond to the increased German influence some politicians proposed to introduce measures to control German correspondence, and also to put in measures to prevent Icelandic territory being used as a base of operation not only by the Germans, but by any foreign power in time of war. The Icelanders were aware that their island could be of interest to the belligerents in terms of use of their fjords by foreign submarines as a refuelling base or actual airbases on the island. They were also considering the possibility of being occupied. It was subsequently reported to London that “While the main object of all Icelanders is to maintain their independence, it is, I think, generally realised now that in the event of a European war this will be difficult in view of their defenceless state.”¹⁰⁹

It was correctly recognised by the British that the greatest danger of German success in Iceland lay in the economic sphere;¹¹⁰ during 1936-37 Germany exceeded the British share in Icelandic exports and became Iceland’s second most important trading partner.¹¹¹ The British, however, did not have to worry as such, because while the Germans had a strong economic foothold the Icelanders did not particularly savour the German influence on their island. As it was reported to the British early in 1939:

M. Jónas Jónsson, head of the ‘Progressive Party’....is confident that Iceland will always be friendly to England, but he pointed out the difficulty of preventing German influence when Germany’s purchases are so great. Nevertheless, the Icelandic Government disliked this influence and has turned down the Lufthansa proposals for this reason.

¹⁰⁹ PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

¹¹⁰ PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

¹¹¹ Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, p. 15

He hoped very much that we would make the Government's task easier by economic assistance.¹¹²

However, although the majority of the Icelandic population sympathised with the Allied cause they nevertheless "desired to maintain the strictest neutrality and continue 'normal trade' with all belligerents."¹¹³ This determination of the Icelanders to remain neutral became evident to the British during the trade negotiations, which took place from October 1939 to January 1940, and the subsequent Icelandic rejection of the British offer of assistance should the Germans attack the island.

4.3 Anglo-Danish-Iceland relations

Since Icelandic foreign affairs were still under Danish control, Iceland did not have its own diplomatic service. However, in some cases Icelanders were appointed to posts within the Danish diplomatic service and on its representations abroad, and therefore took part in matters related to Iceland along with their Danish colleagues. Although Icelandic members of staff at the Legation in London were more or less in charge of Icelandic affairs and Icelandic delegates were sent from Denmark to negotiate with the British, when matters related to trade and commerce, the Danes were always present and Halifax continued to correspond with Reventlow with regard to Icelandic matters.¹¹⁴ In the case of the Icelandic trade negotiations with Britain, Reventlow thus worked alongside Sveinn Björnsson, the Icelandic Minister in Copenhagen, who led the Icelandic trade delegation to London. Also present was Pétur Benediktsson, an Icelandic, who worked at the Danish Legation in London and who was appointed Icelandic Consul in London in February 1940. Although they operated as equals representing Icelandic interests, Reventlow's role was more like that of an observer, to whom both parties turned to for advice when matters became complicated. Especially it seems that Reventlow's presence carried much weight with the British, who regularly consulted him for guidance, whereas the Icelanders employed Reventlow's status to achieve more influence with the British;

On the November 8th the Icelandic and Danish Ministers in London, accompanied by the Icelandic Minister at Copenhagen as head of the Icelandic delegation now in London for the negotiation of a war trade

¹¹² PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

¹¹³ Solrun B. Jensdottir Hardarson, "The 'Republic of Iceland' 1940-44: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences", *Journal of Contemporary History*, (9) No. 4 (October) 1974, p. 28

¹¹⁴ PRO, FO 419/33, Halifax, FO, to Reventlow, London, 02.12.39

agreement with HMG, called on me to urge, on behalf of the Icelandic and Danish Governments, that the agreement should not involve the cessation of Iceland's normal trade with Germany.....M. Björnsson added that his Government's chief fear was that if their protests in this matter were ignored by HMG, the German Government would use that as justification for ignoring protests against any acts they themselves might subsequently commit against Icelandic interests.¹¹⁵

a) Anglo-Icelandic trade negotiations October 1939-January 1940

The Anglo-Icelandic trade negotiations proved to the British, that despite Iceland's recent attainment of independence, and thus a relatively undeveloped diplomatic service, they were no push-over. As determined as the British were to stop Iceland's trade with Germany completely, just as determined were the Icelanders to maintain their neutrality. The situation was at loggerheads and Reventlow tried his best to use his influence. In an aide-memoire to the Foreign Office he raised the issue of having received information to the effect that, during the negotiations that took place in London about an Icelandic-British Trade Agreement, demands had been made to Iceland that all export of goods to Germany should cease;

In the opinion of my Government such a demand is at variance with international law, as the export here in question only embraces goods which are conditional contraband and which are part of the ordinary consumption of the civil population, and are, moreover, of normal proportion...My Government are aware that the undertaking of an obligation of this character would be regarded by Germany as a breach of neutrality. If Iceland were brought into such apposition it would mean a serious difficulty for the impartial policy of neutrality which is carried out by the five northern countries according to a common point of view.¹¹⁶

The Icelanders felt that Iceland should be treated on the same basis as the other Scandinavian states by the British and these appeals were also supported by the Danes.¹¹⁷ The British, however, although appreciating the logical force of the argument, did not agree; their argument was that

the only reason why the principle of normal trade with Germany had been conceded in the case of those other States, was that such trade could not, in fact, be prevented, for reasons of geography, which did not operate in the case of Iceland or of other countries in a similar geographical position. It was not conceded to Denmark or to Sweden

¹¹⁵ PRO, FO 419/33, Halifax, FO, to Howard-Smith, Copenhagen 30.11.39

¹¹⁶ PRO, FO 419/33, Aide-Memoire by Danish Legation, London, 08.11.39

¹¹⁷ SA, 3.E.92(pakke 8)/1909-45/0002, meeting at the UPN (Foreign Affairs Committee), 21.11.39

because they were Scandinavian States but because they were, for blockade purposes, contiguous to Germany; and if it was a question of principle for the Icelandic Government to claim treatment as a Scandinavian State, it was equally a question of principle for HMG to treat on the same basis all countries not contiguous to, or in free communication with, Germany. On this principle Iceland was really in the position of, say, an American State; and if HMG were to refrain from exercising their belligerent rights in her case, they would be placed in a difficult position when dealing with countries like Argentina, Brazil &co, against which those rights were now being enforced.¹¹⁸

And:

It is true that the belligerent rights accruing to HMG are not exercised to the full in the case of the other Scandinavian countries. This is solely because it is physically impossible to prevent exports from those countries from reaching the enemy; and in no way detracts from the right of HMG as a belligerent Power to prevent contraband from reaching the enemy whenever or wherever it is physically possible to do so.¹¹⁹

This resulted in Björnsson concluding that

as there is such a great distance between the views of His Britannic Majesty's Government and those of the Icelandic Government regarding the rights of Iceland according to international law as a neutral country to trade equally with the belligerent parties, I do not think that a further discussion of this question will serve any useful purpose. I therefore, confine myself on behalf of the Icelandic Government to declare that they have not changed their former opinion in this respect and that therefore I am obliged on behalf of the Icelandic Government to protest against the opinion of His Britannic Majesty's Government.¹²⁰

While the trade negotiations took place the British handed Reventlow a proposal in which the British 'confidentially but formally' offered assistance in case the Germans attacked Iceland or in the event of German reprisals on Icelandic shipping¹²¹, which was the main worry of the Icelanders. This offer was given by the end of the negotiations, when the outcome the British had hoped for did not seem to materialise. Therefore, to make a last try to woo the Icelanders, the offer of assistance was given on the conditions that her trade with Germany would cease. After receiving the offer, Reventlow asked to speak to the author of the offer, L. Collier, Head of the Northern Department, where he informed the latter that the offer had been forwarded to his Majesty's Ministry for further steps. To his Government

¹¹⁸ PRO, FO 419/33, Halifax, FO, to Howard-Smith, Copenhagen 30.11.39

¹¹⁹ PRO, FO 419/33, Halifax, FO, to Reventlow, London, 02.12.39

¹²⁰ SA, 5.G.111/1909-45/0002, Björnsson to George Mounsey, MEW, 06.01.40

¹²¹ PRO, FO 371/24778, N133/133/15, Collier to Reventlow, 17.01.40

he stated that during the conversation with Collier he planned to add a comment saying that the Icelandic Government no doubt would appreciate the friendly gesture. However, at the same time Reventlow wanted to point out to the British that in his personal opinion, keeping in mind that Iceland along with the other Nordic countries was determined to remain outside any form of alliance-policy, it was most likely that the reception of the offer by the Icelandic Government would be treated in light of this principal fact. Reventlow also notified his Government in Copenhagen that he intended to make a swift move, and thus by-pass his Foreign Affairs Minister in Copenhagen, in order to make the Foreign Office aware of this detail and at the same time raise their awareness that communications to Iceland were slow, and that they therefore should not expect an immediate answer. The potential wait for a reply should therefore not be perceived by the Foreign Office as a sign of any serious reservations by the Icelanders' behalf to the reception of the offer.¹²²

The offer was not accepted by the Icelanders, who replied to the British that they would only accept the same assistance for maintenance of shipping and commerce as was offered to other neutral states by the British¹²³.

c) Case study: Danish and Icelandic reactions to the landing of a British sea-plane in Iceland

A good example of the compliance of diplomats on both sides to respect each other and the willingness to keep the relations good between the two countries was the incident, when a British sea-plane breached Icelandic neutrality.

In September 1939 a British sea-plane landed in Raufarhöfn on the east coast of Iceland and was detained by the Icelandic authorities. Despite being detained and having knowingly breached the neutrality of Iceland by landing without permission inside Icelandic territorial waters, the pilot departed the island despite having been given orders from the Icelandic authorities to wait for instructions. However, upon the arrival of an Icelandic airplane with the instructions, that he was to fly to

¹²² SA, 9.D.10/1961/372, Reventlow to Munch 18.01.40

¹²³ PRO, FO 371/24778, N1592/133/15, Reventlow to Halifax, 07.02.40

Reykjavik with the Icelandic plane, the English pilot made his escape as the pilot of the latter went ashore.

Following the escape of the pilot the Icelanders and Danes felt certain that the breach of Icelandic neutrality had been intentional. Reventlow therefore felt the need to renew the demarche already given:

With reference to my note of the 29th September regarding the landing and departure of a British seaplane at Raufarhoefn at East Iceland...In view of this, as it would seem, intentional violation of the neutrality of Iceland, and in addition to my former demarche regarding this seaplane, I am now instructed to lodge a renewed protest on behalf of the Icelandic Government.¹²⁴

Reventlow informed the Foreign Ministry in Copenhagen that the British had turned to him for advice as to what deal would be acceptable to the Icelanders in order to restore relations between the two nations following the incident. It seems like Reventlow did not want to put himself on the spot by making the wrong suggestion, because in his report he said that he hesitated to answer, which prompted the Under Secretary to admit in strictest confidence that the British were ready to return the pilot to Iceland. Reventlow then said that if the Icelanders would accept an unconditional apology, this would be the preferred option, but he found it most urgent that whatever move the British make it would not expose the Icelanders to the German threat; Reventlow then declared himself unable to give an answer, but suggested that he should confer with his Icelandic colleagues. According to an agreement with Björnsson Reventlow would then ask the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Copenhagen for advice on what reply to give to the British. Since the approach by the British was made to Reventlow strictly personally, Reventlow requested that no correspondence would take place between Copenhagen and Reykjavik on the matter.¹²⁵

Reventlow and Björnsson jointly requested, most directly, that the pilot was returned to Iceland. Upon the British demand that in return for the pilot the Icelandic Government would show equal treatment should the Germans commit a similar

¹²⁴ SA, 10.G.3/1961/372, Islands Neutralitetsforanstaltninger, Reventlow to Halifax, FO, 03.10.39

¹²⁵ SA, 10.G.3/1961/372, Islands Neutralitetsforanstaltninger, Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 04.10.39

violation of Icelandic neutrality, Reventlow answered on behalf of the Icelandic Government that they wished not to make any difference between the two belligerents. The British further asked whether their decision would be made known to the public in Iceland and Denmark. Reventlow replied that he believed that such a statement would be in everyone's interest. Reventlow then put a request to his Foreign Affairs Minister that the statement should be narrowed to only say that the British were sorry and that the pilot was sent back, as had been declared.¹²⁶

This incident gives an indication of the importance the Foreign Office placed upon correct diplomatic conduct and the willingness not to harm relations with Iceland. However, it could be questioned whether the correct conduct was due to the fact that it was Iceland in particular, or whether it was the concern of appearance of respecting neutrality. The fact that the British placed much importance in the outcome being made public, could indicate the latter. The incident also showed the discrepancies that occurred between the Foreign Office and the Service Departments. In this case, the Foreign Office was able to repair the damage, without it having any further repercussions. This was not the situation, however, in the Flag-case, which will be examined in Chapter III.

E. CONCLUSION

In order to address on of the main questions raised to the hypothesis, namely how come the Danish representatives were able to influence the British and Americans in their policies towards the North Atlantic territories, an introduction is needed to the particulars, which would form their positions during the Second World War. Thus, the questions raised in the chapter firstly and foremost deal with the historical background to the situation, Denmark would find herself in on and in the aftermath of April 9th 1940, and which would shape others' opinion of the position of the Danish representatives abroad during the war. Secondly, the chapter outlines the historical background of the relationship between Denmark and the three territories in the North Atlantic.

¹²⁶ SA, 10.G.3/1961/372, Islands Neutralitetsforanstaltninger, Telegram from Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 10.10.39 (374)

The Danish Government's reluctance to rearm in order to defend her country, even when it was evident that her policy of neutrality was unlikely to succeed, caused much discontent both at home and abroad. On April 9th 1940 the Danes were faced with the stark reality that in line with the arguments and heavy criticism of the opposition and the British, her foreign policy and defence policy had failed. Since Denmark was unable to defend herself, because she had put more importance to securing the welfare and well-being of her citizens rather than spending money on rearmament in order to defend her neutrality, freedom and democracy, the Danish argument for abiding to German demands on April 9th 1940, was exactly that they did not want to see the Danish infrastructure and subsequently society fall apart. Their moral, however, suffered, not only during the war, but also in the aftermath; it has taken the Danes almost 60 years to come to terms with the decisions taken by the Government in the early period of war, and as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the debate was recently rekindled by Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. In a speech to mark the anniversary of the August 1943-rebellion against the co-operative policy with the Germans during the war, Rasmussen dismissed the pacifist policy of the Social Democratic Government in the pre-war/early-war period. The speech rekindled the debate, which was also present during the war, i.e. whether it was morally right of the Danish Government to choose co-operation with Nazi-Germany rather than fight; a debate which would haunt the Danish representatives abroad, as their integrity would be questioned by their opponents seeing that they represented a government which co-operated with the enemy.

As mentioned earlier the Stauning Government justified their policies by stating that their decision to co-operate would increase the chances of the Danish population maintaining an undisturbed life during the German occupation, and thus not suffer the oppression their neighbours in Norway felt. These arguments have also been raised by contemporary historians in reply to Prime Minister Rasmussen's attack on the policy of co-operation. Palle Roslyng-Jensen argues, that it is easy to take a moral standpoint today and to look back critically at the decisions taken at the time, but one must not forget the circumstances they were taken in and the lack of

awareness of the Stauning-Government of the costs, their policy would have on the Danish morale.¹²⁷

These arguments, both for and against, were to shape the criticism and defence of the Danish representatives and their positions in the North Atlantic territories and in London and Washington.

Despite a strong sense of a Nordic Community amongst the Scandinavian states, who in 1938 jointly signed a neutrality declaration, the prospects of a Scandinavian military alliance were slim due to internal tensions. Neither a request to the other Nordic countries for a common stand against a possible German pressure on them to abstain from their neutrality, nor any plea to the British produced a result in favour of the Danish situation. Hence the Danes were more or less forced into signing the Non-Aggression Pact. Although the Danish decision to sign the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany marked a break from the joint line taken by the Scandinavian countries, this was not considered as a major change in relations between the Nordic Countries. Rather it was the earlier Danish-Norwegian dispute over Greenland, which had to be settled at the International Court in the Hague, which was the main reason for this tension between the two countries. As will be evident in later chapters, relations between Danish and Norwegian representatives abroad were marked by this tension, which was intensified by the different approaches taken by the Danes and Norwegians to violations of their neutrality and the fight put up against the German invasion of their countries.

Although the Prime Ministers and their Foreign Affairs Ministers in Denmark and Norway believed that their neutrality would be respected by the belligerents, not everyone was so convinced. These doubts were intensified in the aftermath of the 'Altmark' incident, when a noticeable change in the British attitude towards the neutrals was observed.

¹²⁷ DR Nyheder, 29.08.03,
<http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/htm/baggrund/tema2003/60%20aaret%20for%20bruddet/22.htm>

As Denmark was not able to defend herself she was neither able to provide sufficient defence to her protectorates in the North Atlantic. The only measures Denmark took after the outbreak of war was to advocate the case of Iceland and the Faroes to secure them the most favourable terms in trade by diplomatic means. While the outbreak of war did not cause much concern as such in the Faroe Islands or in Greenland, except for the concern about whether or not they would get enough supplies, the situation in Iceland was quite different. Having gained sovereignty within the Union of the Danish Kingdom in 1918, she was in charge of all internal affairs and thus needed a secure economy to run the country. Iceland, like all other countries, had been hit hard by the economic crises in the 1930s and was therefore dependent upon her exports. The Great War had taught her that her connection with Denmark was of no use in time of war. Rather Iceland was firmly placed within the British sphere of influence and was at the mercy of British naval power. As a consequence the British could easily control Icelandic trade if they wished to do so in order to stop her from trading with Germany. Iceland, however, maintained her rights as a neutral to continue her trade with Germany, not so much because she wanted to, but out of necessity, because Britain could not meet her needs after the war broke out. Realising the problematic position she was placed in the event of another European conflict, she therefore had turned her attention to the United States and through consistent efforts she had created good connections, both commercial and political, with the Americans by the outbreak of war.

CHAPTER II: BRITISH AND AMERICAN POLICIES TOWARDS THE NORTH ATLANTIC AREA PRIOR TO THE GERMAN INVASION OF DENMARK.

With the aim of this thesis being to examine the extent to which Danish representatives were able to influence American and British policies towards the North Atlantic territories during Second World War, this chapter looks at the historical background, which would form these policies and attitudes. The German occupation of Denmark marked a shift in the position of these territories. A closer look at the period before April 9th 1940 is therefore useful in order to get a better understanding of what happened in these territories and their relationship with Denmark in the period after Denmark was occupied. This chapter thus deals with the period leading up till the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940 with a focus on the Anglo-American relationship and attitude towards Denmark and her territories in the North Atlantic. The questions asked are: What were the U.S. and British attitudes towards Denmark prior to the Danish capitulation to the Germans? What were their policies towards the North Atlantic area prior to April 9th 1940? These questions interlink with the question of the influence exerted by Danish representatives in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark, which will be dealt with in the following chapters. Thus, did these policies and attitudes of the pre-April 9th 1940 period form the basis for their policies and attitudes towards the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic, London and Washington DC in the aftermath of April 9th 1940, or was there a shift in attitude caused by the change of status quo following the Danish submission to the German threat? This chapter will introduce the reader to the ambiguous relationship, especially by the British towards Denmark and her subjects during the war.

The reader is introduced to the issues that became the deciding factors in British and American policies towards the territories in the North Atlantic, namely 'neutrality' and the statuses of Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland within the Danish Kingdom and the limits these issues posed to British plans and actions in the North Atlantic and Scandinavia prior to the German occupation of Denmark and Norway on April 9th 1940.

As this chapter will show, during the 1930s the British did not have a dedicated policy towards Denmark; rather it was an *ad hoc* policy responding to economic and military issues and the greater European question. However, with the rise of the German threat the focus on securing the sea-lanes in the North Atlantic became significant to the British. The increasing German interest in the Danish North Atlantic territories was noticed in London, but as the territories were comprised by the Neutrality Declarations signed by Denmark and Iceland in 1938 and renewed after the outbreak of war in September 1939, the neutrality aspect had to be taken into account in their North Atlantic strategic plans. This was also the case for the sea-lanes between Denmark and Norway. The way which Denmark and Norway respectively upheld their neutrality shaped the British attitude towards these countries in the early stages of the war. In the latter chapters, the reader will see whether this was to have any decisive outcome on the relationship between the Danish representatives and their host countries or occupying powers, under whose command their positions in the North Atlantic territories were dependent upon.

However, first the main traits of Anglo-American relations up till the outbreak of war are introduced, as are the aspects that influenced the relationship between the two. The British relied heavily on the support from the United States in order to win the war, and much consideration was therefore put into keeping a good relationship with the Americans. It was therefore of utmost importance to avoid upsetting the American public and hence avoid making it more difficult for Roosevelt to convert to a more pro-active policy towards the hostilities in Europe. This aspect, as will be shown in this chapter, was very much in the minds of the British when breaching the neutrality of the small European states was considered. British policies towards the North Atlantic territories and Denmark in the early stages of the war and until the entrance of the United States into the war was therefore influenced by the attitude of the U.S., or rather the fear of damaging the Anglo-American relationship and the prospects of an early U.S. departure from isolationism.

The aim is also to introduce the main actors and offices that were in charge of policies towards the North Atlantic. Very few matters with regard to the territories in the North Atlantic ever made it so far in the system as to reach Roosevelt's or Churchill's desk. The aim for those wanting to influence British and American

policies towards the North Atlantic was thus to identify those dealing with the area in the Foreign Office and State Department.

The second part of the chapter deals with British and American relations towards Denmark and Norway. British attitude towards Denmark and her representatives abroad, and subsequently towards the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland, throughout the war was influenced by the way they saw the Danes responding to their difficulties with Germany, both before and after the Germans occupied Denmark. In addition the 'Altmark' incident is introduced. While, as mentioned before, Britain did not have a distinct policy towards Denmark prior to this, the incident marked a change in British attitude towards the neutrality of Scandinavia and subsequently the North Atlantic. The chapter will nevertheless also show, that Britain found herself in an ambivalent position with regard to her attitude to the Danish lack of upholding her neutrality. This, because Britain had not seen herself as able to provide Denmark any help to stand against the German threat, which Denmark was not able to do alone. There was therefore some sense of sympathy and liability to be found amongst some British officials towards the hopeless situation Denmark found herself in.

Finally the focus is set on the North Atlantic territories, examining their disparate statuses within the Danish Kingdom and how the varying levels of independence influenced British policy-making towards each of them. These differences in their statuses would also form the different levels, which the Danish representatives' extent of influence would be exercised. The chapter also looks at the level of interest in the area paid by the British and the Americans, and which considerations were made to the area in the event these territories were cut off from their mother-country in the event of a German invasion of Denmark. This last part of the chapter thus highlights the motives behind the British, and subsequently U.S., decision to occupy the North Atlantic territories.

A. ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Anglo-American relations during the war were not so much a case of a "special relationship", an alliance between two nations with strong historical bonds, and a shared cultural and ideological background, as Winston S. Churchill liked to profile

it.¹ Rather it was the case of one nation in decline as a Great Power and the other on the rise of becoming superpower, and the formers' ambivalence in realising the need for help from the latter, the United States, while at the same time recognising that that help would entail a shift in power between the two of them.

In the period after World War I the relationship between the two were strained. B.J.C. McKercher argues that, "the crisis in Anglo-American relations in the late 1920 stemmed from the naval question, more specifically from the dispute between Britain and the United States over cruiser limitation."² The crisis in the relationship also stemmed from competition in other aspects such as in financial and trade issues.

1. Britain

During the 1930s Britain reluctantly had to admit that her days of imperial supremacy had surpassed, as she no longer saw herself capable to meet her commitments and responsibilities towards her dominions. Despite emerging from the Great War as one of the victors, the war had nevertheless had its toll on the British. The heavy cost of being in war meant that she no longer was capable of maintaining and guarding her vast territorial empire, which was more or less open for newly rising economic powers such as Germany and the United States in search for new markets. Peter Smith points out that:

Britain's main competitors, the newly unified German Empire and the rapidly expanding USA were soon in the forefront...with large and well-protected domestic markets, these nations were quickly transformed into modern industrial states, thereby denying Britain access to traditional export markets. By the end of the century, higher productivity had enabled them to challenge British markets throughout the world.³

With the looming conflict with Nazi Germany Britain also had to acknowledge that she could not win a war, especially if it was fought on different fronts, without the support of one or more allies. The Great War had hit hard on her economy and she

¹ The phrase was first recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as being referred to by Churchill in a speech in the House of Commons in connection with Prime Minister Clement Attlee's preparations to visit the United states in late 1945. 415 H.C. Debs. 1299, 07.11.45

² B.J.C. McKercher, "From Enmity to Cooperation: The Second Baldwin Government and the Improvement of Anglo-American Relations, November 1928-June 1929", *A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Spring, 1992), p. 67

³ Peter Smith, "Anglo-American Religion and Hegemonic Change in the World System, c. 1870-1980", *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (March 1986), pp. 90-91

was behind in the rearmament programme compared with Germany. Thus, the main objective was to delay any conflict with the Germans. It could be argued that because they knew that their rearmament program had not progressed as far as the German's, British leaders, and especially Prime Minister Chamberlain, refused to recognise Nazi Germany as a serious threat, and clutched to the notion that this conflict could be solved peacefully and without going to war.⁴ Unwilling to acknowledge the threat no specific policies were put into place to address the German menace and British policies up till the outbreak of war were hence marked by uncertainty and unpredictability; decisions were largely taken as *ad hoc* responses to immediate crisis.

a) British ambiguity with regard to the Americans

The end of World War I changed the old European world order. It meant the end of the German-, Austrian- and Ottoman Empire, while a revolution and a civil war transformed Russia. As already mentioned, Britain emerged weak from the Great War and so did France. The only major power, which emerged from World War I strengthened, was the United States.

The USA, which had entered the war in 1917, emerged from the war as the wealthiest and potentially the most powerful nation in the world. From being Britain's major debtor nation it had become its major creditor. The world's financial capital had moved from London to New York. America's industrial productivity and its share of export markets continued to increase. By contrast British industrial production had been severely strained and German production almost destroyed. The USA did not yet want to act as hegemonic power, however.⁵

The British on one hand felt dismayed by the Americans and their isolationism and although they knew that if they were to succeed in destroying the Nazi regime help from the Americans in one form or another would be essential. They were not, though, confident that that help would be given, at least not when they wanted it, and when and if the help was provided the British feared that it would cost them much in

⁴ David Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, The University of North Carolina Press, 1982, p. 9

⁵ Smith, "Anglo-American Religion and Hegemonic Change in the World System, c. 1870-1980", 1986, p. 95

compromise; “there was a lurking fear that American help would prove more of a liability than an asset.”⁶

Alan P. Dobson argues that “Britain fought two battles for survival during the Second World War: one was the conventional military struggle, the other was an economic one.”⁷ Material and economy-wise there was little hope in getting any help from the Americans because the Johnson Act prohibited the Americans from providing loans to governments that had failed to pay their Great War debts, and the Neutrality Act banned sales of arms and provisions of credits to belligerents. The prospects of having these two Acts revoked with the consent of the American public were slim. “Chamberlain believed that costly alliances might not be necessary because total war could be averted.”⁸ However, not everyone in Whitehall was of the opinion that the United States should be kept outside; at the Foreign Office, Anthony Eden and some of his senior officials, believed that Chamberlain neglected the opportunity for co-operation with Britain’s friends.

The role, which the British would wish the Americans to take on in the early stages of the conflict, was that of a mediator, possibly at the closing stages of negotiations or as a host of an international conference; they also hoped “that the U.S. though unreliable in the short term, might be ‘educated’ or ‘wooded’ into a realistic acceptance of its ‘responsibilities’ as a world power,”⁹ and thus would take upon herself a more active role in the conflict. The British, however, also recognised that using propaganda to swing the American mood in their direction would do more damage than good; as the situation was illustrated in a report from their envoy in the United States: “Sir Robert Lindsay, the British Ambassador in Washington, in an important despatch written in March 1937, set out the limits of diplomacy. He warned that U.S. neutrality must be accepted as ‘something that it is useless to call into question’...’America is the despair of the diplomat’”¹⁰ and that “not only were the Americans uncooperative, but there was little that could safely be done about it.

⁶ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, 1982, p. 13

⁷ Alan P. Dobson, “The Export White Paper, 10 September, 1941”, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Feb., 1986), p. 59

⁸ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, 1982, p. 9

⁹ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, 1982, p. 10

¹⁰ PRO, FO 371/20561, Lindsay to Eden, desp. 247, A2378, 22.03.37

The British had to place their faith in what was sometimes called ‘the educative power of events’,¹¹ rather than in direct propaganda, which would certainly backfire, as the Americans were very much conscious about the British likening them to “a youthful adolescent”¹² and therefore any propaganda by the British would be perceived as patronising.

2. American attitude towards the British

William Wallace argues that the Anglo-American relationship should be seen as “built upon an existing network of economic, social and cultural ties”.¹³ Although there was a strong sense amongst the Americans that the two countries shared a common liberal political tradition, characterized by the rule of law and respect for the individual, and that they also shared a common language and numerous ties of kinship, there was, however, also a deep conviction that Britain was not a genuine democracy, and especially amongst the newer immigrants, those of Polish, Irish and Italian descent, who achieved considerable prominence within the Roosevelt coalition, there retained suspicions of Britain that derived from their families’ European background. The mistrust towards the British also stemmed from the relatively new history of American Independence and they resented any move, which had the smallest indication of United States committing herself to help the ‘old country’, which subsequently entailed some loss of independence. However, “anglophile or Anglophobe, Americans could not escape their national past,”¹⁴ and there was a general sentiment of support for the British cause in the war against the Germans, just as long as the Americans themselves would not be involved.

2.1 The United States Administration

The nature of the U.S. Administration was that it was comprised by two groups of officials: the professional diplomats, that is, service men, who had long-term experiences in the field of diplomacy, and officials, who were ‘politically’ appointed by the President. This created a friction between the two levels, which resulted in

¹¹ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, 1982, p. 11

¹² Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, 1982, p. 12

¹³ William Wallace, the Foreign Policy Process in Britain, London, RIIA, 1975, p. 217

¹⁴ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, 1982, p. 24

loopholes and opportunities of manoeuvring, for those who wanted to have influence on American policy.

Since Government Departments are not entirely governed by personal or emotional considerations their views of foreign governments and their policy towards those governments repose largely on other foundations; this includes, not least, the views expressed and the reports sent home by their representatives on the spot;¹⁵ therefore it was of vital interest for the British to have a good insight to the attitude of the most prominent members of the State Department and those surrounding President Roosevelt and the U.S. Ambassador in London. It is important to point out here, that because of his medical condition and subsequent immobility, President Roosevelt, more so than any other U.S. President before or after, was very much reliant upon his advisors, and in many cases based his interpretations and views of people as well as situations, on secondary impressions. The President, therefore, preferred to form personal relationships; James Leutze argues that this was his reason for starting the correspondence with Churchill, who was First Lord of the Admiralty at the time, and why he personalised this correspondence by referring to himself as 'former naval person'.¹⁶ Thus, to foreign representatives and other key actors wishing more influence on the President it was of importance that they could meet the President in person.

Richardson Dougall also describes Roosevelt as a president

whose off-hand style of running the White House and foreign policy in general and whose penchant for using special envoys and for communicating directly with them, with ambassadors abroad, and even with the under secretary of state was maddening at times to the courtly southerner [Hull] to whom the Department of State had been entrusted.¹⁷

Those exercising most influence around Roosevelt were Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, who played an important role in the relations with Denmark during the war, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, who was Berle's friend and ally, whom Roosevelt brought in to get more dynamism

¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/24248, Minute by Perowne, 23.01.40

¹⁶ James Leutze, "The Secret of the Churchill-Roosevelt Correspondence: September 1939 – May 1940", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 10 (3) Jul., 1975

¹⁷ Richardson Dougall, "The U.S. Department of State. From Hull to Acheson", in *The Diplomats 1939-1979*, Gordon A. Craig & Francis L. Loewenheim ed., Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, p. 40

and creative thinking in the foreign affairs team around him. Both Berle and Welles had direct access to the President and often by-passed Secretary of State Cordell Hull, which would create tensions within the State Department during the war. However, this was a tension that created loopholes for those, who wanted to have some influence, to exploit. Other trusted foreign affairs advisors were Felix Frankfurter, Dean Acheson and Harry Hopkins, whose absolute support for the British was decisive in the first year of the war.

Outside the United States the one actor that caused the British much concern, with regard to their US-aspirations, was the American Ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy, because he was seen as working against them and their cause in neutral Europe and the United States:

Another form of American activity that is undoubtedly having an undesirable effect on neutral opinion, and particularly on the smaller European neutrals, but for which we are hardly responsible to the same extent, is Mr. Kennedy's propaganda campaign against us...It must be presumed that Mr. Kennedy's defeatist propaganda has had an adverse effect on our interests not only in the States but in other neutral countries and on the home front as well.¹⁸

It was therefore up to the British to orchestrate their policies and moves in such a way that they would cause as little upset and gain as much favour and sympathy in the United States as possible.

1940 was an election year, and although Roosevelt was running for the third time, this time around the foreign policy matter became the outstanding issue in the campaign; the Democrats were afraid of the suspicion amongst the public that Roosevelt would push the country into war, and the Republicans tried to avoid the issue of foreign policy, because they realised that the issue might split the party and that many of their members sympathised with Roosevelt's foreign policy.

2.2 American public opinion

Although public opinion played a part in the concerns of Roosevelt and the State Department when discussing the extent of American help to the Allies, Philip E. Jacob argues, that American public opinion on neutrality was not a single notion, but

¹⁸ PRO, FO 371/24248, comment on sleeve of Foreign Office Minute by Perowne, 29.01.40

divided into four kinds of neutrality, “personal neutrality”, “commercial neutrality”, “military neutrality”, and “financial neutrality.” The reaction of opinion to events was strikingly different with respect to these different phases of the neutrality issue.¹⁹

Whereas “personal neutrality,” which was the individual’s attitude toward other nations, was influenced by atrocities, such as those committed by the Germans leading up to and following the Munich Conference on September 29, 1938. Another incident that had much impact upon the “personal neutrality” opinion was on November 10th, when the anti-Semitic drive in Germany reached a new peak in the ‘Day of the Broken Glass.’ American “commercial neutrality,” which was based on trade relationships with the belligerents, was on the other hand not much affected by these events and the opinion remained that the United States should stick to neutrality towards the European powers;²⁰ nor did Germany’s annexation of Czechoslovakia changed the opinion of the Americans and the opinion of half of the population remained that the Neutrality Laws should not be altered in order for the United States to be able to sell war materials to England and France.

A month after the war broke out the United States found a majority of its population to be in favour of lifting the arms embargo, however the majority of these did not necessarily see this as a sacrifice of commercial neutrality either technically or practically;

Thirty-six per cent of those favoring repeal of the embargo in a Gallup poll [Gallup, October 18, 1939] said they would not do so if repeal would help only the Allies. Thirty-five percent of those urging repeal on the succeeding ballot gave as the main reason for their stand, “To improve business in this country,” while only 22 per cent said “To defend democracy.” Twenty-seven percent felt repeal of the embargo would help keep the U.S. out of war. [Gallup, October 24, 1939]²¹

As for “military neutrality” the percentage of the people that wished no involvement of the U.S. military in the conflict remained very high throughout the period, and events in Europe did only marginally influence opinion; the same is said with regard to “financial neutrality”; Jacob describes the opposition of Americans to lending

¹⁹ Philip E. Jacob, “Influences of World Events on U.S. “Neutrality “Opinion”, Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 4 No. 1 (Mar.) 1940, pp. 48-9

²⁰ Jacob, “Influences of World Events on U.S. “Neutrality” Opinion”, 1940, p. 52

²¹ Jacob, “Influences of World Events on U.S. “Neutrality” Opinion”, 1940, pp. 57-8

money to aid one side in winning a war as the “most immovable, the least responsive to international events.”²²

This examination of public opinion by Jacob corresponds with the observations the British envoy made, because in February 1940 the British Embassy in Washington reported that “American opinion will not object to any of our measures which are justified under international law and which are found to be necessary to the winning of the war. But it is most necessary to prove to it beforehand that they are necessary to the winning of the war.”²³ Jacob’s division of the notion of neutrality in American public opinion also shows that although the average poll showed a strong opposition to American departure from her neutrality policy, there were some levers to operate within. The crucial point for the British and Roosevelt thus became to shift the focus of the planned actions over to those areas, which were least offensive to American public opinion.

a) Propaganda?

The prospects of shifting the Americans from their isolationism were not encouraging. The British, as noted earlier, were warned by their ambassador, that the Americans guarded their neutrality fiercely and would not react positively to any attempts of alterations.²⁴ The use of propaganda was thus strongly denounced, since any approach of this kind would have the opposite effect on the American public, which already perceived the British as patronising in their behaviour towards them.

Because of their limited means of affecting the American mood, the British had to make sure that they would get the sympathy of the American public and “place their faith in what was sometimes called ‘the educative power of events’.”²⁵ Although calculations were made as to what effect a German attack on Britain would have on American public opinion, especially if the attack was devastating in terms of number of casualties or the destruction of historical places

²² Jacob, “Influences of World Events on U.S. “Neutrality” Opinion”, 1940, p.62

²³ PRO, FO 371/24248, Chancery, British Embassy Washington to The American Department, FO, 03.02.40

²⁴ PRO, FO 371/20561, Lindsay to Eden, desp. 247, A2378, 22.03.37

²⁵ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941, p. 11

some spectacular act of violence' such as an indiscriminate air attack on London might cause 'an explosion of American feeling' resulting in the participation of the U.S.A. at an early stage.²⁶

The main issue for the British was to be considerate in their own actions, rather than putting their hopes into enemy atrocities out-cancelling their own misgivings. This latter ploy, however, was present in British calculations with regard to breaches of neutrality, as will be evident later in this chapter.

With the nullification of propaganda as a tool to influence American opinion towards the war in their favour, the British were anxious not to cause any upsets with their American counterparts. Recognising the importance of the American goodwill and the effect the attitude of the Americans towards the British would have on other neutral states, "good relations with the U.S., the price of which just now is above rubies,"²⁷ the American Department at the Foreign Office requested the other Government Departments to take into consideration how their policies would affect the attitude of the Americans in favour of the British. However, the plan failed to be executed to the full, due to the failure of the British services to inform and explain to the Americans their decisions taken. But, the scheme succeeded in changing the behaviour of some of the service departments, where increased efforts were made to test the waters with the Americans on possible actions that would infringe the laws of neutrality. This was especially the case within the FO, where there were a larger number of members, who believed in furthering relations with the Americans, than in the other departments.

An example of this was when plans for laying mines in Norwegian territorial waters, in order to stop the iron-ore traffic from Northern Sweden to Germany, were underway in December 1939. A note within the Northern Division of FO revealed that after having tested their grounds on what reaction Roosevelt would have to the suggestion of British mine-laying in Norwegian territorial waters, the British came to the conclusion that the President's reactions were "more favourable than had been

²⁶ PRO, FO 371/22829, A2856/1292/45, minute by John Balfour, head of the American Department within FO, 14.04.39

²⁷ PRO, FO 371/24248, comment on sleeve of Foreign Office Minute by Perowne, 29.01.40

hoped.”²⁸ It might be kept in mind, however, that this message was conveyed to the Northern Division through the First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, who more than anyone wanted to lay mines in the territorial waters of Norway and therefore was not too pleased to see his plans being stalled by those, who appreciated the significance of the neutrality aspect in the situation.

There were doubts within the Northern Department regarding the reliability of Roosevelt’s message to Churchill, “The First Lord’s message from Mr. Roosevelt is altogether cryptic” it was noted.²⁹ Nevertheless, other reports received by the Foreign office supported the notion of American approval of British actions in Norwegian waters; this was especially the case after the ‘Altmark’ incident, as will be seen in the section on the ‘Altmark’ incident.

B. BRITISH AND AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH NEUTRAL DENMARK AND SCANDINAVIA

During the 1930s Britain did not have a dedicated policy towards Denmark; rather it was the case of officials following a framework of policies, economic, ideological and military, which they were then able to apply to individual countries such as Denmark.³⁰

Anglo-Danish relations mainly consisted of commercial matters; Britain was the largest importer of Danish bacon and butter, and British commercial relations with Denmark were thus left in the hands of the Board of Trade, whereas the Northern Department was the office, which mainly dealt with Danish relations within the Foreign Office. However, it was not within these departments that the decisions throughout the 1930s, which had a major impact upon Denmark, were taken.

As mentioned earlier, the British did not have a specific policy towards Denmark; her destiny was thus more a result of other, greater, decisions with regard to Europe, such as the Stresa-Conference, the Anglo-German naval pact and the Hoare-Laval

²⁸ PRO, FO 371/25660, N7318/64/63

²⁹ PRO, FO 371/25660, N7318/64/63, December 1939

³⁰ Susan Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, Odense University Press Denmark, 1982, p. 18

pact. The British believed that through these efforts they would succeed in bringing about peace in Europe, which the smaller states would automatically benefit from. Policies towards Denmark were thus very much a bi-product of the larger European policy, and decisions taken were not always in accord with what the Northern Department wished. They were therefore seldom a result of any moral or ethical concerns for a small neutral state in danger of being overrun by its strong neighbour – perhaps because the general belief in British circles was that Germany would not invade Denmark, and if so, it would only be to annex Schleswig, and not the whole country. Susan Seymour subsequently argues that:

before the spring of 1939 the British...did not give any serious consideration to the problems, which Denmark faced as a result of the growing power of Germany and the increasing likelihood of war in Europe. Danish interpretations which present British reactions and assumptions as a considered and consistent policy from 1933 to 1940 are wide of the mark.³¹

The only policy that seems to be clear and constant with regard to Denmark is that there was little the British could do if the Germans decided to overrun the country. Susan Seymour argues that “the Danish impression, which they drew from such evidence as the Anglo-German naval pact of 1935 and the comments made to Stauning in April 1937, of a conscious British decision to leave to their fate cannot be substantiated.”³² However, from minutes and reports of the Foreign Office it seems quite clear that the British knew and had accepted, that there was little they could do for the Danes, either defence-wise or trade-wise.³³

The British view of their responsibility towards Denmark was naturally influenced by what they saw of the Danes’ own response to their difficulties with Germany.³⁴ The British were dismayed by the Danish failure to rearm and respond to the growing German threat; the British expected the Nordic states to form an alliance, but soon realised that it would not happen. The British believed that a Scandinavian alliance would deter any German aggression, as a fight against all the Scandinavian countries would engage a considerable number of troops and would mean the loss of

³¹ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, pp. 85-6

³² Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 78

³³ PRO, FO 371/23654, From Cabinet Offices and C.I.D to FO, 02.05.39

³⁴ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 80

all supplies from Norway and Sweden, especially the Swedish ore. The reason why such an alliance was not perceived to be possible was because relations amongst the Nordic countries on this issue had turned sour, especially after Denmark's suggestion for such an alliance was not met by a positive reaction in either Norway or Sweden.³⁵

There were sentiments that the British should come to the Norwegian rescue if the Germans would attack

The assumption of the "defeatist" – that this country would not defend Norway against Germany – is of course wrong; and a glance at the map ought to show them that we could never allow so vital a strategic position for attack on Great Britain to fall into German hands without a fight.

It is thus all the more significant, as a measure of the disrepute into which we have fallen, that even a German attack on Norway is not thought, in that country itself, to be enough to rouse us. I venture to suggest that the Legation at Oslo might be authorized to make it plain, by whatever means that they think best, that, in their own interest, HMG would always oppose by force a German occupation of Norway.³⁶

The British, nonetheless, were not willing to give Denmark the same reassurance, because there was a general feeling, both within the FO and the C.I.D. (Committee of Imperial Defence) that the British would not be able to do anything to prevent a German invasion of Denmark. However, the feeling was also that a German invasion of Denmark would only be of advantage to the Germans in a short war.³⁷ In the long run it would prove too costly compared with the gains achieved by invading Denmark. The British thus left the Danish to their own devices knowing that there was a risk that Germany would invade Denmark – a risk, which, as we will see further arguments for in the following pages, the British were willing to take.

In general the British relationship with Denmark was seen increasingly in the light of its bearing on Anglo-German rivalry, both in economic and strategic terms, and their traditional friendship suffered as a result.³⁸ By September 1939, the British had decided to use economic pressure as a weapon against Germany in wartime. Initially they would seek to do this by agreement with the neutrals, but the need to take

³⁵ PRO, FO 371/23654, Foreign Office 15.04.39, German-Danish relations and the minority question, p. 12-3

³⁶ PRO, FO 371/23652, Dormer to Foreign Office, 23.03.39, comments on sleeve by Collier

³⁷ PRO, FO 371/23654, Comment by Lascelles to memorandum by H.W.A.F.-P. 24.04.39.

³⁸ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 95

unilateral action was not ruled out and, in the case of Denmark, they might even be prepared to risk provoking the Germans to interrupt Danish exports to Britain.³⁹ The objective of Britain's economic warfare was namely to deprive Germany, not to spare the neutrals from the effects of the war.⁴⁰ Apart from Britain, the largest importer of Danish goods was Germany. The British were, therefore, more interested in reducing Danish exports to Germany, especially at the outlook of the Danish-German non-aggression pact, than securing their own trade with Denmark.⁴¹ ⁴² This, however, did not match the public mood in Britain, where the prospect of 'no bacon on the breakfast table,'⁴³ was the main matter the newspapers were concerned about, once they realised that economic warfare with Germany and the non-aggression pact between Denmark and Germany, also would affect Danish trade with Britain.

Realising the defeatist attitude of the Danes and their unwillingness to make any attempts military-wise to deter the Germans, the real basis for the indifferent attitude of the Foreign Office officials was that they were not deterred by the thought of a German invasion of Denmark and they even went one step further:

There are reasons, which I need not go into now, why, in present circumstances, it might be a positive advantage for us, politically and strategically, if the Germans were to raise the whole Scandinavian issue by attacking Denmark; and that in that case I should count the loss of our Danish food supplies as a minor evil,⁴⁴ Collier said.

Thus, the British had some liability in the difficult situation Denmark found herself in, resulting in her seeing no other option but to surrender and co-operate with the Germans, when the latter invaded Denmark on April 9th 1940.

1. The possibility of Germany breaching Danish neutrality and occupying the country

It was in connection with the German invasion of Czechoslovakia and rumours of a German ultimatum to Romania, that the British realigned their European policy, and

³⁹ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 89

⁴⁰ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 88

⁴¹ It was not only Britain that relied on Danish exports – in 1938 Denmark was Britain's second largest customer in Europe.

⁴² Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 47

⁴³ Evening Standard, 27.05.39, "No Bacon on the Breakfast Table"

⁴⁴ PRO, BT 11/1211, Collier to Carter, 10.02.40

ultimately decided which countries would be offered guarantees that a German aggression towards them would be a *casus belli* and that the eventual liberation of these states would be a war aim; Denmark was not to belong to this category, because the decision as to whether she should or not came to rest upon the fact of whether she would defend herself in the event of an attack or not, and the lack of military preparations taken by the Danish Government was not taken as a sign that they put enough effort into defending themselves.

In July 1939 the British were made aware of German plans to occupy Denmark in case of war breaking out between Britain and Germany, and that such an occupation not only would entail Jutland, but the whole of Denmark.⁴⁵ However, the Chiefs of Staff had already by this time concluded that the British could not do anything to prevent Denmark being overrun.⁴⁶

At a Chiefs of Staff meeting on May 1st 1939 the effect of a possible German attack on Denmark on the British situation was considered, and the likelihood of such an German attack was weighed up in pros and cons, for example it was concluded that the Germans would only consider overrunning Denmark if they foresaw a short war:

if she were confident of victory within a short while – say, six months – it would no doubt pay her to seize the country and the supplies actually in it, for immediate use. These supplies could not, however be renewed, at any rate in so far as food stuffs are concerned, since Danish agriculture is absolutely dependent on imports of fodder, which His Majesty's Government would be in a position to cut off. If, on the other hand, Germany contemplated a longer struggle, she might think it more profitable to respect Danish neutrality and thereby ensure a constant, if limited, flow of Danish foodstuffs.⁴⁷

And later in the meeting it was concluded that if the Germans intend to occupy Denmark, there was very little Britain can do to prevent it and it would only result in a "useless dispersion of forces."⁴⁸ A couple of weeks earlier, on April 18th, Halifax had come to the same conclusion:

Lord Halifax is inclined to doubt whether in fact the Danish Government are seriously prepared to defend their country; and this doubtful factor is

⁴⁵ PRO, FO 371/23656, Letter from R. Sutton-Pratt, Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Attaché, to Dormer, Oslo, 10.07.39

⁴⁶ PRO, FO 371/23656, N3386/64/63, comment by Lascelles 18.07.39

⁴⁷ PRO, FO 371/23654, C.O.S. 897, 01.05.39

⁴⁸ PRO, FO 371/23654, C.O.S. 897, 01.05.39

clearly of the utmost importance in considering what action, if any, can be taken by His Majesty's Government to prevent German expansion into Denmark.⁴⁹

The final conclusion with regard to Denmark was that "even if we did guarantee Denmark, we could not by force of arms prevent Germany rapidly over-running the country, should she decide that it was to her interest in war to do so,"⁵⁰ and in February 1940 Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, confirmed verbally that "Britain, on account of Denmark's proximity to Germany, would be unable to provide help in case of a conflict with the southern neighbour."⁵¹

After the outbreak of war the main objective of British policies towards Denmark was to control her trade to Germany as much as possible. Since Denmark shared borders with Germany, control for trade across the border was near to impossible, but with the contraband the British sought to deprive the Germans of as much imports as possible.

2. British attitude to Denmark and Danish neutrality

In August 1939 Britain declared that they would respect Danish neutrality, subjected to it being respected by the Germans too;

The British Minister in Copenhagen, Sir P Ramsay, having been informed by the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs of the German Government's statement regarding the observation of Danish neutrality, has conveyed an assurance so the Danish Government that so long as Danish neutrality is respected by Germany it will of course be respected by the British Government, who have no desire that Denmark should be involved in a war which they still hope may be avoided.⁵²

Although British treatment of Denmark in particular has to be seen against the background of British policy towards the neutrals in general⁵³, it can be argued that

⁴⁹ PRO, FO 371/23654, Annex I, 18.04.39

⁵⁰ PRO, FO 371/23654, (Sd) D. Morton to E.W.H. Lloyd, Esq., Food (Defence Plans) Department, 02.05.39

⁵¹ Carsten Holbraad, Danish Neutrality: a study in the foreign policy of a small state. Oxford, New York, Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 69

⁵² Daily Telegraph, 31.08.39, "Britain to respect Danish neutrality."

⁵³ The British did not see it as necessary to spare the neutrals from the inconvenience caused by the war because they were convinced they were fighting for a just cause, that they would not be defeated, or, if they were, that the consequences could not be worse than those of a refusal to attempt to check

the British attitude towards Danish neutrality was also very much determined by the way the Danes upheld their neutrality and that this set a precedence to the British negative attitude towards the Danes in Denmark and in exile throughout the war. However, British attitudes towards Danes were not only determined by how the Danes conducted their policies; comparisons were often drawn with the situation in Norway, and how the Norwegians managed their neutrality. This aspect of British attitude and policy towards Denmark and Danes was not only present before the German occupation of Denmark and Norway, but certainly also after.

Foreign Office's attitude towards Denmark was coloured by Collier who clung to his views of Danish pusillanimity and resented the constraints, which the presence of neutrals put upon the conduct of the war. It was soon realised that if Denmark was invaded by the Germans the Danes would not put up a fight, because they "love their country and would prefer to see it occupied than destroyed."⁵⁴ Collier's view of the Danes was also shared by Gallop in Copenhagen, who in October 1939 reasoned that:

The primary cause of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs is to be found in the faint-heartedness and defeatism of the Danish people....Danes, therefore are to be counted among the more timorous of our friends and the less confident of our supporters...⁵⁵

Although this defeatist attitude of the Danes was somewhat understood by the British, seen in the light of the situation she found herself in

Denmark's position amongst neutrals is....a peculiar one, conditioned by the two material facts that (1) owing to her intensive agricultural production she is probably further from self-sufficiency than any other European country, and (2) all but an insignificant part of her exports on which her economic life is based are sold to Great Britain and Germany,⁵⁶

the British were not too complacent with the Danish tolerant approach to neutrality breaches, neither when it was against themselves.⁵⁷

German expansion.....the British tended to see the neutrals as tools to be used in the war effort, particularly in the pursuit of economic warfare.

⁵⁴ PRO, FO 371/23656, N3386/64/63, comment by I.G. Calvin 24.07.39

⁵⁵ PRO, FO 419/33, Gallop, Copenhagen, to Halifax, 01.10.39

⁵⁶ PRO, FO 371/24782, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to FO, 18.01.40, Political Review for the Year 1939

⁵⁷ PRO, FO 371/23658, Letter from Dormer to Lord Halifax, 22.09.39

The notion that the Danes were too tolerant was set in comparison with the attitude of the Norwegians to breaches of their neutrality, especially that of their Foreign Minister, Koht. Although the British appreciated that there was a general feeling of goodwill amongst the Norwegian public and authorities towards the British rather than the Germans, when it came to Koht there was no difference made between the two belligerents; he was determined not to let any infringement pass by without a protest, no matter which side had committed the breach of Norwegian neutrality.

The disciplinary position of Koht in the matter was much more preferred by the British than the less stern attitude of his colleague in Denmark.⁵⁸ Thus, although some members of the Norwegian Government worried that the stringent attitude of their Foreign Minister Koht would harm their relations with Britain, and he was subsequently 'dismissed' once the Government was in exile in London, because he was too much of an historian than politician in this approach⁵⁹, it seems that to the British his strict attitude was preferred to the relaxed Danish attitude.

Susan Seymour argues that the British may have been subconsciously trying to convince themselves that Danish behaviour was pro-German so that they would feel less guilty at their inability to defend Denmark and even justified in sacrificing Denmark in the interests of a long term victory.⁶⁰ "The Anglo-German agreement of June 1935, whereby the British agreed to allow Germany a fleet of up to 35% of the size of the British fleet which would naturally be concentrated in the Baltic, provoked considerable concern in Denmark."⁶¹

The British, although it was not their intention that the pact would be interpreted differently by the Germans, were left embarrassed, because it left the Danes in a more difficult situation *vis a vis* Germany than before. The increased presence of the German Navy in the Baltic meant that if the Danes already were intimidated by the

⁵⁸ PRO, FO 371/23658, Dormer, Oslo, to Halifax, FO, 22.09.39

⁵⁹ Koht would not let down his indignation to the fact that the British had breached Norwegian neutrality; not even after the Norwegian King and Government had fled Norway to stay in exile in Britain would he let the matter rest, but kept wanting justice done – in his mind the fact, that he and the rest of the Government along with the King were safe in London and subject to British goodwill, made no difference to his will to see justice done.

⁶⁰ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 159

⁶¹ Seymour, Anglo-Danish Relations and Germany 1933-1945, 1982, p. 80

fact that they shared border with the Germans, they now became even more unsettled and exposed to encounters with the Germans, especially on the matter of upholding neutrality in their waters.

Another area, where the British could have felt that they failed the Danes, was in their unwillingness to commit to any guarantee to Denmark, in case she was invaded by the Germans. In a letter marked "secret" to E.M.H. Lloyd, Esq., Food (Defence Plans) Department, May 1939 D. Morton revealed that although no decision had been made to make the same guarantee to Denmark as had been made to Poland, "there is agreement between the Military Authorities that, even if we did guarantee Denmark, we could not by force of arms prevent Germany rapidly over-running the country, should she decide that it was to her interest in war to do so."⁶² The British therefore recognised that they could not force the Danes to concede to any conditions which would affect Danish economy policy in wartime as unneutral and likewise they could not prevent the Danes from accepting any guarantee from the Germans, because the British themselves were unable to give the Danes any guarantee of assistance or protection in the event of a German invasion. The British thus were wary with their language when approaching the Danes, so that they would not cause any conflict or highlight this problem.⁶³ Thus, despite their preference to the Norwegian method, the British recognised that they had kind of forced Denmark into the impossible situation she now found herself in. Therefore, although the British held a critical attitude towards the Danes, because of her lenient neutrality policy, they showed some understanding to the situation. This is the outline of the ambiguous relationship the British had towards the Danes, which also was present in their attitude towards the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories, London and Washington DC.

3. U.S. relations towards Scandinavia: Roosevelt's appeal to Hitler

Despite appeals from the smaller neutral European states the United States stayed true to their isolationism and shied away from the evocation that as the most powerful neutral they inexorably had the obligation to take a more active role to

⁶² PRO, FO 371/23654, (Sd) D. Morton to E.W.H. Lloyd, Esq., Food (Defence Plans) Department, 02.05.39

⁶³ PRO, FO 371/23654, Telegram (N2437) from Ramsay to FO, 12.05.39

secure peace and raise the security of other neutral states, except on one occasion, however, the outcome was not what the Americans, neutrals or allies had sought, namely the German pressure on the small neutral states to sign a non-aggression pact with her.

On Pan American Day, April 14th 1938, President Roosevelt voiced a warning to the totalitarian states to keep out of the western hemisphere and on the following day he made demands for non-aggression pledges from Hitler and Mussolini to thirty nations, including the Scandinavian state.⁶⁴

Whether or not it was the direct cause, the appeal of Roosevelt to Hitler resulted in Hitler's offer to the Scandinavian neutral states of the Non-Aggression Pact. This gesture was made in order to prove to Roosevelt that the northern neutral states did not need to feel threatened by Germany, and hence there was no need for the appeal. Following Roosevelt's appeal, Hitler sent his Ministers in the Scandinavian countries to their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs to formally ask, whether they felt that their countries were menaced by Germany, to which, upholding their neutrality, they replied in the negative.⁶⁵

The reactions in Scandinavia to Roosevelt's initiative were that President Roosevelt acted too hastily "and would have done better had he prepared the ground a little beforehand."⁶⁶ In Denmark Foreign Affairs Minister Munch was not too keen to follow Roosevelt's suggestion to the Nordic countries to make an appeal to Germany for peace, because he thought that such an appeal would not be positively received. The Danes therefore were, reluctantly, in the process of writing a reply to Roosevelt when the peace signing (Peace For Our Time) took place in September, and the reply therefore was no longer relevant. Prime Minister Stauning later stated that negotiations of a non-aggression pact were offered to Denmark by Germany "as a result of President Roosevelt's message and of "Herr Hitler's reply to it."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1982, p. 43

⁶⁵ PRO, FO 419/34, Dormer to Halifax, 31.03.40 (101), extracts from Political Review of the Year 1939

⁶⁶ PRO, FO 371/23654, No. 138, memorandum of conversation between Dormer and Koht., Letter from Dormer to Lord Halifax, 26.04.39

⁶⁷ PRO, FO 371/23655, Telegram from Ramsay, Copenhagen, to Foreign Office 19.05.39

Although the official British reaction to Roosevelt's initiative was appraisal and HMG immediately welcomed his 'statesmanlike initiative,' which offered 'a real opportunity of averting the catastrophe which overhangs Europe', privately the FO was less placid. Cadogan clearly thought the appeal amateurish and worthless and Sargent, the Deputy Under-Secretary, pointed out its 'obvious shortcomings', namely that they could never trust Hitler's promises again and that he could destroy countries' independence by other means than invasion.⁶⁸ It nevertheless showed the British that the U.S. was willing to take some steps with regard to the conflict, which was an encouraging sign.

4. Reactions to the Danish signing of the non-aggression pact with Germany

It was, as mentioned earlier, in the interests of the British that the Scandinavian countries would be able to withstand German pressure on their own as long as possible, but when Hitler offered the neutrals the non-aggression pact it was noted within the Foreign Office that if Denmark decided to sign the Non-Aggression Pact on her own, which had been indicated by the Danish Press, it would be an important break in the policy of "northern co-operation".

The Danish signing of the pact did not otherwise give the British any further qualms as such; as long as the pact did not interfere with Danish exports and imports to Britain, the Board of Trade and Foreign Office did not seem to mind it; it was not seen as an unneutral act. However, it had to be taken into account that it was signed before the beginning of the war,⁶⁹ a Foreign Office report concluded. It nevertheless nurtured the negative attitude amongst the British of the Danes and Lascelles comments to the report were: "Those Danish plans make unpleasant reading, and are, I fear, typical of the knock-kneed attitude of the Danes as a whole."⁷⁰

Here again is evidence of the ambiguous relationship the British had with the Danes. On the one hand the British disapproved of the weakness the Danes showed versus

⁶⁸ Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, p. 48

⁶⁹ PRO, FO 371/23657, N 3853/64/63, August 1939

⁷⁰ PRO, FO 371/23654, handwritten notes on the cover of N 2422/64/63, 11.05.39

Germany, on the other hand they did not seem to mind as long as it did not interfere with their own economic affairs.

5. Case study: the mining of Norwegian territorial waters to stop the traffic of Swedish iron ore to Germany and 'Altmark'.

The case of British plans to mine the territorial waters of Norway, and especially the turn the mood took after the 'Altmark' incident, gives a good picture of the British sentiment towards neutrality and how that sentiment was closely connected with their concerns of American opinion in the period leading up to the occupation of the Faroe Islands and Iceland.

The greatest worry within British circles with regard to Scandinavian neutrality was how to stop the iron ore traffic from the mines in Gällivare in northern Sweden, upon which German war production depended, and which was primarily trafficked from the Norwegian town of Narvik in the north along the Norwegian coastline to Germany. The British believed strongly that if they could block this traffic Germany might be beaten. Along with the Ministry of Economic Warfare, Churchill believed that the denial of Swedish ore to Germany could in itself decide the outcome of the war.

Considerations within the British ministries to stop the iron ore traffic began at the outbreak of war. The Norwegian situation was assessed by staffs at the Foreign Office as to what action would serve the British cause best, and also the likelihood for a German breach of Norwegian neutrality. It was concluded that Norway was of greater importance to Germany than she was to Great Britain, and therefore the British believed that it was unlikely that Germany would attack Norway unprovoked.⁷¹

Because this traffic took place within the territorial waters of Norway, a neutral state, there was little Britain could do except to try to influence the Norwegian authorities. Despite British willingness, especially within the Foreign Office, to solve the iron

⁷¹ PRO, FO 371/23657, Memorandum from Industrial Intelligence Centre (Department of Oversea Trade) to The Secretary, The Joint Planning Sub-Committee, Committee of Imperial Defence, 30.08.39



ore problem via the diplomatic path, there was not much faith amongst the Service Departments that this course of action would succeed, rather the best bet for the British would be to wait for Hitler to commit some atrocity towards the Scandinavian countries and hence permit the British to take action without the consent of the Norwegians.⁷²

Although it was assessed that import-wise Norway was more dependent on the Allies than she was on Germany and therefore a strong economic pressure upon her exercised by the Allies was plausible, it nevertheless seemed important that such an action should be exercised “to its fullest extent compatible with international law”.⁷³ The efficiency of an economic pressure compatible with British international obligations was not considered to be high. The fear amongst the Norwegians for German repercussions, that would inevitably follow the stoppage of the iron ore traffic, would overshadow the effect of British economic pressure.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the option of economic pressure was considered, and so was the option of talking the Norwegians into taking firmer action against the iron ore traffic, by demanding that it should take place outside their territorial waters, hence forcing it out on international waters, where the British with their superior naval fleet would put an end to it. This latter option would, of course, have to include a guarantee from His Majesty’s Government that they would defend the Norwegians against the German reprisals, which the British were sure would bring about a change in the Norwegian attitude towards the iron ore; and the British were willing to give the Norwegians such a guarantee. The reason behind the British willingness of giving such a guarantee lay in the belief that although the Norwegian Government showed little willingness to budge to British pressure on the matter, the British were aware, by reports from their Minister in Oslo and elsewhere, that amongst the Scandinavian states the British were likely to find the most sympathy amongst the Norwegians, especially within private interests:

co-operation with British blockade measures in the fullest degree compatible with technical neutrality might be hoped for from Norwegian

⁷² PRO, CAB 21/1391, Letter from Sgt. A.T. Cornwall-Jones to Air Commodore J.C. Slessor, D.S.O., M.C., Air Ministry, 20.02.40

⁷³ PRO, FO 371/23658, War Cabinet, C.O.S. report (39) 7, 04.09.39

⁷⁴ PRO, FO 371/23658, N4218/64/63, Northern Department, Chief of Staff Committee report on Norwegian Neutrality, September 1939, comment by Collier

private interests, if not from the Government, provided only that the average Norwegian was persuaded that his country could, and would be protected by Great Britain, if necessary by force, against possible German reprisals.⁷⁵

During the visit of the Norwegian Trade Delegation in London, the British presented them with an offer along these lines, but the Norwegians were adamant to follow their principles of neutrality.

6. Concerns about reactions to possible breaches of Norwegian neutrality

Churchill, who was the strongest advocate for British action in Norwegian territorial waters despite Norwegian neutrality, argued that if the desired result could not be attained by diplomatic or economical pressure he would not refrain from suggesting that the British should employ the same measures as adopted in the Great War, that is, sowing mines in Norwegian territorial waters and thus forcing the traffic out of the three-mile limit, where they could be intercepted by the British.⁷⁶

That Churchill did not have much regard for the neutrality issue was apparent; “Small nations must not tie our hands when we are fighting for their rights and freedom...Humanity, rather than legality, must be our guide,”⁷⁷ he stated in a note in December 1939. That sentiment, however, was not shared by everyone, especially not within the Foreign Office, whose main concern was the reactions to such a move from the Americans and other neutral states;

from the start, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, expressed reservations which continued to weigh with him to the end: he did not believe that even if the whole traffic through Narvik were cut off the economic effects would be decisive, and asked whether an operation of doubtful legality would not cause the Allies to lose more in respect, especially in the U.S.A., than they might gain in other ways.⁷⁸

The reliance upon help from America entailed a predominant cautiousness amongst the British not to make any moves that would harm U.S. opinion and attitude towards them. “The absolute centrality of the relationship with the United States can be seen

⁷⁵ PRO, FO 371/23658, War Cabinet, C.O.S. report (39) 7, 04.09.39

⁷⁶ PRO, ADM 205/2, Minutes of Meetings in First Lord's room, 18.09.39

⁷⁷ PRO, FO 371/25660, W.P. (39) 162, Note by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 16.12.39

⁷⁸ David Dilks, “Great Britain and Scandinavia in the “Phoney War”, Scandinavian Journal of History (2) 1977, pp. 33-4

in the day to day conduct of British policy, in which virtually every initiative of any significance had to be carefully scrutinised in the light of its possible impact on American opinion,”⁷⁹ Ludlow argues.

Although Churchill tried to downplay the fears of American repercussions in the event of Britain breaching neutrality, the British were given an insight of the American standpoint on neutrality, when the British cruiser Orion in December 1939 tried to overhaul the German ship Arauca after the latter had entered American territorial waters. The Orion fired a warning shot across the bow of the Arauca, which fell within the three-mile limit. The reaction of the State Department was firm and the British were reminded of the principles of neutrality. Whereas the Admiralty and War Department tried to justify the British action, the members of the Foreign Office wanted to smooth things over with the Americans by giving them reassurance that this would not happen again.⁸⁰

a) International reputation and opinion at home

While the plans to mine Norwegian territorial waters were in progress the British Government was approached by two of the Dominion Prime Ministers, Mr. Menzies and General Smuts, who took strong exception to the proposal. Menzies argued that not only would such an action have a bad effect in neutral countries, but it would also present arguments to Germany to which she would not otherwise have.⁸¹

The Prime Minister in the Union of South Africa pointed out that such an action would “involve Scandinavia in a war without power to safeguard her and that this would damage the Allied image, whose real strength was its morality basis, which in prolonged war, just as in the last war, will secure an eventual victory.”⁸² However, the British could not only focus their worries on reactions and views of the Americans and other neutral states, their concerns also lay with the reaction and opinion of the British public, and although they knew that their strong point with the

⁷⁹ Peter Ludlow, “Britain and Northern Europe, 1940-1945”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, (4) 1979, p. 128

⁸⁰ PRO, FO 371/24234, A 462, 18.01.40

⁸¹ PRO, PREM 1/419, telegram from Mr. Menzies to Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, 12.01.40.

⁸² PRO, PREM 1/419, telegram from the Prime Minister in the Union of South Africa to the High Commissioner in London, 12.01.40.

public was the moral basis of the conflict and the objective to protect small states from the Nazis, they also were aware of the effect the inactivity of the 'Phoney War' had had on the British public and some kind of action would therefore be welcomed. It was thus reckoned that if the objective of the action in Norway was portrayed as being "protection of Norwegian neutrality" and the British, rather than taking action themselves, asked the Norwegians to guard their neutrality and immediately prohibit all vessels carrying iron-ore from Narvik making use of their territorial waters, it would change the picture from 'pressure' to 'concern' from the British side. "If they refused to do so, or if the Germans refused, I presume we should, it appears to me, be on stronger ground in the eyes of public opinion in taking forcible action involving Norwegian neutrality." ⁸³

It was not only concerns for reactions in the United States or the rest of the Commonwealth that affected British attitude towards neutrality and neutral states. Their reputation amongst the neutrals and possible future allies was also a concern of the British, and they became aware early on that their reputation was not exactly what they would wish for. In October 1939, for example, a report from the British Embassy in Copenhagen informed London that the Danes "are to be counted among the more timorous of our friends and the less confident of our supporters, and the failure of Great Britain to accomplish a miraculous rescue of Poland, or to stage a series of spectacular successes on the outbreak of war, has disheartened them to an extent disconcerting in a people who, it might have been imagined, were familiar with our capacity for "muddling through...[and]...losing all battles except the last."⁸⁴ It was this picture that the British wanted to escape, however Britain's reputation suffered further blows during the 'the Phoney War,'⁸⁵ because there was much talk but no action taken with respect to the Russo-Finnish war and the lack of initiative and action thus added damage to their reputation and credibility as a strong power and possible winner of the war. This lack of credibility in Scandinavia resulted in Norwegian, Danish and Swedish reluctance to give up their neutrality and join the British side. Consequently, Britain could not afford to take any further risks at

⁸³ PRO, FO 419/34 Dormer to Halifax 08.01.40 (10)

⁸⁴ PRO, FO 419/33, Gallop to FO, 01.10.39

⁸⁵ François Bédarida, "France, Britain and the Nordic Countries", Scandinavian Journal of History (2) 1977, p. 7

damaging her reputation and credibility or to lose out again to Germany in the North because of apparent indecisiveness or lack of willingness to take action; this could explain the prompt decision and implementation of the occupation of the Faroes immediately after the German invasion of Denmark.

b) The 'Altmark' incident

Sowing mines in Norwegian territorial waters was also found undesirable by the British Government, as it was believed that it could not be legally justified, and thus would damage British reputation internationally, and especially it was feared that this legal aspect, or rather a show of disrespect for international law, would have a damaging effect on relations with the United States.⁸⁶ Hence, an action was looked for, which would justify operations in the Scandinavian theatre. That came, when a German vessel, 'Altmark', sailing down the Norwegian coast was reported to be containing British prisoners from merchant vessels onboard, and a request of a joint Norwegian and British inspection of the ship was refused by the Norwegians.⁸⁷ It was concluded that "we know now that the release of the prisoners from the 'Altmark' gave impetus to German planning for an invasion of Scandinavia. It was judged that if Britain would violate neutrality for that purpose, she would certainly go further to starve Germany of ore."⁸⁸

Although the British action in the 'Altmark' incident could not be legally justified, the British gained much sympathy from amongst others the United States and other neutral states, even Scandinavian, because of the humanitarian aspect of the incident. From Denmark it was reported that:

Although the 'Altmark' incident....at first gave rise to some criticism of Great Britain in the Danish press, a more favourable tone prevailed after the first excitement was over, while public opinion was divided between a genuine fear that the incident might prove a dangerous precedent for further belligerent operations in territorial waters, Danish and Swedish, as well as Norwegian, and sympathy with the humane aspects of the British exploit. There is no doubt that as a result of this episode German prestige suffered a serious blow in Danish eyes and that British prestige was considerably enhanced.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Dilks, "Great Britain and Scandinavia in the "Phoney War", 1977, pp. 33-4

⁸⁷ Dilks, "Great Britain and Scandinavia in the "Phoney War", 1977, p. 41

⁸⁸ Dilks, "Great Britain and Scandinavia in the "Phoney War", 1977, pp.29-51

⁸⁹ PRO, FO 419/34, Howard-Smith, Copenhagen, to Halifax, FO, 04.03.40

Even in the Norwegian Press there was sympathy for the British actions in the incident; “one can understand the moral indignation of the British when they had to remain passive towards an enemy vessel, knowing that it carried 400 countrymen onboard.”⁹⁰ It was being put forward that the British, through the ‘Altmark’ incident had, in a matter of 24 hours achieved more prestige worldwide, and had managed to calm American critics of the British warfare, than 6 months of political statements had managed so far.⁹¹

In the aftermath of the ‘Altmark’ incident it was noted by the Danish Minister in London that the tone in the British press towards the neutrals had changed, giving a clear signal that the patience with the neutrals was up. This made Reventlow certain that the ‘Altmark’ incident would not be a ‘one off’ incident.⁹² He quoted Daily Mail stating that “hopefully the World would understand by now that Britain in the future would act in the exact same way under similar situations, and the Yorkshire Post for stating that what happened in the ‘Altmark’ incident would show the World that the British would not be bluffed, neither by the Nazis nor the neutrals.”⁹³ (translated) Further indications that the mood in Britain towards the neutrals had changed since the ‘Altmark’ incident were given when Chamberlain gave the British Press free run and said that there would be no more censorship on articles dealing with the neutrals and he more or less encouraged the press to be more vigorous in their writings about the neutrals.⁹⁴

Although the ‘Altmark’ incident changed the British attitude towards the neutrality of the Scandinavian countries, they were still reluctant to commit any obvious breaches of their neutrality in order to stop the iron-ore traffic. To overcome their

⁹⁰ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Danish Legation, Oslo, to UM, Copenhagen, 19.02.40, refers to an article in Aftenposten

⁹¹ SA, 10.H.35c/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 24.02.40, accompanied by the Whitehall Letters No. 103 containing remarks to the ‘Altmark’ incident.

⁹² SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow, London, to UM, Copenhagen, 19.02.40

⁹³ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to UM, Copenhagen, 19.02.40

⁹⁴ SA, 5.F.8/1909-45/0002, Reventlow to Munch 22.02.40, quoting Chamberlain: ...”*Til Slut tillader jeg mig at anføre, at det er mig bekendt, at Mr. Chamberlain den 17. ds. udtalte sig til ledende britiske Presse-mænd i Retning af, at der intet var til Hinder for at Bladene behandlede det norske incident med Energi og Udførlighed, og at ”han selv vilde sørge for, at der ikke skete nogen Indgriben i artikler desangaaende fra Censors eller Regeringsmedlemmers Side.”*

neutrality quandary the British planned to hook up the sowing of mines in the Norwegian waters with a Royal Marine Operation. Whereas the British were afraid that if they would only carry out the former plan, they would be accused of violating the neutrality of a small nation, they would overcome this criticism if, at the same time, they took vigorous and effective action against Germany herself in her own waters.⁹⁵ The same opinion was voiced by the department of the FO, which dealt with the United States Press; they sensed that the attitude there was that “the effect on public opinion of the Narvik operation, if carried out separately, would be bad; but that there should be no great difficulty if it were combined with the Royal Marine Operation.” The report from the department continued to stress that “*The Prime Minister* attached great importance to the psychological effect of the Royal Marine Operation...⁹⁶ Another benefit of tying the Royal Marine Operation with the Narvik operation so that they would be carried out simultaneously was partly that the former operation would deflect some of the attention from the fact that the British were violating Norwegian neutrality, but also because “the Royal Marine Operation was a vigorous and aggressive action, and would be accepted as such by the world at large.” It is concluded that “the war in its present phase was largely psychological, and in world opinion points won or gained by the two sides were measured in psychological terms.”⁹⁷

The psychological factor played much with the British policy-makers, because for some time there had been signs and indications that the British would take some action in the direction of stopping the supply of iron ore from Scandinavia to Germany. Therefore, they had reached the point where going back on the plans and taking no action was not an option, as this would make the British appear indecisive and weak.

C. BRITISH AND AMERICAN POLICIES TOWARDS THE NORTH ATLANTIC TERRITORIES

Despite the general belief back in 1939-40, and it is still a prevailing belief today, that Germany had plans to take the territories in the North Atlantic, this was not the

⁹⁵ PRO, CAB 65/6, War Cabinet 78 (40), 01.04.40

⁹⁶ PRO, CAB 65/6, War Cabinet 80 (40), 03.04.40

⁹⁷ PRO, CAB 65/6, War Cabinet 82 (40), 05.04.40

case. However, a strong presence of German activities in the area and an active German Consul in Reykjavik seemed to provide confirmation to the belief, and hence the concerns, for a German move towards occupation of the islands in the North Atlantic.

1. British policies towards the Faroe Islands

Plans to occupy the Faroe Islands and Iceland were in progress during the Great War, but the course of events on mainland Europe made this an unnecessary move. Nevertheless, some of the material gathered back then, such as maps of the islands, proved useful in the initial stages of planning prior to Second World War, which began in 1938, after reports of increased German activity in the islands.

The first serious planning took place a year later in November 1939, when the possibility of a German invasion of Denmark no longer could be disregarded. At a meeting in the Plans Division it was agreed that “in the event of a German invasion of Denmark, it is for consideration that we should take immediate steps to establish bases in the Faroe Islands and Iceland.” However, the status of the islands posed some problems and questions, when the planners learnt that “The Faroes are in a position *vis á vis* Denmark analogous to one of our own colonies. There is a Parliament of sorts, but the Danish Governor’s word is law.”⁹⁸

The plans to occupy the Faroe Islands did not only entail the prevention of German presence on the islands, but it was also the prospect of having bases in the islands, and thus providing the Northern Convoys with a stronger defence, that attracted the British to the idea of occupying the islands:

A fleet based in the Faroes would be ideally situated for control of our Northern Approaches, with particular reference to the interception of raiders breaking out, and well placed to cover the Northern Patrol. It would not, however, provide such good cover to the Scandinavian Convoy as a fleet operating from Scapa, but is equally well placed for this purpose as at the Forth and much better than at the Clyde [and] if it can be assumed that Scapa Flow is about the limit of action of bomber squadrons based on Sylt. We can accept the fact that for the present at

⁹⁸ PRO, ADM 1/10739, PD 09116, 1939, min.1, “Use of Faroe Islands and Iceland”, Plans Division, 02.11.39

least the Faroes would be immune from attack by aircraft based in North Jutland.⁹⁹

The status of Faroe Islands as long as Denmark remained neutral impeded the British from taking any further measures in their plans to occupy the islands, and precautions were also taken regarding Iceland's status, which was different from that of the Faroes. It was concluded by the Naval Intelligence Department that "if Germany invades Denmark, there seems no reason why as a counter measure we should not occupy the Faroes;"¹⁰⁰ further it said:

In such circumstances, Iceland, however, could still regard herself as a neutral, and unless there were any German threat to Iceland, there would not appear to be sufficient excuse for stepping in until we were asked by the Icelandic Government to do so." It was then concluded that "short of Iceland coming in as our ally, or asking to be placed under British protections, there is no way, consistently with international law, in which we can make unrestricted use of her harbours. Similarly, we could only make unrestricted use of the harbours in the Faroes by Denmark coming into the war, or by the Faroes breaking away from Denmark and coming in on our side. The question could, however, be put to the Foreign Office to see if any political action is possible."¹⁰¹

Though, it does not appear that the British Government made any further consideration into this possibility of using political power to break the Faroes away from Denmark despite it being assumed by those reporting from the Faroe Islands prior to the occupation, that there was a general wish amongst the islanders to "join the British Empire on a similar status to that of Isle of Man."¹⁰² Thus, despite the early plans and considerations to occupy the islands, the decisive turn in events that determined the fate of the Faroes and Iceland during the war was the German occupation of Denmark and Norway on April 9th 1940. It seems quite evident that it was the neutral status of the territories, which held the British back, despite the fact that on the eve of the German invasion of Denmark there was a meeting at the War Cabinet in which a request from the First Lord of the Admiralty to amplify instructions regarding attacks on enemy war vessels in Neutral Territorial Waters following the 'Altmark' incident; this entailed the orders that

⁹⁹ PRO, ADM 1/10739, PD 08116, 1939, min. 1, 02.11.39

¹⁰⁰ PRO, ADM 1/10739, N.I.D. 00120/40, 03.04.40

¹⁰¹ PRO, ADM 1/10739, N.I.D. 00120/40, 03.04.40

¹⁰² PRO, ADM 1/10739, PD 08116, 1939, min.1 "Use of Faroe Islands and Iceland", 02.11.39

if enemy surface vessels took refuge in, or were found inside, the Territorial waters of Norway, the Faroes or Iceland, they were to be attacked, except when this would endanger life in towns and villages.” It was stressed, however, that “an endeavour should be made to engage the vessels before they entered Territorial Waters.¹⁰³

British attitude towards respecting the neutrality of the small European states underwent, as we saw in the previous chapter, a change in late January early February. However, although the ‘Altmark’ incident presented the British with the excuse to show the neutrals less respect than hitherto, an excuse they had been looking for with regard to the plans of mining the Norwegian territorial waters, the British still refrained from advancing their plans in the North Atlantic. The fact that the British did not go ahead with their plans until Denmark was occupied therefore shows, as was pointed out earlier, that the other factors, such as the fear of repercussions in their relationship with the United States, still weighed heavily in the decision making.

2. British policies towards Iceland

While the main objective of all Icelanders is to maintain their independence, it is, I think, generally realised now that in the event of a European war this will be difficult in view of their defenceless state. My impression is that responsible Icelanders understand that in this event they will, as in the Great War, have to sacrifice some of their independence to exigencies of the situation. As a protection they realise that the Danish connexion is useless. They would, I believe, consider asking for the protection of the US, if they thought it would be obtained.¹⁰⁴

The interesting point with the neutrality declaration is that despite being under the Danish crown, Iceland was given a separate section and signatory. This decision can partly be explained by the fact that Iceland in 1874 was given the right to decide and legislate in domestic matters and this right then was extended by the ‘Home Rule’ system, which was established in 1903, it gave the Icelandic Government the right to orchestrate their own national policies in financial-, legal-, church-, and educational affairs. On December 1st 1918 a law was passed by the Danish Government, which recognised Iceland as a sovereign state, but part of the Danish Kingdom. This law

¹⁰³ PRO, CAB 65/6, War Cabinet 84 (40), 08.09.40

¹⁰⁴ PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

was to last until 1940 when, if no agreement for a renewal of the law was reached after three years, the law would cease to exist, and Iceland would become a republic, which they did immediately after the war. However, at the signing of the declaration Iceland was not in command of its foreign affairs, these were still under Danish control, which is why it is quite interesting to find that Iceland was given a separate signature and her own amendments to the declaration, whereas the other two dominions under Danish rule, Greenland and the Faroes were included in the Danish declaration.

The British view of Iceland's status was raised in April 1939, when Lieutenant Colonel Macnamara asked the Prime Minister whether he would make it clear "that the independence of the kingdom of Iceland was viewed by the British in the same light as the independence of France."¹⁰⁵ His Majesty's Government acknowledged the special status of Iceland, however they "do not find it possible to accept the comparison as set forth."¹⁰⁶ However, as will be evident in Chapter IV, the British readily accepted and respected Iceland's declaration of independence from the Danish King and Government following the German occupation of Denmark, and treated her independently established diplomatic corps on par with that of other countries.

Although the British attached great importance to their relations with Iceland,¹⁰⁷ she was not seen as being likely to face any threats as a result of the looming conflict in Europe. Thus when the British at first were made aware of increasing German interest¹⁰⁸ in Iceland, they did not pay too much attention to the reports and no alarms were raised. In March 1939 attention was again brought to the increasing German interest in Iceland when the Naval Intelligence Office forwarded a report to the Foreign Office on the matter. It was reported that Iceland would soon receive a visit from Herr Himmler, chief of the Gestapo, acting as the leader of a large expedition of genealogists for the purpose of investigating German ancestry in

¹⁰⁵ PRO, FO 371/23654, Parliamentary question, Lieutenant Colonel Macnamara, 03.04.39

¹⁰⁶ PRO, FO 371/23654, reply to Parliamentary question, Lieutenant Colonel Macnamara, 03.04.39

¹⁰⁷ PRO, FO 371/23654, reply to Parliamentary question, Lieutenant Colonel Macnamara, 03.04.39

¹⁰⁸ PRO, FO 371/22264, Ramsay to Halifax, 07.07.38

Iceland.¹⁰⁹ However, despite these reports and the realisation within the Foreign Office that the “German menace” in Iceland was a real one¹¹⁰, the matter seemed to be played down by the higher circles of decision makers and no action was taken. These reports were later followed by information of other activities and increased German interest in the island, such as the visit of Luft-Hansa representatives to Reykjavik with the purpose of establishing a base in Iceland for a proposed air route between Germany and America, and their desire to have their own radio-station in Iceland. However, the British had their worries eased on the aviation matter, when the Icelandic Government decided not to grant permission to any foreign flying company to maintain an air-service to Iceland.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, the German presence in Iceland could no longer be ignored by the British and because the German colony was by far the largest colony of foreigners in Iceland, the increasing German activities also made the Icelanders a bit disconcerted, because they found some of these activities highly dubious.¹¹²

Following the visit of German cruiser “Emden” to the island, it was advised by the Foreign Office that a visit of one of H.M.’s ships to Reykjavik would prove to be great value as a demonstration that H.M.’s Government also were interested in the future of Iceland.¹¹³ At this stage, however, the main concern was not the loss of Iceland as a strategic point, although German bases on the island certainly would pose a serious threat to the British mainland. Rather the worry was that the use of Iceland by the enemy “would be a great source of embarrassment to us,”¹¹⁴ and based on this the Committee of Imperial Defence argued that “this should be prevented and all diplomatic and other means possible in peace should be directed to ensuring that Germany is not in a position to make use of Iceland in war.” The conclusion in July 1939 was that “although Iceland might prove useful to us in a war as a base for armed merchant cruisers and aircraft employed in trade operations in the North Atlantic we consider that the advantages to be gained by its use are not very great as

¹⁰⁹ PRO, FO 371/23653, N 2569/64/63, Report by (Sd) P.F.W. Tennant, Queens College, Cambridge.

¹¹⁰ PRO, FO 371/23654, note by Sgt. Lascelles, FO, 04.04.39

¹¹¹ PRO, AIR 40/1920, F.O. to D. of S., 01.05.39

¹¹² PRO, AIR 40/1920, Collier to the Under-Secretary of State for Air, Air Ministry

¹¹³ PRO, AIR 40/1920, A.I.3a., 06.04.39

¹¹⁴ PRO, FO 371/23656, Committee of Imperial Defence. Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee. “The Strategic Importance of Iceland,” July 1939

we already have adequate bases in the north of the British Isles,”¹¹⁵ and the view does not seem to have changed in the course of the following months and following the outbreak of war with Germany, because in November greater emphasis was still placed on the Faroe Islands.¹¹⁶

Bittner notes that with respect to Iceland, it was pointed out that if Denmark was attacked Iceland might declare her neutrality and this would preclude active British use of Icelandic facilities.¹¹⁷ Although this passage by Bittner is quite confusing, since Iceland signed the neutrality declaration as independent from Denmark, it may be contemplated that he refers to the considerations the British had regarding the independent status Iceland had within the Danish Kingdom, and the British foresaw that it would be more difficult to negotiate with an Icelandic representative that acted completely independent of Danish influences, however limited that influence might be. As Bittner argues, “generally throughout the staff work no mention was made of a forced occupation without the consent of the Icelandic Government. Iceland’s neutrality and status under international law was always stressed as compared to the actual crown colony status of the Faeroe Islands.”¹¹⁸

2.1 British attempts to influence Icelandic neutrality

Acknowledging that Iceland, although being part of the Danish Kingdom, was technically independent of Denmark and therefore would still regard herself as neutral, if Denmark was to be overrun by Germany, the British apprehended that unless Germany posed a real threat to Iceland, there "would not appear to be sufficient excuse for stepping in until we were asked by the Icelandic Government to do so...[and] that, short of coming in as our ally, or asking to be placed under British protection, there is no way, consistent with international law, in which we can make unrestricted use of her harbours.” Until that occurred the British could do little. It was also considered in a memorandum on Iceland in March 1940, that the British should “try to “nurse” Iceland to sever her ties with Denmark, when the Act of Union

¹¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/23656, Committee of Imperial Defence. Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee. “The Strategic Importance of Iceland,” July 1939

¹¹⁶ Donald F. Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1974, p. 143

¹¹⁷ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 143

¹¹⁸ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 143

expired in 1943”¹¹⁹, with the ultimate goal being “to draw Iceland within the Empire, with Dominion status, though an alliance or defensive guarantee would be satisfactory enough.”¹²⁰ However, this was only contemplated at the lower bureaucratic levels, and did not seem to find much serious support elsewhere. The British thus came to the decision that the goal should be “to ensure that the Icelandic Government will ask for our protection at the earliest possible moment.” The First Sea Lord and Churchill agreed to the final recommendation that the Foreign Office see if a political solution to the problem was possible.”¹²¹

The immediate Icelandic objective of the neutrality declaration of 1938 was to avoid the same situation she found herself in during the Napoleonic Wars, where Denmark had allied herself with France and Iceland thus became embroiled in the conflict against her will and had her communications with Denmark cut off by the subsequent British naval blockade. It was during this period that the Icelanders discovered that, “although their seat of government was in Copenhagen, their Atlantic island fell within the power sphere of London.”¹²² She thus became ‘neutral’ and relied on having made bi-lateral agreements with Britain in order to survive from starvation in the event of her ties with Denmark being severed yet again by another war.

The British realised that they had the upper hand in their relations with Iceland because of her dependence upon trade with the British Isles, and trade negotiations became the predominant tool by which the British tried to influence Icelandic neutrality to their advantage. Although plans had been underway during First World War to occupy Iceland, the British eventually found that it would not be necessary; by applying a stringent blockade control over Icelandic foreign trade, censorship of post and telecommunications, and thus holding the ultimate sway over Icelandic livelihood during the Great War, the British consul repeatedly dictated terms to the Icelandic authorities. An occupation, in order to control the island, was therefore not necessary.

¹¹⁹ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 144

¹²⁰ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 144

¹²¹ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 145-6

¹²² Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War 1939-1946, p. 4

The British were aware that memories of these former British policies towards the Icelandic were still fresh when then war broke out because in his report from Iceland in June 1939, Mr. Gage warned the British to be careful in their economic and commercial policies towards Iceland this time around and quotes M. Jon Arnason, Export Manager, saying that “while Iceland disliked German methods, they had no reason to like British” and he recalled the exploits of Mr. Cable, HM Consul-General during the Great War, whom he described as Iceland’s biggest dictator.”¹²³ It was therefore important that the British were careful in their policies such that they did not alienate themselves in the eyes of the Icelanders. British concerns with the increased German presence and interest in Iceland were thus not only in terms of strategic military matters. Economically and commercially they understood that with the declared neutrality of Iceland they could not force her to break off trade with Germany against her will and the fact that they were not able to meet her needs, whereas Germany gladly stepped in, did not work in their favour. As Mr. Gage’s report showed, quoting M. Jónas Jónsson, Head of the Progressive Party, saying that he was confident that “Iceland will always be friendly to England” but he pointed out “the difficulty of preventing German influence when Germany’s purchases were so great,”¹²⁴ summarised the situation, and was also acknowledged by the British in London.

Financial and commercial difficulties have hitherto stood in the way of meeting Icelandic requests for permission to raise a loan in this country or for other forms of help, which, from the standpoint of the country’s finances, is badly needed. Germany on the other hand, has been willing and anxious to take more Icelandic produce, particularly fish, with the result that the influential class of trawler owners are now becoming one of the most pro-German elements in Iceland.¹²⁵

The obstacle in the Foreign Office’s efforts to counter the increased German influence on Iceland was the Treasury, which was unwilling to meet Icelandic need and demands. In a pledge to the Treasury, the Foreign Office sent a memo where it was pointed out that “although it is understood that Iceland’s reputation stands very highly in British banking circles, it is realised that, in present circumstances, purely commercial and financial considerations may be adduced to justify the refusal of

¹²³ PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

¹²⁴ PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

¹²⁵ PRO, FO 371/23656, FO to the Secretary of Treasury, 29.07.39

further financial assistance; but Lord Halifax feels that the question must be viewed from a wider standpoint, taking into account the strategic position of the island.”¹²⁶

a) British offer to the Icelandic Government

The British eventually recognised that they could not stop Iceland trading with Germany as long as that trade was within the confines of the Neutrality Act, however they came to the conclusion that they could offer the Icelandic assistance in the event of a German attack on the island in exchange with her ceasing trade with the latter. This conclusion, nevertheless was based upon the realisation that in the event of a German attack on the island the “H.M.G. would be obliged to intervene in their own interests, whether or not they have given any previous guarantee to the Icelandic Government, since they could not contemplate the establishment of German forces in Iceland.”¹²⁷ The Icelanders, however, did not accept this offer because it was not in concurrence with her neutrality, and the British therefore did not take the matter any further at this stage. It may be concluded that in November 1939 the British were still deterred by the neutrality of small states and they came to the conclusion that an invasion of Iceland based on the threat alone was not sufficient. They would therefore stick to their decision that it was not desirable to take matters further with Iceland without her invitation,¹²⁸ such a move would create more animosity than wished for and would harm relations not only with Iceland, but also with Denmark it was believed.

Bittner states, that although Britain imposed a naval blockade on Germany where Iceland became the northern anchor around which the Royal Navy established and maintained this blockade, Icelandic neutrality was not infringed and she had no direct involvement in the war, until April 1940 that is.¹²⁹ The exception was the incident of the landing of a British seaplane on the east coast of Iceland.

¹²⁶ PRO, FO 371/23656, FO to the Secretary of Treasury, 29.07.39

¹²⁷ PRO, FO 371/23640, Foreign Office Memorandum, 30.11.39

¹²⁸ PRO, FO 371/23654, Foreign Office note 31.03.39

¹²⁹ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 131

c. Case study: British sea-plane landing in Iceland

In September 1939 a British sea-plane landed in Raufarhöfn on the east coast of Iceland and was detained by the Icelandic authorities. Despite being detained and having knowingly breached the neutrality of Iceland by landing without permission inside Icelandic territorial waters, the pilot departed the island despite having been given orders from the Icelandic authorities to wait for instructions. However, upon the arrival of an Icelandic airplane with the instructions, that he was to fly to Reykjavik with the Icelandic plane, the English pilot made his escape as the pilot of the latter went ashore. The British pilot later claimed that, contrary to the statements by the Icelandic authorities, he had not given his word that he would follow their instructions, but this was even questioned at the Foreign Office, where Lascelles remarked that ‘his story sounded to me distinctly thin.’¹³⁰ The crucial fact in this incident, though, did not seem to be whether the pilot acknowledged having breached Icelandic neutrality or not, but that the Foreign Office realised that the situation was viewed as very grave by the Icelandic Government, and that if the British wanted to remain on friendly terms with the Icelanders, they would have to do what it took to meet Icelandic demands rather than questioning them; and the British even turned to the Danes for advice regarding which approach they believed would be most acceptable by the Icelandic Government.¹³¹

Typically for the war departments their concerns were more with regard to the material matters than the diplomatic implications of the incident, and the Air Ministry’s immediate worry was the plane itself¹³², and how they could get the plane back to Britain. However, the Air Ministry also pointed out that they “have always supported the principle that military aircraft which landed in neutral territory must be interned, with the crew,” and that it was to the interest of the Air Ministry to uphold this principle.¹³³

¹³⁰ PRO, FO 371/23666, Comment by Lascelles to telegram from Consul-General Bowering, Reykjavik, to FO 28.09.39

¹³¹ SA, 10.G.3/1961/372, Islands Neutralitetsforanstaltninger, telegram from Reventlow, London, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen, 04.10.39

¹³² a new American type, which was extremely valuable and the only one which the British had which could operate so far afield

¹³³ PRO, FO 371/23666, Air Ministry to Cadogan, FO, 27.09.39

The incident created a diplomatic crisis with strong objections and protests from both Iceland and Denmark¹³⁴, and although the Air Ministry tried to wriggle their way out of the situation by suggesting that the British should request the release of the machine on the ground that it should be treated “as the equivalent of a warship object to put into a neutral port under stress of weather,” this argument was dismissed by the legal advisors, as it was found that the argument “would definitely not wash: aircraft cannot for these purposes be treated like warships, and the obligations to intern them is perfectly well established.”¹³⁵ It was subsequently suggested by the Air Ministry that the British might induce the Icelandic authorities to connive at a get-away, either by straightforward political pressure or by bribery. This option, however, was dismissed by Lascelles at the Foreign Office, who thought that it would be extremely difficult because, although the Icelanders were “poor but honest,” they were also stubborn and it was therefore not likely that they would meet this suggestion with a positive attitude. Lascelles also pointed out to the Air Ministry that such an approach to solving the situation would surely create a very undesirable precedent; the Air Ministry (and still more the Admiralty) were in general very keen on ensuring that neutrals observed the rules about interning enemy ships and aircraft – in Iceland itself there were a number of German ships for the continued immobilisation of which the British should wish to hold the Icelandic Government responsible – and the British could not have things both ways.¹³⁶

The Foreign Office therefore was resolute that the Air Ministry would have to own up to the Icelandic authorities and return the pilot to the island, because not only would a reluctance to meet Icelandic demands harm Anglo-Icelandic relations, and Anglo-Danish relations, but the rumours of the incident were already spreading like

¹³⁴ SA, 10.G.3/1961/372, Letter from Reventlow to Viscount Halifax, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 03.10.39

¹³⁵ PRO, FO 371/23666, Comment by Lascelles to telegram from Consul-General Bowering, Reykjavik, to FO, 28.09.39, subject: “Landing of a British sea-plane inside Icelandic territorial waters.”

¹³⁵ PRO, FO 371/23666, Comment by Lascelles to draft from Bowering, Reykjavik, to FO, 28.09.39 subject: “the seaplane is understood to have escaped.”

¹³⁶ PRO, FO 371/23666, Comment by Lascelles to telegram from Consul-General Bowering, Reykjavik, to FO, 26.09.39, subject: “Landing of a British sea-plane inside Icelandic territorial waters.”

wild-fire and “would be a godsend to German propaganda.”¹³⁷ It was also concluded, that “gesture of respect for International Law would have positively good effect.”¹³⁸

In the end, and after much delay, the pilot was returned to Iceland to serve his sentence and relations between Britain, Iceland and Denmark restored.

This incident of the British sea-plane breaching Icelandic neutrality by landing without permission showed that both parties were interested in upholding the laws of neutrality. It must, however, be pointed out that the British sentiment to respect Icelandic neutrality and the willingness to meet their demands and thus restore relations with Iceland lay, not surprisingly, with the Foreign Office, while the Air Ministry was not as able to look upon the situation in its wider diplomatic context; their main issue was to secure the sea-plane and crew and were not willing to return the pilot unless the Icelandic Government promised that they would regard this gesture as the end of the incident.¹³⁹

As Bittner also argues, the overall impression is that until the spring of 1940 the British respected the Icelandic desire for neutrality; but this was to change. On April 8th 1940 the War Cabinet held a meeting after which British military forces would be permitted to engage in combat operations in Icelandic waters. Previously specific authorization had to be given to Royal Navy to fight German vessels within neutral waters. On this date blanket approval was granted to His Majesty’s ships to attack German surface ships and submarines within the territorial waters of Norway, the Faeroe Islands, and Iceland without having to receive special permission from the Government. In addition to approving these standing orders to the fleet, the War Cabinet ordered that no public announcement would be made of these new instructions to the Navy.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ PRO, FO 371/23666, Comment by Lascelles to draft from Bowering, Reykjavik, to FO, 28.09.39 subject: “the seaplane is understood to have escaped.”

¹³⁸ PRO, FO 371/23666, Ramsay, Copenhagen, to FO, 29.09.39

¹³⁹ PRO, FO 371/23666, Comment by Addis to memo by Sir L. Oliphant (Conversation with Reventlow), 09.10.39

¹⁴⁰ Bittner, The British Occupation of Iceland, 1940-42, 1974, p. 146-7

3. Greenland

There are no indications of any distinctive Anglo-American common policy towards the North Atlantic territories prior to the German occupation of Denmark. However, it does not seem that the British were troubled with the prospect of increased American influence on the islands following the Icelandic attempts to create stronger economic and trade relations with the United States, rather the opposite, because any further American involvement in the North Atlantic territories, would increase the chances of an U.S. entry in the war, while at the same time provide the Icelanders with another trade option than Germany. When the Foreign Office received reports from Scandinavia, making the British aware that there were fears amongst the Scandinavians that Iceland would move away from the Nordic community and instead look towards Britain and United States, a result of rising separatist movement and attempts to build stronger trade relations with the United States, the British did not think that the fears were grounded and they saw no problem in the Icelandic wish to create stronger trade relations with the United States “since this can only mean a disservice to the German trade relations with Iceland, which is a problem in the eyes of the British.”¹⁴¹ (emphasis in original)

D. U.S. RELATIONS TOWARDS THE NORTH ATLANTIC TERRITORIES

While there was a general feeling amongst some of Roosevelt’s closest advisors within the State Department that the United States should concentrate on defending the Western Hemisphere rather than supporting the Allies,¹⁴² Roosevelt himself hoped to do both. However, although the Americans had a defined Western Hemispheric policy, there are no signs that they had any specific policy with regard to the Greenland, Iceland or the Faroe Islands.

U.S. relations towards the North Atlantic territories before the late 1930s were mainly confined to scientific explorations in the area. However, with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 (later modified), the Americans had a specific policy towards parts of the North Atlantic. The Monroe Doctrine was created in response to the

¹⁴¹ PRO, FO 371/23657, comments by Addis and Lascelles to report by Kenney forwarded by Sir. E. Monson, Stockholm, to Collier 23.08.39

¹⁴² Long, War Diary, 2 Sept. (Hull), 05. & 11.10.39, pp. 1, 24-5, 26-7. Moffat Diary, 01.09.39., Berle to F.D.R., memo 18.09.39, PSF 94: State Dept., Berle; cr. Berle Diary, 04.09.39.

expansionist mood in Europe and was a tool for the Americans to ensure that no foreign power would gain a foothold in their backyard and threaten the hard-won freedom of the American people. Thus, the Doctrine stated, that the United States would not recognise any transfer and would not acquiesce in any attempt to transfer any geographic region of this hemisphere from non-American power to another non-American power.”¹⁴³ In the original Doctrine the eastern limit of the hemisphere was the meridian of 20° west of Greenwich, thus cutting straight through Greenland, while the western followed the International Date Line, however these lines were later modified to serve the change of interest within the United States as the war progressed; thus, after the outbreak of war and the occupation of Denmark, the lines were adjusted slightly to include Greenland and Iceland in the Western Hemisphere, but not the Faroe Islands.

There was little interest within the United States with regard to the North Atlantic territories, that is, until Charles Lindberg flew from the United States to Denmark via Greenland in 1933 and thus not only showed how important aviation would become but also that the shortest route between the north-west of America and European mainland was along the lines which crossed southern Greenland; and when Senator Lundeen proposed to the Congress that the United States should buy Greenland of Denmark in order to use the island as a naval base, and also because of the island’s importance in connection with the establishment of northern air routes. After the proposal the State Department saw an increased interest from both the public and the industry in the status of the territories in the North Atlantic.¹⁴⁴

Despite the growing interest in Greenland and Iceland following the outbreak of war, the Division of Research and Publication within the Department of State acknowledged that there was very little history of American interest in the area. For example there did not appear to have been any serious discussion of Greenland at the time of the purchase of Alaska, and the issue of a possible acquisition of Greenland seemed only to have taken form in connection with negotiations with Denmark for

¹⁴³ Lawrence Martin, “The Geography of the Monroe Doctrine and the Limits of the Western Hemisphere”, *The Geographical Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 3 July, 1940)

¹⁴⁴ SA, 9.D.9/1957/516, Letter from Wilhelm Eickhoff, Counselor of Legation, Washington, To Mr. C. Donal Jess, Westville, N.J. 07.25.39

the purchase of the Danish West Indies; no reference to the purchase of Iceland was found by the Division of Research and Publication.

When Denmark in the 1920s requested the British Government to recognise Danish sovereignty over Greenland the British Government reserved the right to be consulted in case the Danish Government should at any time contemplate the alienation of this territory. Upon learning about this the United States Government informed Great Britain and Denmark that she was not disposed to recognise the existence in a third government of the right of pre-emption to acquire this territory in case the Danish Government should desire to dispose of it.¹⁴⁵

Roosevelt recognized by 1938 that there was a risk of the Germans establishing bases on Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands along with the Azores and Cap Verde Islands. To prevent this the Americans would have to actively join the international policy that the European democratic side had adopted and at the same time, move public opinion towards a more positive attitude of a “stronger foreign policy.”¹⁴⁶ Nothing then happened until after the German invasion of Scandinavia. An example of this lack of interest in the North Atlantic is that the United States had no diplomatic representation in the area until after Denmark was occupied, despite having had plans to establish a consular office in Reykjavik already in April 1939. This plan, however, had been put on hold, at least until war broke out, the reason being that trade with the island had been so small in 1939.¹⁴⁷

E. CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the reader to the Anglo-American relationship prior to the war and the relationship between the British and Americans with Denmark and her territories in the North Atlantic, as these relationships were to form the foundation of the position the Danish representatives abroad would find themselves in on the eve of the German invasion of Denmark on April 9th 1940. The extent to which the Danish representatives were able to influence the British and

¹⁴⁵ NARA, RG59, Decimal File 1940-44, box 5390, Memorandum by Division of Research and Publication, Memorandum 21.02.40

¹⁴⁶ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Minister Kauffmanns Politik, Legationsraad E. Blechingberg og Fuldmægtig A. Tscherning (1. eks), p. 35

¹⁴⁷ FDR, Cordell Hull, Memoirs, (2 vols.; New York; The Macmillan Company, 1948), I, p. 754

Americans very much depended upon the attitude of the host-governments and occupying powers of the territories where the Danish representatives were situated, hence the focus on the issues and events, which had an impact on the opinion others held of Denmark and those representing her abroad.

As this chapter has shown the neutrality question played an important part in the Anglo-American relationship in the early stages of war and especially the British relationship with Denmark, Norway and the North Atlantic territories prior to and after the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940. The ambiguous relationship the British had with the Danes during the war stemmed from the policies each country on its part applied towards the neutrality aspect. The British were dismayed by the Danish lack of resistance to the German threat to her neutrality. However, despite acknowledging the difficult situation Denmark found herself in with regard to Germany and acknowledging that Denmark could not defend herself on her own, Britain was not willing to offer Denmark any support on par with the offer given to Norway. The British therefore were somewhat answerable to the situation, which the Danish representatives in the aftermath of the German occupation would have to face much criticism for. This, therefore, can provide a good reasoning to understanding the following chapters, where the focus is on the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories and in London and Washington DC, and the extent to which they were able to exert influence despite representing a government which collaborated with the enemy.

British policies with regard to the North Atlantic were simple: they had to hinder the Germans getting a foothold there, because with bases in the North Atlantic the Germans would not only pose a direct threat to the British isles, but they would also increase their effectiveness in intercepting the channel of supply from the United States, upon which the British relied heavily. However with limited military resources and subsequent reliance on the Americans, with whom they had an ambivalent relationship, means to combat the German menace were small. To hamper the German rearmament by cutting off the iron-ore traffic from Sweden to Germany therefore became the foremost goal of the British in the first period of the war, but there was one obstacle: the declared neutrality by the Scandinavian states.

Although the British were very much influenced by their concerns of American attitude towards them and the prospect of an American departure from isolationism to take a more active role in the war on the allied side, and despite of a direct correspondence taking place between F.D.R. and Churchill, there is no evidence of any joint Anglo-American policy towards the North Atlantic, nor that the matter is taken up at any stage by either part.

Like the neutrality of Scandinavia had obstructed British plans to stop the iron-ore traffic, so the neutrality of the North Atlantic clearly imposed restrictions on British plans there, but their considerations with the neutrality of the territories was also influenced by their different stages of independence, and that restriction was not lifted until the German occupation of Denmark. The examinations of the neutrality question present in British plans with regard to the Faroe Islands and Iceland shows that there are strong incentives that the British were deterred by the neutrality of the North Atlantic territories.

In the case of the Faroe Islands, because she was a Danish dependency and thus comprised by the Danish declaration of neutrality, the notion was that nothing could be done as long as Denmark herself was free and neutral. However, the possibility of Denmark being overrun by the Germans and thus losing her neutral status was taken into consideration, because that would change the situation of the Faroes, it was concluded, and the obstacle of Faroese neutrality could justifiably be overlooked. That, however, was not the case of Iceland. Because of her separate signature of the declaration, her neutrality would not be affected by a German occupation of Denmark.

Despite a majority of goodwill in Iceland towards the British, Iceland, like so many other countries, was hard hit by the economic crisis in the 1930s and she therefore relied heavily upon her trade. Although being within the British sphere of influence, Germany was successful in increasing her influence on the island, partly due to the lack of alarm raised in Britain to reports of increased German activity in Iceland, and partly due to British failure to meet Icelandic commercial and trade needs, to which the Germans responded to.

Since the likelihood of German plans of establishing bases in Greenland were perceived as unlikely the British did not pay the island much attention. To the Americans the island did not attract much interest either as long as she remained under Danish possession and her position thus was consistent with the Monroe Doctrine.

CHAPTER III: THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE FAROE ISLANDS: THE ROLE OF GOVERNOR HILBERT AND DANISH MINISTER IN LONDON COUNT REVENTLOW

The previous chapters introduced us to the historical background to the British decision to occupy the Faroe Islands. They also outlined the ambiguous relationship between Britain and Denmark following the reluctance of the Danes to put up a sufficient fight against the German threat to her neutrality.

Whereas Chapter I and II deal with the background to the situation, which the Danish representatives found themselves in on the eve of the German occupation of Denmark, this chapter and the following chapters will focus on the representatives, their personalities and their means to influence the British and the Americans in their policies towards the respective North Atlantic territories.

In this chapter the role of the Danish Minister in London and the Governor in the Faroe Islands and the extent of influence they were able to exert on the British is examined and compared to their Faroese and Norwegian counterparts' efforts. The Faroese case shows clear indications of the British ambiguity in their relationship towards the Danish representatives, however despite this, the chapter will show, the Danish Minister in London and the Danish Governor in the Faroe Islands were able to exert much influence on British policies towards the islands. The chapter will introduce the reader to the various variables and means through which the Danish representatives were able to achieve this influence. The comparison with the efforts of their Faroese and Norwegian counterparts also highlights the capability of the Minister in London and the Governor in the Faroes in making the most of the situation, the British ambiguity and the means available to influence the British to their and Denmark's advantage.

The case of the Faroe Islands differs from that of Iceland and Greenland in that the British throughout their occupation of the Faroes continuously were the centre of attention in an internal struggle between the Danish authorities on the one side and the Faroese independence movement and the Norwegian Consulate on the other side,

both parties pursuing to influence the British to their own advantage. This tri-polarity, i.e. between the occupiers, the Danish representatives and the locals, is not as present in the cases of Iceland and Greenland as it is in the case of the Faroes.

The German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940 required a substantial change in the administration and governance of the Faroe Islands. Although connections with the Government in Copenhagen were not completely severed by the German occupation of Denmark, communications with Copenhagen became restricted, especially after the British occupation of the islands four days later on April 13th. The fact that the Government in Copenhagen evidently was acting under German duress begged for a change in the administration of the islands.

The change of status quo introduced both new actors and new roles for existing actors with regard to the external and internal relations of the Faroe Islands. The most important actors were Governor Carl Aage Hilbert, Danish Minister in London Count Eduardo Reventlow, the Norwegian Consul in the Faroes Thorstein Petersen and his secretary Nils Ihlen, British Consul Frederic Mason, Lawrence Collier and E.O. Coote of the Foreign Office, Christopher Warner, head of the Northern Department at the Foreign Office, and John Dashwood likewise of the Northern Department, who was the office clerk, who mostly dealt with matters related to the Faroe Islands.

The first part of the chapter will introduce the initial plans by the British with regard to the occupation of the Faroe Islands. The declared policy by His Majesty's Government at the outset of the occupation was to become the decisive element in the Anglo-Danish-Faroes relations during the occupation. The declaration was from a political point of view loosely worded and because of the ambiguous situation in Denmark the British refrained from making a more clearly worded declaration throughout the occupation. This was to cause the British Consul on the islands, Frederic C. Mason, great difficulty, as he, more than once, would be caught in the middle of internal struggles between local 'Home Rule' politicians, demanding independence from Denmark, and the Danish Governor, Carl Aage Hilbert, both parties hankering for moral support from the occupying forces. Why, then, did the British not make their declared policy clearer?

The importance placed on the islands by the British very much relied upon the utility factor. Despite initial plans to use the islands as a flight- and fuelling base, the decision to build an aerodrome was put on hold. The postponement of an aerodrome on the Faroes and the subsequent decision to build an airbase in Iceland instead diminished the importance attached to the Faroes. As a result matters related to the Faroes rarely reached War Cabinet, but were mainly dealt with by office clerks at the Northern Department at the Foreign Office. Information about the islands were limited, so London very much relied upon the reports from their Consul on the islands to form their knowledge of the situation there during the occupation. The British Consul Mason incidentally was young and inexperienced and hence easily influenced. Thus, the party exerting most influence on Mason would be the most successful in shaping British attitudes and consequently influence their policies towards the Faroe Islands.

The second part of this chapter will look at the Danish contingent, of which the most important were Governor Hilbert and Count Reventlow. The Governor was true to the pledge he had made to his King upon his appointment and his mission was to keep the Faroes from changing as little as possible while cut off from Denmark and the King. Hilbert's only downfall was his elitism, which along with his stern aspiration to keep the Faroes' status quo blinded him to opportunities that could have eased Anglo-Danish-Faroese relations during the war. The problem, which the Danish representatives, especially in the Faroe Islands and Iceland, were faced with, was that their loyalties were constantly under scrutiny by the local independence movements. Hence, although they were granted by the British to continue in their positions, which they had been appointed to by a free Government prior to the German invasion, they had very little room for manoeuvre. Now their Government was controlled by the Germans they could no longer take instructions from Copenhagen, but neither could they officially denounce their Government, like the Danish Minister in Washington had done. By doing so they would in effect resign from their original appointment and this would only add fuel to the independence campaign to have them removed from the islands. The status of the Danish representatives thus very much depended upon event in Denmark. The signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact, the continuous collaboration of the Government and the lack of

resistance had its negative effect on the British attitude towards the Danish representatives. However, in late August 1943 things changed in Denmark. Following continual pressure and hardship by the Germans on the Danes, which culminated in unrest and strikes in different Danish cities on August 29th, the so-called August-revolt, the Government in Copenhagen resigned despite of refusals by King Christian to accept the resignation. Subsequently, martial law was declared by the Germans and this marked the final stage of co-operation of the Danish Government with the Germans, after which an intermittent government, the so-called Ministerial Government because it was run by the Ministries, was established and Danish subjects abroad officially joined the Allies. By this time, however, the conducts of the Danish Government had had so much damage on the Danish credibility and attitude amongst the British, that there was little difference, if any, to notice in their relationship with the Danish representatives with regard to the Faroe Islands.

Like Hilbert the Minister in London, Count Reventlow, was of the old school of diplomats dedicated to the pledge made to his King. He was therefore more reluctant to join the "Free Denmark" movement than some of his colleague, amongst them the Danish Minister in the United States, Henrik Kauffmann, who in the aftermath of the Second World War has been deemed more of a politician than a diplomat, as will be shown in Chapter V. His problem of joining the "Free Denmark" movement, therefore, did not have the added connotation of his change of position having effect on the internal affairs of his host country. Rather it was that with no Government in exile there was no 'highest body' of authority to which the representatives could refer. After the German occupation of Denmark a power vacuum was therefore created. The struggle for this power came to stand between Reventlow, Kauffmann and the Danish Office in London. The question was which tactic would win over most sympathy amongst the Danish diplomatic corps: to remain true to their appointment or to officially denounce their Government. This aspect of the situation of Danish representatives in exile will, however, not be examined in this chapter but in Chapter V.

The third part deals with the main Faroese actors. There was a clear divide between those, who saw the war and the break in communications with Copenhagen as an

opportunity to achieve more independence, and those who wanted the islands to remain as part of Denmark. On some issues, however, both sections were to meet in agreement, when it was evident that it would gain the population. The main opposition to Governor Hilbert came from the leader of the independence movement Jóannes Patursson, and Thorstein Petersen and Nils Ihlen at the Norwegian Consulate. They hoped that the British would help the Faroes gain independence from Denmark. Since the British, upon occupying the islands, had promised to respect Danish rights over the islands and not to interfere with internal affairs as long as Denmark was under German duress, the main objective of the Home Rulers was to undermine the competence of the Danish Governor. This was done by trying to portray Hilbert as the representative and adherent of a Government collaborating with the enemy.

A. BRITISH POLICIES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FAROES DURING THE OCCUPATION

When the British occupied the Faroe Islands, Churchill stated:

We are also at this moment occupying the Faroe Islands, which belong to Denmark and which are a strategic point of high importance, and whose people showed every disposition to receive us with warm regard. We shall shield the Faroe Islands from all the severities of war and establish ourselves there conveniently by sea and air until the moment comes when they will be handed back to the Crown and the people of a Denmark liberated from the foul thralldom in which they have been plunged by the German aggression.¹

With no clearer instructions of his and the military forces' code of conduct whilst in the Faroes, Consul Mason stated that "it is anticipated that the measures taken by His Majesty's forces to ensure the safety and protection of the Faroe Islands will entail a minimum of disturbance to the normal life of the islands and no modification of their internal administration,"² when he was handed the formal complaints to the occupation from the Danish Administration and Faroese Parliament, the Løgting. The uncertain situation of occupied Denmark during and after the war inevitably put the future of the Faroe Islands into question. Thus, although the British stated that their presence on the islands would only last as long as Denmark was occupied and

¹ PRO, FO 371/29279; FO 371/32761, Statement made in the House of Commons on the 11th April, 1940, by Mr. Churchill, First Lord of Admiralty

² PRO, FO 371/24783, Report by Consul Mason to Viscount Halifax, 15.04.1940

that during the occupation they would stay out of internal politics, the British themselves were reluctant to make any further commitment to either the Danes or the Faroese. Hence, after a meeting at the Foreign Office it was decided that with regard to British relations with the Faroe Islands "it would be better for the present not to define these too closely."³

Nils Arne Sørensen argues that one possible reason for British reluctance to let the Faroes sail their own sea with regard to the independence question was due to the fact that Denmark, like Britain, was a colonial power. Although it may be a contributing factor to the British policy towards the independence movement on the islands, it might be questioned because there were also voices within the Foreign Office as to whether the Faroes should be invited to join the British Empire in the light of Denmark being occupied by the Germans. These ideas, however, never reached the Faroes despite it being assumed by those reporting from the Faroe Islands prior to the occupation, that there was a general wish amongst the islanders "to join the British Empire on a similar status to that of Isle of Man."⁴

It was reasoned that

Short of Iceland coming in as our ally, or asking to be placed under British protections, there is no way, consistently with international law, in which we can make unrestricted use of her harbours. Similarly, we could only make unrestricted use of the harbours in the Faroes by Denmark coming into the war, or by the Faroes breaking away from Denmark and coming in on our side. The question could, however, be put to the Foreign Office to see if any political action is possible.⁵

Though, it does not appear that the British Government made any further consideration into the possibility of using political power to break the Faroes away from Denmark.

It was not until after the August 1943 crisis in Denmark that the British finally decided what their policy towards the Faroes in relation to Denmark was to be. Before that, the policy laid out had been rather weak in its formulation and always dependent upon the situation in Denmark.

³ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, report of meeting in Sir Orme Sargent's room 18.04.40

⁴ PRO, ADM 1/10739, PD 08116, 1939, min. 1, Use of Faroe Islands and Iceland, Plans Division, 02.11.39

⁵ PRO, ADM 1/10739, N.I.D. 00120/40, 03.04.40

1. Objective for occupying the Faroe Islands

Besides denying the islands to the Germans, one of the major reasons for occupying the Faroe Islands, along with the use of the islands as a fleet and refuelling base, was building an aerodrome on the islands in order to provide a base for the reconnaissance flights that covered the Northern Patrol and Atlantic Convoys. However, only a month after the occupation it was concluded that there was no suitable site for an aerodrome on the islands, and when it was decided to build an aerodrome in Iceland, shortly after she was occupied, the military importance of the Faroes diminished rapidly, not only in the eyes of the Air Ministry, but also the Navy, which in the end primarily used the Faroes as a refuelling base.

Compared to other British concerns during the Second World War the occupation of the Faroe Islands was a microscopic affair. Consequently, when issues related to the Faroes had to be decided upon, they were rarely debated in the War Cabinet, but usually dealt with in sub-committees concerned with the area. Even there, not much attention was paid to the Faroe Islands, since after it was decided not to build an aerodrome in the islands, there was little interest shown by officials in Britain. It was only when issues were raised by officials on the islands, that matters of the Faroes were attended to. Hence, the flow of initial stages of foreign policy making in relation to the Faroes during the occupation was more or less a one-way process, brought to attention by the British Consul, Frederic C. Mason, who was the official link between the British Government and the occupation forces, the Danish Governor, and the local politicians on the islands. The exception was the question of an aerodrome in the island, which was solely dealt with by the service departments.

In addition to this procedural flow of policy making was the pressure put on officials in the civil departments, particularly at the Foreign Office, by the Danish Minister in London, who, usually based on information from Hilbert, would do his best to influence the British to operate for the cause of continuous Danish governance of the Faroes.

While the occupation of the Faroe Islands was a cut across several Government agencies, the four most important were the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Air

Ministry, conducting the military aspects, while the Foreign Office handled the diplomatic aspects, as the Faroes were, in principal, still a neutral territory. Other Government departments, for example the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, the Ministry of Shipping, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Treasury, were involved too. Unlike the War Office or Air Ministry, the Admiralty was an operational headquarter; it exercised supreme command over the Royal Navy in all seas and oceans. Whereas the Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff and the Air Staff could only issue broad strategic directives to Command or theatre commanders-in-chief, the First Sea Lord (and Chief Naval Staff) could, if he so wished, personally control the day-to-day dispositions of fleets, task forces, squadrons and convoys, even individual ships.⁶ This ability to act independently came to have a decisive consequence for British policies towards the administration on the Faroe Islands after the 'Flag incident', (examined later in this chapter), which the Admiralty caused.

The fact that the plans to build an aerodrome on the islands did not materialise until 1943 and Iceland hence became the major base for the flight squadrons diminished the importance of the occupation of the Faroes. The occupation thus turned into a mere preventative operation, because it was still vital, that the Germans would not get a stronger foothold in the North Atlantic than they already had achieved by their invasion of Norway. It can therefore only be questioned whether an aerodrome on the islands from the start would have made much difference in the attention paid to the Faroes by officials in London; and if so, would Hilbert and Reventlow have succeeded to influence the British in the same way? Although neither the Danes nor the Faroese had anything to do with the decision whether or not to build an aerodrome in the islands, the decision process nevertheless is interesting and the outcome, as argued, was to have a bearing upon the importance attached to the occupation of the islands by the British.

⁶ Corelli Barnett, Engage the Enemy More Closely. The Royal Navy in the Second World War, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 52

a) Building an aerodrome on the islands

An airbase in the middle of the North Atlantic would enhance the security of the Atlantic Convoys as well as provide cover and support to the Northern Patrols, whose purpose was to stop German ships breaking through the blockade, which stretched from Northern Scotland to Iceland. However, it was concluded immediately after the occupation, that there was no suitable site in the islands for an aerodrome, and plans for such an air base were abandoned at first, despite there actually being two areas, that could be used for combined bases for sea- and airplanes.

As mentioned in Chapter I, plans to occupy the Faroe Islands and Iceland came about after the Foreign Office received reports of increased German activity in and around the islands. When it became evident that an occupation of the Faroes was inevitable, and that it was only a matter of time when it would take place, plans for the utilization of the islands began to take shape in the Plans Division of the Admiralty.⁷ These plans were, however, stalled in 1940 only to re-emerge in 1943, when the British looked to lose the Battle of the Atlantic.

Prior to the decision to build the aerodrome in the Faroe Islands, the military presence in the islands was limited. A month after the Royal Marines, about 200 men, had occupied the islands they were relieved by a battalion of the Lovat Scouts, a force of some 800,⁸ whose main objective was to defend the islands from any German attempt to occupy them. Despite the arrival of the Lovat Scouts, and later the Royal Air Force, the command of the islands remained with the Navy, as the Naval Officer-in-Charge assumed the charge as Fortress Commander. By the time the construction of the aerodrome commenced the islands saw the arrival of the first Pioneer Corps, soon followed by the Royal Air Force, which would be the strongest single force in the islands.⁹ The question of command of the islands was raised by the War Office and the Air Ministry, whose forces on the Faroes soon outnumbered those of the Navy by far and therefore felt that the command should lay with them.

⁷ PRO, ADM 1/10739, PD 08116, 1939, min.1, Use of Faroe Islands and Iceland. Plans Division, 02.11.39

⁸ PRO, FO 649/1, General Report - 1942, From the British Occupation to August 1942, by the British Consulate in Tórshavn, 06.09.42

⁹ PRO, AIR 15/483, Air Ministry to Sgd. P. B. Joubert, 30.06.42

But, despite these criticisms nothing was changed as the command of the islands had been deemed a naval one from the outset. The decision to build an aerodrome in the Faroes would thus require cooperation between the service departments, and would inevitably cause conflicts of interests as the different organisational commitments and general objectives would overlap and thus interfere with the operational procedures of each department, as was the case in the Battle of the Atlantic.

b) The “Battle of Air” in the “Battle of the Atlantic”

The decisive particulars in the decision-making process with regard to the aerodrome in the Faroe Islands were very much linked to the conflicting interests of the Admiralty and the Air Ministry coupled with the troubles the Atlantic Convoys and Northern Patrol encountered in the North Atlantic in forms of U-boat and ‘Wolf Pack’ operations orchestrated by the German Admiral Dönitz. Although limited by resources, with only 14 submarines at his disposal in the autumn of 1939, Dönitz had great success in his Atlantic campaign, reaching the highest weekly total of sinkings for the whole war in the period from the start of war until end of 1940: 1.5 million tons in the last six months of 1940.¹⁰

The growing threat posed by U-boats to merchant vessels en route to Britain was made clear to the War Cabinet by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston S. Churchill, in a report where figures of losses due to U-boat attacks on British trade during the first fortnight of the war reached a total of 147.000 tons and 28 ships.¹¹ In 1941, Dönitz’s U-boat successes were recognised by Hitler, who increased the priority given to the Atlantic Battle. Later, Dönitz changed tactics, and increased the number of cruisers in the Atlantic, and had at one point nearly 100 boats at sea at any one time operating in ‘wolf packs.’¹² This was the beginning to a battle so fierce and exhausting to the British Government that questions at times were raised whether Britain would win the war. Barnett thus argues that, “Britain’s fate depended on the conduct of the month-in, month-out battle of attrition in the Atlantic waters.”¹³

¹⁰ Clive Ponting, *Armageddon. The Reality Behind the Distortions, Myths, Lies, and Illusions of World War II*, Random House, New York, 1995. p. 146

¹¹ PRO, ADM 205/2, report of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, to the War Cabinet

¹² Ponting, *Armageddon*, pp. 146-7

¹³ Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, p. 251

Thus, in order to achieve its object the Navy was in badly need of more maritime patrol aircraft as the successes of Admiral Dönitz in the Battle of the Atlantic could only be diminished by adequate air cover, both in number and in technology. However, requests for more coastal aircraft were not met by the Royal Air Force, whose objectives lay in other theatres, mainly the bombing of German cities, and this struggle over aviation was to dominate the decision-making in the Battle of Atlantic, and was dubbed as “the Battle of Air” by First Sea Lord.¹⁴

Whether or not the construction of the aerodrome marked a shift in the attention given to the Faroe Islands in London is not clear. The aerodrome, however, was the first real investment made by the British on the islands, and in the aftermath of the decision to build it was taken, the British began to scrutinise their relations with the islands. As will be shown in the next section, the change of situation in Denmark and how the Danes responded to the German occupation had its effect on British attitudes towards the Danish representative in London. Although their commitment of interference with internal matters the British had respected the rule of the Governor in the Faroe Islands. However, by August 1943 the British question their policies towards the Faroes. “Various reports which we have received from time to time have suggested that there might be a certain amount of feeling among the officers and men in the Faroe Islands Force that our policy with regard to the Faroes is too pro-Danish and makes things difficult for them in their relations with the Faroese.”¹⁵

So how did it British policies towards the Faroes become too pro-Danish? Upon the arrival of the occupational forces it was noted that “the Governor has agreed to give His Majesty's Government all facilities and the Islands have in fact been occupied by a force of marines. All necessary discussions and negotiations will be carried on by H.M. Consul in consultation with the Officer Commanding H.M. Forces in the Island.”¹⁶ The Consul thus became the main channel for British policies towards the islands, and for the main actors on the Faroes the quest was to exert as much influence on him as possible in order to have the policies sway to their favour.

¹⁴ Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, p. 459

¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/36799, M4803/464/15, draft of memorandum from Warner and Coote, FO, to Lt. Col. C.P. Dawnay, WO, 30.08.1943 (although this is a draft, the changes suggested are mainly of a grammatical nature and have no bearing on the content and message of the memorandum.)

¹⁶ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, report of meeting in Sir Orme Sargent's room 18.04.40

The arrival of the extra forces, in connection with the building of the aerodrome, however, shifted the power slightly from Mason and the capital, Tórshavn. The British camp in Vágur, the island where the aerodrome was built, became by far the largest British contingency in the Faroes. Thus, while the original occupying forces had been spread out in the islands, with the headquarter in Tórshavn, the new forces, or rather their chiefs-in-command, were placed outside the Danish Governor's realm of influence, as the Governor rarely left the capitol. It was subsequently only after the arrival of these new forces in Vágur, that London began to receive reports, that were critical of the Danish authorities in the islands.

2. Consul Frederic Cecil Mason

Frederic C. Mason was only 26 years of age when he was appointed as British Consul in the Faroe Islands. His appointment, which took place immediately after the decision to occupy the islands was taken, was a clear indication of how taken aback Britain was by Germany's invasion of Denmark. Although plans had been made to occupy the islands no date was set and when given the instructions to go to the Faroes, Mason had already been told that he was to be sent to Iceland as an official at the Consulate there. The appointment therefore came as a surprise to Mason, who was only given "a quick verbal briefing and a letter signed by Lord Halifax the Foreign Secretary appointing me to be the new Consul."¹⁷ With no other guidelines but the speech, given by First Lord of the Admiralty in the House of Commons on April 11th, he left for the Faroes on H.M.S. "Suffolk", which also carried the occupying forces to the islands.

The Faroe Islands were therefore looked after by a young Consul, who, upon arrival, had no previous experience in the diplomatic service abroad. He had prepared himself to be posted to Iceland, and hence had limited knowledge about Faroese relations, internal as well as external, especially *vis-à-vis* Denmark. It was thus only natural that he engaged in a close professional relationship with the Danish Governor, who, older and more experienced in the field, more or less became his

¹⁷ Sørensen, Nils A., "Storbritannien og Det færøske Styre 1940-45", Historie (2) 1998, Jysk Selskab for Historie, p. 194 (based on interview with Mason by Sørensen in 1993)

mentor in the early stages. This professional relationship, however, also became a close private relationship epitomised by Hilbert being the best man when Mason married a Danish girl, Karen Rorholm, in 1941.¹⁸ It can therefore be questioned whether this close relationship, especially in the early stages, made Mason unintentionally reluctant to disrespect Hilbert by declining his requests or question the subjectivity of his advice. It was certainly insinuated by the Norwegian Consul Wendelbo that Mason was in Hilbert's pocket. However, "he would only remain in Hilbert's pocket as long as everyone else, caught in Hilbert's web, chose to remain silent and passively observe the tragic situation,"¹⁹ (translated) Wendelbo argued, which is possibly why Wendelbo and the rest of the Norwegian Consulate along with the Home Rulers made it their prime target to distort the image of Hilbert and his juridical right to remain in his post as Governor of the islands after the German occupation of Denmark. This aspect will be examined further in section C in this chapter.

In the case of the Faroe Islands, it was always Consul Mason, sometimes pushed by the Danish Governor on the islands, other times by request of the military staff or local politician, but mostly by his own initiative, who presented the Foreign Office with the problems in question. At the Foreign Office, it was primarily John Dashwood in the Northern Department, who dealt with Faroese issues, which then had to be approved by his superiors Laurence Collier, Christopher Warner, Clarke or E.O. Coote. In London, the Danish Minister, Count E. Reventlow, tried to influence these policy-makers in the Foreign Office to serve the Danish interests in the islands and help the Danish Governor on the islands do his job.

Being the British Consul on the islands, Mason was the most important source of information from the islands to the Foreign Office, as all correspondence from the islands to the world outside had to go through him. Thus, every letter or request from the Faroe Islands that arrived at the Foreign Office for further distribution would entail comments by Mason on the jacket. The Foreign Office would seldom get reports from the military officials on the islands, as all their communication would

¹⁸ Ólavur Christiansen, *Villinistíggir Upplýstir*, Forlagið Føroyaklettur, Tórshavn 1998, p. 126

¹⁹ RA, UD/9974/2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Wendelbo, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 01.09.42

go directly to their respective departments, unless it concerned a matter, which had to be dealt with or was at interest for the Foreign Office, and in those cases it would go through Mason. Thus, it can be argued that Mason exercised an almost monopoly on the information the Foreign Office received from the Faroes, hence also on the impression they would base their considerations upon in the various matters; until the arrival and set up of base-camp Vagar, where the airport was built, that is.

It could be argued that this situation to some extent was exploited by the Governor and the Danish Minister in London, as they were aware that their correspondence would be read, both by Mason and by office clerks at the Foreign Office before being distributed further, and thus could influence the British conception of issues without directly approaching the officials themselves. At the Foreign Office reports and memos were usually processed by Dashwood before being discussed by his supervisors. Their impression of the matter would therefore very likely be swayed by Dashwoods interpretation, which again depended upon the information Mason chose to pass on to the Foreign Office.

An indication of how much Mason was influenced by Hilbert during his stay on the islands is shown when Mason's second successor (his first successor, Price, stayed only on the islands for few a months) Norman Vorley reported to London after his arrival to the Faroes. In his reports Vorley clearly did not share Mason's gusto for Hilbert, and found him rather pompous

I have always attached importance to "first impressions" and mine are unfavourable regarding "Governor" Hilbert; his weakness is as evident as his colossal vanity...I assure you I have not been influenced by the opinions of Captain Corbett, R.N., or Colonel Mackay (O.C. Troops), both are definitely adverse concerning his reliability.²⁰

It was also pointed out in a report by the Consulate in Tórshavn that

The Governor is personally too pompous and unbending for the Faroese...and it is only recently that he has shown himself ready to accept advice and assistance from many influential people who could support him. He travels little and surrounds himself in Thorshavn with Danish or strongly "Samband" (Unionist) Faroese people. He is seldom seen in the streets, and when he occasionally makes speeches in public he emphasises with almost Goebbelsesque insistence the Danishness of his

²⁰ PRO, FO 371/36819, from Norman Vorley to Warner 08.07.43

Faroese audience, in the same way as the opposition emphasise their Nordic qualities, the Norwegian connexion etc.²¹

Although Mason would be much under the influence of Hilbert during the remainder of his stay on the islands, and despite the British promise and intention not to interfere with internal relations, there is one incident in particular that stands out in the history of the British occupation of the Faroe Islands: the Flag case.

a) The Flag Case

Although promising 'not to intervene in internal political issues' upon his arrival, it only took Mason 11 days before he had to do just that in the 'Flag incident'; but that case was atypical for the remainder of the occupation. However, relations between Mason, Hilbert and the Faroese politicians were marked by this incident afterwards.

It is generally assumed by people in the Faroes that Mason is to be credited for the fact that the Faroe Islands today have their own flag, 'Merkið', and are not still obliged to fly 'Dannebrog' as they were prior to the occupation. However, although Mason did make the decisive decision in the flag question, he was forced into making a hasty decision under pressure from Danish, Faroese and British officials because of organisational misunderstandings between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office.

Prior to the war the Faroe Islands did not have a national flag, and therefore the Danish 'Dannebrog' was used. A flag, 'Merkið', with a red and blue cross on a white background, had been designed by the independence movement, but was forbidden by the Danish authorities on the islands. However, after Denmark was occupied by the Germans, all vessels flying Dannebrog had to be identified as enemy vessels, also the Faroese, which now, after the British occupation of the islands, technically belonged to the allies. Being aware that the British sooner or later would demand that Faroese vessels no longer fly 'Dannebrog' because of security reasons, Hilbert brought up the question of which flag should replace 'Dannebrog' even before Mason arrived on the islands. The then acting British Consul, Mr. Valdemar Lützen,

²¹ PRO, FO 649/1, Faroe Islands: General Report – 1942 (From the British Occupation to August 1942) 06.09.42

told Hilbert that Faroese vessels without a doubt would continue to sail under 'Dannebrog'. The same answer was given by Consul Mason shortly after his arrival. Nevertheless, internal political struggles, and amongst those a demand by the independence movement for recognition of the 'rebel' flag 'Merkið', kept Hilbert agitated and eager to find a solution that would fall in his favour. After informing Reventlow about the situation, an official at the Danish Ministry in London, Gustav Rasmussen, was appointed to design a new flag.²² Though, the matter did not seem to be too urgent, as Mason had reassured Hilbert that 'Merkið' under no circumstances would be considered as an option, and that the decision would rest with the Danish Administration in cooperation with the Løgting.

The preparations for launching the new flag, therefore, had not progressed much by April 21st when two Faroese vessels entered Tórshavn harbour flying 'Merkið' and with 'FAROES' painted over 'DENMARK' on the bow.²³ It took everyone by surprise, Consul Mason, Governor Hilbert, and the Foreign Office, and when asked, the skippers told them that they had been ordered to do so by harbour officials whilst in Aberdeen. However, when the Admiralty reported the following day to the Foreign Office and Consul Mason, they admitted having ordered the Faroese vessels to fly under a different flag than the Danish, but the Admiralty denied having anything to do with what flag was chosen.²⁴

This turned out to be the biggest crises in Anglo-Danish-Faroe relations during the war, because the Danish authorities refused to recognise 'Merkið' and saw this gesture as a British way of signalling their support to the independence movement. Also, it caused great confusion at the Foreign Office, as they were bypassed in a matter, which they had to be consulted in, and they were therefore anxious to find the culprit, something, as it turned out, was almost impossible to do, due to the organisational muddle within the service departments, where too little information was shared between the departments.

²² Niels Juel Arge, *Stríðsárini 1940-45*, Vol. I, Forlagið Hvessingur, Tórshavn, 1985, p. 81

²³ Arge, *Stríðsárini 1940-45*, Vol. I, p. 70

²⁴ PRO, FO 371/24783 Report by Dashwood, His Majesty's Government's Attitude with regard to the Administration of and existing Constitution in the Faroes, 20.09.41

An inquest was made into why 'Merkið' had been chosen by the Admiralty, and according to information the Admiralty had received, the British Consul on the Faroes together with the Faroese Authorities had made arrangements "for Faroese owned vessels to fly a Faroese National flag of apparently new design." Consultations with the Naval Control Service Officer at Aberdeen showed that 'the Customs War Department insisted on the Faeroese vessels wearing the (offending) flag before he gave them clearance.' Thus, the Admiralty denied that the Naval Control Service Officer had, himself, anything to do with the choice of flag."²⁵ The whole report from the Admiralty left the Foreign Office baffled, as events and arrangement, that they had no recollection of, were mentioned, as well as Naval departments and titles, that were unfamiliar to them.²⁶

The Foreign Office was not able to establish who was to blame for the mistake and concluded, that the blame had to lie with the Faroese skippers, who had taken advantage of the ignorance of the Admiralty to recommend 'Merkið', which had hitherto not been recognised officially, as the alternative to 'Dannebrog'. However, taken into consideration that the Admiralty was able to exercise supreme command over the Royal Navy, and hence decisions could be taken without informing or counselling the other departments, it seems likely that this is what has happened. The following account of the events seems to support this explanation.

According to interviews with the skippers in question, Niels Juel Arge was able to uncover some of what really happened, however not what the exact organisational procedure of the matter was. On April 13th the sloop 'Eysturoyggin' was embarked by three British officers near the Orkneys, who immediately stroke 'Dannebrog' and hoisted 'Merkið', which the skipper, by chance, had onboard. When the sloop reached Kirkwall in the Orkneys, the skipper was given a letter to the authorities in Aberdeen, where they arrived on the 15th. The next day people came onboard and asked for the flag, according to which several copies were made immediately, and the following day 'Merkið' was painted on the bow and 'FAROES' written on the

²⁵ PRO, FO 371/24783, Report by Dashwood, His Majesty's Government's Attitude with regard to the Administration of and existing Constitution in the Faroes, 20.09.41

²⁶ PRO, FO 371/24783, Report by Dashwood, His Majesty's Government's Attitude with regard to the Administration of and existing Constitution in the Faroes, 20.09.41

wheelhouse instead of 'Dannebrog' and 'DENMARK'. Hence, according to the investigations made by the Admiralty into their own handling of the matter, their officials in Orkneys and Aberdeen were operating according to what they believed to be correct instructions from the Foreign Office, whereas the Foreign Office, from their point of view, could not understand how the Admiralty could have gotten the wrong impression of the matter. When the vessels arrived in Tórshavn flying 'Merkið', Mason was instantly put under pressure, both from Hilbert and the 'Home Rulers', to make a formal decision as to what flag should be used. Hilbert immediately announced that he under no circumstances could accept 'Merkið', and that a British acceptance of the flag would be a breach of their stated policy of not interfering with internal politics. Mason thus constructed a third flag, a white cross on a green cloth, and intended to implement this to solve the problem. But, when the Faroese learned about his plans to authorise a green flag instead of 'Merkið', they gathered in large crowds to demonstrate against the plan.

Mason had maintained from the outset, that the flag decision would have to be decided by the local authorities, but when Hilbert was not able to secure a majority against the use of 'Merkið' within the War Committee, set up by him and the Løgting at the beginning of the occupation, he left the decision with Mason, but emphasised his objections if Mason was to implement 'Merkið'.²⁷ It can be argued, that because this incident took place at an early stage, Mason was not yet much influenced by the more experienced Hilbert, and therefore acted according to his own judgements, which, after the agreement in the War Committee and demonstrations, told him that there was a strong wish shared by most Faroese, for the vessels to sail under 'Merkið'. It does not seem that there has been much time either for Mason to confer with his superiors in London from when the decision was handed to him, because of the deadlock situation in the administration on the islands, till the decision was taken. There is no correspondence about the flag situation prior to April 25th, which is when he authorised the Faroese vessels to sail under 'Merkið'.

In order to restore Hilbert's confidence in the British, Mason had to, at Hilbert's request, make a public statement saying:

²⁷ Arge, Stríðsárin 1940-45, Vol. I, pp. 64-78

“I am to state that the present arrangement made for the use of the Faroese flag at sea is a temporary practical measure designed to avoid that necessity for Faroese-owned ships to fly the British flag like other Danish shipping. His Majesty’s Government have no intention of intervening in the question of which flag should be flown on land in the Faroe Islands, and in general they desire that the Islands shall continue to be administered by Your Excellency in co-operation with the Føroya Løgting, subject only to such security regulations as may be necessary for the safety of the occupying forces.”²⁸

The Flag incident left Anglo-Danish relations strained. On April 26th, immediately after the Flag-case, the British noted that “the British Council and troops are very popular, but Governor is not entirely convinced of our intentions.”²⁹ For the remainder of the occupation the Governor and the Minister in London would subsequently request,³⁰ and be given, reassurance by the British that they would not interfere with internal affairs on the islands. The Foreign Office even went a step further following a report handed to them by Iversen, one of the more active members of the Danish Council after his visit to the Faroes:

We have already made a declaration that we wish the administration of the Islands to be conducted by him [Hilbert] in collaboration with the Lagting, and have generally shown that he has our full support. We have followed up that declaration by arming the Consul with a further declaration for use in support of the Governor if he encounters serious trouble from the Lagting. This was done as the result of a request to that effect by Mr. Hilbert.³¹

Thus, Hilbert’s mistrust of the British did not have a lasting effect, as he soon realised that the British would stick to their policy of non-interference, whether they agreed on the issues or not. Thus, in the end the Flag incident indirectly presented Hilbert with an upper hand with the British in his struggle against the Home Rulers. This decision by the Foreign Office, which would prove the strongest weapon against the independent movement, also demonstrated how easy it was for the Danes to sway the British in their favour during that first period of the occupation. The decision was taken by Dashwood, an office clerk, following a report by a member of the Danish Council and conversations with Hilbert. It might only be guessed if the Danes had

²⁸ PRO, FO 371/29278, From Mason to His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, FO, 25.04.1941

²⁹ PRO, FO 371/24783, Report by Dashwood, His Majesty’s Government’s Attitude with regard to the Administration of and existing Constitution in the Faroes, 20.09.41

³⁰ PRO, FO 371/29278, report by Warner, FO, on conversation with Hilbert, 18.09.41

³¹ PRO, FO 371/29278, from Dashwood to Hambro, 06.09.41

been as successful had the independence movement had the same channels of communication and influence, and the same experience in diplomacy, as the Danes possessed. As will be demonstrated later in the chapter, exactly this lack of entrepreneurship and lack of diplomatic education amongst the leaders of the independence movement would harm their chances of having much influence on the British.

B. THE DANISH GOVERNOR ON THE FAROE ISLANDS AND THE DANISH MINISTER IN LONDON

As has already been established, one of the main actors in Anglo-Danish-Faroese relations was the Danish Governor on the Faroe Islands. The centrality of his position was stated by a report by Iversen to the Foreign Office in 1941: "A close connection exists between the British authorities and the governor. However, as British authorities refrain from interfering with local administration, all necessary arrangements must be made through Danish administration (Governor)."³²

1. Governor (Amtmand) Carl Aage Hilbert

C. A. Hilbert was appointed the post as Governor (Amtmand) in the Faroe Islands in 1936. He was thus, at the time of the occupation, already involved in the internal politics, especially in the conflict with those who wished for more independence to whom he was the acting symbol for what they opposed.

Prior to the occupation, Hilbert had only advisory powers and no legislative powers, as these lay with the Government in Copenhagen. While the Løgting functioned as an advisory council to the Governor and the Danish Government, but nevertheless possessed considerable influence on laws made by the Danish Government for the islands. However, with the looming conflict and German threat the Danish Government had taken a precautionary step to increase the powers of the County Governors and provide him with the powers of an interim-governance in case the country was invaded and communications with Copenhagen were severed. When connections with the Danish Government eventually were severed on April 9th 1940

³² PRO, FO 371/29278, report by Iversen, Danish Council, Visit to Faroe Islands 15.08 – 02.09.41, 07.09.41

the future of the administration of the Faroes, despite this precaution taken, was uncertain. Heavy critique from the opposition to the validity of the Danish administration representing a government under German rule and the subsequent arrival of the British forces, who were in war with Germany, could easily have diminished the Danish claim to continuous governance of the Faroe Islands. However, after some hefty debates at the Løgting, Hilbert, with help from his supporting parties, the Unionists, Social Democrats and the Home Rule Party, succeeded in gaining the right to assume the functions of government.³³ This entailed that all laws should be proposed either by the Governor or the Løgting, that they should be discussed freely by the Løgting, and most important of all: that the Governor would have the right of veto.³⁴ This, as could be expected, did not go down well with the Home Ruler's, who criticised the British for allowing this 'dictatorship' to go by unnoticed "as everyone knows that Britain has gone to war against dictatorship in Germany, and that the British war aim is to liberate the small countries."³⁵ Thus, the Governor became the sole representative of the Danish Crown and Government in the islands, and consequently had to guard Danish interests and policies towards the islands against the independence movement, which saw the occupation as an opportunity to gain more power as all ties with Denmark were severed and the British occupying forces had the power to oppose the Governor, who maintained his position only because it was in the British interest to do so. This was because the British had a moral obligation to the Danish Government, having promised to only guard the islands from the enemy and not interfere with internal relations. Also, although it was speculated by officials in London before the occupation whether the Faroes could possibly join the British Empire after the war, it was not considered a desired option.

After the flag incident Danish authorities, both on the islands and in London, made sure that the British would not commit a 'mistake' again, which would weaken the Danish position in the islands. When Merkið was accepted by the British, questions were raised with regard to the British support of the Danish administration. Time and

³³ Sølvará, H.A.: Løgtingið 150, Bind I, Løgtingið, Tórshavn, 2002, p. 238

³⁴ PRO, FO 371/24783, FO 371/29278, N 5610, Report by Dashwood, His Majesty's Government's Attitude with regard to the Administration of and existing Constitution in the Faroes, 20.09.41

³⁵ Dagblaðið, 11.05.40

time again Hilbert presented his position as becoming weaker in light of the independence struggle, and therefore asked for British reassurance that they still were sticking to the line they announced upon their arrival, and in London Reventlow would advocate the same to Warner, Clarke or Dashwood, and each time the British would issue such a statement. Subsequently all statements from Mason would end with these lines "...in general they [His Majesty's Government] desire that the Islands shall continue to be administered by Your Excellence in co-operation with the Føroya Løgting, subject only to such regulations as may be necessary for the safety of the occupying forces."³⁶ The Foreign Office even went as far as to ask Mason to issue a letter of confirmation, which Hilbert then could use if he would feel the need to do so. By doing so, they gave Hilbert the ability to refer to British backing in issues without actual approval of the British in the matter concerned.

Hilbert and Reventlow also tried to justify the Danish reluctance to curtail their persistence of not letting any constitutional changes taking place in the Faroes, despite strong local wishes to do so, by indirectly portraying the Faroese as difficult. Hilbert, for example, touched upon the departure of Fortress Commander Crowther in a letter to the Foreign Office and praised him because "he has succeeded in reconciling firmness with fairness – an important success with a people who are sometimes difficult to handle."³⁷ This view of the Faroese was also presented to the Foreign Office in a report by Iversen (one of the more active members of the Danish Council in London), who, after his visit to the islands, was all but impressed by the locals. He defended Hilbert's position by implying that amongst the Faroese "whatever is consider wrong to-day and not in their personal interest is viewed as the fault of the Danish administration and in particular as the fault of the Governor."³⁸ He too, therefore, urged the British to show their support as "the character of the Faroese is such that a definite demand, they understood was voiced by British authorities...would be adhered to by the Faroese without discussion."³⁹ These representations of the locals seem to have influenced Dashwood, because despite

³⁶ PRO, FO 371/29278, from Mason to H.M.'s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 25.09.41

³⁷ PRO, FO 371/29279, from Mason to H.M.'s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26.10.41

³⁸ PRO, FO 371/29278, report by Iversen, Visit to Faroe Islands. 15.08.-02.09, 1941, 07.09.41

³⁹ PRO, FO 371/29278, report by Iversen, Visit to Faroe Islands. 15.08.-02.09, 1941, 07.09.41

having never been in the Faroes, he refers to the Løgting as “little better than a Parish Council in this country, and the mentality of the majority of its members is correspondingly limited.”⁴⁰ Another indication of the success of the Danes in influencing the Foreign Office’s appreciation of the Governor in the first year or two was when Hilbert made an official visit to London in September 1941. In a letter to the Government Hospitality Fund Warner wrote

Since the separation of the Faroes from Denmark, as a result of the German occupation, the Governor has been obliged to take on his own shoulders the main responsibility for the maintenance of the local administration and for the promulgation of such laws and orders as have from time to time been necessary. He is therefore virtually in the position of the supreme civil authority in the Faroes and it is consequently of great importance that he should be well-disposed and work in close collaboration with the commanders of the British garrison and the Consul at Thorshavn. In point of the fact he has, from the first days of the occupation, shown himself most helpful and friendly and the Consul has recommended that, while the Governor is over here, the opportunity should be taken of showing official appreciation of his attitude, since this would not only encourage him personally, but would help to strengthen his hands in dealing with certain recalcitrant elements in the Faroes which have tended to upset the working of the existing administration which it is to the interest of HMG to maintain.⁴¹

The Foreign Office, however, as mentioned earlier, also received reports from the islands that indicated the opposite, namely that the “Danish policy towards the Faroes is in general somewhat narrow and unsympathetic to Faroese sentiments...the Danes in the islands tend to form a small exclusive set with little contact with the population in general.”⁴² These reports were not dismissed, although their tone surprised the Foreign Office, and considerations were made as to whether they should be more cautious in supporting Hilbert, especially after the Danish Government capitulated, and whether they should instruct him to be less rigid. It was also anticipated by Clarke at the Foreign Office that Mason probably was more influenced by the Governor, than hitherto perceived, and was portraying the locals according to Danish official opinion; “I suspect that Mr. Mason’s view was an

⁴⁰ PRO, FO 371/29279, report by Dashwood, His Majesty's Government's Attitude with regard to the Constitutional position in the Faroes, 01.11.41

⁴¹ PRO, FO 371/29326, Warner, FO, to Crankshaw, Government Hospitality Fund, 09.09.41

⁴² PRO, FO 371/32761, Memorandum by Mr. Turville Petre of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

expression of Danish official opinion rather than that of the Faroese in general.”⁴³ However, as long as Mason seemed to be supporting Hilbert, and no serious crisis broke out, the Foreign Office did not pay much attention to reports indicating Hilbert’s flaws in representing the Faroese people alongside the Danish Government, and correspondingly their policies towards the Faroes were predominantly in favour to the requests of the Danish administration, rather than those of the independence movement.

With guarding Danish interests being his main objective, it is easy to understand Hilbert’s fierce protection of all aspects of Danish interests in the islands, up to the point where he was, even by Mason, perceived as inflexible and stubborn in his persistence to maintaining the status quo. However, although political events in Copenhagen, such as the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1941 and the full governmental collaboration with Nazi Germany, which under other circumstances would have invalidated his position, it was not in the British interest to take over the administration of the islands. An indication of this British position was when the matter was acute they suggested Hilbert to make a statement emphasising “that he [was] merely repudiating (a) Government which [was] temporarily acting under duress and that allegiance of himself and members of his Administration to King Christian and Denmark [remained] unimpaired.”⁴⁴

a) Hilbert and the “Free Denmark” movement

With no connection with their Government in Copenhagen and with the absence of a government in exile Danes abroad felt the brunt of not having a central authority outside Denmark. Soon after the German invasion of Denmark “Free Denmark” movements were established by Danes in exile. However, the association’s goal was not to act as an authority but to rally Danes together to do their bit, whether it be to collect money, raise awareness of the Danish situation or to recruit men to serve the Allies in order to liberate Denmark. As will be demonstrated in chapter V the lack of a government in exile created a power vacuum and a competition for that power

⁴³ PRO, FO 371/32761, Minute by Clarke on a memorandum received from Mr. Turville Petre, 20.11.42

⁴⁴ PRO, FO 371/29279, telegram from FO to British Consulate, Tórshavn, 06.12.41

amongst the Danes in exile, especially those in London and in Washington. Hilbert, however, did not embrace the idea of a Danish Government in exile.⁴⁵

The Foreign Office in London expressed much interest in the establishment of a Free Denmark movement in the Faroes, since this movement also recruited men to fight on the allied side (in order to liberate Denmark essentially). The “Free Denmark” Faroese branch was established on November 11th 1941, but Hilbert did not officially express his sympathies with the movement, although he initiated the steps to its establishment and everyone knew that his sympathies lay with the movement. The reason for him refraining from publicly joining the movement was that he was afraid of the repercussions it would have on relations with the Faroese, especially those who advocated Faroese independence. While most Danes in the islands were members of the Free Denmark movement, however the other two important Danish officials, Judge Bonnevie and Chief of Police Westerby took the same precautionary measures as Hilbert and keep a distance from the movement. There was also a considerable number of Faroese members.

The “Free Denmark” movement in the Faroes was met by opposition immediately after its establishment. According to Hilbert’s diary he was visited by the three party leaders, with whom he collaborated with in the Løgting, expressing their concerns that the establishment of the movement might cause reprisals from the Germans. The three party leaders pointed out that there was a strong belief amongst many Faroese that there was a reason why German airplanes so far only had bombed ships and harbours. The Faroese believed that the Danish King and Government somehow had influenced the Germans such that they would spare the villages. Hence the fear amongst the population that the news of the establishment of a Faroese branch of “Free Denmark” would change this German attitude towards their islands.⁴⁶ In a closed meeting at the Løgting on November 28th 1941 Home Ruler, Patursson, called for the abolition of the association. He based his argument on the fact that the Faroes had declared their neutrality and that the “Free Denmark” movement was not neutral,

⁴⁵ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.IV), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, p. 2

⁴⁶ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.IV), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, p. 3

therefore it could not exist in the Faroes. According to Hilbert the attitude of Unionist, Samuelsen, was more moderate. He was of the belief that the Løgting should not start a precedence of abolishing societies or associations expressing their sympathies with either side, just because the Faroes were neutral. Samuelsen had also pointed out that so far private expressions of sympathy for the German cause, as well as for the British cause, had been tolerated. To further his argument Patursson pointed out that what the association sets out to accomplish was a free Denmark, thus to work against the present policies of the Danish Government and its consulates and actively support the British cause. There were unneutral acts and therefore would initiate German reprisals.⁴⁷

As for the reaction amongst the Faroese population to Hilbert's declaration of joining the Free Danes, Hilbert wrote in his diary

I do not think that my declaration of joining the Free Danes on the whole has had any effect upon the Faroese. Most of the Faroese, who have not themselves joined the movement, see the movement as irrelevant. Some may well understand that a return to a free and fully democratic Denmark will have some effect upon the future status of the Faroe Islands, but as for the issue of Danish freedom for the sake of Denmark itself does not interest the Faroese any more than Norway's or any other occupied country's liberation.⁴⁸ (translated)

Although supported by the British Hilbert wanted full adherence at least from the three parties with whom he collaborated before taking any action. The declaration of Hilbert joining the "Free Denmark" movement and consequently denouncing the Danish Government in its present form was made on December 1st 1942.

In the end the "Free Denmark" movement in the Faroes did not achieve much and was mostly regarded by the locals as a social gathering; the Norwegian Consul Wendelbo even compared it with a knitting club where Danes and those supporting the Danish Governor met for coffee and a good gossip.⁴⁹ The British, who had put

⁴⁷ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VI), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmænd C.A. Hilbert, p. 7

⁴⁸ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1. Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939, (A.II.), bilag nr. 16, NR. 4066, Letter from Hilbert to Reventlow 13.02.43

⁴⁹ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Wendelbo, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, 01.09.42

much hope to the movement, were not impressed either. In a report to the Foreign Office the Consul wrote that “it has not yet shown itself at all helpful in the matter of salvage, Red Cross collection or propaganda, and can hardly be said to justify its existence as yet.”⁵⁰ Thus, its establishment had only served the independence propaganda in the islands as it had “been subjected to attacks from the Home Rulers and others who saw in it something “unneutral.””⁵¹

In 1942 there were talks within Danish circles in Britain about sending those Danish soldiers, who had voluntarily joined the British army to the Faroes. At first instance it was believed that such a move would strengthen the Governor’s position in the islands. More significantly, it would provide an enormous boost to the morality of Danes, both at home in Denmark and abroad, to know that Danes were guarding this segment of free Danish land alongside the British against the common enemy. Such a move would also strengthen the bond between the Danish and the Faroese, it was believed.⁵² The issue, however, failed to get support. Reventlow pointed out that the situation in the Faroes was too complicated and that sending Danish troops to the islands would only make matters worse.⁵³ The same sentiment was shared by John Christmas Møller, a Danish politician in exile in London, who went to visit the Faroes in the summer of 1942. “The question was raised, whether some Danish volunteers could be sent to the Islands amongst the British soldiers. In one way I should like it, but I think it will be wiser not to send either Danish or Norwegian soldiers to the Islands to prevent any incidents.”⁵⁴ The same J. Christmas Møller, the former leader of the Conservative Party, was to cause much controversy, not only in the Faroes, but also amongst the Danish representatives, as he initially remained in the Danish Government after the German occupation, but only left Denmark after the Germans started to put more pressure and demands on the Danish Government. He was subsequently the subject of much criticism and speculation with regard to what his morals and motives were.⁵⁵ That debate, however, did not have much bearing on

⁵⁰ PRO, FO 649/1, General Report on the occupation, August 1942

⁵¹ PRO, FO 649/1, General Report on the occupation, August 1942

⁵² SA, 8.H.25/1961/372, Overførelse af danske soldater til Færøerne, from Sødring, Leith, to Danish Council, London, 04.01.42

⁵³ SA, 8.H.25/1961/372, Overførelse af danske soldater til Færøerne, from Reventlow, London, to Consul Schacke, Leith, 18.06.42

⁵⁴ SA, 8.H.27/1909-45/0002, letter from J. Christmas Møller to Warner, FO, 26.08.42.

⁵⁵ Dimmalætting, 10.11.42, “Aabent brev til J. Christmas Møller” by Thorstein Petersen

Anglo-Danish-Faroe relations as such, although it was a strong feature in the conflict between the Governor and the Home Rulers. It will, nevertheless, be examined more thoroughly in Chapter V, where the focus will be set on the power struggle amongst the Danes in exile, as Christmas Møller became the Chairman of the Danish Council after his arrival in London, and thus became one of the contenders for that power.

b) Reactions in the Faroes to the Danish signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact

The signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact by the Danish Government increased the pressure of Danish representatives abroad to officially denounce their Government in Copenhagen, as their opponents grasped the opportunity to further question their allegiance. The situation was no different in the Faroes. "I have noted that in his letter M. Ihlen enquires whether there will be any change in the Danish Administration of the Faroes following the adherence of Denmark to the Anti-Comintern Pact and that he is apparently under the impression that the Governor is in regular communication with the Copenhagen Government."⁵⁶ The British, however, decided to let the doubts be in Hilbert's favour and continued to give him their support. "It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government that there should be any change in the Administration of the Faroes in consequence of the Danish Government's signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact and that we have no reason to believe that Mr. Hilbert is in correspondence with the Danish Government as suggested by M. Ihlen, except with our approval and consent in regard to minor routine and humanitarian matters,"⁵⁷ Warner at the Foreign Office informed the Norwegians in London. The situation, nevertheless, begged for the Danish representatives to manifest where their allegiances lay in order to remove all doubt.

Following the news of the Danish signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact Reventlow declared that "although he remained loyal to his King he did not see himself fit to take orders from the Nazi-controlled Danish Government and that he from now on would act as a representative of the 'free Denmark'."⁵⁸ In the aftermath of this declaration Hilbert received a demarche from the British consul, questioning whether

⁵⁶ RA, UD-10440/25.3 Norden. Nordisk samarbeid...Færøyene. Politiske forhold. Bind I & II, from Warner, FO, to Rasmus Skylstad, UD, London, 29.12.41

⁵⁷ RA, UD10440/25.3 Norden. Nordisk samarbeid...Færøyene. Politiske forhold. Bind I & II, from Warner, FO, to Rasmus Skylstad, UD, London, 29.12.41

⁵⁸ SA, 8.H.22/1961/372, letter from Mason to Hilbert 03.12.41

the Governor and the Løgting planned to take any steps with regard to the Danish Government's accession to the Pact. Although Mason did not question Hilbert's loyal cooperation nor where his sympathies lied in the war, he nevertheless wanted an official declaration confirming that Hilbert's administration was completely independent of the German-controlled Government in Denmark. Mason was of the belief that it was desirable to see the Governor make such a declaration to the Løgting. Such a declaration at this important point in the war would be of huge importance to future relations between the Faroe, Britain and a free Denmark, the British stressed. It would remove the ambiguity of Hilbert's position in the islands and the British relation to his administration, and thus would mark a new era for the natural development of the Faroese nation as this element of dispute would be taken out of the equation,⁵⁹ the British argued. According to Hilbert, Mason also suggested that Hilbert should declare that the Faroese should expect that Denmark after the war would give all Faroese national wishes a fair treatment in accordance with the wishes the majority of the population expressed. By doing so the Governor would secure continuous cooperation with the majority of the Løgting and at the same time tie in Faroese interests with the interests of the "Free Denmark" movement. Mason also expressed that although the Governor and the Danish Government hitherto had enjoyed the support of His Majesty's Government in matters concerning the Faroese wish for independence, he could no longer vouch for such support after the Danish Government had signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. Hilbert, however, refrained from making any promise to Mason until he had had communication with Reventlow on the matter. Hilbert also wanted to confer with some of the Faroese politicians and county chiefs. At a meeting with Unionist Johan Poulsen and county chief Djurhuus they agreed that the situation begged for a reaction of some sort. However, the action chosen should be the one that would be least damaging for Faro-Dano relations. A very difficult situation would arise if the wrong action was taken and the Governor was dismissed by the Government in Copenhagen as a result, like his colleague in Washington was. Incidentally Ólavur Christiansen points out that the British were clear about what would happen should Hilbert abdicate or be dismissed. In such a case the Danish Legation in London would be allowed to appoint a successor, but only with British approval. This attitude of the British was unknown to the Faroese,

⁵⁹ SA, 8.H.22/1961/372, letter from Mason to Hilbert 03.12.41

it appears. According to Christiansen the belief amongst the politicians and members of the Lagting was that should Hilbert leave his post, the administration of the island would be fully taken over by the Faroese.⁶⁰ This explains why the Home Rulers were so anxious to have Hilbert removed from his post.

To the British it was vital that some action was taken by the Governor since the situation of the Faroes as occupied by the British would become very awkward if the acts of the Danish Government were not condemned.⁶¹ The change of the British attitude towards the change of the future status of the Faroes with regard to independence therefore was not due to the success of the Home Rulers' campaign. Instead it was due to events in Denmark.

Hilbert refrained from taking any action until he had conferred with Reventlow. However before he had had time to correspond with Reventlow, he received a telegram from London on December 2nd 1941. It announced the steps Reventlow had taken as a result of the Danish signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact, namely that he no longer could take orders from the Danish Government. Hilbert wished to follow suit, but realised that without a demand from the British that he should do so, it would be difficult to get the back-up from the Løgting, which was needed in order to cause as little damage as possible to the Faro-Danish relations.⁶² Hilbert thus was in a similar situation as the Danish representative in Iceland, which will be examined in Chapter IV. Compared to their colleagues in London and Washington Hilbert and Fontenay, the Danish Minister in Reykjavik, were aware that any action from their side on this matter would have a bearing upon the sentiment of the local population towards themselves as representatives of the Danish Government and would be an invitation to criticism by the independence movement.

Hilbert also conferred with the other two Danish officials on the islands, Judge Bonnevie and Chief of Police Westerby. They, however, were less willing to take any steps that would remove them further from their duty, which was to serve the

⁶⁰ Christiansen, *Villinistíggir upplýstir*, p. 121

⁶¹ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.IV), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, pp. 4-5

⁶² SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VI), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, p. 9

Danish Government's cause in the Faroes. Judge Bonnevie noted that if a joint declaration was made by the governor and Løgting along the lines of Reventlow's declaration, he (Bonnevie) would have to review his position in the light of the reaction of the Danish Government. Westerby, on the other hand, noted that if it became necessary to make a statement on their behalf, he would like it to be made after the matter had been discussed by the Danish officials and Løgting.⁶³ In a report Hilbert noted in brackets that the talk between the three Danish officials unfortunately bore the brunt of bitter comments from Judge Bonnevie, guided towards Reventlow, whom he accused for using the opportunity to create havoc. Hilbert made a note that these comments were a characteristic of Judge Bonnevie's instability.⁶⁴

In the following days Hilbert realised that he would not succeed to get a majority of the Løgting behind his declaration, and he noted that this did not please the British. The British, however, accepted the fact based on the general fear amongst the Faroese population of the effects such a declaration would have on their safety. The matter lay dormant until August 29th 1943, when the Danes finally revolted to the German pressure and the Government stopped their collaboration with the Germans and resigned. For the remainder of the war and until the liberation of Denmark on May 5th 1945, Denmark was run by an interim-government, the so-called Ministerial-Government, because the country was run by the Ministries and its officials. August 1943 thus marks the beginning of Denmark as a formal ally. However, by now her reputation and credibility was so tarnished that it was difficult to reverse the damage her earlier chosen policies had had on the attitude of the British.

Hilbert was well aware of, and understood, the general fear amongst the Faroese that a wrong action from him would cause German reprisals against the islands. He also expressed that he did not understand why the Danish Government had seen it

⁶³ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VI), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, p. 9

⁶⁴ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VI), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, p. 10

necessary to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact.⁶⁵ In other cases Hilbert also showed general understanding for the situation he and the Faroe Islands found themselves in.

With regard to the Flag incident Hilbert expressed in a report that the British stand in the question was very unfortunate, albeit Hilbert justly acknowledged with just that the British did not take this step in order to disrespect Danish interests in the islands. Neither was it a sign that the British supported the independence movement in the islands. Rather, Hilbert reasoned, it was for practical reasons that the British chose to use a flag, which already existed on the islands, and which had local sympathy. Hilbert was moreover of the belief, that the British were not aware of the political implication of their decision. Hilbert concluded this passage in the report by stating that his stand in the Flag incident was the same as his stand with the Løgting, namely that it was his duty to maintain status quo while the Danish Government was unable to govern the islands. Hilbert also pointed out in the report that the British, as mentioned earlier, had stated that they would not intervene in internal political matters on the islands, except in such cases where it was needed military-wise, and according to Hilbert the British followed this line exceptionally. Hilbert especially appreciated this fact since he acknowledged that with the increased trade, especially in fish export, and the strong pro-British sentiment amongst the Faroese, the British could easily have taken advantage of the situation and persuaded the Faroese to break with Denmark and join the British Empire.⁶⁶

c) Hilbert's relationship with other Danish authorities on the islands

As shown earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out by Mason's successor that Hilbert held anti-Faroese feelings and was regarded as pompous by other British on the islands. Not surprisingly Hilbert's popularity was non-existent amongst the Home Rulers and the staff at the Norwegian Consulate, as will be evident later in this chapter, who deemed him elitist, because he would not interact with the local population but kept himself to a small excluded group of people, predominantly Danes. These sentiments, however, could always be questioned on the basis of their

⁶⁵ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VI), Den frie danske bevægelse of Færøerne. Indberetning til Statsministeriet fra amtmand C.A. Hilbert, p. 7

⁶⁶ SA, Privatarkiver: C.A. Hilbert, arkiv nr. 6685, Pk nr 1. Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939 (1. del), p. 44

fundamental differences with regard to the future of the Faroes. There is, however, further evidence that Hilbert was a difficult actor even to his fellow Danish on the islands, Chief of Police Westerby and Judge Bonnevie, to whom he also seemed to feel slightly superior. These latter two, however, were not held in high esteem with the British either, as they found the British presence in the islands a great disturbance to their posts.

In a report to the Home Office in 1945 on the civil protection on the Faroes during the war and Police Chief Westerby's relation to it, Hilbert patronised Westerby and his lack of competence for his job, especially after its realm was increased by the outbreak of war and the subsequent British occupation of the islands. Although he found him difficult and incompetent, Hilbert nevertheless appreciated the awkward situation Westerby found himself in, once the islands were occupied by the British. Westerby contacted Hilbert on the question of what jurisdiction the British had, in as much as if they were to make some inspections and to what extent were they allowed free rummage. Later, in 1942, Westerby again found his position in relation to the British presence in the islands awkward. This was when it was reported on the Danish Radio that the Danish Government had put into force a law stating that any help given by Danes to enemies of Germany would be punished severely.⁶⁷

It was not only Hilbert, who had his troubles with Westerby. The British also had a problem with Westerby, because he created panic rather than calmed the population, and Captain Crowther saw him as "a real danger".⁶⁸ The British found him so difficult that not only did they request Hilbert to remove him, but they also contacted Reventlow in London about the problem. Although Hilbert agreed with the British and fully realised that Westerby was a problem, he nevertheless would not take the action that the British wished, because this could harm Dano-Faroe relations and it would not look good, if it became known that Westerby was removed from his post following British requests for this; such a move could have consequences, in as much as Hilbert's opponents would get the idea that Hilbert was giving way to British

⁶⁷ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VII.), Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. civilbeskyttelsen på Færøerne m.m., p. 1

⁶⁸ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VII.), Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. civilbeskyttelsen på Færøerne m.m. Bilag 2, Letter to Reventlow from Hilbert 27.05.41

pressure and therefore was weak. Hilbert also maintained that Westerby's reluctance or incapability to cooperate with the British did not stem from him being authoritarian towards the Danish Government in any way. Hilbert was quite sure that Westerby was pro-British. Rather his behaviour towards the British stemmed from his character as indecisive and nervous in situations where decisiveness and calmness are called upon.⁶⁹

In a letter to Reventlow Hilbert revealed that when Westerby was appointed the post as Chief of Police in the Faroes, Hilbert himself worked in the Department of Justice. There were many, including himself, that were surprised of the appointment, because he was the youngest of the 2nd rated applicants. Hilbert had heard rumours that the transfer of Westerby had taken place, because the Head of Police in the county, where Westerby served, had declared that there was no use for him there. Hilbert thus pondered upon what the reason for that would be, but he did not come with a direct answer. He only stated that Westerby has been difficult to work with, even before the war broke out.⁷⁰

The estranged relationship between Hilbert and Westerby was captured by an incident in 1943, reported by former county clerk (amtsfuldmægtig) H.N. Olesen, following his dismissal by Westerby after Olesen refused to reveal the Governor as the informant in a recent fraud case, which Olesen worked on without Westerby's knowledge. When Hilbert wanted the police to take some action against a sheep and a couple of geese, which had visited his garden and partly destroyed it. Westerby refused to take any action, as such matter would normally not be attended to by the police, Westerby informed county clerk H.N. Olesen. Olesen subsequently accused the police of being too passive.⁷¹ The incident indicates Hilbert's reservations to Westerby's competence, since he chose to by-pass him in the fraud case. It also showed Westerby's indifference to Hilbert's request for help, even though the matter was out of normal police work.

⁶⁹ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VII.), Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. civilbeskyttelsen på Færøerne m.m. Bilag 2, Letter to Reventlow from Hilbert 01.06.41

⁷⁰ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (A.VII.), Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. civilbeskyttelsen på Færøerne m.m. Bilag 2, Letter to Reventlow from Hilbert 01.06.41

⁷¹ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 3 (B. VIII), Chartek mærket Politimester Westerby, letter from H.N. Olesen to Hilbert, 24.03.43, p. 2

With regard to Judge Bonnevie, Hilbert found him to be rather difficult as the war went on and he seemed to think that the war has taken its toll on the former. The judge's fear of drifting mines had resulted in him refusing to sail the sounds and straits in order to perform his duty in some of the islands. Hilbert also reported that the Judge's attitude towards the British is quite unfriendly. He had been difficult with regard to the lack of a courtroom on the islands, after the British took over Skansin, the fortress, where the courtroom was situated.⁷²

In his report on Bonnevie Hilbert reflected upon their long friendship. They were colleagues back in the days when they worked in the Department of Justice. Hilbert also mentioned that Bonnevie used to do his job without anything to remark. Hilbert indicates that the war-situation had caused Bonnevie a nervous breakdown. For instance, after becoming ill with flue twice within a short period of time, Bonnevie phoned Hilbert and claimed that he had become ill because the building, which housed the Løgting and which doubled as Bonnevie's court-room, was a health risk, and not suitable for a court-room. On the other hand, he had no objection to the building being suitable for the Faroese politicians, because they, he said, had been elected to the Løgting. Bonnevie, on the other hand, had been appointed the job, and therefore it was not because of free will that he was there.⁷³

Like Westerby Bonnevie found his position awkward with the British presence and occupation of the islands. He distrusted the British and did not believe that they would keep the promises of non-intervention. It was Bonnevie's conviction that the British should have taken over the Faroes completely, so that there would be no question as to who was in charge, and whom one was accountable to. To this Hilbert reminded him, that immediately after the occupation, both he, Westerby and Hilbert agreed that measures had to be taken, so that as little as possible would be put in the British hands.⁷⁴

⁷² SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 3 (B. IX), Chartek mærket Dommer Bonnevie, report by Hilbert, p. 1

⁷³ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 3 (B. IX), Chartek mærket Dommer Bonnevie, report by Hilbert, p. 3

⁷⁴ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 3 (B. IX), Chartek mærket Dommer Bonnevie, II, handwritten report by Hilbert immediately after his return from London, dated 27.01.42

The German invasion of Denmark and the subsequent British occupation of the Faroe Islands did not only land Danish subjects in the Faroe Islands in an ambiguous position. The status of the Danish Minister in London in the eyes of the British officials also depended upon events in Denmark.

2. Danish Minister in London Count Eduard Reventlow

In the meetings of the Løgting's Committee in the days following the German occupation of Denmark, the main subject was how to deal with the change of status quo. A request was made to the Governor that he should contact his colleague Reventlow in London and make sure that the latter would somehow try to provide help to the Faroese situated in Denmark.⁷⁵

Hilbert was aware that although the British had promised that they would not interfere with internal issues there were some issues, which would only be resolved to Hilbert's advantage with help from them, and therefore he wrote to Reventlow to highlight the situation and make sure that Reventlow would do what was in his power to influence the British from London.⁷⁶

Count Eduard Reventlow, who was the Danish Minister in London at the outbreak of war, had already been posted in London once, as legations secretary from autumn 1913 – 1919. Back then he had established few contacts, which he revived when he returned as Minister on January 1st 1938. In his autobiography I Dansk Tjeneste he mentions several British officials, especially at the Foreign Office, as his friends or 'close contacts',⁷⁷ amongst these Christopher Warner, then Chief of Northern Department, with whom he regularly met for lunch or dinner. Reventlow had therefore good prerequisites for influencing issues of Danish interest.

The German invasion of Denmark and the subsequent ambiguous situation that arose from the Danish Government still being in power inevitably raised the question of

⁷⁵ FL, Løgtingið, Gerðabók fyri "Stóru Landsnevnd" 1940, Meeting in Stóru Landsnevnd, 19.04.40

⁷⁶ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1. Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939. (A.II.), bilag 9 (Letter from Hilbert to Reventlow 26.11.40)

⁷⁷ Reventlow, E., I Dansk Tjeneste, Thaning & Appels Forlag, Copenhagen, 1956, pp. 112-147

the status of Danish nationals abroad. If the Danish Government was collaborating with their occupiers then the Danes were in effect enemies to the allies.

On April 12th it was argued in a Foreign Office minute that

it might be a good idea to find out what attitude the Danish diplomatic and consular representatives in foreign countries are adopting as regards taking orders from the German controlled Danish Government. If we can show that Danes in neutral countries outside the grip of the Gestapo are refusing to collaborate with the Germans, this might be a good propaganda point. We have heard that the Danish Minister in Washington does not intend to take orders from the German controlled Danish Government.⁷⁸

Despite initially expressing his wishes to return to his family in Denmark, Reventlow announced, according to instructions received from the King of Denmark a couple of days after the occupation, that he would stay in England as long as His Majesty's Government would allow him to do so. Contrary to his colleague in Washington, Kauffmann, Reventlow felt that he could not, as a loyal subject of his King, adopt the same position as representative of the Free Denmark movement regardless of the wishes of the King and Government.

When Denmark was occupied by Germany, Reventlow's position was taken up for revision at the Foreign Office and it was concluded, that his position "should not be considered as being in relations with the Danish Government so long as that Government remained under German control;" however, "it was further agreed that there would be no objection to the Danish Minister continuing to act in a semi-official capacity in the way of helping Danes, and with other problems affecting territories not under German control."⁷⁹ Thus, despite reservations by the British Government towards Reventlow as a representative of the Danish Government, and Lord Halifax's conclusion that they could not recognise him as an accredited diplomatic representative, Reventlow was not debarred from continuing to act, semi-officially, on behalf of Denmark in case of problems arising out of the occupation of

⁷⁸ PRO, FO 371/24784, FO Minute by Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, 12.04.40, subject: Attitude of Danish diplomatic and consular representatives to the German-controlled Danish Government

⁷⁹ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, report of meeting in Sir Orme Sargent's room 18.04.40

the Faroe Islands.⁸⁰ Hence, to the British it was not Reventlow, who was the problem, but the government he represented. Therefore, when he severed his connections with Denmark after her signing the Anti-Comintern Pact on November 25th 1941 his status was taken up for revision at the Foreign Office as to whether they were “going to recognise him as qualified to make official representation to us regarding the Faroes or not.”⁸¹ The conclusion was “to continue to recognise Count Reventlow after his break with Copenhagen;”⁸² and so when Denmark on 29th August 1943 came under military administration it did not affect the Foreign Office’s position towards Reventlow as such, but it did put their stance towards the Faroe-Danish relations into perspective. However, despite feeling more sympathetic towards the ‘Home Rulers’, it was not expressed officially, because it was not the relations on the islands that were of greatest concern to the British, but the relations in Denmark and with Denmark. As Sørensen argues, “4 million Danish were more interesting to the British decision-makers and ministers than 30.000 Faroese.”⁸³

Despite maintaining in his autobiography that he, until November 1941, when Denmark signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, did not intervene in British policies towards Danish interests (for example the Faroes), but only provided assistance when asked for,⁸⁴ documents from the Foreign Office suggest otherwise, and it is apparent that his visits were frequent, up to the point where Dashwood commented on a document that “there is no need for Count Reventlow’s interventions – in fact it seems to me just what we have been trying to stop him from doing.”⁸⁵ Tried they might have, but it is quite clear, that Reventlow was one of the strongest ‘policy entrepreneurs’ when it came to Faroese issues, because, not only was he able to use Hilbert as a channel, and thereby was unmistakably able to raise awareness of matters to Foreign Office officials, who inspected all letters going to and from the Faroes; because he was their best source of knowledge in Faroese relations on location he was also able use his channels in London, although there were some reservations within the Foreign Office to his frequent requests.

⁸⁰ PRO, FO 371/24784, Paper by Dashwood, FO, regarding the status of Danish nationals in Britain, 18.04.40

⁸¹ PRO, FO 371/29279, comment by Collier 02.12.42 on letter from Warner to Reventlow 04.12.41

⁸² PRO, FO 371/32761, FO minute by Clarke, 13.07.42

⁸³ Sørensen, “Storbritannien og Det færøske Styre 1940-45”, p. 218

⁸⁴ Reventlow, *I Dansk Tjeneste*, p. 127

⁸⁵ PRO, FO 371/29279, notes by Dashwood on letter from Warner to Reventlow, 04.12.41

a) Defence of the islands: a case study of Reventlow and Hilbert influencing British policies towards the Faroe Islands

In the recurring questions about defences on the islands, Hilbert, Reventlow and Mason are easily recognised as the policy entrepreneurs, pushing the matter into agendas at the Foreign Office and the War Office, which was responsible for the defence of the islands.

With no aerodrome and a fleet base, that was of little use but as a refuelling base, the importance of the Faroe Islands to the British service departments, especially the War Office, decreased substantially, and so did the emphasis on placing adequate defence on the islands. This caused much dismay amongst the British officials in the islands, Mason and the Fortress Commander. The dismay was also felt amongst the inhabitants on the island, especially after German bombers succeeded, due to lack of detecting apparatus, to surprise attack the islands and cause much damage on November 22nd 1940.

A few days later, on December 6th Count Reventlow visited the Foreign Office, after the matter was brought to his attention in a letter from Hilbert. Rather than only requesting more anti-aircraft (A.A.) defence, Reventlow made the officials aware of the rising belief in the islands that Britain was unable to defend the islands. He also pointed out that this could damage their conduct in the islands as such an impression could result in the lack of cooperation from the locals. Reventlow also referred to the promise, made by Churchill on April 11th, and indicated that if the islanders felt unsafe then Britain had broken their promise to protect the islands from enemy attacks, which was the stated reason for occupying the islands in the first place. Skilful as he was, Reventlow refrained blaming the British for the lack of adequate defence and instead implied “that the Governor, not being an expert, might possibly have formed a wrong impression of the state of [the] anti-aircraft defences,”⁸⁶ and hence placed the blame for lack of action on insufficient information from the Danish Administration in the islands.

⁸⁶ PRO, FO 371/24784, memo by Dashwood on talk with Reventlow, 06.12.40

To make sure the matter would not be laid aside Reventlow wrote an aide memoir about the defence and A.A. conditions in the Faroes five months later, which he sent to the Foreign Office. On June 6th 1941, Christopher Warner, head of the Northern Department, informed Reventlow that the requests were passed on to the departments concerned and that a definite recommendation had been made for further A.A. guns. Four months later, after the matter had been stressed to the War Office by Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary, because of its political significance,⁸⁷ the Chiefs of Staff decided "to allot a further four light A.A. guns for defence for the Faroe Islands."⁸⁸ Acknowledging that allocating these was principally to give moral support to the Faroese,⁸⁹ as four more light A.A. guns would not provide adequate defence, it was as much as the service departments felt they could spare.

Having occupied the islands, the British Government was well aware of the increased threat of attacks from the Germans this would entail. Based on the likelihood of a German attack and assessments of the scale of such an attack by air it was reasoned that factors, such as the relative importance of the objectives at the anchorage, the size of the enemy bomber force within range, and the distance of the enemy bases from the anchorage would be decisive. It was concluded that with German airbases in Norway, "both Iceland and the Faroe Islands are within range of German air forces based in Norway and if a reasonable proportion of their present strength were to be employed, some 30 tons of bombs per day might be expected to be brought to bear on the Icelandic objectives, and about 50 tons per day against those in the Faroes."⁹⁰ However, due to lack of defence equipment, the War Office was reluctant to provide any more A.A. guns, as placing these on the Faroes would deprive other theatres of adequate defence. Also, because of the scattered nature of the islands and townships, it was acknowledged by the Foreign Office that despite their wish to do so, they "could hardly hope...to deal adequately with indiscriminate attacks on towns and installations in the Faroes which have little or no military or strategic importance."⁹¹ It was however judged that this situation could be considerably improved "if it

⁸⁷ PRO, FO 371/29278, Warner, FO, to the Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 31.10.41

⁸⁸ PRO, FO 371/29279, FO memorandum, 31.10.41

⁸⁹ PRO, FO 371/29279, message to A.C.O.S. 587 (repeated to N.O.I.C. Faroes, War Office and Foreign Office) from Admiralty, 28.11.41

⁹⁰ PRO, ADM 199/671, Report from Air Ministry titled "Iceland & Faroe Islands, observations on the likely scale of enemy air attack on certain anchorages," 10.07.40

⁹¹ PRO, FO 371/29279, note by Dashwood to Mason's letter to Eden. 03.11.1941

should prove possible to carry out the project for constructing an aerodrome in this region.”⁹²

When Mason raised the issue again in November 1941 the Foreign Office, having pushed the matter through once, felt that it should not fall within their responsibility to request for more A.A. defence, but that the matter should be raised by the military forces on the islands to their respective departments. And, as Dashwood noted, Mason did not make any recommendations for improving the present situation, and therefore the request did not appear to be too urgent. Nevertheless, a party containing representatives from the service departments was sent to the Faroes to look into the defence question.⁹³

Coupled with the recent developments of radar equipment the problem was in the end alleviated by the War Cabinet in their decision to “provide a form of warning system of the approach of enemy aircraft” by locating “radiolocation stations in certain parts of the Islands.”⁹⁴ This seemed to be the perfect solution for all parties concerned, especially the Service Departments back in London, as it would not drain the War Office of defence guns and would provide both the Navy and the R.A.F. with better warning systems for their fleets. Also, it relieved Consul Mason of criticism from locals for the passive British stance in dealing with the problem. Thus, although Mason had the power of selecting the information passed to the Foreign Office, it was Reventlow, who, with his bargaining skills, was able to present the problem in such a way, that it became difficult for the British not to improve defences. By linking the defence problem with the political situation from the start, Reventlow was certain that the matter would reach the top at the Foreign Office, as it was in their responsibility that all British conducts abroad were as successful as possible, and thus would be responsible to Denmark, if anything went wrong in the Faroes whilst under their control. Hilbert’s impact on the defence issue, however, was rather limited, and it could be discussed that the reason for this was that in this case the responsibility would be placed with the British, and thus not put pressure on

⁹² PRO; FO 371/29279, note by Dashwood to Mason’s letter to Eden. 03.11.1941

⁹³ PRO, FO 371/29279, note by Dashwood 19.11.41 on letter from Mason to Anthony Eden 03.11.41

⁹⁴ PRO, FO 371/29279, letter from Mrs. Lightfoot to Dashwood, 17.12.41

his position. However, when issues were perceived to bring his position in conflict, he was just as much a policy entrepreneur as Mason and Reventlow.

This pattern of bargaining in the British policy making process towards the Faroes dominated the British-Faroe-Danish relations bar one major incident: the use of 'Merkið', as was demonstrated earlier in this chapter.

C. THE FAROESE: HOME RULERS AND UNIONISTS

As was demonstrated in sections A and B, the extent of success in influencing the British policies depended very much upon the central position of the Danish representatives in the flow of information from the Faroes to London. Because most of the important authorities in the Faroes were Danish and since Mason quickly was encapsulated by the Governor and his administration, there were very few Faroese, who were in a position to exert any influence on British opinion. There was one Faroese, however, who was in a position to have some influence on the British. Thorstein Peteresen, a local advocate and the leader of the People's Party, was also the Norwegian Consul on the islands. As will be demonstrated below Petersen's dislike of Hilbert's personae, nevertheless, came to overshadow his goal to sway the British from their initial statement not to interfere with internal affairs and support the wish for independence. Subsequently his and his secretary Ihlen's continuous attacks on Hilbert and the Danish administration would cause much irritation with the British, as they stirred trouble to the otherwise problem free occupation.

1. Situation in the Faroe Islands after the outbreak of war

According to Hilbert the events on April 9th 1940 came as a complete surprise to everyone in the Faroes. There was little contact with the outside world. Except for radio broadcasting and some foreign newspapers, which were all out of date (newspapers only arrived ever so often to the islands), and apart from radio messages of increased British interests in the territorial waters of Norway and the German exploitation of this, there was no inkling amongst those in the Faroes that the war arena would expand to Scandinavia or Denmark in particular. Thus, the news of the German invasion of Denmark and Norway came as a surprise to the islanders. The immediate thought was how the Faroes, with its around 30.000 inhabitants, would cope supply-, economical-, administrative-, and political-wise without the support

from Denmark, upon which the islands were quite dependent within these particular areas of interest.⁹⁵

Supply-wise the islands were well equipped and as for the economy, there was no reason that any immediate problems should arise from the situation. Administratively the only solution would be to continue as before, at least for the moment. Politically, however, there were reasons for Hilbert to worry, especially after the increased attention the independence movement had enjoyed over the last decade or so. Hilbert knew he could expect some immediate political demands from the Løgting, or at least some divisions within it, as a consequence of the Danish Government no longer being accessible. As it turned out it was exactly on the political front that the main problems during the occupation would arise, not because of the British but because of Hilbert's ambiguous position.

As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter and which was continuously pointed out in reports from the islands, when compared to Iceland, relations between the British troops and the locals were excellent. The Danes appreciated the good relations between the British and the Faroese,⁹⁶ because that meant one less possible source of trouble for internal affairs, especially as news from Iceland told of estranged relations between the locals and the occupying forces there. It may also be worth noting, that Hilbert pointed out in his diary that they always semantically chose to use the word 'protection' rather than 'occupation'.⁹⁷ By referring to the occupation as 'protection' Hilbert thus probably saved the British from possible trouble from the locals, as it has a much more positive connotation than the term 'occupation'. This may be seen as a conscious move by Hilbert in order to keep relations between him and the British cordial.

According to Hilbert's diary the Governor made every effort to get into contact with the Government in Copenhagen in order to get instructions with regard to the new

⁹⁵ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 3 (B. VI), Diverse vedr. Færøerne, "Færøerne under Krigen", p. 2

⁹⁶ SA, 9K.4/1961/372, Amerikanske Troppers Ophold i Island under krigen 1939-, From Reventlow, London, to Konsul Schacke, Royal Danish Consulate, Leith. 12.05.43

⁹⁷ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 3 (B. VI), Diverse vedr. Færøerne, "Færøerne under Krigen", p. 4

situation. His attempts, however, failed and he did not receive any information until July 4th, 86 days later. This was in form of a radio address, a transmitted speech by Prime Minister Stauning in which he informed the Folketing (Danish Parliament) that Hilbert had been instructed to continue to perform his duties according to *conduite*. Hilbert stressed this point in his diary, because of the constant criticism and questioning of the right/legality of him remaining in his post following the German occupation of Denmark.⁹⁸ As the main argument of this thesis points out, and which has already been argued earlier in this chapter with regard to Hilbert's and Reventlow's status in the eyes of the British, and which will be argued further with regard to the Danish representatives in Iceland and Washington, the ambiguous position of the Danish representatives during the German occupation of Denmark continued to raise questions in their host countries, especially amongst their enemies and sceptics. This ambiguous status of the Danish representatives resulting from the German occupation of Denmark and the collaborationist mood of the Danish Government was not lost on the 'Home Rulers' (the collective term used by the British for those advocating Faroese independence). Their main objectivity was to undermine the authority of Danish Governor by constantly questioning his relationship and sentiment with the Government in Copenhagen.

2. Faroese relations with the Governor and the British

Although the wish for Faroese independence by the outbreak of war had not progressed as far as that in Iceland the opportunity, which the British occupation and the subsequent loss of communications with Denmark, presented, was not lost to the 'Home Rulers'. Immediately after the German occupation of Denmark they raised a proposal in the Løgting that the Faroes should, like Iceland, declare their independence from Denmark. However, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the proposal did not meet the necessary support, neither from the majority of the Løgting nor from the British. Such a move would not have been legal either according to the Danish constitutional laws, under which the Faroe Islands remained despite the German occupation. Instead it was agreed by a majority of the Løgting that the administration of the islands during the occupation should be in cooperation between

⁹⁸ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert, arkiv nr. 6685, pk, Nr. 1, Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939 (1. del), p. 7

the Danish Governor and Løgting, with the Governor holding the right to veto. The constitutional position of Iceland in the Danish Kingdom, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, was slightly different and they were therefore able to justify declaring their independence to the British.

A report handed to the Foreign Office by Iversen from the Danish Council following his visit to the Faroes in August-September 1941 described the political situation in the Faroes as

The Governor is today supported in Lagting by 17 members out of 24 – representing the party supporting status quo, the samband-party of the social democrats, which actually constitutes the balance of power. The remaining members consist of Homerule Party members and are anti-Danish.⁹⁹ [sic]

As for the political parties the report stated:

Samband-party. [Unionist] Support the continuation of connection with Denmark, perhaps wishing for certain alterations – financial, administrative etc.

Socialist party. May support the Danish connection, may not. Not a very large party, is however more or less the balance of the scale.

Homerule party. The leader of this is the old politician Johannes Patursson...who in reality advocate the Faroes should be placed in the same position as Iceland – independent etc.

From a historical point of view Patursson considers the Faroese as Norwegians and his party is undoubtedly anti-Danish – pro-Faroese. He is said to be supported by businessmen like Thorste[i]n Petersen (now in America) and H[K]jólbro in Klaksvig (a very wealthy Faroese)

General. The islanders are very political minded; politics forms the main topic of conversation, however on rather parochial lines.¹⁰⁰ [sic]

The report was on the whole very pro-Danish, which is understandable since Iversen was one of the more active members of the Danish Council. Strangely enough, it did not mention the People's Party, which was founded by those, who found the Home Rule party too lenient. Patursson was one of those, and so was Thorstein Petersen. In his report to Copenhagen on political conditions in the Faroes, Hilbert explained that,

the reason why Jóannes Patursson left his old party 'Sjálvsstýtisflokkurin' (Home Rule Party) to start a new party 'Fólkaflokkurin' (People's Party) was that the leader of Sjálvsstýrisflokkurin at the time, E. Mitens, did not give the personae

⁹⁹ PRO, FO 371/29278, report by Iversen, Visit to Faroe Islands. 15.08.-02.09, 1941. 07.09.41

¹⁰⁰ PRO, FO 371/29278, report by Iversen, Visit to Faroe Islands. 15.08.-02.09, 1941. 07.09.41

Jóannes Patursson enough 'space' within the party; he was not taken into account enough to Patursson's liking. Also, the Sjálvsstýrisflokkurin was not radical enough in its pursuit of Faroese independence to his liking.¹⁰¹
(translated)

Being the draughtsman of the Faroese independence movement, Patursson was too old at the outbreak of war to assume a leadership role. The British Consul remarked that Patursson was "a highly respected man...over 70 years of age and very viril but has evidently passed his best period, and in politics is used rather as a figure-head by the younger extremists."¹⁰²[sic] Thus, although Patursson was the leader of the People's Party, it was the younger Thorstein Petersen, who became the most serious opponent to the administration during the occupation. That came especially evident when Petersen went on a business trip to the United States, and subsequently, the levels of attacks on the administration dropped.¹⁰³

The argument of the Home Rulers was that "Hilbert is a stranger in this country and he is only here for a limited period. Hence it is easy to understand that he does not put much effort into understanding the Faroese people and only socialises with other Danish on the islands."¹⁰⁴ They also accused him for continuing to take orders from Copenhagen via the Danish Embassy in Stockholm.¹⁰⁵ The Home Rulers also found it regrettable that they had not succeeded in convincing the Løgting to follow the Icelandic lead and break off all ties with Denmark on April 9th. If they had done so the islands would not have been occupied, they believed.¹⁰⁶ This sentiment did not necessarily mean that the Home Rulers were anti-British. They would just rather have no foreign power on the island. However, the notion was not lost on Hilbert, who would pick up on any chance to portray the Home Rulers to be anti-British, or even pro-Nazi, in order to make sure that they did not receive any sympathy from the British. One example of this was when an article in Tímin towards the end of the war

¹⁰¹ SA, Privatarkiver: C.A. Hilbert, arkiv nr. 6685, pk nr 1. Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939 (1. del). p. 7

¹⁰² PRO, FO 649/1, Faroe Islands: General Report – 1942 (From the British Occupation to August 1942), 06.09.42

¹⁰³ RA, UD/9975 De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, note from Collier, FO, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 01.10.41

¹⁰⁴ Dagblaðið, "To Gamle Breve", 07.08.43

¹⁰⁵ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Wendelbo, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, 01.09.42

¹⁰⁶ SA, Privatarkiver: C.A. Hilbert, arkiv nr. 6685, Pk nr 1, Indberetning til Statsministeriet vedr. de politiske forhold på Færøerne siden krigens udbrud i september 1939 (1. del)., p. 10

critically viewed the British occupation of the Faroes. It was questioned, why Danes and Norwegians received so much sympathy from the Faroese, because their countries had been occupied, when the Faroes themselves were experiencing the same by the British. The article also criticised a local newspaper for writing that “we should be thankful and count us lucky that the British occupied us”...”What do we have to thank them for”¹⁰⁷, the article asked. The article inevitably aroused much sentiment and anger, especially amongst the British, and it seems that Hilbert found an opportunity to capitalize on the situation. According to his diary he brought the issue up at a dinner where some of the British officials were present. In his dinner-speech Hilbert expressed his disgust and took distance from the article. Hilbert even wrote in his diary that he took up every opportunity to express his disapproval of the article to the British.¹⁰⁸ Hilbert also enquired the British consul whether the British wanted any action to be taken, i.e. if they wish the matter to be taken to court, however the consul had no wish hereof, but would leave the matter in Hilbert’s capable hands.¹⁰⁹ As mentioned earlier in this chapter by the latter half of the occupation the British attitude towards Hilbert had changed and they were more critical towards his personae and negative sentiments towards the locals.

Hilbert was not only content with turning the British against his opponents. As will be evident in the following pages, he was also to do his utmost to have Thorstein Petersen and Nils Ihlen dismissed from the Norwegian Consulate.

3. The Norwegian Consulate

Apart from the Danish Governor and the British Consul the only other foreign diplomatic service on the Faroe Islands was the Norwegian Consulate. Prior to the war the Norwegian presence in the islands mainly consisted of fishermen. However, after the German invasion of Norway the Faroes received many refugees, who

¹⁰⁷ Tímin, 19.04.45

¹⁰⁸ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1, Udskrift af Færø amts dagbog. (A.I.), p. 472

¹⁰⁹ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr. 1, Udskrift af Færø amts dagbog. (A.I.), p. 472-3

escaped the occupation in small fishing vessels. Many of these fishing vessels, each with a crew of 3 to 8 men, joined the British military on the islands.¹¹⁰

The Norwegian Consul on the Faroe Islands was Thorstein Petersen, a local advocate and board member of the Sjóvinnubankin, on of the then major banks in the Faroes, but also a front figure of the People's Party. The Consulate's secretary, Norwegian Nils Ihlen, felt equally strongly for the Faroese independence cause as his Consul and joined forces with Petersen in his agitation against Governor Hilbert. Petersen and Ihlen caused Hilbert difficulties during the occupation and subsequently created tension in Anglo-Danish relations, because Hilbert and Reventlow turned to the British to have them removed from the islands, or at least from their posts.

3.1 British attitude towards the Norwegian Consulate

The British attitude towards Petersen was clear in a memorandum to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry by Collier:

M. Thorstein Petersen makes use of his position as Norwegian Consul to create trouble for the British authorities. As Manager and Director of the Faroese Trade Bank he has tried to obstruct the working of the currency control, and as manager and principal shareholder of the newspaper "Dagbladið" he tries to make trouble for the British Consul. He is at present in the U.S.A. but has left a second in command, M. Patursson through whom he continues his agitation. This however, has been on a much reduced scale since his departure; and it is felt that, if advantage could be taken of his absence to install a regular Norwegian Consul, his return would be viewed with much less anxiety.¹¹¹

Ihlen subsequently sarcastically pointed out that it had to be a coincidence that Collier would approach the Norwegians in London on this matter at the same time as Hilbert visited London. He also indicated that the Governor exercised too much power on the islands and that the situation begged for a strong British authority, who would dare to stand against both Danish and Faroese extremists. If nothing was done about the situation at least 70 per cent of the population would turn anti-allied, Ihlen predicted. By this, he did not mean that they would become pro-German, Ihlen stressed, but rather too Faroese nationalist. Also, Ihlen pointed out, it did not help

¹¹⁰ RA, 152/2B08611-54, Færøylene, Generalkonsul Kildal, Det Norske Generalkonsulat, Torshavn, Til Sjøforsvarets overkommando, London, fra 3 skøytefører i Torshavn, 16.03.43

¹¹¹ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, memorandum from Collier, FO, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, Notes for Conversation with M. Skylstad, 01.10.41

matter much that the British Consul was getting married to a Danish girl. Ihlen was not alone in thinking along these lines. His views were shared by the former British Consul on the islands for 30 years, Valdemar Lützen, who incidentally was a Unionist, Ihlen pointed out.¹¹²

Although London, the Governor and Naval Officer in Charge (N.O.I.C.) in Tórshavn had their reservations towards Thorstein Petersen, Petersen was appointed as legal adviser to the British military forces on the islands; the position, however, was not as a legal adviser to the British Consulate nor the Naval forces. This decision was, unsurprisingly, not welcomed by the Danes. They were afraid that Petersen would use this appointment in his propaganda, as it would show, that the British trusted him. Hilbert therefore tried to convince the British to revoke the decision, but without success.¹¹³

a) Danish attempts to influence British and Norwegians in London to take action with regard to the Norwegian Consulate

Despite the estranged relations between the consulate on the one hand and the Danish Governor and the British on the other hand, Danish and British relations with the Norwegian contingent in the islands were generally good. There is even suggestions that the refugees sided with Hilbert in his attempt to have Ihlen removed. The Norwegian Government in exile in London received letters from these Norwegian subjects in the islands expressing their dissatisfaction with Ihlen. They accused him and Petersen for being more interested in promoting their own positions and involvement with local politics.¹¹⁴ There might be an added aspect to these accusations. In Norway, at least at the time of the Second World War, the country was divided into two, the religious fishing communities of the Northwest, and the secular and educated southeast. There was therefore a deep mistrust amongst the refugees, who all came from the Northwest towards those from the Oslo-area, where Ihlen came from.

¹¹² RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from Ihlen, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 24.11.41

¹¹³ SA, 8.H.12a/1961/372, from Hilbert to Reventlow, 08.04.42

¹¹⁴ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from Johan Melbø to The Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission, London, 14.10.40, letter from Ingebr. Kaarbø, Klaksvík, to The Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission, London 01.05.41

Following the letters from the Faroes the Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission put pressure on the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in London that Petersen should be removed from his post and replaced by Ewald Kjølbro, the son of the most prominent entrepreneur in the Klaksvík, the capital of the northern islands, where most of the Norwegian refugees were positioned during the war. Ewald Kjølbro was also incidentally the brother of the girl, whom Kaarbø, the author of the letters, was engaged to. The Norwegian Foreign Minister, Lie, however, was not willing to yield to the pressure but suggested that Thingvold, a fishing agent based in Lissabon, would be sent to the Faroes as a representative of the Shipping and Trade Mission to examine the situation in the islands.¹¹⁵ This reply did not go down well with the Shipping and Trade Mission. They would rather see Thingvold take over the position of vice-consul in the Faroes instead of Ihlen. Likewise they suggested that Kaarbø should take the position as their representative on the islands.¹¹⁶

Defending their position in the Faroe Islands Ihlen wrote to Lie in July 1941 explaining that all criticism towards the Norwegian Consulate was purely of a political nature, that is, the criticism was mainly due to the fact that the Norwegian Consul also was the leader of the progressive independence party, the Peoples Party and thus posed a threat to the Danish administration. Also, Ihlen pointed out, the fact that the Norwegians were immensely popular amongst the locals, to much irritation to the Danish and British.¹¹⁷

Although he had the Norwegian refugees against him Ihlen found support for his arguments amongst those Norwegians, who had joined the British forces on the islands. A letter from Kristian Kahrs, C.O.H.N.M.S. "KOS 5", addressed to C.in.C Royal Norwegian Navy a month later stated that:

On account of the difficult conditions at present prevailing at the Faroe Islands, I beg to make the following statement:

¹¹⁵ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from Trygve Lie, London, to The Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission, London, 17.06.41

¹¹⁶ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from The Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission, London, to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 21.06.41

¹¹⁷ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from Ihlen, Tórshavn, to Trygve Lie, London, 05.07.41

As already known, the Faroe population is very anti-Danish. After the British occupation, the feeling towards the British has also cooled off considerably, not least on account of the very little elastic and diplomatic methods of procedure shown by the British Consul and the N.O.I.C.

The Norwegians, are however, very popular, and the excellent behaviour of the crew of "Kos 5" in the service as well as ashore, has increased this popularity. As an example I may mention, that on the 29th July, which is the national day of the Faroes, the leader of the Self-Government party made a very pro-Norwegian speech, after which the Faroese sang 3 verses of "Ja vi elsker" [Norwegian National Anthem]....The Danish sheriff was present. This popularity enjoyed by the Norwegians, has of course been very hard to swallow for the sheriff, and as there is intimate co-operation between the latter and the British Consul, one has reason to believe that he is the indirect cause of the bad treatment "Kos 5" received in Thorshavn...All the crew of "Kos 5" asked me on my departure from Thorshavn, to try and get them transferred to another place. Personally I am of the opinion that on account of the present difficult political conditions there, it would be just as well to take all Norwegian vessels away from the Faroe Islands.¹¹⁸

Kahrs blamed the unfair treatment of the Norwegians by the British on jealousy, because the Norwegians were far more popular with the Faroese, especially the girls, than the British.

Ihlen also found it not advisable to dismiss Petersen as Norwegian Consul. Petersen held a central and vital position, both professionally and politically, and his dismissal would create much discontent amongst the locals towards Norway and the consulate on the islands and would subsequently harm Norwegian interests in the islands. He suggested that the best solution would be that the status of the Norwegian Consul on the islands would be altered so that he would hold the same rank as the British Consul in order to create an equilibrium in the conflict. He suggested that the Foreign Minister could appoint an additional Consul, a native Norwegian, to the Consulate, who would take over the Consular title, while Petersen would be given the title of Honorary Consul.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ RA, 152/2B08611-54, Færøylene, Generalkonsul Kildal, Det Norske Generalkonsulat, Torshavn, translation of a letter received from Kristian Kahrs, C.O.H.N.M.S. "KOS 5" addressed to C.in.C Royal Norwegian Navy, 05.08.41

¹¹⁹ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from Ihlen, Tórshavn, to Trygve Lie, London, 05.07.41

The Norwegians in London were not inclined to succumb to the pressure applied by the Danes to have Thorstein Petersen removed, as such a move would cause more harm than good to their interests in the Faroes. Instead they decided, along the lines of Ihlen's suggestion, to appoint a second Consul, Thingvold, who would be superior to Petersen in rank, in hope to restore some peace in the islands. The situation was namely getting out of hand and was beginning to put a strain on Norwegian relations with the Danes and British.

Following his arrival on the islands, Thingvold reported to London on the situation. He supported Ihlen in the conflict and even suggested that Ihlen should be promoted from Secretary to Vice-Consul. Thingvold also found that the Norwegian fishing and trade interests were too insignificant for a special appointment to take care of these aspects of Norwegian interests in the islands and that once Petersen returned from the United States, the Consulate would be adequately manned to also be in charge of these matters.¹²⁰ Thingvold did not last long in his post on the Faroes, mainly because he did not get along with Ihlen.¹²¹ He was not inclined to support the crusade against Hilbert's administration, which probably explains why he did not relish his stay in the islands.

In early summer 1942 Wendelbo, the then Norwegian Consul in Lerwick, Shetland Islands, was appointed Norwegian Consul in the Faroes and Thingvold was appointed the position in Lerwick.¹²² The appointment seems to have been the result of a successful entrepreneurship by Petersen, Ihlen and Wendelbo himself. In early April Wendelbo wrote to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in London expressing his concerns for the situation of the Consulate in the Faroe Islands. He pointed out that he had known Petersen for several years and saw him as a dear friend and consequently believed that they would work well together. He also mentioned that if he were appointed the consular post in the Faroes then Thingvold could take his

¹²⁰ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, letter from Thingvold, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 28.10.41

¹²¹ RA, UD/9975 De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind I, from Thingvold, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, 25.11.41

¹²² RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, Foredrag til statsråd. Kgl. Resolusjon. 01.05.42, "Utenriksdepartementet vil tilråde at fiskeriagent Axel Thingvold blir midlertidig utnevnt til konsul i Lerwick på Shetlandsøyene etter konsul P.R.S. Wendelbo som ved kgl. Resolusjon av idag er utnevnt til konsul ved generalkonsulatet i Tórshavn på Færøyene."

place in the Shetland Islands.¹²³ Later Petersen mentioned Wendelbo as a suitable candidate for the post in one of his letters to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.¹²⁴ It is very much possible that this orchestration was not a coincidence, because no sooner had Wendelbo arrived he too became one of Hilbert's strongest critics on par with Petersen and Ihlen.

The partnership between Wendelbo, Petersen and Ihlen was highly successful in terms of infuriating Hilbert. When the Danes learned that the Norwegians were contemplating to appoint Consul Petersen to General-Consul they were not pleased at all and did everything to forestall it. Norwegian Foreign Minister Erik Colban was approached by Reventlow, who pointed out that Petersen belonged to a group of nationalist extremists on the islands, who were at open war with the Danish administration on the islands. The Danes were therefore upset by the Norwegian decision to promote Petersen to Consul-General, which would only worsen the situation in the Faroes. Colban regretted that the Danes felt this way, but the matter was outside his realm and would lay with the newly appointed Consul on the islands, Wendelbo.¹²⁵

The Governor's frustration with the passive tolerance shown towards Petersen, Wendelbo and Ihlen was acute and he took it upon himself to take control by announcing that he would issue residence permits to all Norwegians in the island. By doing so he would show the Norwegian Consulate, who held the ultimate power on the islands.

I shall take steps to ensure that Ihlen applies for a residence permit. This will be granted only subject to renewal for short periods at a time, and on condition that he abstains from all political activity in the Faroes. These steps will be taken immediately without waiting further communication from you.¹²⁶

¹²³ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, letter from Wendelbo, Norwegian Consulate Lerwick, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 07.04.42

¹²⁴ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Petersen, Tórshavn, to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 25.04.42

¹²⁵ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Ambassador Erik Colban, London, to Foreign Minister Lie, London, 20.05.42

¹²⁶ SA, 8.H.26/1961/372, Norges stilling til Færøerne, from Hilbert to Reventlow, 18.12.42

In 1942 following Wendelbo's appointment as Norwegian Consul on the Faroes and the following promotion of Petersen to Consul-General the Danes again used their power and position to create problems for Petersen. When Petersen was to leave for London the Danes delayed his application for a visa for so long that he missed three connections (ships sailing for Britain). "Still without visa three connections now missed. As later departure very difficult please investigate real reasons refusing visa and confirm."¹²⁷ (telegram style) Following this Wendelbo and Petersen wrote to the Norwegians in London expressing that "we both feel that Petersen is considered persona ingrata by British Foreign Office. Any work undertaken by this consulate under such circumstances will be meaningless and useless."¹²⁸ Also, when Thorstein Peteresen and Gunnar Holm-Jacobsen went to the United States on business, Hilbert tried to stop them from going, because he was

afraid that they would perform political agitation and lobbyism for the independence cause in the Faroes. In order to get to the United States, Petersen and Holm-Jacobsen first travelled to Iceland, where they applied for visa to enter the United States. On instructions from Hilbert Fontenay, the Danish Minister in Reykjavik tried to put the journey to a halt by pulling all stops to hinder them in getting the visas, referring to the American announcement that they to greatest extent try to avoid having subjects entering the United States on the purpose of political agitation. Fontenay therefore demanded an explicit explanation of the purpose of travel as well as a signed declaration from the two men that they would only stick to their intended business and would not take any political steps while in the United States. After Petersen and Holm-Jacobsen had done what Fontenay requested of them, he saw no other option but to forward the request to the American Consul, who granted them visas.¹²⁹
(translated)

These antics by the Governor did not help Dano-Faroe relations and only fuelled the criticism against the Danish administration and increased the frequency of demands for independence. Incidentally Hilbert's activities did not only have repercussions on the Faores. Word had gone about in Iceland amongst members of the Althing that the Danish minister has tried to forestall Petersen's and Holm-Jacobsen's application for

¹²⁷ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, telegram from Petersen to Normin, London, 30.07.42

¹²⁸ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, telegram from Wendelbo and Petersen to Normin, London, 06.08.42

¹²⁹ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, Letter from Fontenay to Hilbert, 25.02.41

visa, resulting in much disgruntle and stronger voices in the Althing for a severance of ties with Denmark and declaring Iceland a republic.¹³⁰ The Danes, however, did not react to this, although Hilbert's actions this time not only harmed their interests in the Faroes, but also in Iceland, and no reprimand was given to Hilbert. The reason for this long leash could be explained by the fact that the British, acknowledging that the Norwegian Consulate was creating more trouble than was needed, more or less gave Hilbert the go-ahead to deal with the problem in his own way. In his private notes from the period of 1943-5 Hilbert mentioned a letter, which Consul Vorley showed him on August 8th 1943. In this letter

the Foreign Office had given him instructions on how to handle the radical separatists if they started to cause trouble; amongst other things it said that if the People's Party made an attempt to exploit the situation and declare the Faroes as independent from Denmark, then Vorley was to announce that the party "was acting illegally as rebels and neither His Majesty's Government nor any other respectable country would recognize or deal with them."¹³¹ (translated)

Hilbert was "convinced that the Norwegian Government will appreciate the necessity of eliminating the harmful effects of Thorstein Petersen's activity. Should the Government contrary to what I am expecting feel unable to meet my requests I shall prefer them to explain their reasons clearly rather than ambiguously."¹³² It thus seems that Hilbert was ready to go to great lengths to have his opponents silenced.

Reventlow promised Hilbert that he would do his best at influencing the Norwegians in London to dismiss Petersen as their Consul on the Faroe Islands.¹³³ After conferring with the Norwegians, Reventlow, however, was not so confident that he and Hilbert would succeed in their quest to have Petersen removed from his post. Reventlow suspected that the reluctance amongst the Norwegians in London to make such a move was that they feared that it would create a negative reaction back home in Norway, especially amongst those, who were hostile to the Social Democratic Government. The political and social circles in question, Reventlow pointed out,

¹³⁰ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Sendemand til Island, br.bk. 140A.2, Udskrift af Dagbog for Sysselmand K. Djurhuus, Tveraa, vedrørende Deltagelsen i den færøske Erhvervsdelegations Rejse til Island i Februar Maaned 1941

¹³¹ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (B. II), Private optegnelse vedr. perioden 1943-45, p. 1, Søndag den 8 August 1943, kl. 11.45.

¹³² SA, 8.H.26/1961/372, Norges stilling til Færøerne, from Hilbert to Reventlow, 18.12.42

¹³³ SA, 8.H.26/1961/372, Norges stilling til Færøerne, from Reventlow to Hilbert, 08.01.43

were predominantly people advocating the Norse heritage¹³⁴, and hence the Norwegian natural right to the islands in the North Atlantic. Reventlow, nevertheless, was pleased to inform Hilbert that their concerns were met with understanding at the Foreign Office and that Warner had promised that he would try to influence the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The prospects of success, however, were not high amongst the officials at the Foreign Office either, Reventlow noted.¹³⁵

With the possibility of having Petersen removed lessened, the focus for Hilbert and Reventlow's campaign against the Norwegian Consul was fixed on Ihlen.

On August 6th 1943 Consul Vorley informed Hilbert that N.O.I.C. (Naval Officer in Charge) and Colonel MacKay wanted Ihlen removed from the islands as soon as possible, because they perceived him as dangerous and harmful. Hilbert noted that it was perceived by the British that Ihlen's activities were harming the relations between the Norwegians and Danish circles in the Faroes, the political life on the Faroes, for example with his exaggerations created mistrust amongst the different branches of services. The removal of Ihlen had to take place immediately, as the British were aware that there were plans to make him chairman of the planned Norwegian Marine club in Tórshavn.¹³⁶

In early 1943 some Norwegian skippers situated in the Faroes wrote to the Naval Office in London praising the work of the Norwegian Consul and his staff, especially Nils Ihlen. They confided that they had heard rumours that the British would appoint a liaison officer to act between the Norwegians and the British military on the island. On the ground of his previous assistance to the Norwegian skippers, they recommend that the post should be appointed to Nils Ihlen.¹³⁷ This was incidentally around the same time Ihlen was removed from his post in the Faroes.

¹³⁴ SA, 8.H.26/1961/372, Norges stilling til Færøerne, from Reventlow to Hilbert, 28.01.43

¹³⁵ SA, 8.H.26/1961/372, Norges stilling til Færøerne, from Reventlow to Hilbert, 28.01.43

¹³⁶ SA, Privatarkiv: C.A. Hilbert. Arkiv nr. 6685, pk. Nr 2 (B. II), Private optegnelse vedr. perioden 1943-45, p. 2, 06.08.43.

¹³⁷ UD, 152/2B08611-54, Færøylene, Generalkonsul Kildal, Det Norske Generalkonsulat, Torshavn, Til Sjøforsvarets Overkommando, London, fra 3 skøyteførere (norske) i Torshavn, 16.03.43

It was not enough to have Ihlen removed from his post as Secretary at the Norwegian Consulate. In September 1943 a Foreign Office minute suggested the expulsion of Ihlen from the Faroes on the grounds that he had not abided by the conditions set forth by the Governor, when the former was granted permission to remain on the islands only if he refrained from political activities. The minute pointed out that “This condition has not been observed and on the 13th September the Governor, being unable under present circumstances to exercise his powers to expel undesirable aliens, requested HM Consul to approach the Naval Officer in charge with a view to his expulsion from the Islands,” and concluded that “Mr. Ihlen is closely associated with Mr. Thorstein Petersen and his political activities are of a nature to make trouble between the Danish authorities and the Faroese and thus to cause unrest and disturbance in the Islands. This is contrary to the interest of HMG and it is, therefore, proposed to authorise the Naval Officer in Charge, in his capacity as Fortress Commander, to remove Mr. Ihlen to this country.”¹³⁸

In the beginning of 1943 the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in London recognised the troublesome nature of the staff at their Consulate on the Faroes. “Our people on the Faores have behaved and are clearly behaving in a manner that is contrary to our interests and which threatens our good relationship with Denmark.”¹³⁹ They had subsequently “instructed Wendelbo to maintain good relations with the Governor and the British Consul.”¹⁴⁰ (translated) The main problem over the following months was Wendelbo’s and Ihlen’s refusal to apply for their resident permits, which Hilbert, as mentioned earlier had put in force. Hilbert, thus, achieved exactly what he set out to do when he installed the residence permits, namely to make it impossible for him to stay in the islands, since a renewal of Ihlen’s permit rested upon him abstaining from political activities. As would be expected Ihlen refused to abide by Hilbert’s instruction, and consequently gave Hilbert the opportunity to demand the removal of Ihlen from the islands. Hilbert also succeeded in his efforts to create an excuse for the removal of Wendelbo.

¹³⁸ PRO, FO 371/47281, Foreign Office minute, 16.09.43

¹³⁹ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, UD-notat (Norwegian Foreign Ministry Note) 15.01.43

¹⁴⁰ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Lie, London, to Norwegian Consulate, Tórshavn, 09.11.42

In addition I would be grateful if you would endeavour to obtain from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry a final official instruction to Mr. Wendelbo ordering him to ask for recognition within a short timelimit, thus enabling me to announce publicly, in case no such application should have been received within the timelimit, that Wendelbo has received no recognition and accordingly cannot act as consul. Finally, though I much regret the necessity of this step, I feel compelled to request you to demand from the Norwegian Government the annulation of Thorstein Petersen's appointment as consular representative for Norway in the Faroes.¹⁴¹

As expected Wendelbo found it in conflict with his personal beliefs to ask Hilbert for recognition of his appointment. After conferring with the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in London, upon which he was informed that the consequence of his standpoint would be his dismissal, Wendelbo stuck to his principle.¹⁴²

Following Wendelbo's dismissal, the Norwegian appointed Otto Jacob Lange Kildal, a long serving member of the Norwegian diplomatic service, whose only wish was to join the military. His lack of interest in the post was evident in his efforts to convince the Foreign Ministry in London that, with the Norwegian colony on the island only consisting of 20 men and 13 women, there really was no need for a General-Consul on the island.¹⁴³ The work at the Consulate was therefore so minimal that it could be left in charge of Petersen.¹⁴⁴ Kildal's wish to join the Norwegian army, however, was not met by the Foreign Ministry, and he was subsequently sent to Iceland to cover for the Norwegian Minister there, Bay, who had fallen ill. No one was appointed to replace Kildal.¹⁴⁵ Kildal was finally allowed to leave the diplomatic service and join the military once Consul Bay was well enough to return to his post.

The explanation for the resentment amongst some of the Norwegians towards the Danish Governor on the islands, or rather their support for the Faroese independence movement, could be that their memory of Norway's departure from the union with

¹⁴¹ SA, 8.H.26/1961/372, Norges stilling til Færøerne, from Hilbert to Reventlow, 18.12.42

¹⁴² RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, foredrag til statsråd om avskjed for legasjonsekretær og midlertidig konsul P.R.S. Wendelbo, 26.02.43

¹⁴³ RA, UD-9976/2.23-38: De ulønte stasjoner, Færøerne, Tórshavn, from Kildal to Skylstad, Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 09.06.43

¹⁴⁴ RA, UD-9976/2.23-38: De ulønte stasjoner, Færøerne, Tórshavn, from Kildal to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, London, 23.12.43

¹⁴⁵ RA, UD-9976/2.23-38: De ulønte stasjoner, Færøerne, Tórshavn, Norwegian Foreign Ministry note, 11.04.44

Sweden in 1905, which was initially met by strong opposition by the Swedes, was still fresh in the Norwegian's mind, hence their sympathy for the wish for Faroese independence. In a report from his inspection of the Faroes in early 1943, Bredsdorff, of the Marine Station in Port Edgar, compared the political situation on the islands with that of Norway in 1905. The report roused some interest amongst the Norwegians in London, because it also touched upon the future status of the Faroes after the war. It questioned whether the British would be willing to give up the aerodrome and fuelling station in the islands once the war was over. Also it highlighted the wish for independence on the islands and the desire amongst the Faroese to maintain consular and cultural ties with Norway, as well as the good relations between the locals and the Norwegians on the islands.¹⁴⁶ These last comments especially raised some interest amongst the Norwegians in London, where the report was shown to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In the end the Danes were able to exercise more pressure on the British than the Norwegian Consulate was. Those troublesome elements, which could be laid off without creating too much of a controversy, were dismissed and the Norwegian Foreign Minister in London consequently ordered the Consulate in Tórshavn to "maintain good relations with the local authorities and to avoid all conflict of a personal nature."¹⁴⁷

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the influence on British policies towards the Faroe Islands exerted by the Danish Minister in London and the Danish Governor in the Faroe Islands. Despite representing a government collaborating with the enemy, the Danish representatives succeeded in most part to influence the British.

The Faroe Islands never acquired the strategic importance originally placed upon them by the British, especially the Admiralty. This was due to the reluctance of the Air Ministry to meet the Admiralty's wish to have an aerodrome built on the islands.

¹⁴⁶ RA, 152/2B08611-54, Færøylene, Generalkonsul Kildal, Det Norske Generalkonsulat, Torshavn, fra Bredsdorff, Marinens Stasjon in Port Edgar til Sjøforsvarets Ovekommando, London, 04.02.43.

¹⁴⁷ RA, UD/9974-2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, from Lie, London, to Consulate, Tórshavn, 26.08.42

Consequently the level of interest for the islands within the Foreign Office diminished and the islands were predominantly dealt with by an office clerk at the Northern Department and very rarely reached the Foreign Secretary's desk. The level of interest taken in the islands was also mirrored in the level of intelligentsia on the islands, which meant that the Foreign Office acted upon a restricted base of information. The British Consul sent to the islands on the eve of the occupation was young and inexperienced, and therefore easily influenced by the Danish Governor on the islands. This chapter shows that in the first couple of years of the occupation the Danish contingencies in the Faroes and in London subsequently were highly successful in manipulating the information the Foreign Office based their decisions and policies regarding the Faroes upon.

Once in the islands the British realised that they had been landed in the midst of an internal conflict between the Danish administration and the independence movement supported by the Norwegian Consulate. This conflict reached its peak during the occupation owing to the severing of connections with Denmark and the subsequent Icelandic decision to declare their independence due to the situation. Initially the British decided to stick to their initial declaration of non-interference with internal affairs. However, upholding a complete neutrality to the internal conflict was at time difficult and often the British ambiguity towards the Danish representatives was apparent in their reports, even after the August-revolt in Denmark in 1943, which marked the end of governmental collaboration with the Germans. The British, nevertheless, stayed true to their promise given to the Danes on the eve of the occupation, namely that they would not interfere and would return the islands in the same state, as when they were occupied.

As for the local population the British found the Farose "not really quite conversant with what really happens and base most of their discussions on erroneous knowledge of affairs. They are therefore inclined to listen to any propaganda and may be swayed f. inst. by the Homerule party or any other influence, which may appeal to them."¹⁴⁸
[sic] It was therefore urged that

¹⁴⁸ PRO, FO 371/29278, Report, Visit to Faroe Islands. 15.08.-02.09, 1941. 07.09.41

As the British government is obviously supporting the Danish administration and does not intend to interfere with this administration except when it might be necessary for quite military defence reasons, it would be of great value both from a British as well as a Danish point of view that Danish prestige was backed as much as was possible by British wishes, by stating their wishes such that the Danish administration can consider such expressed wishes as a demand and back their own instructions accordingly, as inevitable.¹⁴⁹

In London, however, officials were careful not to commit themselves “too definitely to the support of the Danish Government and the existing constitutional arrangement”¹⁵⁰ in case Denmark would succumb to the Germans, and the Faroes, in such a situation, would wish for independence or press for inclusion in the British Empire, for in such circumstances “H.M.G. might feel that there was no reason why the islands should be handed back to Denmark.”¹⁵¹ Therefore, they never elucidated their statements, resulting in Reventlow and Hilbert taking advantage of the flexibility of the wording and turning every matter of internal conflicts into a matter of security to the British control over the islands.

Hilbert and Reventlow succeed through their bargaining skills to get an almost unconditional support for their endeavours from the British. But whereas Reventlow seems to have acted for Faroese interests on par with the Danish interests, except in those cases it would bring about constitutional changes, there are indications that Hilbert predominantly acted on behalf of his own position as Governor and the responsibility towards the Danish Government and King in retaining status quo on the Faroes.

As far as bargaining power goes, Reventlow was the strongest player, not only in British policies towards the Faroes, but he also managed to get the Foreign Office to interfere with Norwegian policies towards the Faroes, in order to restrict the authority of their Consul in the Faroes, local ‘Home Rule’ politician Thorstein Petersen, despite it being acknowledged by Collier that the latter “had done nothing

¹⁴⁹ PRO, FO 371/29278, Report, Visit to Faroe Islands. 15.08.-02.09, 1941. 07.09.41

¹⁵⁰ PRO, FO 371/32761, FO minute by Clarke 13.07.42

¹⁵¹ PRO, FO 371/32761, FO minute by Clarke 13.07.42

actually contrary to Norwegian interests.”¹⁵² Thus, Nils A. Sørensen is right, when he claims that during the occupation, apart from the flag incident that is, it is evident that the Foreign Office listened and followed the requests of the Danish delegation in London.¹⁵³ Hence, despite the reserved attitude of the British towards the Danes due to the situation in Denmark, Reventlow and Hilbert were to a great extent successful at influencing British policies towards the Faroes. This success was due to their entrepreneurship.

In an obituary to C.A. Hilbert in National Tidende on 19.10.53, Hilbert’s handling of the Faroes during the war was applauded and especially the way he handled the British occupation. With regard to the latter aspect a distinction was drawn between how Hilbert succeeded in completing his task while, according to the author, Kauffmann (the Danish Minister in Washington) failed, and thus secured continuous Danish control over the Faroes. By not protesting nor accepting the British occupation, Hilbert had been able to remain in his position as the Governor on the islands and thereby maintain Danish authority over the islands, despite the presence of the British. If Hilbert had, like Kauffmann, openly accepted the occupation, he would have been dismissed by King Christian, acting on German demands. Thereby there would have been no officially authorised representative of the Danish Government on the Faroes, and the author (Max) was in no doubt that the independence movement would immediately have seized the opportunity to declare the islands independent after the war.¹⁵⁴ Although Hilbert indeed did succeed in upholding Danish authority of the islands, he was by no means a popular Governor, and that was not only due to his reluctance to give way to the independence movement. As this chapter has revealed, he also faced much criticism from his British counterparts, and even his Minister in London at times acknowledged that Hilbert, with his stern attitude, did not make it easy for himself. Upon Hilbert’s departure from the Faroes it was thus remarked in Føroyatíðindi that “Hilbert did not have the popularity-gene in him, and he did nothing to seek popularity while in the

¹⁵² PRO, FO 371/29312, comment by Collier 02.10 to minute by Dashwood on Mr. Thorstein Petersen, his activities and occupation, 25.06.41

¹⁵³ Sørensen, Storbritannien og Det færøske Styre 1940-45, p. 199

¹⁵⁴ National Tidende, obituary to C.A. Hilbert by Max, 19.10.53

Faroese; he had come to do his duty as governor, and that is what he tried to achieve to full extent.”¹⁵⁵

The Faroese independence movement was headed by the grand old man, Patursson, and the younger Thorstein Petersen, who, in his post as the Norwegian Consul, was able to exert some influence on the British. However, the tactics, or rather lack of tactics, of the independence movement meant that the British saw them more as a nuisance and source of disturbance to the otherwise good relations between the British occupiers and the local people and administration, than an equivalent counterpart to the Danish administration. This despite there being some level of understanding amongst the British for the arguments of the independence movement.

The outcome of the Atlantic meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill attracted the attention of the People’s Party, and in their newspaper, Dagblaðið, they embraced one of the nine points made at the meeting, namely the one where the United States and Britain pledged to guard the right of people and nation, no matter how small they are, of sovereignty and right of self-determination.¹⁵⁶ The occupation also saw a rise in the support for the independence movement amongst the Faroese. This was manifested at the elections for the Danish Government in 1943, to which the Faroese, according to constitutional law, had to elect two members. One of the members elected was Thorstein Petersen. These electoral results gave the British some afterthought with regard to their stringent policy of support to the Danish administration in the islands, but nevertheless they did not diverge from the promise of no interference given at the outset of the occupation.

Despite the lack of success in influencing the British to support their cause of following the steps of Iceland and becoming fully independent during the war the independence movement succeeded in increasing their support amongst the Faroese to such an extent that by the end of the war it was acknowledged by all, Faroese, British and Danish that a return to pre-war conditions was impossible.

¹⁵⁵ Føroyatíðindi, 30.03.46

¹⁵⁶ Dagblaðið, ”Smátjóðanna rættur,” 21.08.41

CHAPTER IV: ICELAND OCCUPIED BY BRITISH AND AMERICANS: THE ROLE OF THE DANISH REPRESENTATIVES IN ICELAND, LONDON AND WASHINGTON DC?

Since 1918 Iceland was an independent entity within the Danish Kingdom, with its own Home Rule Government. This meant that she was in charge of everything but foreign affairs. Immediately after the German occupation of Denmark the Icelandic Government declared its independence from the Government in Copenhagen, and more importantly, that Iceland was taking charge of her foreign affairs. The structure of this chapter is based upon the four main events in Iceland during the war: the German occupation of Denmark, the British occupation of Iceland, the American take-over and finally the Icelandic decision to leave the Union with Denmark. While chapter III showed an example of highly active Danish representatives in all aspects of the British occupation of the Faroe Islands, this chapter will demonstrate that not all representatives with regard to the North Atlantic territories during Second World War were equally active. For most of the occupation of Iceland the Danish representatives kept a low profile. The chapter will demonstrate why there was such a difference in the conduct of affairs between the positions in Iceland as compared to that of the Faroes. This chapter will thus deal with a situation based on a different constitutional basis as was the case in the previous chapter. What difference, if any, did this have on the role of the Danish representatives in relations with Iceland compared to that of the Danish representatives in relations with the Faroe Islands?

One difference, as mentioned above, lay in its constitutional status and the fact that Iceland, as opposed to the Faroe Islands, was in charge of all her affairs in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark. The questions asked in the first part of this chapter concern how the newly established Icelandic diplomatic corps was received abroad, and to what extent the Danish representatives were able to influence the British and Americans with regard to Iceland, now that Denmark no longer was in charge of Icelandic foreign affairs. Chapter I introduced us to the historical background of the Icelandic situation in the North Atlantic, and her strategic importance to the British and Americans in the years leading up to the war. This chapter takes a more thorough examination of the immediate situation of

Iceland after the outbreak of war, and the implications the German occupation of Denmark had on the course of Icelandic affairs during the war. The question is also asked whether this reserved role of the Danish representatives in Iceland was due to the representatives themselves, or because of the British attitude towards occupied Denmark, whom they represented. The question in the second part of this chapter is whether one factor was that the British personnel sent to Iceland, especially the diplomatic, was of a different calibre, than that sent to the Faroes (Mason). Did the British apply a different attitude and policy towards their occupation of Iceland compared with that of the Faroes? And if so, what were the deciding factors for such a different approach?

Unlike Mason, Howard-Smith, the British Minister sent to Iceland, was experienced. His previous post was as Minister in Copenhagen and he was in fact transferred to Reykjavik following the German occupation of Denmark. Did this have any bearing on the level of influence exercised by Danish Minister Fontenay on the British, or were there other reasons for his relatively passive role?

Although Iceland took charge of her own foreign affairs in April 1940 she remained in the Union with the Danish Kingdom till 1944. Hence, did this fact have any bearing on the influence the Danish representatives were able to exert? This chapter questions to what extent the Danish representatives concerned with Iceland, that is the Danish Ministers in Reykjavik, in London and in Washington D.C., were able to exercise their influence during the war,

The third part of this chapter examines what bearing, if any, did the occupation of Iceland changing hands mid-way through the war have? Did the American attitude towards the occupation differ from the British? Did their take-over of the occupation bring about any changes with regard to the role of the Danish representatives? Did the arrival of the Danish Minister in Washington bring about any change? And did he take a more active role than his colleagues in Reykjavik and London had adopted?

The fourth part focuses upon the Icelandic decision to break out of the Union with Denmark. What was the standpoint of the Danish Minister in Reykjavik and of his colleagues in London and Washington? What stance did the British and the

Americans take to the Icelandic decision, and what were their considerations, if any, to the Danish sentiments in the matter? Subsequently, to what extent did the Danes have an influence on the independence question?

A. ICELAND TAKES OVER CHARGE OF HER FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOLLOWING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION OF DENMARK

According to the Act of Union Iceland was sovereign and independently in charge of all her affairs, with the exception of foreign affairs. However, John J. Hunt argues that Iceland, from the ratification of the Act of Union in 1918 “could have conducted her own foreign affairs anytime; the only reason she did not was the expense involved, the lack of trained personnel after 1918 and Denmark’s impartiality and fairness in representing Iceland,”¹ and that she had “signed and ratified at least 1000 bilateral and multilateral agreements between the two World Wars.”² Nevertheless, Iceland had no ministry of foreign affairs nor any diplomatic envoys abroad, except in Copenhagen, at the time of the German occupation of Denmark. Upon the German occupation of Denmark, the Icelandic Government declared that it would take charge of her foreign affairs. This meant that she set up a diplomatic corps and established consular offices in Britain and in the United States. Thus, unlike the Faroe Islands and Greenland, Iceland ultimately became in charge of her own affairs, both internally and externally. Did this shift of power mean that the Danish representatives became obsolete in matters related to Iceland, or were they still able to exercise some influence? This is one of the questions, which this chapter will examine in the attempt to understand why the Danish Minister in Reykjavik, contrary to his colleagues, was so inactive.

As mentioned in Chapter I Iceland was already in the process of moving her sphere of interests, especially with regard to her trade, towards the West and the United States rather than the traditional and historical bonds with Europe, and in particular the Scandinavian states. The Great War had taught the Icelanders that the vast distance from mainland Europe meant that she was easily cut off from trade with European states; hence the turn to the West. The incentive, however, was not merely

¹ John Joseph Hunt, The United States Occupation of Iceland, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., January, 1966, p. 203

² Hunt, The United States Occupation of Iceland, 1966, p. 202

concerned with trade, but as was also discussed in Chapter I, with defence and security issues. "As a protection they realise that the Danish connexion (sic) is useless. They would consider asking for the protection of the US, if they thought it would be obtained."³ Efforts to improve their connection with the US were made prior to the war. These were predominantly made in the sphere of trade negotiations and cultural exchanges, in which the Icelanders, according to the Act of Union, were able to conduct on their own behalf. However, when it came to foreign affairs issues, as mentioned earlier, these remained under Danish jurisdiction. According to the Act of Union:

[Denmark] should conduct Iceland's foreign policy and foreign representation in accordance with Iceland's wishes. Nevertheless Iceland had the right to appoint consuls in places abroad where there was no Danish Consul already. Treaties concluded between Denmark and foreign powers before the ratification of the Act were to be binding for Iceland. Treaties subsequently concluded by Denmark were not to be binding for Iceland without Iceland's express wish. Iceland had no war flag and was declared perpetually neutral.⁴

The German occupation of Denmark thus presented the Icelanders with an opportunity to take matters into their own hands. And, as we have seen in Chapter II, the Danes supported them in doing so.

1. Iceland in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark same as in chapter II

The German occupation of Denmark caused much worry in Iceland and "it was feared that the German Government would demand that Iceland place herself immediately under German protection,"⁵. Thus, to stress their neutrality, the Icelandic Government decided to completely detach itself from the Danish Government. This decision was also based on the fact that with all communications with Copenhagen cut off, Denmark was not able to fulfil her part of the Act:

since the occupation of Denmark by Germany had prevented the King from discharging his duties as King of Iceland. It has, therefore, become

³ PRO, FO 419/33, Report on a visit to Iceland by Mr. Gage, 02.06.39

⁴ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 16, Box 1568, Foreign Office Research Department, Whitehall, "The International Status of Iceland", 08.01 45

⁵ Solrun B. Jensdottir Hardarson, "The 'Republic of Iceland' 1940-44: Anglo-American Attitudes and Influences", Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Oct., 1974), p 32

necessary for Iceland to assume the conduct of all her own affairs, including her representation abroad.⁶

The Icelanders were also adamant to maintain their perpetual neutrality. By severing any association with occupied Denmark, they strengthened their position as a neutral and also strengthened their sovereign integrity in the conflict. As a consequence, the Icelanders believed that they safeguarded their territory and people against the belligerents. As Hardarson argues, “only in neutrality did the Icelanders see any hope of warding off a German attack.”⁷ However, the concern was not only with regard to the belligerents alone. Icelandic apprehension was also with regard to the British, who, as we saw in chapter II, had expressed their wish to protect the island in the aftermath of the outbreak of war. In return the British wanted Iceland to break off her trade with Germany, which she refused as such a move would be contrary to her perpetual neutrality. The Icelanders, however, soon realised that in order to safeguard economic survival and territorial defence, especially once a republic, they would have to alleviate their neutrality policy.

2. Iceland becomes *de facto* independent and establishes her own diplomatic corps independent from the Danish diplomatic corps

To begin with the British were not quite sure what to do with regard to Iceland and the representation of Icelandic affairs in London.⁸ At first “it was pointed out that the Danish Minister was also the Icelandic Minister, and that he might be able to claim certain privileges in his latter capacity, although [the British] might be compelled to deny them to him as the representative of Denmark”.⁹ However, it seems that the fact that Iceland had been independent for the past twenty years, and had conducted trade negotiations with the British on her own during that time, had had an effect on how the British perceived and respected Iceland as independent from Denmark. They were thus soon ready to accept them as diplomatic envoys on par with the Danes.

⁶ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 16, Box 1568, Foreign Office Research Department, Whitehall, “The International Status of Iceland”, 08.01.45

⁷ Hardarson, “The ‘Republic of Iceland’ 1940-44”, 1974, p. 32

⁸ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4565/4220/15, Comment by Coote 13.04.40

⁹ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4565/4220/15 (former N4420), minute by Patrick Dean of the Foreign Office, reporting from a meeting held in Sir W. Malkin’s room, 10.04.40

As to the question of a Minister of Iceland, the matter was cleared by Collier. Collier had been informed by Reventlow, that he, in the aftermath the Icelandic announcement that she took charge over her foreign affairs, did not see himself as the Minister of Iceland, and that Icelandic affairs subsequently were to be handled by Mr. Benediktsson, the Icelandic member of the Joint Standing Committee in London appointed under the Anglo-Icelandic trade agreement. Mr. Benediktsson, however, had not at this stage asked to be regarded as Icelandic Chargé d'Affaires, and Collier thought that the matter was not important/ of immediate concern for the time being.¹⁰ The British thus waited for the Icelanders to make a move.

The request from the Icelanders came a few days later. In the mean time, however, the British had learned about the move of the United States to establish a Consular post in Iceland. As we saw in the first chapter, the British had acted rather indifferently two years previously when the Germans were showing much interest in Iceland. The failure of the British to respond by stepping up their attention to Iceland had resulted in the Germans getting a strong foothold on the island. Now, however, it seemed that the British would not be overtaken by the Americans as they had by the Germans.

The Icelandic Government have asked His Majesty's Government to receive an Icelandic Chargé d'Affaires. It is recommended that we should agree. In that case it is desirable that the Icelandic Government should address a letter to His Majesty's Government...On the question of reciprocal representation in Iceland, it was agreed that there was good reason why we should appoint a diplomatic representative in that country in view of the naval and aeronautical importance of the Island during the war. For this reason there was much to be said for our going out of the way to be strongly represented in Iceland. It was also important that we should be first in the field. It was noted that the United States Government had already announced their intention to appoint a Consul in Iceland.¹¹

Acknowledging the importance of Iceland in their war plans, the British thus found it important to keep good relations with the Icelanders. As shown in Chapter I there were other incidents, for example the British sea-plane breaching Icelandic neutrality, which illustrated this willingness to build good relations with Iceland.

¹⁰ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4565/4220/15, Comment by Collier 13.04.40

¹¹ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, report by Dashwood of meeting in Sir Orme Sargent's room 18.04.40

Also, when it came to Icelandic independence the British were expressing their interest;

In these circumstances, and as the Consul-General has confirmed that there is considerable uneasiness in Iceland public opinion, I submit that we should take the opportunity to state publicly that we have a vital interest in Icelandic independence, and we clearly have such an interest, in view of the danger to which we might be exposed from the use of Iceland as a naval or air base by any hostile power, though it might be going rather far to say that we viewed Icelandic independence in the same light as that of France.¹²

While the British showed willingness to recognize Icelandic independence, they nevertheless realised that the U.S. recognition of the independence of the island would make matters more difficult for the British with regard to eventual occupation of the island;

If the Adty [Admiralty] and the A.My [Air Ministry] are very anxious to have the use of bases in Iceland, we shall have to consider whether it will be possible on any pretext to take Iceland under some form of protection. This would be more difficult now that the U.S. Govt have recognised the independence of Iceland to the extent of agreeing to appoint a Consul General there.¹³

The Americans were also anxious in getting a strong foothold in Iceland and were ready to meet the Icelandic wishes with regard to the status of the diplomatic envoy;

The Icelandic Government, which seems to attach an undue importance to matters of protocol, considers the question of diplomatic representation as one of national prestige. Icelandic sensibilities will be soothed only when our consulate has been elevated to a legation¹⁴

The new situation of Iceland taking over her foreign affairs and consequently setting up her own diplomatic corps did thus not cause any problems abroad. On the contrary, as we have seen, the realisation and acknowledgement of Iceland as an important new player on the international stage, was very much recognised. It even created a race between the interested parties to set up diplomatic representations in Iceland, as it was believed that such a signal would strengthen their relationship with the Icelanders, whose island was becoming more and more important in the strategic

¹² PRO, FO 371/23654, Comment by Collier to Parliamentary Question by Lieutenant Colonel Macnamara, 03.04.39

¹³ PRO, FO 371/24783, Bowering to FO, Northern Department, 14.04.40

¹⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/88, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 18.07.41

plans of war. Thus, whereas in the case of the Faroe Islands the concern of the British was to keep good relations with the Danish representatives, as the Faroes still were a county of Denmark, the situation was different in the case of Iceland after the German occupation of Denmark. Nevertheless, as we will see later in this chapter, although the British and Americans put much emphasis on good relations with the Icelanders, rather than the Danes, the British and Americans nonetheless had their concerns for their relationship with the Danish representatives when the issue of Iceland leaving the Union with Denmark prematurely arose. This concern had very much to do with the other Danish territories in the North Atlantic, which were still under the Danish Kingdom.

a) Changes at home and reactions in Danish circles following the taking over of foreign affairs and setting up a diplomatic corps

In the Icelandic administration the major change following the declaration was the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later the appointment of a regent.¹⁵ The important question was how their representatives abroad would be received. Upon being questioned about his opinion on the establishment of an Icelandic Charge d'Affairs in London, Reventlow replied to his Norwegian colleague that he had no problems with Iceland taking over direct diplomatic correspondence with other countries. On the contrary he hoped, and would appreciate, that the Icelandic Charge d'Affairs would be welcomed and treated with friendliness. (translated)¹⁶ There is also an example of Reventlow stepping aside for the sake of his Icelandic counterpart immediately after the German occupation of Denmark, that is, even before any decision had been taken by the British on the matter. This is documented in the following extract from a letter to the British Consul-General in Reykjavik from Collier:

I [Collier] am directed by Viscount Halifax to transmit to you herewith a translation of a telegram reporting the measures taken by the Icelandic Parliament in consequence of the German occupation of Denmark, which was communicated to this department on the 10th April by M. Benediktsson, Icelandic member in London of the Joint Standing Committee appointed under the Anglo-Icelandic War Trade Agreement.

¹⁵ PRO, FO 371/29307, N205/205/15, Howard Smith, Reykjavik, to Eden, 14.01.41, Report on Political Conditions in Iceland during 1940, p. 2

¹⁶ RA, UD-2 Leg/Ambassaden i London, fra Erik Colban, London, to Foreign Minister Koht, 20.08.40

The Danish Minister had previously telephoned to ask that M. Benediktsson should be received, since the communication, which Count Reventlow himself might, strictly speaking, have been entitled to deliver, was, as would be seen from its contents, rather a delicate matter for him as a Dane to deal with.¹⁷

The Norwegians subsequently decided that it was in accordance with their interests that Norway should be represented in Iceland and on August 29 they appointed Mr Esmarch as the Norwegian Consul in Iceland.¹⁸

B. THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF ICELAND: THE ROLE OF FONTENAY AND REVENTLOW

Despite the Icelandic declaration to take over the royal powers of her Foreign Affairs, Iceland remained in a personal union with Denmark till May 17 1944. The declaration meant that Fontenay and Reventlow no longer would be directly involved with Icelandic external affairs. As a main rule they left the Icelanders to their own affairs. However, as we will see later in the chapter, when it came to issues, which would further alter the constitutional status of Iceland, they stepped in. The interesting question is why the Danish representatives allowed the Icelanders so much space and freedom, when they were not ready to give the Faroese any room to manoeuvre?

1. The role of Danish Minister in Reykjavik, Fontenay, Danish Minister in London, Reventlow, and Danish Minister in Washington, Kauffmann

Despite having lost their positions as representatives of Icelandic affairs in their respective host countries, Kauffmann and Reventlow nevertheless did not cease to act in their roles as the envoys of their King. Thus, although the Danish representatives became almost invisible with regard to Icelandic external affairs as well as internal affairs, when it came to guarding Danish interests in Iceland, they all tried to varying degrees to influence all parties concerned when Iceland began the process to leave the Union with the Danish Kingdom.

¹⁷ PRO, FO 419/34, N4197/236/15, Collier, FO, to Consul-General Bowering, Reykjavik, 17.04.40

¹⁸ RA, UD-2 Leg(Ambassaden i London, fra Colban, London, til Koht, 03.09.40

1.1 Sage de Fontenay

Like Hilbert Fontenay found himself in a delicate situation with regard to declaring himself independent from the Government in Copenhagen. Unlike the situation of Kauffmann and Hilbert, Fontenay found that the Icelandic politicians were reluctant to issue a binding assurance that his position would not be compromised in the event of him denouncing the Government in Copenhagen. It was feared by the Icelanders that such a step by Fontenay would cause trouble for Icelandic subjects abroad, the Icelandic Legation in Copenhagen, and Icelandic neutrality. Also, Fontenay feared that if he followed Kauffmann's step it would provide the independence camp with arguments against his cause and position.¹⁹ These were the same concerns, which Hilbert was faced with when he was asked to join the Free Danes and denounce the Government in Copenhagen.

The Danish adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1941 renewed the question of Fontenay declaring his independence from the Government in Copenhagen: should he break with Copenhagen and declare himself as member of the "Free Denmark" movement or not? Like Hilbert Fontenay once more came to the conclusion that he would not bolster Danish interests if he were to take the same course as Kauffmann and break off with Copenhagen. He feared that such a move could be exploited by the independence course of the Icelandic Government. Thus, as Warner reported to Halifax on the matter, Fontenay's "position remains unchanged, though he has made no secret of his sympathy with the Free Danish Movement and confines his communications with the Danish Government to a minimum."²⁰

Fontenay found that his position in Iceland had not suffered to great extent because of the situation in Denmark, and he put it down to the fact that the notion in Iceland was that "Denmark still latently [was] a free and independent state."²¹ Fontenay had no contact with Copenhagen but for a couple of telegrams through the Legation in Stockholm. Upon Fontentay's wish to give the King of Denmark or the Prime

¹⁹ SA, 9.B.27/1983/450, Pakke II, Islands politiske forhold til Danmark efter 9.4.40, from Fontenay, Reykjavik, to Kauffmann, Washington, 06.05.42

²⁰ PRO, FO 115/3484, N 5402/33/15, Warner, FO, to Halifax, Washington, 31.10.42

²¹ FL, J. Nr. 4079, Færø Amt, Diverse vedr. Island, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Fontenay to Hilbert, 15.08.40

Minister in Copenhagen some information about the situation in Iceland, the British were supportive,²² as was the case with the Danish representatives in the Faroes.

Fontenay's role in everyday matters was thus, as compared to that of Hilbert in the Faroes, minimal. He kept a low profile, except when the plans for Iceland to break away from the Union with Denmark started to materialise. His presence in Iceland did not seem to cause the representatives of the United States or Britain any reason for concern either. Thus, when Leland Morris, who by 1943 had assumed the post as American Consul in Reykjavik, was approached by Minister for Foreign Affairs with regard to the status of Fontenay following the German proclamation of a state of military emergency in August 1943 following the August revolt in Denmark, he was taken by surprise;

[the] Minister for Foreign Affairs...stated that the Danish Minister, Fr. Le Sage de Fontenay, had originally been accredited by the Danish Prime Minister to the Icelandic Prime Minister and he inquired how I and the other chiefs of mission felt about his being the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps since Mr. Thor considered it doubtful whether Mr. de Fontenay has in fact diplomatic status. I expressed astonishment that the question should be raised after all the years that Mr. de Fontenay has been treated as a diplomatic Minister and stated that any action to curtail his prerogatives now or to change his long-accepted status would appear most ungracious and discourteous, especially in view of the events taking place in Denmark. I told him that I had never heard any of my colleagues object to Mr. de Fontenay's being Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and I personally considered him a persona grata for that office...Mr. de Fontenay could not account for this action of the Icelandic Government.²³

The events in Denmark therefore gave the British and Americans little or no apprehension with regard to the Danish representative in Iceland.

The difference between Fontenay's situation and that of Hilbert was only that with Iceland being independent and having taken over her foreign affairs, Fontenay's role in Iceland had diminished, while Hilbert's remained central. Fontenay also acknowledged that by laying low, he would serve Danish interests better than taking a similar line as to that of Hilbert.

²² PRO, FO 371/32750, comment by Clarke to draft by Howard Smith, Reykjavik, addressed to Warner, FO, 30.06.42

²³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, 859.00/1059, from Leland Morris, US Legation in Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, 09.09.43

1.2 Reventlow's involvement in Icelandic foreign affairs

When Denmark was occupied by the Germans, the consequences this would have on the position of the Danish Minister in London with regard to Icelandic matters were discussed. Now that Iceland was entrusted with the conduct of the royal power, the British were anxious to learn the views of the Icelandic Government on the matter of an Icelandic Minister in London. This was especially acute in the case of Reventlow, who initially had decided to return to Denmark, in which case he would become persona non grata and the His Majesty's Government would cease to recognise him both as the Minister of Denmark and of Iceland.²⁴

As already mentioned in chapter III the initial reaction in Britain towards the Danish representation in London was that it could no longer continue to enjoy diplomatic facilities. It was considered by the Foreign Office that

To what extent any or all of them [Danish Consular Officers] can henceforward be allowed to function may also depend on the question whether the Icelandic Government are willing to make use of them. Even if that Government are no so willing, the Consular Officers are in consequence deprived of consular status, it will, in the opinion of the H.O., (semi-officially stressed), be possible to make use of them in a number of ways of value to the Allied cause.²⁵

Although Reventlow at first was resolute to return to Denmark, he nevertheless changed his mind a few days later after he learned that King Christian X wanted him to stay in London. The British, who thus originally thought that they would not have to take a stance on the position of Reventlow in London²⁶, since he was determined to return back to Denmark, now had to contemplate what their attitude toward him should be. Collier stated that Reventlow

wants to stay as Minister and not as a private person; and, provided that we control his correspondence, I see no political reason why we should not permit this, though it is not in accordance with the French attitude, which seems to me unnecessarily severe. The fact that Denmark has accepted enemy protection does not, I presume, automatically deprive either Count Reventlow or Mr. Howard Smith of their status as

²⁴ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4565/4220/15, Comment by Coote 13.04.40

²⁵ PRO, FO 371/24784, comment by R. Dunbar to letter sent by Sir R. Campbell, Paris, to FO, Northern Department, 15.04.40

²⁶ PRO, FO 371/24784, comment by R. Dunbar to letter sent by Sir R. Campbell, Paris, to FO, Northern Department, 15.04.40

accredited Ministers, though it gives us the right to prevent Count Reventlow from exercising any functions to which we choose to object.²⁷

Reventlow was thus allowed to stay in London and act semi-officially in matters relating to Danish subjects and interests in Britain,²⁸ and also with regard to problems that might arise with regard to the British occupation of the Faroe Islands. It was hence conveyed by Lord Halifax that Reventlow's "diplomatic immunities will, in practice, be continued as an act of grace in so far as this may be practicable, and that there will be no objection to his corresponding with King Christian through the United States representatives here and at Copenhagen on purely domestic matters affecting the Royal Family."²⁹

Although stepping aside to let Icelandic matters be taken over by Iceland's appointed Consul, Reventlow would, as will be evident in a later section, meddle with one particular aspect of Anglo-Icelandic affairs: the Icelandic decision to leave the Union with the Danish Kingdom.

1.3 Icelandic diplomatic relations with the United States: change of role for Kauffmann

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Icelanders put great importance in the status of the consular representations in their island; the higher status the more prestigious. As for their own diplomatic service, the Icelanders were more anxious to appoint their first minister to the United States than to Britain, where they only had a Charge d'Affairs.

for Iceland to appoint her first minister [Thor Thors] to the United States rather than to England would not be out of keeping with the spirit of the relationship recently established between our two countries. I said "first" because not only will the minister now appointed to Washington be Iceland's first at that post, but her first anywhere, with the exception of Copenhagen.³⁰

²⁷ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, Collier, FO, to the Under Secretary of State, Home Office, 25.04.40

²⁸ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, report of meeting in Sir Orme Sargent's room 18.04.40

²⁹ PRO, FO 371/24784, N4680/4220/15, Collier, FO, to the Under Secretary of State, Home Office, 25.04.40

³⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 701.59A11/10, Lincoln MacVeagh, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, 10.10.41

This was, as mentioned earlier, because the Icelanders were anxious to build a stronger relationship with the United States, where they saw greater future economic and trade possibilities than in Britain. The sentiment was also recognised by the Secretary of State when he met Thor Thors:

I [Cordell Hull] concluded by saying that if and when the crisis is over and Hitler is defeated...it will give this Government the greatest satisfaction to cooperate to the fullest practical extent with the Government and the people of Iceland with a view to aiding them in formulating and establishing policies and plans and bringing about conditions that will create for the Icelandic people greater progress and comfort than they have experienced at any time in the past.³¹

In addition to the appointment of Thor Thors, Vilhjalmur Thor was appointed Icelandic Government Trade Commissioner in New York and temporary Consul General for Iceland in New York before being appointed Consul General of Iceland in New York and in charge of the Legation in Washington.

Handing over the consular and diplomatic matters to the Icelanders seemed not to be a problem to Kauffmann.³² Rather it was, as we will see later in this chapter and furthermore in Chapter V, very much in concert with Kauffmann's general pragmatic attitude towards the situation, which the German occupation, and the subsequent collaboration of the Danish Government, had created.

The Department had previously been informed by the Danish Minister in Washington of the adoption by the Icelandic Parliament of a resolution by which the executive power vested in the King of Iceland will, for the time being, be entrusted to the Icelandic Cabinet, and of a second resolution by which the Icelandic Government takes over of the time being the entire charge of Icelandic foreign relations. The Danish Minister now states that in view of the foregoing he has turned over to the Icelandic Government Trade Commissioner in New York all Icelandic diplomatic and consular business hitherto transacted by the Danish Legation and Danish consular officers in the United States.³³

³¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 701.59A11/12, Memorandum of conversation between Secretary of State Hull and the New Icelandic Minister, Mr. Thor Thors, 14.11.41

³² FRUS, Foreign Relations, Diplomatic Papers 1940, Volume II, General and Europe, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1957, p. 678, Kauffmann to the Secretary of State, Washington, 18.04.40

³³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 701.59A11/1, telegram from Cordell Hull to American Legation in Copenhagen, 22.04.40

This shows the pragmatic stance by Kauffmann to the situation. However, the Americans only pointed out that it was “agreeable in the existing circumstances”³⁴

The steps taken by the Icelandic Government taking charge of their foreign affairs and establishing representations abroad were also found justifiable by King Christian X and the Danish Foreign Minister Munch.³⁵

1.4 American Consul to Iceland, Mr. Bertel E. Kuniholm

Following the Icelandic wish for an American consul in Reykjavik, the State Department appointed Mr. Bertel E. Kuniholm to the post.³⁶ To the Icelanders, as mentioned earlier, the appointment of Kuniholm marked an important development for Iceland in their relations with the United States. For the United States, however, it was not until the talks of an American take-over of the occupation of Iceland that the diplomatic relations with Iceland really became important. The importance was emphasised by the fact that Roosevelt appointed his trusted friend, MacVeagh, as Kuniholm’s successor.

The decision by the Americans to establish a consular representation in Iceland was also perceived by the British Press as a positive sign despite their initial concerns of the U.S. getting a better foothold in Iceland than the British. The Times noted that “the State Department maintains silence as to the implications of this statement [establishment of a Consular representative in Reykjavik in the near future], but its promptitude in issuing it invites the inference that it may be the forerunner of more important developments.”³⁷ Thus, although the British were anxious to avoid being overtaken by the U.S. in Iceland they nevertheless appreciated that this was a positive sign of further involvement by the Americans towards the East.

³⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 701.59A11/1, from Cordell Hull to American Legation in Copenhagen, 22.04.40

³⁵ Hardarson, “The ‘Republic of Iceland’ 1940-44”, 1974, p.33

³⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 701.59A11/1, from Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, to Herman Jonasson, Prime Minister of Iceland, 16.04.40

³⁷ The Times, “Iceland’s Request to U.S. Direct Relations Opened. 17.04.40

2. The British occupation of Iceland

As we learned in Chapter I Britain had offered Iceland protection after the outbreak of the war in September 1939. These offers were presented at the war-trade negotiations between the two countries, which took place in London from October 1939 to January 1940. Iceland, however, turned down the offers, because they required that she should stop all trade with Germany. The Icelanders, as mentioned earlier, were reluctant to leave their policy of perpetual neutrality because they were afraid that submitting to such a British offer would cause German repercussions in the form of attacks on the island and their vessels. It was also feared by the Danish Minister in London that if Iceland accepted the offer the Germans might take action against Denmark if the conditions of the offer became known to them.³⁸

On the day of the German invasion of Denmark the British renewed the offer of protection to the Icelanders.³⁹ However, the Icelanders were still resolute to stick to their neutrality and subsequently turned down the offer. The German occupation of Denmark and their progress up the west coast of Norway nevertheless made the security situation of unprotected Iceland more acute to the British. Especially the prospect of German airbases along the Norwegian coast, which would put the North Atlantic in range of immediate danger of German attacks by air, worried the British. The British thus stood at a crossroad. They could not afford Iceland to fall into the hands of the enemy, but were they ready to violate Icelandic neutrality despite the clear signal from the Icelanders that such a move would not be welcomed? Nonetheless, as we saw in the previous chapter, the attitude of the British towards neutrals had altered over the first months of 1940, not least after the Altmark incident. Subsequently, and despite that they on April 9th had explained to M. Benediktsson “that His Majesty's Government had no intention to occupy Iceland or “protect” her in the German manner, and that it was hoped that it might never be necessary for them to come to her assistance”⁴⁰, they occupied Iceland on May 10th.

³⁸ PRO, FO 371/24778, N902/133/15, memorandum by Collier, 19.01.40

³⁹ PRO, FO 371/24778, N4099/133/15, telegram from FO to Bowering, Reykjavik, 09.04.40

⁴⁰ PRO, FO 419/34, N4197/236/15, Collier, FO, to Consul-General Bowering, Reykjavik, 17.04.40

The British Government had contemplated repeating their request for Iceland's co-operation,⁴¹ but refrained from doing so to avoid yet another refusal. A German landing in Iceland would, however, have directly endangered British security, so on 6 May the British Government decided to occupy the island forthwith, presenting the Icelandic government with a *fait accompli*. This would secure Iceland as a flying-boat base and permit refuelling of the Northern patrol fleet.⁴²

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the War Office was reluctant to send any resources of significance to the North Atlantic islands, because of the importance placed upon the European theatres instead. Once the initial stages of the occupation were over some of the troops were called back to fight in the European theatres. The state of the replacements indicated the extent to which the British thought that Iceland was in real danger of a German attack. As U.S. Consul Kuniholm remarked:

The only recent event of significance has been the arrival of a squadron of 18 fighter planes, together with ground crews and equipment. The planes are old and obsolete. I have been informed that the British War Office has refused to send Spitfires or Hurricanes, since none can be spared for use outside of Great Britain. This will now constitute the only air combat group on the island, since the Walrus seaplanes already here are old and slow reconnaissance planes used only for patrolling Icelandic coastal waters...Many of the best staff officers who came here with the original expeditionary force have now been returned to duty in the British Isles. The replacements for these departing officers seem in general to be much less experienced, and decidedly of a much inferior type. The new officers are mostly from the reserve, whereas those who have gone were seasoned veterans, not only from the last war, but from the present one.⁴³

These observations by Kuniholm on the British occupation were mirrored by the Norwegians in Iceland. During the war a Norwegian battalion was present in the island as part of the allied occupation. It was not formally set up by the Norwegian Government in exile, but established as a consequence of the course of the war. They had arrived from Petsamo, from where they had fled occupied Norway. Wanting to take part on the allied side they remained in Iceland in order to win the war and preserve Norwegian interests in Iceland and the surrounding waters. According to the Norwegians "the British marine commando on the island was lacking both in

⁴¹ PRO, FO 371/24558, N5209/133/15, Admiralty to FO, 29.04.40

⁴² PRO, War Cabinet Conclusions, 06.05.40, 111 (40)

⁴³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/4, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 11.08.40

personnel, equipment and transport. As a result it was the Norwegian contingent who was the initiative taking and dominating marine factor in the beginning of the occupation.” (translated)⁴⁴

a) Reactions to the British occupation of Iceland

The reaction in the British press to the occupation of Iceland was welcoming, especially after the British ‘missed the bus’ in Norway – the Icelandic case showed that the British Government had become more alert the British press noted. And, although it was acknowledged that the occupation was a breach of Icelandic neutrality, the British should not have any moral qualms, because it was a peaceful occupation, it was argued.

The Times wrote

It is admittedly a breach of Icelandic neutrality, but in the circumstances no one is likely to boggle at this, least of all the Icelanders themselves. In comparison with the great events now shaking the world the landing is a comparatively trivial affair. It is none the less welcome as an indicator that the Government do not always feel it necessary to wait for Hitler to seize a vantage point before taking steps to prevent him.⁴⁵

In the House of Commons in June 1941 the occupation was questioned by Mr. Gallagher. “Is it not the case that the Forces of His Majesty’s Government have taken control of Iceland in opposition to the wishes of the Icelandic Parliament?” To which Mr Eden answered: “No, Sir; it is not the case. What is the case is that a British garrison is temporarily stationed in Iceland, in order to prevent the occupation of that country by the common enemy.”⁴⁶

The conduct of the actual occupation by the British did not only come under criticism because of its breach of neutrality or the lack of an Icelandic consent. The American consul did not think much of the way the British had conducted their arrival, which was everything but a surprise.

⁴⁴ RA, 312/2B08611-54, Div. papirer angaaende Islandsavdelingen. Sjøforsvarets Mineinspeksjon. J.nr. 1025, 1948, from Kom. Kapt. E Ullring. Ref. Jnr. 999/48, to Den Krigshistoriske Avdeling, Ad. Islandsavdelingen.

⁴⁵ The Times, 11.05.40

⁴⁶ SA, 9.B.27.bilag.pkIII/1983/450, report by Reventlow 26.06.44.

Although the setting, as concerns surprise, was perfect, the British threw this advantage away, and, before landing-parties had gotten under way, flew their plane over the city to impress the inhabitants, providing thereby a theatrical setting totally irrelevant to the problem at hand. The time lapse between the appearance of the planes over the city, and the arrival of the landing-parties within the mole of the inner harbor, was sufficient for the German Consul General, Dr. Werner Gerlach, to burn his confidential documents and codes. When the first British detachment rushed up to his office he was standing in front of his fireplace busily disposing of incriminating papers...It was early apparent that the British authorities had but a rudimentary and half-baked conception of the problem facing them here, both with respect to the potentialities of the country as a base of operations, as well as the simple matter of geography. Brigadier Lamie, who preceded me here by a short period of time, told me in the early stages, that an attempt to man Iceland with one brigade was absurd. The country was larger than he had been led to believe...it was perhaps, therefore, fortunate that the Germans did not attack Iceland in May.⁴⁷

A month later Kuniholm still sent reports back home to the State Department, which criticised the British conduct:

The British are beginning to be less careful in handling the local population than heretofore. Now orders are given and action taken before notification is sent to the Icelandic Government. Officials of the Government are becoming more and more resentful of the British attitude toward them, and now express themselves in rather violent language. The reaction is inevitable in a country which has been reared in a long democratic tradition.⁴⁸

Thus, although the Americans were pleased that the island had not fallen into the hands of the Germans, they did not approve of the way the British had conducted the occupation. The fact that the British did not notify the Americans of the occupation until on the day of the invasion⁴⁹, did not improve the sentiments of the Americans. As a note from Adolf Berle, assistant Secretary, stated: "The President was not happy about the occupation of Iceland without prior consultation with the United States, though obviously there is no intent or desire to do anything at this time."⁵⁰ However, as we will see later in this chapter, there was a plan behind the swift and secret action

⁴⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/57, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to the Secretary of State, Washington, 15.07.40

⁴⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/5, from Kuniholm, American Consulate, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 22.08.40

⁴⁹ FRUS, Foreign Relations, 1940, Volume II, p. 679, from The British Ambassador Lothian to the Secretary of State 10.05.40

⁵⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 711.59A/9, from Berle to Welles, 17.01.41

taken by the British, and they were later trying to convince the Americans to conduct the take-over of the island in the same manner, as they had occupied the island.

2.1 Howard Smith, British Minister in Reykjavik

Upon the occupation of Iceland the British appointed Howard-Smith, who had just left his post as British Minister in Copenhagen following the German invasion, as British Minister in Reykjavik replacing Consul General Bowering. The British thus chose to send a well-established and experienced Minister to be in charge of their affairs in Iceland, unlike their choice of representation on the Faroe Islands. As for Howard Smith's character, Whitehead writes: "Howard Smith was approaching his goal with his usual tact and insight."⁵¹ The difference between the British representative in Iceland and the Faroes was remarkable. Whereas Consul Mason was inexperienced and thus easily influenced by the Danish authorities in the Faroes, there were hardly any references made by Howard-Smith with regard to the Danish Minister in Iceland. However, it can be discussed whether the reason was British indifference to the Danish Minister or if it was simply down to Fontenay keeping quiet. As we saw earlier in this chapter Fontenay did not feel too secure in his position as the Danish representative in Iceland. His stay in the island as Danish Minister was very much dependent upon the goodwill of the Icelandic Government. Also, the fact that the British in conjuncture with the Danish representatives had agreed to and recognised the declaration of Iceland that she took over the charge of foreign affairs inevitably resulted in a minimised role for Fontenay. Subsequently it might be noted that in the first many reports on the occupation sent back to the Foreign Office, Howard Smith made no mention of meeting with or seeing Fontenay.⁵²

2.2 Anglo-Icelandic relations during the occupation

Taking into account that the British had arrived uninvited, despite repeatedly being notified that they were not welcomed, it was no surprise that the Icelanders showed reservations towards their presence. Kuniholm reported that:

The gradual tightening of the British control of the island has brought about a corresponding stiffening of the attitude of the Icelanders. Certain

⁵¹ Whitehead, *Iceland in the Second World War*, 1978, p. 170

⁵² PRO, FO 419/34, N5693/133/15, Howard Smith, Reykjavik, to Halifax, FO, 12.05.40

leading officials of the Government have communicated...during the past few days their growing antipathy against the British. Others have voiced their doubts as to Britain's might, and some have even gone so far as to imply that victory for Germany might not be a bad thing at all, particularly for Iceland.⁵³

Relations between the British and the local population were thus not as good as they were in the Faroes. It was reported by a Miss Hansen, connected with the Bank of Iceland, that

It is a fact, not very widely known, outside of military and naval circles that, since the occupation of Iceland by Britain there has existed a great deal of tension between the British forces and the Icelandic population...⁵⁴

At the arrival of the American troops in Iceland, however, a change in the attitude of the Icelandic politicians towards the British troops was noticed. "Sentiment within the Atthing is now much more kindly disposed toward the British than a year ago. The admission of the Prime Minister that the former theory that neutrality and the refusal of protection from any country is, in his opinion outmoded, is typical of the opinion of the majority of the members,"⁵⁵ Kuniholm reported to the Secretary of State.

Upon the American take-over and the subsequent British departure (which, however, did not take place as immediately as planned) Icelandic newspaper Visir wrote: "The whole time that the British garrison has been here, it may be said that their whole behaviour has been so gentlemanly that there have been very few difficulties in the relations with it. It is amazing what a good disciplined behaviour has reigned in its ranks, and one may say that the nation owes them thanks for their behaviour in everything."⁵⁶ Hence, although there were criticisms in Iceland towards the conduct of the British occupiers, once they were faced with the arrival of another

⁵³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/4, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 11.08.40

⁵⁴ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 106, Box 83, folder 508, Memorandum on Iceland (no date and no author)

⁵⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, from Kuniholm, American Consulate, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 17.07.41

⁵⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Enclosure No. 5 to Despatch No. 135 dated July 17, 1941, Visir 09.07.42, Leader: Increased Danger of Accidents

occupational power, the Americans, whom they were not acquainted with, they showed appreciation for the British troops.

C. AMERICAN TAKE-OVER OF THE OCCUPATION OF ICELAND

This third part looks at the American take-over of the occupation of Iceland from the British. The actual deal of the take-over was highly orchestrated with all parties drawing upon different aspects of the deal, which would work in their favour. What, then, were the incentives of the Icelanders, British and the Americans? And to what extent did the Danish play a role in the outcome?

While the British occupation and subsequent increased export to the British Isles had solved the Icelandic export crisis, the British nevertheless were not able to meet the needs of the Icelanders import-wise. The Icelanders, therefore, continued to look westward to the United States for improved trade. Also, the fact that the British were a belligerent power, as oppose to neutral United States, inevitably put the island in danger of repercussion from the Axis powers, to which the British defence, as was in the case of the Faroe Islands, was close to inadequate. It was therefore very much in the interest of the Icelanders, as well as the British, that the occupation was taken over by the United States.

The only problem the Icelanders had with accepting the American terms of the take-over was the aspect of British troops remaining in the island after the arrival of the Americans. By the continued presence of the British in Iceland, one of the main arguments and justifications for inviting the Americans to take-over fell wayside, namely that Iceland no longer would be under the protection of a belligerent, but a non-belligerent.

The arrival of the Americans came to have a great impact on the Icelandic independence course. Not only did the Americans promised to recognise Icelandic sovereignty and support their independence morally, but also economically through trade agreements, once the war was over. Thus, the deal with the Americans, although made without the knowledge of the Althing, was acceptable to all parties, except the Communists. They opposed it due to the fact that nothing was mentioned of providing aid to Russia, who was now at war with Germany. However, their

criticisms were checked by their acknowledgment that through supporting the Allied, they indirectly helped the Russian cause.⁵⁷

1. Icelandic-American relations prior to American occupation of Iceland

On the American part, the political environment in the United States had, by the time of the talks of a take-over of the protection of Iceland, changed. To Roosevelt and others, who wanted the United States to take a more active part on the allied side, the relief of British troops in Iceland presented an ideal opportunity for the Americans to help the British without actively joining the war on the allied side.

Although Vilhjalmur Thor and Thor Thors, as was seen in Chapter I, had campaigned Iceland's cause in the United States it was not until after the German occupation of Denmark that the focus really was set on Iceland. Looking back in August 1944 a State Department memorandum read:

Prior to 1939, limited attention was paid to Iceland by the United States in view of the negligible commercial exchange between the two countries, the European orientation of Icelandic economy and culture and, finally, the fact that transatlantic air transportation was not sufficiently advanced to warrant negotiation of landing rights in Iceland. In the spring of that year, however, the ominous European situation made it necessary to reappraise our attitude to the defence of the Western Hemisphere. Consideration was also given to the opening of an American Consulate at Reykjavik. The neutrality of Denmark permitted the United States temporarily to hold these proposals in abeyance. However, the German seizure of that country in April 1940 followed by the occupation of Iceland by British forces in May of the same year required this Government to adopt a more active policy toward Iceland.⁵⁸

This gives a clear indication that despite Iceland being independent and taking charge of her Foreign Affairs, the separation from the Government in Copenhagen really had an important impact on the status of Iceland, also even though the U.S. at the time was not at war with the Germans and still had an open Legation in Copenhagen.

The importance of Iceland in the course of the war was not lost to the Americans:

⁵⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83,, from US Consulate in Iceland to Secretary of State

⁵⁸ FDR, President's Secretary's File, Diplomatic Correspondence, Iceland, Box 39, memorandum by Hull, Department of State, for the President, 23.08.44

The role of Iceland in the North Atlantic...has increased enormously of late, and seems destined to develop into an answer to the submarine menace, if not the ultimate one. There seems to be no doubt that...it constitutes the only route that can afford any security during the foreseeable future. The trade route, with proper protection from patrol bombers based on Newfoundland, Greenland and Iceland, can be covered throughout its entire course during the whole of the year.⁵⁹

The idea of American presence and defence of Iceland was thus not unfamiliar to the Americans.

2. The take-over process

As seen in Chapter I, the Icelandic envoys in the United States had made a thorough preparatory work to change the American perception of the Western Hemisphere to include Iceland.

As also shown previously the Icelanders realised that the British would not be able to provide them with enough resources. Neither were the British able to provide enough protection to the Icelandic fishing vessels freighting fish to the British market. In a communication with the American Consul in Iceland, Prime Minister Jonasson had voiced his concern "that Great Britain was unable to furnish the Icelandic nation with food in an quantities."⁶⁰

For the Icelanders the prospect of an American take-over of the protection was thus also linked to the future prospect of increased trade and economic prosperity as a result of strengthened relationship with the United States. Hence, an American take-over would provide Iceland with a stronger foundation in her process of leaving the Union with Denmark and establishing the republic of Iceland.

2.1 Icelandic wish for United States to take over the occupation

On July 12th 1940 the Icelandic Consul General in the United States asked Berle "whether the United States would not include Iceland in the Western Hemisphere

⁵⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/15, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 21.04.41

⁶⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859A.8595/3, Enclosure to No. 1 to despatch No. 104 dated April 22, 1941 from Bertil Kuniholm to Secretary of State, Washington, memorandum of conversation between Mr. Herman Jonasson, Prime Minister, and Kuniholm, American Consul at Reykjavik, 08.04.41

and put it under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine.”⁶¹ Berle’s answer was that “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,” and that Berle therefore “could not give assurance, though [he] should be glad to study it.”⁶² The matter was raised again on September 5th 1940 by Vilhjalmur Thor and Thor Thors in a meeting with Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and Hugh S. Cumming, from the Division of European Affairs. However, again the issue was wavered off by the Americans on the account that “with the many complicated phases of problems arising out of the European situation and the situation in the Far East”⁶³ the Administration was not able to come with a definite answer. A month previously Vilhjalmur Thor along with the newly appointed Consul General, Thor Thors, visited the Secretary of State and expressed that:

What most Icelanders would like best is to get under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine. At least one article has been published to this effect, but it is the most significant possible, for it was written by Jonas Jonason, the most powerful man in the strongest of the political parties, the Cooperative Party, of which the Prime Minister is a member.⁶⁴

It was thus not surprising that the Americans got the notion that an American takeover of the occupation of Iceland was a common wish of all Icelanders. This notion was given further substance when Thor Thors, at a meeting with the Secretary of State Hull and Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., Division of European Affairs, 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 Berle that the United take Iceland under its protection through some sort of a declaration which would recognize that Iceland was in the Western Hemisphere, and which would extend the Monroe Doctrine so as to include that island. Mr. Thor also suggested, on his own initiative, that in view of the recent acquisition by the United States of a naval base in Newfoundland the United States might wish to strengthen its sea defences in northern waters through acquiring naval and air bases in Iceland. [He also suggested that] some arrangement be worked out by which Iceland might obtain certain

⁶¹ FRUS, Foreign Relations, 1940, Volume II, p. 681, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), Washington, 12.07.50

⁶² FRUS, Foreign Relations, 1940, Volume II, p. 681, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), Washington, 12.07.50

⁶³ FRUS, Foreign Relations, 1940, Volume II, pp. 682-3, Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., of the Division of European Affairs, Washington, 05.09.40

⁶⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/56, Photostatic copies of a letter and memorandum entitled “British Occupation of Iceland” from Vilhjalmur Stefanson, 11.06.40

economic and trade advantages in the United States in exchange for such naval and air bases in Iceland.⁶⁵

Although Thors was rather evasive about the extent to which he had his Government's consent for this approach to the State Department on the issue of an American take-over of the protection of Iceland, it cannot be denied that the sentiment of the majority of the Icelandic Parliament, Althing, would back such a deal. However, the problem became how to go about the issue without causing too much uproar, either in Iceland, the United States or elsewhere.

Following these signals from the Icelandic representatives in the U.S. it was therefore understandable that the Americans expected a positive receipt of their offer. However, from the British Embassy in Washington the Americans were given a different impression of the Icelandic mood. "The British Minister in Iceland believed that it was doubtful whether Iceland would ask the United States Government to assist in its defence,"⁶⁶ Lord Halifax had explained and as we will see in the next section, this was not far from the truth.

2.2 The British role in the take-over

As argued earlier the British were very anxious to have the Americans closer to the theater of war. At the Foreign Office "Eden and Hambro had long recognised that Britain had every reason to foster U.S. interest in Iceland."⁶⁷ Thus, they were dismayed when they learned about the Icelandic reluctance to meet the American terms and offer:

The President of Iceland had in the same conversation with the British Minister in Iceland also expressed his opposition to such a move, although he acknowledged that there were "many individuals in the Icelandic Government [who] favoured the step proposed."⁶⁸

⁶⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.014/9, memorandum of conversation between 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, 05.09.40

⁶⁶ ⁶⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 1/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 22.06.41

⁶⁷ Whitehead, *Iceland in the Second World War*, 1978, p. 159

⁶⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 2/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 25.06.41

The reluctance of the Icelandic Government to provide the Americans with an invitation to take over the occupation of Iceland took the Americans by surprise. As pointed out earlier the Americans subsequently expressed their reluctance to go further with the plan. The British, who by now were adamant to have the matter settled, instructed their Minister in Reykjavik to do his utmost to influence the Icelandic stance. A cable sent by Halifax to the British Minister in Reykjavik the following day was "couched in very stiff terms and...amounted literally to an instruction to the British Minister to "see to it" that the Icelandic Prime Minister sent a request to the President of the United States for assistance in defending the independence of Iceland."⁶⁹

The reply from Howard Smith, however, was not positive

Despite my every argument and insistence Iceland Government refuse to use word "invite". Their position is that during last session of Parliament there was large majority in all parties against asking United States for protection. They cannot therefore assume responsibility for "inviting" without consulting Parliament, but they are anxious that whole plan should not come to nought.⁷⁰

Another hurdle in the plan was the need for justification to the American public that an American take-over of the occupation of Iceland was compatible with their interests. President Roosevelt was eager to help the British and Allied cause. However, as pointed out in Chapter II, without the backing of public opinion and with the danger of dividing the Congress, he was reluctant to take any action that could harm his cause, especially with the upcoming elections in mind. Iceland, therefore, presented the president with an opportunity to move the sphere of interest of the United States closer to Europe. By taking over the protection of Iceland, the United States presence in the North Atlantic waters would inevitably increase, both in presence and activity. This at a time, when the Battle of the Atlantic was gathering pace and the British Navy looked to loose out to Germany's Wolf Packs, and therefore was in desperate need of support for their convoys. Consent from the isolationists for such a move, however, was unattainable without the inclusion of Iceland in the Monroe Doctrine. By doing so, the protection of Iceland would

⁶⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 3/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 26.06.41

⁷⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 5/12, Telegram from British Minister at Reykjavik to the FO, 27.06.41

become part of the defence of the Western Hemisphere, and hence not a move of aggression but self-defence.

Roosevelt, however, had the backing of the military. In a memorandum amongst Sumner Welles' papers it is stated that "the President is advised by the Army and by the Navy that it is essential to prevent, through prior occupation by the United States, the probably German attempt at the occupation of Iceland."⁷¹ However, Roosevelt needed the backing of the public opinion and the Congress before any measures could be taken. In order to obtain that, Iceland would have to be included in the Western Hemisphere so that she was covered by the Monroe Doctrine.

The subsequent ABC-1 plans, which were agreed upon by the Americans and British, entailed that the United States eventually would take over the protection of Iceland.

2.3 Inclusion of Iceland in the Western Hemisphere

In Chapter II, section 4.1, it was demonstrated how Vilhjalmur Thor and Thor Thors back at the New York World Fair had started a campaign to alter the American perception of the Western Hemisphere to include Iceland.

At a meeting in the State Department five months after the German occupation of Denmark and four months after the British occupation of Iceland, Vilhjalmur Thor and Thor Thors approached the matter again. The Secretary of State, Hull, however, was reluctant to give a definite answer.⁷² The matter, however, did not lay dormant. The interest in widening the scope of the Western Hemisphere was noticeable, especially amongst those, who wished for a more active U.S. role in the war.

A letter from Lt. Col. Chief, Special Assignment Branch, Bureau of Public Relations helped to form the argument to include Iceland in the Western Hemisphere:

⁷¹ FDR, Sumner Welles Papers, Box 164, Folder 15, Europe Files 1933-1943, Iceland 1940-1941, No author, but written by pencil on upper right corner it says "take to Sen. George 7-2-41".

⁷² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.014/9, memorandum of conversation between 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, 05.09.40

Writing on Iceland in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Dr. Pius Wittman of Büdingen, Germany, said: "The island called Iceland, which, though really a part of America, is considered, because of its population and history, as forming a part of Europe..." This article was apparently written about 1910 as it bears a copyright of that year..."⁷³

The result was that the Western Atlantic Area was redefined to include Iceland such that the area lay west of the following line:

Meridian of 10 west longitude south to the 65th north parallel, thence by rhumb line to the junction of 53 north latitude and 26 west longitude, thence south along the 26th meridian west.⁷⁴

The Icelanders thus succeeded in influencing the Americans although they were very much helped by military interests in the United States.

a) British interest in the inclusion of Iceland in the American conception of the Western Hemisphere

On April 12th 1940 Marquess of Lothian in Washington reported to Halifax in London that the Secretary of State had stated that "Iceland did not come within scope of Monroe Doctrine."⁷⁵

Whether or not Iceland was included in the American concept of the Western Hemisphere, and thus covered by the Monroe Doctrine, did occupy the British a lot in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark and the subsequent situation Iceland and the rest of the North Atlantic area found itself in. In July 1940 it was noted in the Foreign Office that "Mr. Waldock (Admiralty) asked Sir John Dashwood whether Reykjavik was in the American Belligerent port Area. Sir John asked Mr. Perowne who states that no reference can be found either to Iceland or Reykjavik in any of the Presidential pronouncements and it may therefore be assumed that it is not."⁷⁶

⁷³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.014/16, letter from Lieutenant Colonel F. V. Fitzgerald, Chief, Special Assignment Branch, Bureau of Public Relations, War Department, to Mr. William D. Bassett, The White House, Washington, D.C., 15.07.41

⁷⁴ John L. Zimmerman, "A Note on the Occupation of Iceland by American Forces", Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 62 (1) Mar, 1947, p. 106

⁷⁵ PRO, FO 419/34, N4471/4295/15, The Marquess of Lothian, Washington, to Viscount Halifax, FO, 12.04.40

⁷⁶ PRO, FO 371/24783, N5990/4115/15, Foreign Office Minute by Dashwood, 10.07.40

To the British the inclusion of Iceland in the Western Hemisphere was of utmost importance, because that would mean that the Americans physically would move into closer proximity of Europe and this would in turn increase the chances for an early U.S. entry to the war.

On July 12th 1940 the Evening Standard contained a short piece under the headline 'Iceland "Monroed"', where Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (Republican, Massachusetts), during a debate at the Senate the day before "contended that Iceland was part of the Western Hemisphere...[and thus] covered by the Monroe Doctrine".⁷⁷ Following this query the American Consul General in Reykjavik, Kuniholm, received an urgent telegram from Sumner Welles, requesting information on the military situation in Iceland, the Faroes and the coast of Greenland.⁷⁸ This unprecedented approach by the Americans quite upset the British, as the normal line of inquiry would be for the Americans to approach the British in London in order to acquire such information on British military activities in the North Atlantic. However, it was chosen to look at the incident as a case of an 'oversight' on the part of the American Under-Secretary.⁷⁹ Also, it raised some interest amongst the officials at the Foreign Office, because Dashwood noted that "I am under the impression that this is the first indication we have received that the U.S Govt were in any way particularly interested in Iceland."⁸⁰

2.4 Iceland 'invites' the Americans to take-over the protection from the British

As mentioned earlier the State Department was surprised to find that contrary to the indications they had been given by Vilhjalmur Thor and Thor Thors, the Icelanders were initially not welcoming the idea that the occupation should be taken over by the Americans. Roosevelt was thus reluctant to make such a move without an invitation from the Icelandic Government. The British on the other hand suggested that the Americans should just copy the steps taken by the British when they occupied the

⁷⁷ Evening Standard, 'Iceland "Monroed"', 12.07.40

⁷⁸ PRO, FO 371/24783, decipher from Howard-Smith, Reykjavik, to FO, 22.07.40

⁷⁹ PRO, FO 371/24783, N6034/4115/15, comment by Dashwood, 23.07.40, to decipher from Howard-Smith, Reykjavik, to FO, 22.07.40

⁸⁰ PRO, FO 371/24783, N6034/4115/15, comment by Dashwood, 23.07.40, to decipher from Howard-Smith, Reykjavik, to FO, 22.07.40

islands and turn up unannounced. Mr Butler, the then British Minister in Washington, left a memorandum at the State Department, which read:

The British 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.⁸¹

The British based this recommendation on the fact that their Minister in Iceland believed that it was doubtful whether Iceland would ask the United States Government to assist in its defence. Both he and the Foreign Office feared that if negotiations were to take place there would be danger of leakage since there was no censorship of the press in Iceland and likewise no control over wireless installations on Icelandic fishing vessels.⁸²

At first the Americans were not inclined to follow the procedures as put forward by the British. Instead the Americans wanted the British to inform the Icelanders that the British forces were needed elsewhere. This would make the Icelanders see that they needed protection from another country. However, the British could not withdraw their forces and leave Iceland unprotected. They would furthermore inform the Icelanders that to their knowledge the U.S. Government was interested in taking over the protection of Iceland as part of their Western Hemispheric defence. In turn the Americans would "assist in the defence of the integrity and independence of Iceland."⁸³

This plan, however, required that the Icelandic Prime Minister would send a request for protection to President Roosevelt. To President Roosevelt, however, it was unfeasible and undesirable to follow the British recommendation since, as Sumner Welles pointed out

the whole basis of our [U.S.] relations with the other American Republics was based upon our policy of non-aggression and non-intervention, the

⁸¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/17, memorandum left at the State Department by British Minister in Washington, Mr. Butler, dated 16.06.41

⁸² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 1/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 22.06.41

⁸³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/17, memorandum of conversation between British Minister in Washington, Mr. Butler and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 18.06.41

occupation by the United States of Iceland without having received from the Icelandic Government a request to do so, would destroy in great measure the confidence which the other American Republics possessed in this Government and would be utilised by axis propagandists throughout the Western Hemisphere.⁸⁴

Also, an occupation without invitation, it was reasoned by Welles, would mean that “fears of Portugal with regard to our possible action in the Azores would be materially stimulated and would be exploited to our disadvantage and that of the British by German propaganda in Portugal.”⁸⁵ Likewise, President Roosevelt did not approve of the suggestion by the British that a statement should be made suggesting that the Americans were acting “in concert with His Majesty's Government”.⁸⁶

The Americans were thus anxious and adamant that

the British Government should studiously emphasize the fact that the action taken by the United States was not the result of any secret agreement or any collusion between Great Britain and the United States but was the result of a message received by the President from the Prime Minister of Iceland and was the result of the practical fact that Great Britain intended to withdraw her forces of occupation from Iceland.⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier, Halifax had given the British Minister in Iceland instructions to see to that the Icelanders would request for American help to defend the island. The efforts of the British Minister were not in vain. On the matter of the British suggestion for a take-over of the occupation by the United States, the Foreign Minister, Stefansson, approached the American Consul, Kuniholm. Stefansson enquired for Kuniholm's opinion for a possible approach by the Althing, on behalf of the Icelandic people, appealing to be “placed under the protection of the American flag.”⁸⁸ The meeting was a success, because upon leaving Stefansson said: “he hoped that some arrangement could be made, when zero hour does come, so that Iceland

⁸⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 1/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 22.06.41

⁸⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 1/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 22.06.41

⁸⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/17, memorandum of conversation between British Minister in Washington, Mr. Butler and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 18.06.41

⁸⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 9/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Viscount Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 03.07.41

⁸⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 711.59A/9, memorandum of conversation between Mr. Stefan Johan Stefansson, Icelandic Minister for Foreign affairs, and Mr. Bertel E. Kuniholm, American consul at Reykjavik, 18.12.40

would be able to dispose of its produce under favourable conditions in the United States. Perhaps as a condition to granting the United States a base in Iceland, tariff or other concessions could be made.”⁸⁹ This was the first real important step in the process of the United States acquiring the invitation, they needed and wanted, for the take-over to take place. However, in the end the Icelandic people and Althing were not notified of the steps taken. Although there was a majority within the Althing for asking the Americans to take over protection of the islands,⁹⁰ the final decision was taken by the Icelandic Government alone, without summoning the Althing. Prime Minister Herman Jonasson explained in his speech to the Althing a couple of days later that he and the other three Ministers had wanted to summon the Althing, but that the British Minister had discouraged this idea.

I hope that the Althing will agree with the Government that the responsibility was great which this Government took upon itself in replying to the British Minister’s request without consulting the Althing, and that the responsibility would have been even greater if the Government under these circumstances could have taken upon its shoulders to summon the Althing. For this reason and for this reason alone did the Government choose the only possible way to reply without discussing the matter in the Althing...Though the Government alone should take the decision, which was taken, it is desired that the Honorable Regent, because of the special importance of the matter under discussion and to be decided upon, should preside over the meetings which were held to discuss the matter. The Honorable Regent considered it natural that the matter should be taken up as it was, and therefore willingly agreed.⁹¹

Thus, the problem was solved and the British subsequently prepared a suggestion as to how the invitation should look like. An aide memoire was delivered to the Prime Minister by the British Minister where the latter had “come to ask you [Prime Minister] to give this invitation to the United States” and at the same time listed the advantages of taking this course of line: “

⁸⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 711.59A/9, memorandum of conversation between Mr. Stefan Johan Stefansson, Icelandic Minister for Foreign affairs, and Mr. Bertel E. Kuniholm, American consul at Reykjavik, 18.12.40

⁹⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/20 2/12, memorandum of conversation between British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, and Under Secretary, Mr. Welles, 25.06.41

⁹¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, report of speech of the Icelandic Prime Minister delivered to the Althing on July 9, 1941 sent by American Consulate, Reykjavik, to the Secretary of State, Washington, 17.07.41

- 1) Whatever may be the outcome of war so far as Great Britain is concerned you will have the assurance that the United States will defend the independence and integrity of Iceland...
- 2) The position of Iceland and the Icelandic Government will be much stronger if the United States troops come on your invitation. Admittedly the British violated your neutrality, but the course of war has shown that they had no alternative. If the Americans come on your invitation, they will not be committing any unneutral act, and the undertaking which the President will give you about non-interference will have the greater force if it is given after your invitation...⁹²

In his message to President Roosevelt Prime Minister of Iceland, Hr. Hermann Jonasson, asserted that in conversation on June 24th a British Minister explained to him that the British forces in Iceland were required elsewhere. At the same time it was stressed that the adequate defence of Iceland was of immense importance and that President Roosevelt was prepared to send United States troops immediately to supplement and substitute for the British forces. This action, however, could not be taken except at the invitation of the Iceland Government.

It is worth noting, that the Danish representatives were completely absent in this process.

2.5 Reactions to the American take-over

In general the take-over did not make the headlines in the world press. However, in most countries the event appeared at least in one newspaper.

a) Reactions in Icelandic newspapers

In Iceland Brynjolfur Bjarnason of the Communist Party questioned the legality of the Government's decision;

although we must be satisfied with the accomplished fact, it is necessary to point out that this agreement was unlawfully made because in so serious a matter that which calls itself a Government should have appealed to parliament and the people. He suggests that the agreement is not binding on the Icelandic people, who have never expressed themselves ready to entrust the United States...everyone will agree that

⁹² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, Aide Memoire handed to Icelandic Prime Minister by British Minister at Reykjavik, Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch No. 135 dated July 17, 1941, from Bertel E. Kuniholm, American Consul at the Reykjavik, Iceland, on subject of Protection of Iceland by United States

Iceland has now ruined her neutrality...it is good to have written promises, but nothing is more dangerous than for a small country to be dependent for its sovereignty and freedom on the mercy of one great power.⁹³

On of the largest Icelandic newspapers, Morgunblaðið, however, showed more approval towards the decision of the Government. Although the newspaper recognised the necessity of the Government's actions, they nevertheless did not want it to become a precedent; "Most of the Atlhing appreciated the Government's necessity of making their decision without consulting the Atlhing, although it is obvious that in usual times such an action is not to be imitated, if democracy and the Parliamentary system is to reign in our country."⁹⁴ Thus, in general (the Communist Party aside) there was wide approval of the invitation sent to the Americans to take-over the occupation from the British.

b) Reactions in U.S.

By the time of the invitation the mood in the United States towards the war had changed somewhat. Already in June 1940 it was voiced that

Neutrality has proved a death trap Isolationism and defense [sic] strategy have run counter to the elementary military lesson that it is best to fight on someone else's soil and to have friends fighting for you...America has ignored that the Monroe Doctrine has existed by the grace of the British and the British navy. With Britain and the navy gone, the Monroe Doctrine is only an incantation. Such is the Nemesis of sentimentalism.⁹⁵

However, according to Morgunblaðið reactions in the Senate were not all positive, as could be expected. Robert Taft, leader of the Republicans in the Congress was reported to have said that "it is the same as an aggressive war."⁹⁶ Also, amongst the American public there were split opinions. Following the take-over of the occupation the President received letters from civilians of all walks of life expressing their

⁹³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Enclosure No. 5 to Despatch No. 135 dated July 17, 1941, Nýtt Dagblað 11.07.41

⁹⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Enclosure No. 5 to Despatch No. 135 dated July 17, 1941, Morgunblaðið 11.07.41

⁹⁵ FDR, Alexander Sachs papers, Correspondence file, Box 42, folder Alexander Sachs papers, correspondence file, Lord Lothian, Exhibit 3 to Chapter VII, Conference with Lord Lothian, 01.06.40

⁹⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/83, from Kuniholm, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Enclosure No. 5 to Despatch No. 135 dated July 17, 1941, Morgunblaðið 11.07.41

reactions. Those on the pro-side were along the lines of “A little slow on the trigger but Iceland shot a bulls eye”⁹⁷

Others were not so impressed by the decision of the President. It was pointed out that it was not according to the promises made at the elections

In view of the fact that I supported your Administration at the last three Presidential Elections on the strength of your campaign promises...may I respectfully ask how this move can be reconciled with campaign promises?...are we not occupying an Island directly north of the British isles. Are we not in the war zone where shooting cannot be avoided?⁹⁸

...one argued. Another wrote

I have read in the paper that Navy Secretary Frank Knox implied, in connection with United States occupation of Iceland, that United States naval forces had been ordered by you to shoot, if necessary, to keep sea lanes open. Such would be an act of war, and Congress alone has the power to declare war. You must not assert this power and become a dictator. We are opposed to dictatorship abroad, and we do not want it in any form in America.⁹⁹

Some of the arguments went along with the idea of the Western Hemisphere:

by what stretch of the imagination [sic] can Iceland be called a part of Western Hemisphere? If it is not you are clearly violating your oath of office inasmuch as present laws expressly forbid sending United States armed forces out of this hemisphere if congress were not slavish following all the recent years of the peoples money poured out by you impeachment would follow.¹⁰⁰

c) Reactions elsewhere

The decision for an American take-over of the occupation of Iceland came as a surprise to the other Scandinavian countries. The American Legation in Stockholm reported that the Swedish newspaper Stockholm-Tidningen termed the decision

⁹⁷ FDR Official File, OF 660 Iceland, Box 1, folder OF 660 Occupation of Iceland, Icelandic misc, Pro A-1 1941, telegram to President Roosevelt, from Frank W. Buxton, Brookline, Mass. 07.07.41

⁹⁸ FDR Official File, OF 660 Iceland, Box 1, folder Of 660, Occupation of Iceland, Iceland misc, Con A-G 1941, to President Roosevelt, from Ackerson, Wilkinsburg, Pa, 07.07.41

⁹⁹ FDR Official File, OF 660 Iceland, Box 1, folder Of 660, Occupation of Iceland, Iceland misc, Con A-G 1941, to President Roosevelt, from Walter T. Burke, Boston, 10.07.41

¹⁰⁰ FDR Official File, OF 660 Iceland, Box 1, folder Of 660, Occupation of Iceland, Iceland misc, Con A-G 1941, to President Roosevelt, from Robert Harris Cobb, Chautauqua, NY, 10.07.41

extraordinary noteworthy and implies significant change in position of island in that instead of being militarily occupied by warring power Iceland now comes under armed protection of neutral power. Although opinion differs as to nature of United States' neutrality and label "nonbelligerent" is accepted even by Americans themselves as more adequately descriptive of their position United States is nevertheless neither de facto nor de jure at war with any country.¹⁰¹

In Spain the event was on the first page. In an editorial in the ABC it was stated that

the case of Iceland is regarded by political observers as the forerunner of similar action with respect to Cape Verde, the Azores, and Dakar. ABC states that by this action the President has exposed his country to great danger and pointing out that Iceland is outside the zone defined by the United States as forming part of the Western Hemisphere, but on the other hand is within the War Zone laid down by Germany, it forecasts some "great incident" in Iceland waters in the near future.¹⁰²

In some South-American countries, however, the tone was different. The Legation in Bogota reported that "President Santos...observed...that our entry into Iceland was "extremely grave", that we were going a long way (four-fifths) across the Atlantic."¹⁰³ The Legation in San Jose, nevertheless, reported that the Foreign Minister there had

"expressed himself as pleased that the United States Government has taken the steps indicated and he considers it necessary for the protection of the Western Hemisphere."¹⁰⁴ According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, (FBI), the Brazilian Ambassador in Washington listed several reasons for which he thought were the reasons for the American occupation of Iceland. Amongst those were, apart from to prevent German presence on the island and thus in the vicinity of the United States,

to protect Greenland...to create a supplementary advance line of national and continental defence in front of that created by the bases in British possessions...to pursue the interventionist method adopted by the exchange of destroyers for bases last year, in which intervention and help for Great Britain is co-ordinated and unified with the general system of

¹⁰¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/25, telegram from Sterling, Stockholm, to Secretary of State, Washington, 08.07.41

¹⁰² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/32, telegram from Weddel, Madrid, to Secretary of State, Washington, 09.07.41

¹⁰³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/26, telegram from Braden, Bogota, to Secretary of State, Washington, 08.07.41

¹⁰⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/28, telegram from Hornbrook, San Jose, to Secretary of State, Washington, 08.07.41

national and continental defence...to carry American cooperation with England to the furthest limit compatible with the constitutional powers of the Executive; strategical offensives against Germany and the naval safeguarding of merchant shipping supplying England's war needs, both steps directly or indirectly accepted and approved by the greater part of the nation's public opinion...that the U.S. are practically in the War.¹⁰⁵

Not surprisingly the reports from Legations in the Axis countries stated that the coverage of the take-over bore the notion of the decision being an "aggressive and imperialistic move,"¹⁰⁶ and that the "landing of United States military forces on Iceland was a move bringing closer an intercontinental war as it represented a deviation from neutrality policy and put the United States a further step towards armed conflict" and characterized Roosevelt as "an aggressor who meddled with European affairs and played the game of wolf and sheep with Iceland."¹⁰⁷

In Denmark the papers were marked, not surprisingly, by German propaganda. Politiken described the decision a "sensational step that a neutral should demonstrate its lack of respect for sovereignty of another neutral state by occupation of its territory."¹⁰⁸ The Berlin GSKD was reported to predict that "so long as the occupation lasts tendency will be to take Iceland away from the Nordic countries and from Europe generally. This is the opposite of what Iceland wants and therefore the Nordic countries regret that the great North American power should have laid its hand on Icelandic territory."¹⁰⁹ The Social Democrat wrote on the same lines that the take-over was not in accordance with what the Icelanders wanted, while the National Times [National Tidende] referred to "domestic American opposition asserting that the President and his adherent have long ago exceeded the bounds of the Monroe Doctrine".¹¹⁰ The Danish Press, nevertheless, was also careful not to harm Danish

¹⁰⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/103, report by J. E. Hoover, FBI, to Adolf A. Berle, 27.08.41

¹⁰⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/43, telegram from Rome, to Secretary of State, Washington, 09.07.41

¹⁰⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/42, telegram from Pell, Budapest, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.07.41

¹⁰⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/44, telegram from Perkins, Copenhagen, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.07.41

¹⁰⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/44, telegram from Perkins, Copenhagen, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.07.41

¹¹⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.20/44, telegram from Perkins, Copenhagen, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.07.41

relations with Iceland and risk pushing them further away in the wake of the growth of wish for independence. Henceforth

they [Danish newspapers] all express great sympathy for Iceland and the hope that Iceland's status in the family of Nordic nations will not be changed. The articles are as friendly in tone as is possible for them to be under present conditions. There is however strong evidence of the German propaganda influence.¹¹¹

In the Folketing, the Danish Parliament, the Prime Minister stated that "Iceland had no choice in the matter and that new state of affairs caused great worry in Iceland which may be drawn into war operations zone."¹¹²

The fact that the Danish Government did not issue a formal complaint to the Americans regarding the American occupation of Iceland was a surprise to the U.S. Government.¹¹³ However, as we have seen throughout this chapter, the lack of involvement of the Danish representatives in these matters was remarkable. There were hardly any, if none, references made to the opinion of the Danes, nor were their views on the shift of occupational power ever requested, it seems. Nevertheless, as shown above, it looks as if the Danes were overall supportive of the steps taken by the British and the Americans with regard to the defence of Iceland.

In the Faroe Islands much attention was paid to the events in Iceland. The fact that the Icelanders successfully had made trade-agreements with their occupiers was noted in the Faroese papers, and the Faroese asked why nothing of the same sort was achieved by the Faroese.¹¹⁴ The Faroese independence movement was right in feeling a bit jealous, because not only had the American take-over brought a better prospect for prosperity, but, as previously mentioned, the Americans had also promised to respect Icelandic independence and not interfere with domestic politics. The American take-over had thus created favorable conditions for the Icelanders to abrogate from the Union with the Danish Kingdom.

¹¹¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/96, from Perkins, Copenhagen, to Secretary of State, Washington, 14.07.41

¹¹² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/101, telegram from Perkins, Copenhagen, to Secretary of State, Washington, 23.08.41

¹¹³ SA, 9.D.45d/1909-45/0002, telegram from the Legation in Reykjavik, 22.07.42

¹¹⁴ Dagblaðið, "Ongland gjørt sáttmála við Ísland um keyp av øllum fiski uttan sild. Hvat verður gjørt í Føroyum?", 21.08.41

3. U.S. occupation of Iceland

The American troops and personnel sent to Iceland were not all too content with their situation. MacVeagh reported back to President Roosevelt that “it is at least a barren existence here for most Americans. Among the troops there is already a high incidence of mental disease of one sort or another and several officers have had to be sent home owing to excessive strain.”¹¹⁵ A week earlier in a telegram to the Secretary of State on U.S. relations with Iceland, MacVeagh had commented, that the U.S. relationship with Iceland was an ‘unusual one’: “When consideration is given to the circumstances that brought about the establishment of this office and to the unusual nature of our relations with Iceland and to the special problems with which the Legation has to deal...”¹¹⁶ What MacVeagh referred to here was not only the physical circumstances of Icelandic-American relations, that is that the Americans found it difficult to adjust to the geographical parameters and climate of the island, which called for increased care of illnesses and vacations for the personnel compared with other locations of U.S. Legations. What MacVeagh also referred to in his telegram were the circumstances surrounding the American take-over and thus the grounds for the American presence on the islands.

To begin with the Americans did not have an overriding policy with regard to Iceland, except for ensuring that she did not fall into the hands of the enemy. After Pearl Harbour Iceland, like other American outposts, in particular served as a buffer zone safeguarding the American Continent. However, Whitehead argues that “the president [Roosevelt] ascribed such importance to the U.S. presence that he remained personally in charge of diplomatic and military relations with Iceland during 1941-42. To ensure a direct liaison with the local scene, the president installed his friend Lincoln MacVeagh as the first U.S. minister at Reykjavik.”¹¹⁷ This practice by Roosevelt, however, was not unusual. As mentioned in Chapter II, Roosevelt attached much importance in direct relations with persons, upon whose information he relied. The appointment of MacVeagh, nevertheless, can be read as a sign that Roosevelt did put importance on U.S. relations with Iceland. What also needs to be

¹¹⁵ President’s Secretary’s File, Diplomatic Correspondence, Iceland, Box 39, from MacVeagh, Reykjavik, to the President 22.11.41

¹¹⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 745, 124.59 A3/3, telegram from Legation in Reykjavik to Secretary of State, Washington, 04.11.41

¹¹⁷ Whitehead, Iceland in the Second World War, 1978, p. 275

taken into account is that Iceland became one of the first theatres of war where both the British and Americans were based simultaneously. It was thus also an important venue for Anglo-American relations in practise.

One rather controversial plan, which emerged within the U.S. military circles, and was contrary to the promise given to the Icelanders by the Americans and thus not welcomed by the State Department was General Bonesteel's announcement that in the event of an attack on Iceland the General would install a military government without conferring with the American Consul or the local authorities. Welles made his opinion on this matter clear to President Roosevelt:

General Bonesteel, who has now assumed the Supreme Military Command in Iceland, has requested Minister MacVeagh to inform the Icelandic Government secretly that in the event of an attack on the Island sufficiently serious to warrant such action, he will instantly proclaim the existence of a military government without further recourse to the civil authorities...In my [Welles'] opinion, the establishment of an American military government in Iceland, even in the event of a German attack, would be contrary to the spirit if not the terms, of your explicit promise not to interfere with the Government of Iceland and to recognize the absolute independence and sovereignty of the country.¹¹⁸

The Minister in Reykjavik was subsequently advised to follow the lines as suggested by Welles.¹¹⁹ It turned out, however, that Bonesteel was bound by orders from the War Department, which were contrary to that of the Department of State, and which "not only approve and direct the use of the proclamation proposed by him but follow a secret direction previously issued authorising military government here in the event of invasion."¹²⁰

The State Department was anxious to keep good relations with the Icelanders and to stick to their promised policies towards the island. The main concern of the military, on the other hand, was to secure the island. Here is thus an example of two departments at odds with each other.

¹¹⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/173, Welles to Roosevelt 24.04.42

¹¹⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/173, Under Secretary of State to American Legation, Reykjavik, 07.05.42

¹²⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/180, telegram from MacVeagh, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 09.05.42

There were other examples showing the length the Americans were ready to go to secure good relations with the Icelanders and meet their wishes. One was the Icelandic wish on racial restrictions within the U.S. troops that were sent to their island;

During last year's negotiations leading up to the agreement between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Iceland for the entry of American military forces into the country, the Prime Minister specially requested that no Negroes be included in units sent to Iceland. So far the Army has complied with this request but the Navy has included some 50 Negro mess attendants in the personnel of its base camps...since their presence in Iceland is contrary to the expressed wish of the Icelandic Government, I earnestly hope that the Navy Department will promptly accede to the Commandant's request for their replacement.¹²¹

The Americans thus were ready to go to great lengths to avoid any trouble arising. Also, when the Americans were informed that because problems between the troops and the locals there was a desire amongst the Icelanders "that American troops be no longer quartered in town, where unfortunate collisions may more frequently occur than in the country,"¹²² the Americans took actions accordingly.

This accommodating attitude by the Americans was also noticed by the British. On the diplomatic matter Howard Smith noted that

It is interesting to observe how differently MacVeagh seems to take his job from how I conceived I ought to take mine. I thought that it was up to me to try to assist the soldiers in getting things done, when they came up against obstructions from the Icelanders. MacVeagh on the other hand seems to take the line that he is here to see that General Bonesteel does nothing which might upset the Icelanders... Indeed the Americans seem to be very chary of doing anything, which might offend the Icelanders. MacVeagh has hinted on several occasions that his position is very different from mine, seeing that the Americans came here on invitation and we came here against the will of the Icelanders, and there is of course something in that.¹²³

Herein lies the main difference between the conducts of the occupational forces and their aspirations for a good relationship with the Icelanders. Whereas the Americans

¹²¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/198, from Hull to Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, 30.06.42

¹²² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/200, from MacVeagh, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 03.06.42

¹²³ PRO, FO 371/32750, from Howard Smith, Reykjavik, to Warner, FO, 12.05.42

showed great will to accommodate the wishes of the Icelanders, the British acknowledged that their approach had been somewhat different, but that was the result of the different basis of the two occupations, where one was based on an invitation and the other not. Hence, despite having handed over the protection of Iceland to the American's Warner exclaimed that

we do not want the Icelanders to feel that we have forgotten them and I think it is important that we should continue to be strongly represented there if only for prestige reasons...you will remember, too, that when they were persuaded to invite the Americans to take over their protection the Icelanders expressly said that they wanted to retain the present diplomatic representation between themselves and us, thus showing their desire to keep in touch with us and not to be drawn too much into the American orbit.¹²⁴

D. ICELAND'S DECISION TO LEAVE THE UNION WITH DENMARK

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, when Germany occupied Denmark and Iceland subsequently declared herself in charge of the Foreign Affairs the role of the Danish representatives with regard to Iceland diminished and there are, as we have seen, hardly any references to any communication of importance between the Danish representatives and the occupiers, except for when the independence question surfaced. To what extent were the Danish representatives able to influence the British and Americans to intervene in the Icelandic plans to leave the Union?

According to the Act of Union either party could, if they wished so, leave the Union after 1943; "either Parliament can express a wish for a revision of the treaty. If the revision is not agreed on within three years either Parliament can nullify the treaty by the votes of two thirds of Parliament and subsequently 75 per cent of 75 per cent of the electors in favour of annulment."¹²⁵

On April 10th 1940 the Icelandic Government agreed to pass a resolution to revise the treaty. On May 17th 1941 the Althing further passed two resolutions,

the first stated that, since Denmark is no longer in a position to take care of those affairs which she had undertaken by the act of 1918, the Althing declared that it considered Iceland to have the right to cancel the Union

¹²⁴ PRO, FO 371/32750, from Warner, FO, to Howard Smith, Reykjavik, 27.05.42

¹²⁵ PRO, FO 371/29311, Summary of article in Tíminn 04.03.41

with Denmark. It also stated that Iceland does not intend to renew the Union.¹²⁶

Thus, according to the Act of Union Iceland could, providing that all provisions were in place, leave the Union in 1943. However, considering that one party of the Act, Denmark, was occupied and therefore not free, and that it was not sure when she would be free, there were some who argued that Iceland should declare herself a republic and no longer a part of the Union. Others advocated that “seeing that Iceland is now practically independent, nothing is to be gained by precipitate action.”¹²⁷

In the first instance nothing happened, and the matter was laid to rest. However, with the resolutions in place, the Icelanders were free to take the matter up again when they wanted to. In the meantime the Danish representatives tried everything in their power to forestall the development, as it was not appreciated by them and Denmark that the Icelanders exploited the unfortunate situation Denmark found herself in. Thus, the question is: were the Danish representatives able to exert any influence to forestall any change happening within the Union while Denmark was under occupation?

1. Danish pressure on the British and American policies with regard to Iceland's independence course

Although the common consensus amongst the parliamentary parties in Iceland since the late 1920s had been to steer towards a departure from the Union with Denmark¹²⁸ some Danes were of the belief that the Icelanders were not intending to leave the Union once the agreed period was over. This is evident in a letter to Consul C.A. Brun in Washington in 1944, thus after Iceland's decision to leave the Union, where Reventlow expressed his concurrence to Brun's views on chances for Iceland renewing the Act of Union. These chances would have been present if Iceland had

¹²⁶ Thor Thors, A Small Nation in a Great War, World War, 1939-1954, Iceland, booklet, reprinted from The New York Historical Society Quarterly, for April 1944

¹²⁷ PRO, RO 371/29307, report by Howard Smith to Eden, Report on Political Conditions in Iceland during 1940

¹²⁸ Hardarson, “Republic of Iceland 1940-44”, 1974, p. 29

not been occupied by foreign forces, they believed. Likewise both expressed regret that Iceland would not remain under the same crown as Greenland and the Faroes.¹²⁹

1.1. 1940-1941: Iceland commences the process to leave the Union with the Danish Kingdom; reactions of the Danish representatives

Feeling that it was his duty to try and stop the plans Fontenay nevertheless was unable to turn to his Government or his colleagues in London and Washington D.C. for immediate guidance. He therefore voiced his worries to the British Minister in Iceland, Howard Smith, who advised him “not to commit himself prior to Icelandic action.”¹³⁰ Howard Smith’s instruction to Fontenay endorses the delicate situation the Danish representative found himself in; being a representative of a government cooperating with the enemy and being situated in a country, which had taken over all its affairs from Copenhagen had thus diminished his role in the country. He would also have to tread carefully with regard to the occupying forces, who, as we have seen, were keen to support the Icelanders in order to maintain good relations with them. There were thus no grounds for trying to have the British or Americans side with him, as was the case in the Faroe Islands.

Fontenay’s approach, nevertheless, sparked some worry with Howard Smith, who passed on Fontenay’s concerns to Reventlow in London. At the Foreign Office Reventlow warned Collier that an early exit from the Union would harm the British cause. Reventlow’s warning must have struck a note with the Foreign Office, because shortly after the Foreign Minister, Eden, expressed that

Since HMG have no technical *locus standi* in this matter, not being a party to the Act of Union, nor having any treaty obligations in connexion therewith, they cannot take up the question officially with the Icelandic Government. On the other hand, since it is clearly undesirable that this further complication should be introduced into their position as the Government of the occupying Power, it seems desirable that such action as may be possible should be taken unofficially to dissuade the Icelanders from taking an illegal step, the blame for which, in Denmark and elsewhere, would be likely to fall partly upon HMG themselves, as well

¹²⁹ SA, 9.B.27/1983/450, Bilag, Island politiske forhold til Danmark efter 9.4.40, Pakke I, from Reventlow, London, to C.A.C. Brun, Washington, 06.03.44

¹³⁰ PRO, FO 371/24790, N 7032/7032/15, Howard Smith to Halifax, 12.10.40

as upon the Icelanders, unless everything possible had been done to dissuade them from it.¹³¹

Following this notice a letter was sent from Foreign Office to Halifax notifying him that

Mr. Howard Smith was recently instructed to do what he could unofficially to discourage movement in Iceland in favour of declaring immediate separation from Denmark in violation of Act of Union, in view of undesirable repercussions this would have on position of HMG as occupying Power. USG's [United States Government] notification, coming at this moment, will not make his task any easier, though in general we welcome any signs of US interest in Iceland,¹³²

In 1941 Collier, the head of the Northern Department, also voiced the concerns of the British with regard to the Icelandic intentions to leave the Union with Denmark while Denmark was still occupied by the Germans. The British were thus worried that if the Icelanders made any such move it would have serious consequences to the British since Iceland was occupied by them. Especially it was anticipated that such a move would be exploited by German propaganda in as much as the Germans would portray that the British had encouraged the Icelanders to take such steps despite the British promise not to intervene with Iceland's relations with Denmark or any other country.¹³³

Trying his best to influence the British Reventlow indicated to the British that willingness to help the Danish cause in the independence matter would meet great gratitude with the Danish King. C.A. Brun, who at the time was positioned in Iceland (he later transferred to the United States) also made a point to warn the British that if Iceland went ahead with its pursuit of independence it would inevitable also affect the situation in the Faroes, which already was troublesome. Reventlow thus used all measures to influence the British in the matter, however he soon realised that the British were not willing to change their initial stand on the matter.¹³⁴

¹³¹ PRO, FO 371/29311, N 398/398/15 (no 11.), from Eden, FO, to Howard Smith, Reykjavik, 03.02.41

¹³² PRO, FO 371/29313, from FO to Halifax, Washington, 18.02.41 (no. 897)

¹³³ RA, UD-10383 25.1, Notat fra Trygve Lie, UD, London 17.03.41, report of conversation with Collier, head of the Northern Department, FO

¹³⁴ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, report by Reventlow 26.06.44

The head of the Nordic Division in Foreign Office nevertheless expressed to Reventlow that the British would prefer if the Icelanders waited to take any action till after the war, and Reventlow was quick to suggest that Mr Howard Smith should be instructed to make it clear to the Icelandic Government that such an action would not be looked upon in favour by the British. Reventlow tried to apply pressure on the British by saying that it would not serve the British reputation well, neither in Denmark nor in other countries, if this happened on their watch. Amongst other this was an important imperial affair,¹³⁵ Reventlow pointed out, playing on the imperial factor.

Having in mind that the preparations were still in the early stages and sensing that the mood of the British was not in their favour, although officially they would not say so, the Icelanders refrained from taking any hasty steps to further the process.

1.2. 1942: The United States in charge of the occupation; effect on the attitude towards the Icelandic plans to leave the Union

By 1942, when the plans to leave the Union resurfaced, the occupation of Iceland had changed hands. The American take-over of the occupation marked a shift in the official British attitude towards the Icelandic plans to leave the Union. It might be suspected that this shift was due to the fact that the British no longer were in charge of the island and therefore would not feel the brunt of blame when Iceland inevitably left the Union with Denmark. The British, although they were reluctant to make any official statements, showed understanding for the Danish position and provided support by other means, such as conveying a message from the Danish representatives to their King in Denmark;

...although we ourselves are taking up an attitude of indifference in the constitutional question, it is only natural that the Danish Minister should stand up for the maintenance of the Act of Union and should want to report on this question confidentially. If we transmit the message it will perhaps help to show that we are not encouraging the Icelanders to break with Denmark.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ SA, 9.B.27.Bilag.pkIII/1983/450, report by Reventlow, 26.06.44

¹³⁶ PRO, FO 371/32750, comment by Clarke to draft by Howard Smith, Reykjavik, addressed to Warner, FO, 30.06.42

This also shows some consideration on the British part for the situation the Danish representatives found themselves in after the German occupation of Denmark. This also corresponds to the argument put forward by Nils A. Sørensen in the previous chapter, that there probably was some element of loyalty in the British attitude towards Denmark, her being a fellow imperial power.

The change in the official British attitude to 'indifference' disturbed Hull, because the Americans felt

that a unilateral abrogation of the Act by Iceland in a manner contrary to that provided for by the Treaty itself and while our troops are in the country would be seized upon by the Germans to spread pernicious propaganda, at which they are adept, in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries which might react unfavourably on both Icelandic and American interests.¹³⁷

This was also an issue which the Danish representatives were aware of and they did not hesitate to highlight the disadvantages to the Americans should Iceland leave the Union prematurely while under their supervision. In June 1942 Fontenay wrote to Kauffmann

I have earnestly emphasized the serious consequences both for the mutual relations of the two countries by such a unilateral, untimely, premature disregard of a solemn Treaty, and for Iceland entering the ranks of democratic states as a treatybreaker following the bad manners of nations which cast aside agreements which they do not find convenient any more and which are neglecting solemn promises given of their own free will.¹³⁸ [sic]

It was not only the British and the Americans who expressed their hopes that the Icelanders would wait and not leave the Union prematurely. It was reported that "the representatives of Norway and Sweden unofficially endeavoured to persuade the Icelandic Government to abide by the Act of Union, and, while not opposing Icelandic desire for independence, exhorted the Icelanders to behave 'decently'"¹³⁹.

To the dismay of the Danish representatives, the Icelanders were able to support their arguments with statements by the occupiers, such as the initial declarations by the

¹³⁷ FRUS, 1942, Volume III, p. 13, Hull to the Chargé in Iceland, Warner, 22.07.42

¹³⁸ SA, 9.B.27/1983/450, Pakke II, Islands politiske forhold til Danmark efter 9.4.40, from Fontenay, Reykjavik, to Kauffmann, Washington, 28.06.42

¹³⁹ PRO, FO 371/32751, from Mr. Ross, Reykjavik, to FO, 15.09.42

Prime Minister and President Roosevelt, when the American take-over took place, where they pledged to “recognise the absolute independence and sovereignty of Iceland.”¹⁴⁰ The Icelanders also made the most of Churchill’s announcement while on his visit to Iceland in August 1941 where he stated “that the British along with the Americans would take care for Icelandic independence.”¹⁴¹ Reventlow was surprised by this statement because he was of the understanding that “neither the British nor the Americans would want any change to occur until after the war” and he thought that Churchill could not have had “Danish-Icelandic relations in general nor in particular the United Kingdom in his mind.”¹⁴²

A republican constitution was drafted and it was later reasoned by the British that if the Americans had not intervened it would probably have been brought into force in the autumn of the same year.¹⁴³ The Americans were now in charge of Iceland and a premature abrogation of the Union whilst under American occupation would harm the Americans. Hence, the plans were halted after the United States Government in the summer of 1942 “informed the Icelandic Government that they would not approve of the formal abrogation by Iceland of the Act of Union before the end of 1943, when the Act might have expired under normal circumstances.”¹⁴⁴

The Icelanders were dismayed by this American stance. In a radio message Ólafur Thors informed the listeners that the Icelandic Government had asked the Icelandic Minister in Washington to examine the reasons behind U.S. Governments reservations towards Icelandic separation from Denmark, whether it was their wish that Iceland would put the case on hold until after the war, so that the decision taken would be completely unaffected by the war, or whether the reservation only meant that Iceland should wait to put the decision into force until the end of 1943. In the radio speech Ólafur Thors was happy to announce that the conclusion was the latter. There were, however, some sceptics, who accused the Free Danes in London and

¹⁴⁰ PRO, FO 371/32749, Howard Smith to FO, 26.05.42

¹⁴¹ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Reventlow to Hilbert, 15.01.44,

¹⁴² FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Reventlow to Hilbert, 15.01.44,

¹⁴³ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 16, Box 1568, Foreign Office Research Department, Whitehall, “The International Status of Iceland”, 01.08.45

¹⁴⁴ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 16, Box 1568, Foreign Office Research Department, Whitehall, “The International Status of Iceland”, 01.08.45

Washington to be behind the American intervention in the matter of having the abrogation delayed and this was more or less confirmed by Clarke of the Foreign Office:

I expect Mr. Pjetur Ottesen was right in seeing the hand of the Free Danes in the U.S. intervention; we first heard of it from Count Reventlow, who got it from Mr. Brun of the Danish legation in Washington, and I expect it was the Danish Minister there who urged such action on the State Department, as his colleague here did, unsuccessfully, on us.¹⁴⁵

Understandably this interference by the Americans was not kindly looked upon by most Icelanders, especially when taken into account that the Americans had declared upon their arrival that the U.S. would recognise Iceland's independence.¹⁴⁶

The Icelanders nevertheless acknowledged that there was not much to gain by going ahead with the plans without the support of the British and the Americans. The plans were thus temporarily suspended. However, because there was a wide political wish and support for leaving the Union with Denmark, the Icelandic Government nevertheless stated that "it has never been and is not a desire of the Icelandic people to cause any inconvenience to the United States Government; quite contrary it is their desire that the friendly collaboration may continue intact as hitherto."¹⁴⁷ The Icelandic Government nevertheless stressed that the Icelandic Parliament already twice before the outbreak of the war had declared unanimously that the Union would be abrogated the Union with Denmark and also, in accordance with the Act there had never "existed any disagreement between Icelanders or Danes or others as in fact the wording of the treaty cannot be disputed."¹⁴⁸

This attitude and reasoning of the Icelandic was appreciated by the Americans who showed understanding for the situation the Icelandic politicians found themselves in with regard to this matter. It was thus noted that "the question of the immediate severance of the union before the expiration of the treaty appears in no way to be a

¹⁴⁵ PRO, FO 371/32751, from Mr. Ross, Reykjavik, to FO, 15.09.42, comment by Clarke

¹⁴⁶ PRO, FO 371/32751, from the Press Attaché, Reykjavik, to FO, 15.09.42

¹⁴⁷ FRUS, 1942, Volume III, pp. 14-5, The Chargé in Iceland to the Secretary of State, 08.08.42

¹⁴⁸ FRUS, 1942, Volume III, pp. 14-5, The Chargé in Iceland to the Secretary of State, 08.08.42

vital or pressing popular issue but since each party has publicly come out for it no one alone can afford politically to change its declared position.”¹⁴⁹

1.3. British and American attitude to Icelandic abrogation of the Union after 1943 in accordance to the Act

After the decision of the Icelandic Government to suspend the plans to after 1943, the State Department committed themselves to support the Icelandic case. “The Government of the United States has no desire to interfere in the slightest degree with the freedom of action of the Icelandic people in these respects, but it is desirous that no action should be taken during these troublous [sic] times that might interfere with the general war effort of the United Nations, on the outcome of which so greatly depends the future welfare and independence of Iceland and of the United States as well as of other nations and peoples.”¹⁵⁰

The attitude of the British and Americans with regard to the argument that the Icelanders were in their full legal right to leave the Union after 1943 was thus set, and so was the Icelandic Government decision to wait till 1943 before carrying out their plans. Therefore the Danish representatives had to accommodate and prepare themselves for what Howard Smith pointed out in his despatch to the Foreign Office namely that “there appears to be quite a chance that the declaration of a republic will take place before the end of the war.”¹⁵¹

Fontenay nevertheless made a last attempt in 1943 to sway the Americans to “intervene further in this matter and persuade the Icelanders to hold in suspense the question until Denmark was in a position to negotiate” but the U.S. Consul in Reykjavik informed him that the Americans “had expressed [their] views relative to this question and were not likely to go further.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ FRUS, 1942, Volume III “Europe”, p. 16, The Chargé in Iceland to the Secretary of State, 15.08.42

¹⁵⁰ FRUS, 1942, Volume III, pp 17-8, Secretary of State to the Chargé in Iceland 18.08.42

¹⁵¹ PRO, FO 371/32749, Howard Smith to FO, 26.05.42

¹⁵² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859.01/97, from Leland Morris, US Legation, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.06.43

Thus, when it became “inevitable that Iceland by unilateral action would abolish the union and monarchy in 1944”, Kauffmann pleaded to Fontenay that they should “exchange views in respect to the common line of policy to be followed from now on before you take further official steps on behalf of Denmark.”¹⁵³ It was subsequently reasoned by Kauffmann in Washington that they could do no more and he therefore realised that in order to serve Danish interests a change of tactics and attitude was needed.

2. A Common Danish Stand?

Whereas Fontenay, Reventlow and Kauffmann to begin with were in agreement that the Icelandic plans to leave the union had to be halted, at least as long as Denmark was occupied and therefore not able to have her say, Kauffmann soon changed course. This change occurred after the arrival of C.A. Brun to the Legation in Washington.

C.A. Brun arrived in Washington after having been based in Iceland for five and a half years. He, therefore, had much more insight to Icelandic affairs, than any other in Washington. According to Brun the Icelanders did not bear any grudges towards Denmark; they were just indifferent, because they had no natural or long historical connection with Denmark nor the Monarchy, and the traditional idealistic notion amongst the Icelanders was republican. Brun pointed out that the picture could possibly have been different if King Christian, like his father, had been more active in visiting the island, or if he even had built a castle there, because then the Icelanders would sense a stronger belonging to the Kingdom. However, while the Icelanders were polite and welcoming towards the Danish King and his family when on visits to the island, the sentiment was no different than that to the Norwegian or the Swedish Royal Family. It was also pointed out by Brun, that the Danish cause in Iceland suffered a heavy blow on April 9th 1940 and for some time after that. However, after the August-revolt in 1943 the sympathy for Denmark and admiration for the King had been noticeable. But, Brun emphasised, it was “King Christian as the King of Denmark and not as King of Iceland, and therefore the Icelanders did not

¹⁵³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/99A, telegram from Hull to American Legation Reykjavik paraphrasing a message from Kauffmann to the Danish Minister in Reykjavik

feel that they owe him any obligations with regard to the future of Iceland.”¹⁵⁴
[emphasis in original]

In 1941 Fontenay had suggested that the Danish representatives in the United States should raise awareness amongst the American public to the Danish cause in relations to the Icelandic decision to declare her independence and leave the Union. However, Kauffmann pointed out to Fontenay that the American public was poorly informed about Danish-Icelandic relations. Therefore, one should not expect the American public to react to any news of Iceland leaving the Union with Denmark. To start propaganda in favour of the Danish cause with regard to the Icelandic decision to leave the union was not perceived by Kauffmann as being plausible. The attitude amongst the American public towards Denmark was rather unfavourable as Danes in Denmark were seen as too complacent in relation to their German occupiers. Denmark and Danes, therefore, could not count on as much sympathy as their Norwegian counterparts, for instance.¹⁵⁵ Again an example of how the situation in Denmark affected the lives and work of the Danish representatives.

In 1943 Kauffmann informed Reventlow that those officials in charge of Icelandic matters at the State Department were of the opinion that after 1943 Iceland was free to do what she wanted.¹⁵⁶ The Danes, therefore, should not expect any help from the State Department.

As was mentioned earlier the arrival of C.A. Brun in Washington changed the mood of Kauffmann with regard to the Icelandic wish for independence and after a while he had convinced Fontenay to adopt the same attitude. Whereas Reventlow lived in the hope that the Icelandic plan would never materialise, Fontenay and Kauffmann were more realistic as to where things were heading and were of the opinion that Iceland should be allowed to pursue her wishes, and also that she legally and morally

¹⁵⁴ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from C. Brun to Reventlow 03.02.44

¹⁵⁵ SA, 9.B.27/1983/450, Pakke II, Islands politiske forhold til Danmark efter 9.4.40, from Kauffmann, Washington, to Fontenay, Reykjavik, 11.03.41

¹⁵⁶ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Kauffmann to Reventlow, 02.02.44

had the right to do so.¹⁵⁷ To take a negative stand would only create alienation in the relations between the two countries. Thus, when it was clear that Iceland would leave the union Kauffmann approached Fontenay and suggested that they should exchange views before Fontenay took any further official steps on behalf of Denmark, so that a “common line of policy to be followed [by the two] from now on”¹⁵⁸

3. Worries for repercussions in the other North Atlantic Areas

The worries for repercussions in the other North Atlantic territories, which the Danish representatives had stressed to the British and Americans in their attempts to make them intervene in the Icelandic plans, were not merely a means of tactics. The resistance of Reventlow towards the independence course Iceland had started was very much due to the repercussions he feared such a move would have on other Danish territories separated from the Government in Copenhagen because of the war.

Reventlow was anxious that his and Danish worries and endeavours to secure Faroese interests and the rights of Faroese subjects in Iceland in the case of an Icelandic departure from the Union should be known, not least to the Faroese themselves. Reventlow also foresaw that a positive Danish attitude towards Icelandic independence wish would put a damper on the quest for independence for the Faroes,¹⁵⁹ which inevitably would follow. By refraining from putting up too much resistance towards the independence wishes of the Icelanders the Faroe Islanders might not see the need to follow Iceland suit and act swiftly while Denmark was still occupied, he reasoned. As we saw in the previous chapter, the attitude of the British towards Denmark and the Faroese wish for independence was changing in favour of the Faroese independence movement. Reventlow, therefore, was not too far off his premonition. By showing such care and willingness to guard Faroese interests in Iceland, Reventlow hoped to achieve appraisal in the Faroes and that this would dampen the independence movement, because the Faroese would acknowledge that

¹⁵⁷ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Fontenay to Reventlow, 26.02.44

¹⁵⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/99A, telegram from Hull to American Legation, Reykjavik paraphrasing a message from Kauffmann to the Danish Minister in Reykjavik

¹⁵⁹ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Reventlow to Hilbert, 11.04.44

Denmark was pursuing Faroese interests, and he presented this idea to Fontenay, and Hilbert.¹⁶⁰

Also, C.A. Brun voiced his worries when he referred to the Danish Union as a ‘string of pearls’ and was, although he supported the Icelandic cause, a bit disappointed that this would mean a “break in the chain stretching from Cap Farvel to Reykjavik and via Tórshavn to Copenhagen.”¹⁶¹

Although Kauffmann foresaw that the situation in Iceland would have its effects on the situation in the Faroe Islands, he nevertheless reassured Hilbert that the outcome could not be the same. Unlike Iceland, which had been an independent country within the Danish Kingdom, the Faroe Islands were technically a part of Denmark. Thus a similar action in the Faroes would not have any legal grounds. Kauffmann finally concluded that he was of the belief that if Denmark had been more cooperative with the Icelanders from the beginning it would only have strengthen the Danish position in the Faores, because it would have shown the Faroese that the Danes were willing to listen to their wishes, and thus it would effectively dampen the demands of the independence movement.¹⁶²

Hilbert on the other hand was not so pleased about the way things turned out in Iceland, probably because he foresaw, that the reaction in the Faroes would not be to his advantage. On the contrary it would only bring about more trouble with the independence movement. Hilbert also belonged to the group of critiques, who found it appalling that Iceland should exploit the situation Denmark found herself in, to make such a move.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, report by Reventlow 26.06.44,

¹⁶¹ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from C. Brun to Reventlow 03.02.44

¹⁶² FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Sendemand til Island, br.bk.140A.1 (Islands forhold til Danmark), letter from Kauffmann to Hilbert 18.06.44,

¹⁶³ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Sendemand til Island, br.bk.140A.1 (Islands forhold til Danmark), letter from Kauffmann to Hilbert 18.06.44,

4. Iceland decides to leave the Union in 1944

Once it was clear that an Icelandic exit from the Union was inevitable the Danes did what they could to maintain good relations with the Icelanders.¹⁶⁴ Kauffmann thus was anxious that the Danish representatives should officially present a common line on the issue. In London, Fontenay, Kauffmann and Reventlow came to the conclusion that

In view of the practical impossibility of preventing or even delaying this move, the three Ministers propose to draft a message to Iceland in which, after mentioning their regret that the step is being taken at a time when the Danish Parliament is unable to deliberate on the matter as provided for in the Act, they will express the desire that the change in Iceland's status will in no way affect the close ties which have always existed between it and Denmark. Thor Thors, with whom Carl Brun of the Danish Legation recently discussed the matter, has agreed to draft a resolution for the Icelandic Althing reciprocating the friendly sentiments of the three Ministers.¹⁶⁵

This common Danish line was, however, somewhat disrupted by the King's message.

a) King Christian X's message

Following the Icelandic decision to break out of the Union with Denmark King Christian X sent a condemning message to the Icelanders. When in the company of his Icelandic colleague Kauffmann tried to smooth the lines of the reactions from Denmark to the Icelandic decision to leave the union.¹⁶⁶

According to Hull, Kauffmann did not support King Christian's protest of Iceland's decision to sever the Act of Union. Through the Icelandic Minister in the U.S., Kauffmann and Brun declared to the Icelandic Government that they

deeply [regretted] the message from His Majesty the King to Iceland and that they [were] convinced that the statement contained in the message only [could] be occasioned by the fact that the King owing to the German occupation [could not] have formed a clear idea of all the circumstance. They [entertained] no doubts that the Danish people when they [were]

¹⁶⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/99A, telegram from Hull to American Legation, Reykjavik paraphrasing a message from Kauffmann to the Danish Minister in Reykjavik

¹⁶⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5368, 859.00/1150, report by Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., Danish Political Summary – March 1944, Division of Northern European Affairs, Department of State, 01.04.44

¹⁶⁶ FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Sendemand til Island, br.bk.140A.1 (Islands forhold til Danmark), letter from Kauffmann to Hilbert 18.06.44,

free to form an opinion and to speak [would] understand all these circumstances which determined the decision made by Iceland.¹⁶⁷

The news of the King's attitude and message, however, did not deter the Icelanders from their decision. "The Government and the political parties agree that the news of the King's message can change in no way their position with regard to the founding of a republic in Iceland and they urge every individual Icelander to vote on the republic constitution so that no doubt can exist regarding what the Icelanders wish."¹⁶⁸

The news of the message from the Danish King to the Icelandic Government was received with surprise by the Foreign Office

as, during the recent talks with Count Reventlow, Mr. De Kauffmann and Mr. De Fontenay...it was stated that all three of them believed that the thing to do was for the Danish Government to accede willingly in the decision of the Icelandic Government to sever its ties with Denmark, and that all three of them believed the King would make no objection at this time.¹⁶⁹

Warner thus expressed the opinion "that the King had made a mistake in tactics, but that he felt there was nothing the British Government could do regarding the matter inasmuch as it was considered to be a domestic affair."¹⁷⁰

It was believed by some Icelanders that Fontenay was behind the King's message to Iceland, but this was denied by Kauffmann, who nevertheless admitted that the message possibly was the result of his, Reventlow's and Fontenay's decision to inform the King of the decision and asking him of his opinion.¹⁷¹

There was a worry that the King's message to Iceland and the reaction in Iceland to the message would harm Icelandic relations with the rest of the Nordic countries, and

¹⁶⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/127, from Hull to US Legation in Stockholm 11.05.44

¹⁶⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/127, from Morris, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, 06.05.44

¹⁶⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/127, telegram from Winant, London, to Secretary of State, Washington, 06.05.44

¹⁷⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/127, telegram from Winant, London, to Secretary of State, Washington, 06.05.44

¹⁷¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/130, telegram from Morris, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, 09.05.44

the Danish representatives in charge of the other two North Atlantic regions Kauffmann, Hilbert and Reventlow were thus anxious to forestall such a turn in Nordic relations.¹⁷²

5. British and American attitude to Icelandic decision to leave the Union

Although the British and Americans acknowledged the right of the Icelanders to abrogate the Union with the Danish Kingdom after 1943, thus according with the act, they nevertheless were cautious not to harm their relations elsewhere by taking a too supportive stance on the matter. The instructions to the U.S. Legation in Reykjavik from Hull thus read:

Department approves of your proposal to call on the Foreign Minister and convey to him orally felicitations on the results of the plebiscite and to assure him that we will welcome the Republic of Iceland into the Family of Nations...We do not believe that it would be advisable to make an additional call on the Regent unless the Foreign Minister himself suggests such action. This step would, in our opinion, not only accentuate the divergence in attitude between the representatives in Reykjavik of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union on the one hand and the Scandinavian States on the other, but also might supply additional fuel to the German propaganda contention that we and the British have been instrumental in bringing about the severance of the Act of Union. Further, such action might render somewhat anticlimactic the June 17 ceremonies at which the Chiefs of the diplomatic missions to Iceland are to deliver formal addresses of welcome.¹⁷³

The same restriction on the British part was also apparent when the Icelanders finally declared the establishment of the Icelandic Republic and invited the foreign representatives to the official celebrations. Whereas the United States were ready to attend the celebrations and Roosevelt even had notified the Icelandic Government that they would appoint a "special representative with the rank of Ambassador to represent him at the celebrations,"¹⁷⁴ the British "felt that the United States Government might wish to reconsider its decision to appoint a Special Ambassador

¹⁷² FL, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1, letter from Kauffmann to Hilbert 29.06.44, J. Nr. 4079/3, Færø Amt, Islands forhold til Danmark, br.bk.140A.1

¹⁷³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859A.01/124, telegram from Hull to US Legation Reykjavik, 28.05.44

¹⁷⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59A/5-3044, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation between Mr. P. Pares, Second Secretary, British Embassy, Mr. William C. Trimble, Division of Northern European Affairs, and Mr. Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., Chief, Division of Northern European Affairs, 30.05.44

on the occasion of the celebrations incident to the establishment of the Icelandic Republic.”¹⁷⁵ The British based their argument on the fact that they felt that the “Icelanders have behaved with little consideration in dismissing their King when he is in captivity, and they might in the opinion of His Majesty’s Government more properly have waited until the Danish Government were once more free to discuss with them the term of settlement.”¹⁷⁶

Thus, although the British and Americans upon their arrivals to Iceland had expressed their support and interest in Icelandic independence, they were reluctant to make official approvals to the Icelandic decision, due to the repercussions it would have, because of the manner, the Icelandic Government had conducted the affair.

The reason for the Icelandic wish to leave the Union with the Danish Kingdom before the war was over was stated in a report to the Secretary of State in June 1943. In the report Leland Morris drew particular attention to the statement of Mr. Benediktsson that the Icelanders’

desire to have a fixed form of Government before the war is over so that they will have the final voice in the arrangement of their own affairs at the peace table.” I [Leland Morris] do not recall that I have seen quite such an open and blunt statement heretofore offered of one of the bases for the Icelandic desire to dissolve the union without negotiation with Denmark. Only yesterday evening the Danish Minister expressed to me a hope that the United States might intervene further in this matter and persuade the Icelanders to hold in suspense the question until Denmark was in a position to negotiate. I told him that as far as I could see we had expressed our views relative to this question and were not likely to go further.¹⁷⁷

5.1. Other countries’ reactions to Icelandic decision to leave the Union

The Norwegian Minister in London, Lie, was a bit concerned with what reaction the Norwegian should adopt if the Icelanders approached him and asked Norway for recognition of Iceland as a sovereign and independent state following their decision

¹⁷⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59A/5-3044, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation between Mr. P. Pares, Second Secretary, British Embassy, Mr. William C. Trimble, Division of Northern European Affairs, and Mr. Hugh S. Cumming, Jr., Chief, Division of Northern European Affairs, 30.05.44

¹⁷⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59A/5-3044, Memorandum by the British Embassy, Washington, D.C., 30.05.44

¹⁷⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859.01/97, from Leland Morris, US Legation, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.06.43

to leave the Union. As we saw just earlier the Norwegians, along with Sweden, had expressed their concerns with the Icelandic plans in 1942 of a premature departure from the Act of Union. He therefore approached Collier with the wish that the British kept him and the rest of his office up to date with the attitude of the British Government towards this issue and other matters related to Iceland.¹⁷⁸

6. Post-occupation Iceland

If Iceland was deemed a too important strategic point prior to and during the war to be left alone, the acknowledgement of her strategic importance to the British and Americans did not diminish in the aftermath of the war. The interests of both the British and Americans in future bases in Iceland were always present in their policies surrounding the occupation of the island. This was also a reason why the British were reluctant to completely withdraw from Iceland and kept a small number of troops in the island after the American take-over, despite the need for all forces in other theatres of war. However, British and American aspirations of future bases in the island were too delicate an issue to entertain during the occupation, and was therefore not spoken of officially. When the matter thus was raised by a member of the U.S. Senate it caused much stir.

According to the Icelandic newspaper Visir Tom Connally, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee had expressed

his opinion of the policy which he considers the United States should follow in future concerning the acquisition of bases abroad. Connally said among other things... 'in the Atlantic the United States should try to reach an agreement regarding a long term lease of all bases on islands there if necessary but if possible the United States should try to gain possession of these islands. It is vitally essential to have bases in Iceland. These are Connally's words and it is right to point out that the committee which he is chairman wields the greatest influence in the United States regarding the country's foreign policy. Iceland and its future is beginning to be the subject of frequent discussion in the United States.'¹⁷⁹

This article caused great concern in Iceland and especially within the Atlthing. Subsequently the American Minister was called upon. His queries to the State

¹⁷⁸ RA, UD-579, 34.1/2a, Notat fra t. Lie, UD, London 22.05.44

¹⁷⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5385, 859A.20/8-2244, telegram from Dreyfus, Iceland to Secretary of State, 22.08.44

Department resulted in Connally being confronted with the matter. Connally, however, said that he had been misquoted.¹⁸⁰

The importance of these releases [copies of editorials from the Chicago Tribune and the Washington Star discussing in the problem of post-war security and the necessity of military bases outside the United States in order to maintain the peace] is that they evidence a skilful move on the part of the Foreign Ministry to keep alive in the public mind the important question of post-war bases in Iceland.¹⁸¹

In London Ernest Bevin, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, feared that the intention of the Americans to acquire future bases in Iceland would have repercussion with regard to the Soviet Union and her relation with Denmark and Norway. The Soviet Union had already established bases on the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea, and it was contemplated that the American move would cause the Soviet Union to acquire more bases in Denmark and Norway. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs also noted that "The Russians already occupy the Danish island of Bornholm and this American proposal may induce them to stay in Northern Norway. We might thus get straight back to the worst form of power politics and armed neutrality. The chances of organising world security on an international basis through the Security Council would be gravely prejudiced and the relevant provision of the Charter might remain a dead letter."¹⁸² The British therefore would have preferred that the Charter was done and dusted before anything was done by the Americans: "I know that you share my anxiety that nothing should be done in this difficult period before the United Nations Organisation has got under way to prejudice the successful working of the provision in the Charter for preserving world security in the future."¹⁸³

The course chosen for the future of Iceland did not come as a surprise to the pro-German voices in Denmark. Already in 1942 an article in the pro-Nazi paper DNB read:

¹⁸⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5385, 859A.20/8-2244, telegram from Hull, State Department, to AM Legation, Reykjavik, 28.08.44

¹⁸¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5385, 859A.20/10-544, from Dreyfus, AM Legation, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington

¹⁸² PRO, CAB 120/571, Copy of a Minute (P.M.45/21) from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister. American Desire for Bases in Iceland. 27.09.45

¹⁸³ PRO, CAB 120/571, Draft of letter to Mr. Byrnes from the Secretary of State, FO, September, 1945

British-American negotiations about the future of Iceland are on the point of being concluded. It was already agreed between Roosevelt and Churchill during their last meeting that in the event of a victory of the Western Powers, Iceland will pass after the war under the U.S. control. The population will be accorded a certain measure of self-government, but real power will be in the hands of the eventual commander of the American base on the island.¹⁸⁴

E. CONCLUSION

The case of Iceland and the respective Danish representatives in charge of securing Danish interests in Iceland differs greatly from that of the Faroe Islands in Chapter III. Whereas the Danish representatives with regard to the Faroe Islands were highly active, on the whole this was not the case with regard to Iceland. This difference was due to several factors, both in terms of persons involved and circumstances. As we saw in this chapter the British personnel sent to Iceland was of a higher calibre than that sent to the Faroe Islands. Also, both the British and the Americans quickly acknowledged the importance of Iceland in their war plans, whereas the strategic importance of the Faroes, once Iceland had been occupied, never really materialised. The constitutional status of Iceland, as compared to that of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, also had its effect on the difference of the roles of, and the influence exerted by, the Danish representatives with regard to Iceland as compared with the other two North Atlantic territories.

The Danish representatives, nevertheless, initially succeeded in influence the British and Americans to stop the Icelanders from leaving the Union prematurely.¹⁸⁵ However, as the importance of Iceland (and Greenland) increased the influence exerted by the Danish to prevent British and American policies from working in the favour of Icelandic departure from the Union diminished. One point which highlights the importance Iceland was to have to the Allied is that while no prominent figures ever visited the Faroe Islands, Iceland received the visits of Churchill, the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Treasury from the U.S. Administration and five Americans senators.

¹⁸⁴ PRO, FO 371/32751, from Miss Thornton, Ministry of Information to Clarke, FO, 15.09.42 referring to an article titled "The Future of Iceland." In DNB 10.09.42

¹⁸⁵ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 16, Box 1568, Foreign Office Research Department, Whitehall, "The international Status of Iceland", 08.01.45

It was not only the fear of repercussions to the British and American causes elsewhere which sparked Allied concern of an early Icelandic departure from the Union while under their occupation. The consequences this would possibly have on the new world order after the war were also in their minds:

...the abrogation of the Act of Union before the date of its normal expiry might be prejudicial to the interests of the United Nations, and be used as propaganda against them by the Axis Powers. Axis propagandists would tell the world that the United Nations had induced Iceland to separate from Denmark.¹⁸⁶

The first part of this chapter focused on the Icelandic decision to take charge of her foreign affairs and the readiness of the British and the Americans to accept this decision. The findings showed that this decision was not opposed by the Danish Ministers in London and Washington, who otherwise had been in charge of Icelandic foreign relations with the British and the United States. Also examined was what constituted the extent of the success of the Icelanders in acquiring full control over their foreign affairs and the extent to which this would form the conduct of British and American policies towards Iceland. Moreover, the extent to which this determined the role of the Danish representatives concerned with the island was also looked into.

In addition to the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940 three events during Second World War were to shape the Anglo-Dano-Icelandic relations: the British occupation, the American occupation and the decision to leave the Union with the Danish Kingdom. Whereas the role of the Danish representatives was close to non existence in matters relating to the occupation and the shift in occupational forces, they were highly active in trying to influence the British and Americans when the Icelanders began to plan an early exit from the Union. Although they succeeded in influencing the British and Americans, by pointing out the repercussions of an early Icelandic exit while under British or American occupation would have for their war case, especially in terms of German propaganda, the future strategic importance of Iceland weighed more. The Danes were therefore to a degree successful in

¹⁸⁶ NARA, RG 226, OSS, Entry 16, Box 1568, Foreign Office Research Department, Whitehall, "The international Status of Iceland", 08.01.45

forestalling the untimely Icelandic plans to leave the Union before 1943, but not after.

An important issue to stress in relations to the American take-over of the occupation of Iceland is that the take-over took place prior the United States had entered the war, that is while the U.S. still was neutral. In order to overcome the question of legitimacy for taking such an action Iceland had to be included in the Western Hemisphere. Although the fact that the United States was neutral at the point of the take-over was important, what was even more important to the Icelanders was the prospects of an increased access to the U.S. market, which this would entail. With a stronger economy, the island would enhance her ability to leave the union with the Danish Kingdom. The Icelanders therefore put much effort in, and succeeded, in having Iceland included in the Western Hemisphere.

Of the points in the agreement between the Icelandic Prime Minister and President Roosevelt on the American take-over the two most important were the American promise to recognise Iceland's sovereignty and independence, both during the war and after, and the promise not to interfere with internal affairs. These two statements proved to be vital in the Icelandic argumentation against the Danish representatives, who nonetheless were able to exert a considerable degree of influence on the British and Americans in the matter. This was due to the fact that the Americans were anxious not to cause any damage in their relations with Denmark, especially with regard to Greenland. The British, too, were wary not to cause any upset with the Danish. They had already occupied two of her territories without the consent of neither the Government in Copenhagen nor the local population in the islands, and the British were well aware of, that their conduct of affairs in the North Atlantic could easily be exploited by enemy propaganda. There was also the notion of solidarity amongst the British for their fellow colonial power, also because if the British allowed the territories of another empire more independence, while under their occupation, they would have difficulties not doing the same for their own colonies.

Some Icelanders felt that the British had pushed them to invite the Americans to their island; those, who were reported to suggest that "the British were pressing it to invite

[the Americans] here,”¹⁸⁷ were therefore not too far off the mark. However, as this chapter shows, there were several forces at work, the Icelandic Minister in the United States being one. Also, the American take-over was not unwelcomed by the Icelanders. As the chapter shows the take-over was a culmination of Icelandic interests in securing a stronger basis for independence, British needs to relieve their forces for other theatres, and American intent to widen their scope of influence to Europe and take a more active role in helping the Allied cause despite the isolationist mood on the home front.

It is worth noting that although the American take-over did spark criticism, none were officially made by Danish authorities. The Danes realised that with the support of the British and the Americans for Icelandic independence a resentful Danish stance would only harm Danish interests elsewhere and the future position of Denmark in the world. This was also noted by the Americans; thus when discussing the situation in Denmark and the role of the Danish representatives in 1942 when Danish cooperation with the Germans was at its high, Welles pointed out to FDR that “you will remember that in view of our occupation of Iceland and of Greenland, of the very cooperative attitude of the Danish Minister in Washington and various of his colleagues...”¹⁸⁸

The reason behind Icelandic wish to abrogate from the Union with the Danish Kingdom before the war ended was that when the war was over they wanted to “have the final voice in the arrangement of their own affairs at the peace table.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5384, 859A.20/124, telegram from MacVeagh, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 17.10.41

¹⁸⁸ FDR Official File, OF486-OF491, OF488 Denmark, Box 1, folder OF488, Denmark 1933-1945, from Sumner Welles, Department of State, to FDR, 13.06.42

¹⁸⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5383, 859.01/97, from Leland Morris, US Legation, Reykjavik, to Secretary of State, Washington, 10.06.43

CHAPTER V: U.S. OCCUPATION OF GREENLAND AND THE POWER STRUGGLE AMONGST THE DANISH REPRESENTATIVES

The two previous chapters have examined the roles of the Danish representatives with respect to the Faroe Islands and Iceland. This chapter will not only examine the role of the Danish representatives with respect to Greenland, but also the power struggle which emerged amongst the Danish representatives due to the fact that no Danish Government in exile existed during the war, hence the division of the chapter into two parts. The first part examines the elements of the competition for the authority over Greenland and sees a power-shift taking place from the Greenland Governors Svane and Brun to Danish Minister in Washington, Kauffmann. The second part examines the situation the Danish representatives found themselves in arising from the lack of a Danish Government in exile and the fact that the Danish Government was collaborating with the Germans. The power-struggle that the situation created amongst the Danish representatives in London and Washington did, as we saw in the previous two chapters, have some effect on the Danish representatives in Iceland and the Faroes. Especially Kauffmann's calls for Hilbert and Fontenay to show their support of the Free Denmark movement and renounce the Government in Copenhagen caused Hilbert and Fontenay some distress, as they did not feel that such a move would serve their positions.

Apart from being situated within the Western Hemisphere and therefore covered by the Monroe Doctrine, there were other matters related to the unprotected post-April 9th 1940 Greenland which were of importance to the Americans. The cryolite mine in Ivigtut provided the U.S. industry with aluminum for the production of airplanes; Greenland also became an important stepping stone for the transatlantic route between the U.S. and Europe (Britain) and later on of great importance in the protection of the Atlantic convoys.

When Denmark was occupied by the Germans on April 9th 1940 Greenland was administered from the Greenland Office in Copenhagen and run by two governors in Greenland, Svane and Brun. However, with the connection with Copenhagen being severed all matters relating to Greenland were initially handled by the two governors as agreed by the U.S. Department of State. However, as time went by more and more of the administrative power was taken over by the Danish Legation in Washington

and the Minister there, Mr. Henrik de Kauffmann. This happened partly against the will of the governors in Greenland, but with the consent of the Americans, who took over the protection of Greenland shortly after the connection with Copenhagen was severed. This chapter looks into how this shift of power happened and which factors were present in the process.

The Greenland Agreement permitted the Americans to some extent to establish bases, radio and metrological stations in the island, and the prospect of this extended boundary of activity of the Americans in Greenland did not please the Greenland Governors. The Governors condemned the fact that they had not been consulted and that they neither had had the chance to scrutinise the Act beforehand. This, because the Agreement did not address a solution to some of possible consequences of the American presence in the island on the local environment and population, such as loss of land and hunting areas to the activities of the Americans. Also the terms regarding the conclusion of the American protection of the island were rather diffuse. It was clear that Kauffmann had rushed the process of the Defence Agreement, because it lacked in the legal part and did not serve the interests of Greenland to the full. The Agreement became one of the single most important events in the shaping of the Danish position amongst the allies during the war and in the aftermath of the war.

Although the American troops in Greenland hardly ever got in contact with the locals there were some troubles between the American Consul and the two governors; these, however, stemmed rather from a personal difference between the three of them than from practical issues regarding the U.S. presence in Greenland. Did this fact have any bearing on the attitude towards the shift of power between the Governors in Greenland and the Minister in Washington that took place? Or was the shift purely a practical solution taken by the Department of State? Where other factors involved in this change of attitude of the State Department? And if so, which were they?

Prior to April 9th 1940 Greenland was, as mentioned in Chapter I, a closed area with its only communication to the outside world managed through Copenhagen. This meant that all traffic, export and import had to go through Denmark where Greenland matters were handled by the Greenland Office. The German occupation of Denmark

thus left Greenland without a protectorate that catered for all the needs of the island. This was the immediate problem the Danish Governors were faced with in the aftermath of the severing of communications with Copenhagen.

Being within the Western Hemisphere Greenland was covered by the Monroe Doctrine. It was therefore in the interests of the U.S. Government to secure the island from a foreign power establishing bases there. The decision of the Danish Minister in Washington to sign the Greenland Treaty without the consent of his Government caused a crisis between the Government in Copenhagen, the Danish Embassy in Washington and amongst the Danish representatives. What did Kauffmann achieve by doing this? Did he do it for the good of Denmark and the King, to whom he had declared his loyalty to at his appointment as Minister? Or were there other motives behind the decision?

The fact that there was no Danish Government in exile and the fact that the Government in Copenhagen cooperated with the Germans (until after the August-revolt in 1943, when the Government was abolished) meant that the post-war political situation in Denmark was very open. Did this have any influence on the decisions the Danish representatives took with regard to their positions towards the Government in Copenhagen and towards the policy they chose with regard to the territory they administered and their relations with the locals and occupiers? That is, were their actions influenced by their aspirations for a place in the building up of a new Denmark after the war?

The move by Kauffmann inevitably sparked a chain of reaction amongst his fellow Danish representatives abroad. His subsequent dismissal split the Danish Foreign Service between those, who stuck to the loyalty pledges they had given the King upon their appointments, and those, who chose to denounce their Government in Copenhagen, but remained in their positions, if allowed by their host government, in order to safeguard Danish interests in the best way possible. How did this split strengthen Kauffmann's position?

Greenland proved to be an important feature in the shaping of the Danish diplomatic corps in the aftermath of the German occupation of Denmark. How did Greenland

figure in the power struggle that arose amongst Danish representatives abroad due to the absence of a Danish Government in exile?

Another question addressed in this chapter is what role the importance of Greenland to the Americans played in the status of Danish representatives as compared to other countries' representatives? This is in particular interesting in conjunction with the fact that the position of the Danish representatives abroad was very much dependent upon the goodwill of their host governments, which again depended upon the perception of the situation in Denmark. Why did the Danish representative maintain their positions, despite the fact that their Government in Copenhagen was collaborating with the enemy? Which obstacles did the Danish representatives encounter in their quest to minimize the damage caused by the pre- and post-occupation policy of the Government in Copenhagen?

A. U.S. POLICIES TOWARDS DENMARK AND GREENLAND

Politically Greenland is part of Europe, however geographically Greenland is part of the North American continent. Therefore, unlike Iceland, Greenland was always included in the Western Hemisphere, albeit originally the border did not embrace whole of the island. The question of moving the borders in order to justify the presence of American troops in Greenland was thus not necessary, as was the case with Iceland. However, there were other obstacles; being neutral the United States could not send her troops to a territory that belonged to another state. Although the U.S. Government fully recognised the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Denmark over Greenland, the notion within the State Department was nevertheless that the Danish Government was "not in a position to exercise sovereign power over Greenland so long as the present military occupation continues."¹

The importance of Greenland to the Americans lay not only in her geographic and strategic location; there was also the Cryolite-mine at Ivigtut, which was important to the U.S. aluminum industry, which amongst others used it for the production of aircraft components.

¹ SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, letter from Cordell Hull to Kauffmann, 07.04.41

With all Danish monetary resources being held back in the United States following the German occupation of Denmark, the Ivigtut mine provided the only income the Danish community abroad had at their disposal. The control over the income from the Ivigtut mine therefore became a point of struggle between the Governors of Greenland and the Danish Minister in Washington; a struggle, which in the end was determined by the State Departments acknowledgement of Kauffmann's status as the representative in charge of Danish interests, including Greenlandic, in the United States. The process of this power-shift will be examined later.

The severance of connection with Copenhagen following the German occupation of Denmark also meant that the Greenlanders needed a new market for the small local production of salt fish, blubber and sealskin, which hitherto had been handled via the Greenland Administration in Copenhagen. Likewise, although the island had secured itself a larger storage of provisions than normal due to the uncertainty of war, Greenland needed another source for import of goods, now the connection with Copenhagen was severed. The West, that is, the United States and Canada became the obvious providers of these needs. To formalize the coverage of these needs both countries established consulates in the islands within a few months of the German occupation of Denmark and the U.S. Coast Guard began patrolling the waters around the island.

These were the parameters of the initial relationship between Greenland and the United States. The signing of the Greenland Agreement on April 9th 1941 and the entrance of the United States to the war later that year would also had an impact on U.S. relations with Greenland and its authorities.

1. U.S. diplomatic relations with Denmark during the war

The United States maintained their representation in Copenhagen after the German occupation of Denmark. Although the Government in Copenhagen dismissed Kauffmann as their Minister to the United States and despite the fact that the State Department decided to recognise Kauffmann as the Danish representative regardless of his dismissal, the U.S. Government was not interested in breaking off relations with Denmark although Kauffmann had. On May 5th 1941 President Roosevelt thus sent a letter to King Christian X in which he wrote:

I have noted with regret Your Majesty's statement to the effect that it is now inexpedient to deal with the Government of the United States of America through Mr. de Kauffmann even though this Government recognizes him as Minister of Denmark at Washington. I am confident, however, that Your Majesty's Government will find it possible to maintain completely friendly relations with the Government and people of the United States of America through the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. [ad interim] of the United States in Copenhagen.²

As we will see later in this chapter, albeit not applauding Kauffmann's single-handed action without their authorization, the Danish Government was pleased that the United States Government took over the protection of Greenland, whilst Denmark was occupied. The Germans on the other hand were not so thrilled by the arrangement and tried to cast doubt on and cause damage to U.S.-Danish relations. In a telegram from Stockholm, Sweden, on December 22nd 1941, the State Department was informed that

telephone and telegraphic communications have been cut not by Danish Government but by German Wehrmacht...Danish Government continues normal relations and has stressed its desire to maintain Legation as long as possible. Danes however constantly expect demand from German authorities to close Legation.³

This telegram was sent six months after the signing of the Greenland Agreement. It must therefore be concluded that the Agreement did not strain the relations between the countries to the extent that the Americans felt the need to leave Copenhagen. In August the same year the Department of State sent a telegram to the Legation in Copenhagen in which it was stated that they "irrespective of changes in the status of relations between the United States and Germany which might take place in the future, this Government proposes to maintain the Legation at Copenhagen as long as possible."⁴

The Americans thus maintained their Legation in Copenhagen until December 20th 1941, when the Legation was informed by the Danish Foreign Office that they had

² SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Kauffmann (Kopi), Nils Svenningsen, Letter from Franklin D. Roosevelt to the King Christian X of Denmark and Iceland, 05.05.41

³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59/50, telegram from Johnson, Stockholm, to Secretary of State, 22.12.41

⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59/53A, telegram to American Embassy, Berlin, from Department of State 14.08.41

received a demand from the Germans to close the American Legation.⁵ Upon asking whether this implied

a breaking of relations on the part of the Danish Government or whether it was simply a request that the Chancellery should not conduct business...he [Mr. Hvass of the Foreign Office] stated the latter was the case. He was unable to give any indication as to what would happen to our group but stated that he felt certain we would be included in the regular diplomatic exchange.⁶

Despite having kept the Legation open for business until late 1941, already in March the same year the Americans nevertheless began to contemplate what to do with the embassy, and especially the archives, should “a situation arise requiring the departure of our Legation and Consular staffs in Copenhagen.”⁷ The memorandum, written by the American Consul Atherton, was clearly written with the forthcoming Greenland deal in mind because it further said that “since the closing of our Legation in Copenhagen might very possibly be coincident with or preceded by a short time the closing of our establishment in Berlin...”⁸. This indicated that the Americans were well aware that an action from their side in the near future would deteriorate relations between the Americans and the Governments in Copenhagen and Berlin.

It is worth mentioning that although the U.S. Consular remained in Copenhagen until January 24th 1942 the Americans did not notified the Danish Government of their decision to send a consul to Greenland until after the decision was taken.⁹ This procedural matter did not seem to cause any distress in Copenhagen. They showed understanding of the requirements of the situation:

The Ministry take note of the declaration contained in the said memorandum to the effect that this action of the U.S.A. Government has not in any way impaired the validity of the declaration made by the Secretary of State on August 4th 1916 concerning the Danish rights over Greenland...The Danish Government note with satisfaction the assurances given in the memorandum that the consulate at Godthaab has

⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59/70, Memorandum by State Department, Division of European Affairs, 04.06.42

⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59/70, Memorandum by State Department, Division of European Affairs, 04.06.42

⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59/52 ½, Memorandum to Atherton by State Department, Division of European Affairs, 24.03.41

⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, box 744, 124.59/52 ½, Memorandum to Atherton by State Department, Division of European Affairs, 24.03.41

⁹ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Bilag til Redegørelse for Minister Kauffmann's Holdning ("Graabog I"), bilag 33, Memorandum from the Legation of the United States of America 31.07.40

been established on a provisional basis and will not operate to the injury of any legitimate interests.¹⁰

The Danish Government, however, expected that “the American Government will in future if wishing to undertake further measures in connection with the provisioning of Greenland submit such plans to the Danish Government through the channel of the American Legation in Copenhagen. [sic]”¹¹ The U.S. Government, on the other hand, found this impossible. Although they recognised the sovereignty and independence of Denmark they nevertheless recognised that the Danish Government was not in a position to exercise full sovereignty while being under German military occupation. The U.S. Government thus decided to acknowledge those Danish elements, which were not under German occupation and had chosen not to follow orders from German controlled Danish Government. This was the only way the U.S. Government could possibly recognise the neutrality of Greenland, for otherwise Greenland would be under the control of a belligerent, Germany. Hence, as long as Greenland acted neutrally from the Government in Copenhagen the U.S. Government could make a distinction between their dealings with Greenland and the authorities there and the Danish Government in Copenhagen. If the situation was to change and Greenland seized to act autonomously from the Government in Copenhagen the U.S. Government would find it difficult to object other belligerents, such as Britain or Germany, to occupy the island.¹² Thus, as long as the United States remained neutral in the war, they could only provide protection to another neutral territory. This was also the reason why a Canadian protection of Greenland could not have been accepted by the U.S.A., seeing as Canada was a belligerent.

2. American concerns regarding Greenland following the German occupation of Denmark

¹⁰ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Bilag til Redegørelse for Minister Kauffmann’s Holdning (“Graabog I”) bilag 37, Note Verbale delivered to the Legation of the United States of America by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16.08.40

¹¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 86, 125.422H/11, letter from Copenhagen to Secretary of State, Washington, 17.08.1940

¹² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/293, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann, 03.09.40

It seems that following Britain's occupation of the Faroes and the notion that Iceland inevitably was next, the State Department feared that the British had forgotten the Agreement of 1920 between the United States and Denmark¹³, which the U.S. had informed Britain of. An aide-mémoire from the Department of State written on the day of the landing of British troops in the Faroes read:

Without assuming that the Government of Great Britain has any thought of interfering with the present status of Greenland but having in mind the existing situation resulting from the war in Europe and particularly as it relates to Denmark, it is deemed appropriate to call attention to the abovementioned communication of 1920 and to say that the position of the Government of the United States remains unchanged.¹⁴

The Americans, however, were not too keen on going into Greenland themselves, at least not prematurely and not before the American public was ready for such a move. Thus, when Kauffmann met Roosevelt on April 10th 1940, the day after the German occupation of Denmark, and stressed the importance of an announcement by the President on the safety of Greenland, the President only went as far as to promise to do what was in his power. Roosevelt thought it better to wait with a too strong declaration of commitments to the Greenland cause, because there was a risk that such a declaration would prompt criticism from the Isolationists. The President, nevertheless, was more optimistic about swaying the American public which, to a great extent, was not aware that Greenland fell under the Western Hemisphere. Thus, when informed hereof, Roosevelt expected the public to accept U.S. protection of Greenland on that basis.¹⁵

There were other aspects to take into account as well. The State Department was worried that any move with regard to sending troops to Greenland might have repercussions in the Far East, where the fear was that Japan would follow such a step by occupying the Netherland's East Indies.¹⁶

¹³ "In 1920 the Government of the US stated that it would not be disposed to recognize the right of a third government to acquire Greenland should the Danish Government desire to dispose of that territory." Department of State for the Press, 09.01.41

¹⁴ PRO, FO 371/24787, Aide-mémoire from the Department of State, 13.04.40

¹⁵ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Kauffmann-Sagen, Referat No. 1/Bilag, p. 5

¹⁶ PRO, FO 371/24784, from Marquess of Lothian, Washington, to FO, 27.04.40

The question of protecting Greenland was thus a delicate matter and on the Danish part Kauffmann instructed Svane and Brun not to do anything, which might provoke a reaction from the public or the politicians either in the U.S. or in Denmark. Especially, Kauffmann stressed, the wording “protection” had to be avoided at all costs. The Greenlanders should also be cautious not to ask for too much from the Americans to begin with.¹⁷

a) American relief to Greenland

Although the Greenlanders appreciated the American relief, there were worries amongst them with regard to what the American presence in the island would entail. In October 1940 American Consul Penfield reported to the Secretary of State on the atmosphere in Greenland with regard to the presence of the Americans on the island: “The questions most asked in Greenland this summer seem to be, “will the United States take over Greenland” and “what will happen if she does?”¹⁸ Amongst some of the Danish residents in Greenland there was concern regarding the possibility of losing their positions in the island, as there seemed to be some fear that the United States would take over the entire administration of the colony. Consul Penfield did his best to eradicate this fear in conversations with Danes in the various settlements. With regard to the native Greenlanders, although there were not a sufficient number of educated or wealthy Greenlanders to constitute a group with any real power in the colony, it was of passing interest to note that some of the more “radical” Greenlanders privately expressed the hope that the United States would take over the administration, on the assumption that the Greenlanders would obtain greater freedom and privileges under American rule.¹⁹

Although the reaction of the Danish Government to the arrangement between the Americans and the authorities in charge of Greenland for provision supplies was positive, there was some scepticism amongst the Danes in Denmark to the arrangement. From the Greenland Society it was reported that the “Administration

¹⁷ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad Blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Grønland: Bilag 20; letter from Kauffmann to Svane and Brun, 08.05.50

¹⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5397, 859B.00/11, report from American consulate, Godthaab, sent to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

¹⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5397, 859B.00/11, report from American consulate, Godthaab, sent to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

had supplied colony with requirements for one year in addition to the current year,” and the arrangement therefore came as a surprise; nevertheless, it was concluded that although “it is not known who took initiative...we trust our Greenland officials and have faith in their judgment and loyalty. [The] District chiefs have acted on own responsibility and undoubtedly to the best in their belief but certain points are not understandable here.”²⁰

3. Enemy activity in Greenland

Even with bases along the Norwegian coast, Greenland was too remote for the German Luftwaffe to cause any concern of such to the U.S., as was the case with the Faroes and Iceland. Some German activity in the air was registered nevertheless. In the autumn of 1940 an air reconnaissance was registered over East Greenland and in spring 1941 a German bomber and another German war plane were spotted. On the sea, on the other hand, the German threat to Greenland was present, but the level of German activity in Greenland never reached the same level as in the other two territories. During the summer of 1940 some German activity was registered on the eastern coast of Greenland. Three ships sailing from German occupied Norway arrived of the coast of Greenland supposedly for commercial or scientific purposes. Norway had still retained some rights with regard to the North Eastern coast of Greenland and at the outbreak of war some Norwegian hunters were in the area. The presence of Norwegian ships in the area, therefore, could be explained. However, although it was stated that the landing was for scientific purposes, the actual reason turned out to be to set up a meteorological station in order to provide assistance to German belligerent operation in the North Atlantic.

The substantiation of German activity in the Western Hemisphere also helped paving the way for the U.S. Government to take further steps for a more active role in the defence of Greenland.

²⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/302, telegram from Perkins, Copenhagen, to Secretary of State, 18.10.40

4. Further U.S. involvement with Greenland

German activity in Greenland not only substantiated the argument against the isolationists to protect the island based on the Monroe Doctrine it also caused concern in other American states resulting in the consultation of American Foreign Ministers at Habana on July 25, 1940, where it was declared that “any attempt on the part of a non-American state should be considered an act of aggression, and that they would cooperate in defense against any such aggression.”²¹ A declaration, the Act of Habana, further declared that “the status of regions in this continent belonging to European powers was a subject of deep concern to all of the governments of the American republics.”²² The increased German activity in Greenland thus required that “further steps for the defense of Greenland were necessary to bring Greenland within the system of hemispheric defense envisaged by the Act of Habana.”²³ The path to the subsequent agreement on the defense of Greenland, signed on April 9th 1941 was thus well cleared in advance and Roosevelt had strong arguments on his side against the criticisms from the isolationists.

The Greenland Agreement stated that the United States recognized Danish sovereignty over Greenland and that the United States would assist Greenland in maintaining its status. However, the Agreement lacked a clear statement on when and how the American presence in the island would be brought to a close. Also, the Agreement granted the United States the right to locate and construct landing sites for airplanes and other facilities for the defense of Greenland and for the defense of the American Continent.

Not only was the legal basis of Kauffmann signing the Agreement on behalf of the Government in Copenhagen questionable, but between 1941 and 1944 the Americans built 17 bases of different sizes ranging from airfields to weather stations in Greenland. These constructions caused the locals some distress as they interfered with their livelihood, that is, their hunting grounds. The Agreement provided that in case of such interference caused by the American presence in the island financial

²¹ U.S. Department of State, Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941, Washington, D.C.: U.S., Government Printing Office, 1943, U.S., Department of State, Publication 1983, p. 640

²² U.S. Department of States, Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941, 1983, p. 640

²³ U.S. Department of States, Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941, 1983, p. 640

compensation would be given, but this would always just be based on an estimation and did not lessen the distress and disrupt experienced by the locals.

Thus, although providing Greenland with the necessary protection and at the meantime recognizing Danish sovereignty over Greenland, the Agreement was met by criticism amongst some Danes abroad as well as in Denmark, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

4.1. American Consul in Greenland, James K. Penfield

On May 7th 1940 the State Department announced its establishment of an American consulate at Godthaab and Mr. James K. Penfield as the designated Consul. The Consulate was

provisionally established at Godthaab to facilitate the handling of numerous questions which have arisen with respect to the purchase in the United States of food and other supplies for Greenland and of the sale of Greenland products in this country.²⁴

The establishment of an American consulate in Greenland left the State Department in a dilemma. According to the Monroe Doctrine it was an obligation that an American Government representative was to be situated in Greenland in order to study conditions, establish liaison with the local authorities, et cetera. The Americans, however, were sure that if they contacted the German controlled Danish Government beforehand, in order to achieve approval of the establishment of the consulate, they would be refused, and this would therefore leave the U.S. Government in embarrassment. The Americans thus concluded that “normal independent sovereign functions had been suspended through the occupation of Denmark by a belligerent power. Accordingly, as a matter of policy, we considered the consent of the Danish Minister in Washington and the Greenland Government as sufficient authority under the circumstances for us to go ahead with the establishment of a consulate.”²⁵

²⁴ PRO, FO 371/23904, Department of State, for the Press, 09.01.41

²⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 862, 125.422H/10, Department of State, Division of European Affairs, to Mr. Dunn, 22.07.40

Penfield's instructions were to secure good relations with the Governors of Greenland, Svane and Brun. With the consulate situated in Godthaab, Penfield's first contact was naturally with Svane, who was the Governor of South Greenland and positioned in Godthaab. Although, as will be evident later in this chapter, Penfield did not think highly of the Greenland Governors, he nevertheless took upon himself to follow his instructions to secure good relations with them and planned to travel up to Godhavn, the seat of the Governor of North Greenland, to meet Governor Brun.²⁶

Penfield quickly got a negative impression of Greenland, its inhabitants and authorities. Of the natives he wrote to the Secretary of State that "in their childlike way, they invariably approve of anyone who gives them things."²⁷ In a telegram almost a year later likewise to the Secretary of State Penfield wrote

Greenland like other unsophisticated regions appears to be extraordinarily productive of rumors and false reports...there are a lot of false reports and rumors always current in a country like Greenland which is so cut off from world events. These rumors and reports are often repeated, even though obviously inspired to a considerable extent by active imaginations, by reliable Greenlanders and even the more sophisticated Danes.²⁸

Penfield's impression of the Greenlanders did not improve over time. A few months later he attended a meeting of the Greenland United Councils, a gathering of all the local chiefs and administrators. In his report from this meeting Penfield wrote:

The session as a whole gave more the impression of a class in school than of a deliberative assembly in operation...It is only natural, however, that a people which has lived under the extremely paternal Danish colonial system for over two hundred years should be characterized by an immature provisionalism, and the tone of the Council meetings is certainly no reflection on the native intelligence or character of the people.²⁹

Thus, he did not have a high impression of the standard of the Councils or the role they played either. His impression was that the role of the Councils was relatively

²⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/189, telegram from Penfield to Secretary of State 27.05.40

²⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5397, 859B.00/11, report from American consulate, Godthaab, sent to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

²⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/30, telegram from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 04.05.41

²⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/49, from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 15.07.41

unimportant and that there was little or no interest amongst the Greenlanders in the deliberations of the Councils. This impression was confirmed by the absence of spectators to the sessions, which were open to the public.³⁰

Penfield's negative impression of the locals and, as we will see in the following pages, of the Danish Governors in his reports he sent back home did not aid the Governors' cause, when they later struggled with Kauffmann for the power over Greenland.

5. Greenland and the Danish representatives

As mentioned in Chapter I, Greenland was a Danish colony at the outbreak of war and was run accordingly, with a strict 'closed' policy. All ships sailing to Greenland came from Copenhagen and all supplies were obtained through the Greenland Trade Office in Copenhagen. With little traffic to and from Greenland, the Greenlanders were more or less left to their own devices. Thus, when Greenland was opened up to the outside world following the German occupation of Denmark, the Governors found it difficult to adapt to the new situation. Their lack of experience with other areas than local domestic politics became apparent. This was especially the case of Brun, who was Svane's junior and compared to Svane had limited experience governing Greenland. He was thus perceived by his countrymen in the United States as "not young enough to comfortably seek guidance from others and not old enough to acknowledge that the wiser a man is, the more willing he is to seek other's opinions."(translated)³¹

Apart from the disruptions caused by the constructions by the American forces to the livelihood of the natives and apart from the few cases of contacts between the natives and the members of the American forces, which the Danish representatives otherwise had put much effort into preventing, it was reported that the population of Greenland appeared to be

³⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B:00/49, from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 15.07.41

³¹ SA, 8.S.15 (Bilag)/1909-45/0002, Grønlandsafdelingens Kontor ved generalkonsulatet i New York. Rapport om "The American-Greenland Commission" og dens Forretningsudvalg i Tiden April 1940 til August 1941. Udarbejdet af Kommissionens Formand H. Chr. Sonne.

adapting themselves easily to the changing conditions, and are, on the whole, contented. This is no doubt due to the fact that they are materially well provided for. Their connections with America and Canadian ships have added interest and excitement to their lives.³²

5.1. Danish Governors in Greenland, Svane and Brun

Shortly after the German occupation of Denmark the Danish Minister in Washington, Kauffmann, declared himself independent from the German controlled Government in Copenhagen. This meant that he would not take orders from Copenhagen if these were perceived as being made under duress by the occupiers. As will be demonstrated in the second section of this chapter, which deals with the relationship between the Danish representatives abroad, and which has also been mentioned in the earlier chapters, Kauffmann was anxious that all Danish representatives abroad followed his suit, there amongst also the Greenland Governors, Svane and Brun. When no immediate reaction came from the Greenland Governors to his request of allegiance both Kauffmann and the State Department got worried.

...During the past two days these messages have been insistently demanding an answer, but no answers have come. Two theories are entertained to explain this state of affairs: (1) that German sympathizers in Greenland, with or without assistance, have taken some action there; though this is regarded as improbable, and (2) that the Greenland authorities have been receiving messages and instructions from Copenhagen as well as from the Danish Minister in Washington and that they are undecided what to do and are sitting tight.³³

As it turned out the latter was the case. Both Svane and Brun were uncomfortable with the shift of power that took place after the German occupation of Denmark and the subsequent interest shown by others, especially the Americans, to the situation of Greenland. The Greenland Governors felt strong loyalty towards the King and Denmark. Nearly a month after the German occupation of Denmark the United Greenland Councils met in Godthaab and adopted a resolution reiterating their oath of allegiance to King Christian X and Denmark.³⁴

³² PRO, FO 371/24790, Postal Censorship Reports, New Series no. 98, 19.12.40

³³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/233 GRR, secret memorandum written on 27.04.40, attached to report by Penfield (written at Washington, DC) sent Secretary of State 10.07.40

³⁴ Herbert W. Briggs, "The Validity of the Greenland Agreement," American Journal of International Law, Vol. 35 (3) Jul. 1941, p. 507

Explaining the situation of the Greenland Governors and their realm of power to the Secretary of State, Penfield pointed out that “the legal basis of the present administration of Greenland in Article 10 of the Law of 1925 which states that the Governors may “in special cases make such arrangements as the welfare of the population may render necessary”.³⁵ With the plan that Governor Brun would travel to New York to handle matters related to the situation Greenland found herself in, the Governors executed a decree stating that in the event of Governor Brun being absent from Greenland he would be empowered to act on behalf of Greenland while Governor Svane would take over the administration of both North and South Greenland.³⁶

This was the initial set up of the administration in Greenland. However, disagreements amongst the Danish representatives in Greenland and Washington on which policies should be adopted with regard to Greenland brought about changes in the administration. This will be looked upon closer later on in this chapter in the section examining the shift of power that took place.

a) Governor Svane

Aksel Svane was appointed Governor of South Greenland in 1932. In a telegram to Secretary of State six months after his arrival in Godthaab, Penfield had little positive to say about Svane and his administration. Penfield found him pompous and rather inefficient in his position, where he showed “inability to delegate responsibility...and himself incapable of handling efficiently the mass of detailed involved in the administration of the colony.”³⁷ Furthermore Penfield found Svane to be “unable to grasp the “feel” of the situations in his dealings with people, a fault which many times leads to unnecessary and unconscious tactlessness on his part.”³⁸ Penfield also felt that Svane lacked attachment to the island and its inhabitants. According to Penfield Svane was due to return to Denmark, where he was expected

³⁵NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

³⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

³⁷NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, report from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

³⁸NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, report from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

to be appointed to a judgeship. "All his actions, therefore," Penfield concluded "are influenced by his understandable desire to avoid any act which would prejudice his chances of obtaining a desirable appointment in Denmark after the war."³⁹

When Svane in 1941 left for the United States Penfield noted the remarkable change in the administration in Greenland. Reporting home to the Secretary of State Penfield wrote "on May 17th Governor Svane left for the United States...and very soon thereafter the effect of Governor Brun's greater energy and willingness to delegate at least some responsibility became evident, and by the end of the period under review the general administration of Greenland had appreciably increased in efficiency."⁴⁰

While in the United States, the effect of Svane also became apparent at the Greenland delegation there. Penfield noted that after Svane's arrival in New York the "inability of the authorities here to obtain prompt replies to telegrams and in other delays."⁴¹ It was therefore suggested that the matter was taken up between the State Department, Kauffmann and Svane. To dismiss Svane was not an option and therefore it was contemplated to position him at the Ivigtut mine as Controller on a permanent basis.⁴² Such a solution, it was perceived, would be the most practical solution as the Americans believed that the "widening differences of opinion between Svane and Brun regarding policy and the great temperamental differences between the two men render it improbable that they would be able to work together in Godthaab harmoniously or efficiently."⁴³

Although Brun agreed with the suggestions made by the Americans with regard to Svane's position, he nevertheless refrained from putting forward the idea to Svane as this would inevitably cause an open break between the two. The matter, as mentioned earlier, was therefore taken up by the State Department in collaboration with

³⁹NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, report from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

⁴⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/49, Quarterly Political Report from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 10.07.41

⁴¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/53, telegram from Penfield to Secretary of State, 12.09.41

⁴² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/53, telegram from Penfield to Secretary of State, 12.09.41

⁴³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/53, telegram from Penfield to Secretary of State, 12.09.41

Kauffmann. Svane did not refuse to go along with the suggested plan. The outcome was that Svane at first remained in New York indefinitely as “adviser” to the Greenland Section,⁴⁴ after which he should return to Greenland to take up his new position at the Ivigtut mine.

Penfield was noticeably pleased with the decision, as Svane in his position as Governor in Greenland had caused him much concern. Although he also had some apprehensions with regard to Brun these were of no comparison to those with regard to Svane. His remark to the solution was

Governor Brun was obviously pleased with the arrangement, and although the Minister’s expression of confidence in him seemed to inspire an expansion of his already well inflated ego, there seems to be no doubt that the administration of Greenland will, from every point of view, be carried on more efficiently and satisfactorily by Governor Brun alone rather than by Governor Svane or by both Governors together.⁴⁵

From 1941 and onwards Brun thus became the sole Governor of Greenland.

b) Governor Brun

Born in 1904, Eske Brun had a law degree and experience working in the Ministry of Finance, when he already in 1932 applied for the position as Governor in South Greenland. At the time it was nevertheless reckoned that being only 28 years of age, he was rather young for such a post, and his application was therefore not met.⁴⁶ In the autumn of the same year, however, the Governor of North Greenland had to go home on six-months leave, and Brun was asked whether he was interested in taking the post in the meantime, which he was. This was Brun’s first encounter with Greenland. After his return to Denmark he was appointed as official to the Greenland Office.

Brun’s second visit to Greenland was in 1934 when he went to cover for Svane, who went on leave, as Governor in South Greenland. When Svane returned to Greenland in Spring 1935, Governor Rosendahl of North Greenland went on leave and Brun

⁴⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/68 PS/VFZ, Political Report June 1942 from Penfield, Godthaab, sent to Secretary of State, 06.07.42

⁴⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/68 PS/VFZ, Political Report June 1942 from Penfield, Godthaab, sent to Secretary of State, 06.07.42

⁴⁶ Eske Brun, Mit Grønlandsliv: Erindringer af Eske Brun, Gyldendal, Haslev, 1985, p. 9

therefore remained in the island to cover for him. From 1936-38 Brun was back at his post at the Greenland Office in Copenhagen, however when Director Daugaard-Jensen died and Departmental Chef Oldendow replaced him, Rosendahl was called back to Copenhagen to take up the post as Departmental Chef, which left the post as Governor of North Greenland vacant. In summer 1939 Brun was appointed as the Governor of North Greenland.⁴⁷

In his memoirs Brun listed three main principles to which he adhered to in his position as Governor in Greenland during the war. First, that the responsibility of the Greenland administration was to prevent the war and its atrocities from having any effect on the situation of the Greenlanders. Second, like all other Danes abroad, it had to be the responsibility of the Governors to support the allies in their fight against the Nazis. Third, that he would never take advantage of the fact that the connection with Copenhagen was severed. It was not in his interest or his job to bring about changes, which could be brought about by a free Denmark in the future.⁴⁸

Penfield's view of Brun was that he was a person who sometimes appeared to base his opinions on emotions rather than on fact or reason. However, Penfield noted, "he is usually quick to change his attitude if presented with reasonable evidence that it is unjustified."⁴⁹ As we saw in the previous section Penfield's opinion of Brun was considerably higher than that of Svane and Penfield recognised that "in spite of a tendency to carelessness and hasty decisions [Brun] is proving extremely cooperative and easy to work with."⁵⁰

Brun felt great responsibility towards Greenland and its inhabitants. As we will see later in this chapter he and Kauffmann did not always agree upon which policy would serve the Greenland cause best. The discussion did not only occur between

⁴⁷ Brun, *Mit Grønlandsliv: Erindringer af Eske Brun*, 1985, pp 53-4

⁴⁸ Brun, *Mit Grønlandsliv: Erindringer af Eske Brun*, 1985, pp. 66-7

⁴⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1857, 701.5911/409, from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, Washington, 13.10.41

⁵⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/45, telegram from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 04.08.41

Kauffmann, Brun and Svane, but was also central amongst Danish representatives and the Danish community abroad as the latter part of this chapter will demonstrate. Despite differences of opinions it was nevertheless recognised by some, amongst them Holtken-Møller of the Greenland Section, Royal Danish Consulate General in New York, that although he did not agree

with Governor Brun's piecemeal efforts at electrification in Godthaab, nor with his conservative views towards a possibility of greatly increased economic activity in Greenland, he nevertheless, as a loyal Dane, feels that Greenland has "needed a strong man" during the present period and that Brun is doing a good job for Danish interests.⁵¹

One of the issues which Brun felt strongly about with regard to the American occupation of Greenland was that the American presence should have as little effect on the lives of the natives as possible. The less contact between the two parties the better, he felt, and the Americans showed consideration for his sentiments. However, in September 1943, the American Vice Consul, Gray Bream, reported to the Secretary of State that Governor Brun criticised the Americans for not keeping to the strict line of keeping the American troops and the natives apart.⁵² The Danish representatives in the United States, however, did not perceive the matter as troublesome as Brun, and when Mr. Holten-Møller of the Greenland Section at the Royal Danish Consulate General in New York visited Greenland in 1944, he noted that the Greenlandic settlements were administered "much as they were on his last visit two years ago. In other words, American influence, through the various regulations of the armed forces limiting contacts with the native settlements in accordance with Article IX of the Defence Agreement, has been small."⁵³

Brun also took an active role in the aftermath of the war, when the new Greenland policy was discussed in Denmark. More on this later in the chapter.

⁵¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/8-1044, Political Report b American Consul John B. Ocheltree, March 1 1944 to July 31 1944, sent to Secretary of State, 10.08.44

⁵² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/80, Political Report, July-August 1943, sent to Secretary of State by Gray Bream, American Vice Consul, 03.09.43

⁵³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/8-1044, Political Report by American Consul John B. Ocheltree, March 1 1944 to July 31 1941, sent to Secretary of State 10.08.44

5.2. Danish Minister in Washington, Henrik Kauffmann

Immediately after the German occupation of Denmark the Danish Minister in Washington, Henrik Kauffmann, declared himself independent from the Government in Copenhagen. In a letter to Danish Foreign Minister Scavenius Minister Kauffmann explained the reason for distancing himself from a Danish Government acting under the duress of Nazi-German rule. Kauffmann stressed that it was of importance for Danish interests in the United States that Denmark attained sympathy from the American public. Showing lack of backbone against the German pressure would “hurt Danish “good-will” in the U.S. and would also seriously jeopardise Danish odds for maintaining Greenland Danish.”(translated)⁵⁴

Whereas Brun’s main concern with regard to Greenland was the situation of the island and its inhabitants as well as securing Danish interests in the island, Kauffmann put more emphasis on the strategic importance of Greenland in strengthening the position of the Danish representation in the United States and hence the position of an liberated Denmark in the aftermath of the war. Kauffmann also succeeded early on to attract the attention of Assistant Secretary Berle and the two began to prepare a U.S. policy towards Greenland and the subsequent status of Denmark and Danish subjects and funds in the United States. Indications of Berle’s and Kauffmann’s plans with regard to the Danish status in the United States after the German occupation of Denmark and the consequences of that to the Greenland situation were also present in a conversation between Berle and Morgenthau.

Berle: “You may not realize it, but you and the Danish Minister and the President and I are building a Denmark in our heads for the time being.”
H.M.Jr.: “What’s that?” Berle: “I say, you may not realize it, but about three of us are building a Denmark in our heads for the time being.”
H.M.Jr.: “You mean – meaning what?” Berle: “Well, obviously there isn’t any Danish government. There’s a German Government there.” H.M.Jr.: “Oh.” Berle: “And we’re just arranging there’s going to be a Denmark existing somewhere in the upper ether and just keep on going until the Germans get out of there.” H.M.Jr.: “Well, if they want to send an Ambassador this summer to Greenland, please consider my application.”
Berle: “I’ll put your application on file and consider your qualifications.”
H.M.Jr.: “All right. I don’t know whether I’m qualified, but after all Ruth Bryan Owen went there and liked it.” Berle: “Well, my grandfather explored that country in the earlier days, crossing Greenland he was

⁵⁴ SA, 8.U.13/1/1964/516, letter from Kauffmann, Washington, to Foreign Minister Scavenius, Copenhagen, 04.09.40

shipwrecked on the coast up there and had a very good time.” H.M.Jr.:
”(Laughs) All right.”⁵⁵

Although the prospect of the Americans sending an envoy to Greenland was treated lightly in this conversation, it shows that the idea was not foreign to the State Department. On a more important note, Berle made a reference to him and Kauffmann being in dialogue with regard to the lack of a Danish Government in exile. This point will be elaborated on in the second part of this chapter. In connection with the Greenland question, though, this record of Berle’s remark should be read as an initial step in a plan to secure Kauffmann’s position such that in case the United States were to deploy forces in Greenland, this could be done with the authority of Kauffmann.

Berle, along with his friend Sumner Welles, turned out to be the persons in the State Department, who were most ready to accept Kauffmann, and because they were not directly under the Secretary of State, they were able to bypass those, who were more sceptical of Kauffmann’s legitimate position as Danish Minister to the United States. With the prospect of not being able to conduct any negotiations with the Government in Copenhagen, as long as it was acting under the duress of the Germans, Kauffmann became instrumental in the American plans with regard to Greenland, and that was partly why the Americans were so ready to recognise his position as Danish Minister independent of his Government, also after he was dismissed by the Government in Copenhagen following the Greenland Agreement. It will also become evident later in this chapter, that the Americans also placed much importance on Kauffmann’s position in relation with other Danish representatives abroad, especially as there was no Danish Government in exile.⁵⁶ Thus, on April 18th 1941 Scavenius received a note from Cordell Hull, delivered by the American Chargé d’Affairs, in which the latter stated that “this Government will continue to recognize Mr. de Kauffmann in his official capacity until such time as the Royal Danish Government may be able to

⁵⁵ FDR, Morgenthau Diaries, book 253, p. 301, Telephone conversation between Berle and Morgenthau 11.04.40

⁵⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum by A.A. Berle of conversation with Kauffmann, 04.09.43

reconsider his status as freely as did the Danish Government seek his agreement as Minister to this country in 1939.”⁵⁷

Mutual recognition of the other party's role in their strategic ambition with regard to the future position of Greenland and Denmark created a strong bond between Berle and Kauffmann and from an early point they met regularly, sometime several times a week, to discuss U.S.-Danish-Greenland matters.

5.3 Relations between Kauffmann, Svane and Brun

As mentioned earlier there were some discrepancies between Kauffmann, Svane and Brun with regard to their preferred Greenland policy. Although Brun played down the disagreement between him and Kauffmann in his memoirs⁵⁸ and stressed their mutual aim in securing Danish interests and the best conditions for Greenland the relationship between them was marked by distrust and discontent with the conducts of the others. While Kauffmann was annoyed by the presence and meddling of the Greenland Governors in matters, which he felt should be under his control, Svane and Brun on their part felt overrun by Kauffmann in matters, which they felt were under their control.

Soon after the arrival of the Americans in Greenland the Danish Governors voiced their disgruntlement over the occupiers and their lack of understanding of the situation Greenland found itself in and the conditions there. Brun argued, that someone from Greenland should go to the United States and support the administration there with some local knowledge.⁵⁹ Kauffmann, however, did not welcome the idea. In general Kauffmann discouraged the Governors from spending too much time in U.S. and argued that they served Greenland better by staying in the island. To substantiate his point of view Kauffmann pointed out to Svane and Brun that “it would not be looked upon with favour if Danish representatives and their families spent too much time in one of the ‘most expensive cities’.”(translated)⁶⁰

⁵⁷ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Bilag til Redegørelse for Minister Kauffmann's Holdning („Graabog I“), bilag 102. Note from Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Scavenius, 18.04.41

⁵⁸ Brun, Mit Grønlandsliv: Erindringer af Eske Brun, 1985

⁵⁹ SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, letter from Eske Bruun, Greenland, to Kauffmann, Washington, 17.05.41

⁶⁰ SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, letter from Kauffmann to Svane and Bruun, 04.03.41

Kauffmann also pointed out that according to State Department's view, "staying outside Greenland for longer periods under the present circumstances was neither proper nor consistent." (translated)⁶¹

Following the increased American interest and focus on Greenland Kauffmann began to meddle with the internal affairs of Greenland. As mentioned above Kauffmann also tried to diminish the Governors' involvement in Greenland affairs in the United States and criticised the conduct of the Governors.

Kauffmann reprimanded the Governors on their economical running of the island, especially the fact that they were "using the dollars from the Cryolite mine to acquire imports of all sorts, while their countrymen in Denmark were suffering under German oppression."⁶² However, as is mentioned later in this chapter, Kauffmann himself was accused of using the money from the Cryolite account to other purposes than the welfare of Greenland.

Kauffmann also used the opportunity in a letter to Svane and Brun to state that he acknowledged the two of them as the highest authority in Greenland. However, he requested that Svane and Brun would continue, like they had done hitherto, to inform him before any correspondence was made with the outside world. This because, Kauffmann said, it would put him in a very awkward position if any correspondence with Copenhagen or the American Government took place without his knowledge, especially in the case of the latter. To stress this point Kauffmann indicated that being situated in Greenland, the two Governors would have little opportunity to know what happened on the political international arena, as well as internally in the different countries.⁶³ Thus, by indicating the necessity of him 'approving' all correspondence to the outside world beforehand, in order to prevent possible misunderstandings, Kauffmann would be able to control all communication from the Governors to the U.S.

⁶¹ SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, letter from Kauffmann to Svane and Bruun, 04.03.41

⁶² SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, letter from Kauffmann to Svane and Bruun, 04.03.41

⁶³ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad Blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Grønland. Bilag 20 (Letter from Kauffmann to Svand and Brun, 08.05.40)

Another means, which Kauffmann used to keep the Governors in check, was the rumours within political circles in the United States that the U.S. wanted to annex or buy Greenland. Although these ideas were present, they were never taken up at serious discussion at a higher level and Kauffmann did neither believe that this would happen. However, he nevertheless used the opportunity to worry the Governors about the possibility and stressed the necessity that Danish representatives 'played their cards right'.⁶⁴ This was no doubt a warning to the Governors not to do anything hasty and as we saw above, to confer with Kauffmann before communicating with other countries.

The sour grapes between Kauffmann and the Greenland Governors were not missed by onlookers. Penfield reported to the Secretary of State that Brun occasionally made critical remarks of Kauffmann and his representation of Greenland interests. These were partly based on news reports recounting that the State Department had granted a general license for the export of American goods to Iceland. Brun's immediate comment to these reports was that "Greenland would certainly have been granted a similar license long ago if it had had a representative in Washington with any push."⁶⁵

Brun had also expressed after meeting Kauffmann on his visit to the United States that he felt that Kauffmann, "while a charming and able person, was perhaps too concerned with his personal popularity with the State Department to be a completely effective representative of Danish interests."⁶⁶ Kauffmann's handling of the Greenland Agreement only accentuated this feeling of Brun, as it seemed that Kauffmann had signed the Agreement without any questioning its content. There were many issues in the Agreement, which Brun felt could have been done differently. The comparison with the Agreement, which the Americans presented to Iceland, mentioned above, was one example. More examples on the effect of the

⁶⁴ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Grønland. Bilag 20. Letter from Kauffmann to Svane and Brun, 08.05.40

⁶⁵NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG59, Box 1857, 701.5911/406, from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 13.10.41

⁶⁶NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG59, Box 1857, 701.5911/406, from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 13.10.41

Greenland Agreement on the relationship between Kauffmann and the Greenland Governors will be examined later in the chapter.

a) American Greenland Commission and Greenland Delegation in the United States
Shortly after the German occupation of Denmark Kauffmann appointed an American Greenland Committee.⁶⁷ Manned with prominent Danes and American friends of Denmark its role was to act as an advisory council on Greenland matters as well as perform practical matters in this connection. Kauffmann was eager to have the United States Government approval of the establishment of the Committee. Berle's reply was that the U.S. Government had no reason to object, but it was an affair of the Danes and Greenlanders, not the United States. But when Kauffmann asked whether the Americans could see the Commission have any political function, Berle's reply was negative.⁶⁸

This was only but one example of Kauffmann's strategy to have powers taken from the Greenland Governors to the Danish administration in the United States. The following section will examine this struggle for power over Greenland. However, in this particular case Kauffmann failed because Berle's answer in this instance was that the position of the Americans was that "so far as political authority was concerned...[the United States Government] was proceeding on the theory that such political functions as there were resided in the Greenland councils and their governors, who were not cut off from the Copenhagen Government by reason of the occupation."⁶⁹ The U.S. stance at this point as compared to their stance later reflects the fact that the statement was made in the early stages of the war.

The Greenland Governors were not pleased with the work of the Commission. They felt that one member of the Commission, Mr. Sonne, tried to control Greenland affairs in the U.S. "a little too closely."⁷⁰ Thus, when Governor Brun went to the

⁶⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/60, Quarterly Political Report by Penfield, July-September 1941, sent to Secretary of State, 02.10.41

⁶⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/170, memorandum by Berle of conversation with the Canadian Minister, Mr. Christie, 27.04.40

⁶⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/170, memorandum by Berle of conversation with the Canadian Minister, Mr. Christie, 27.04.40

⁷⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, report from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

United States in July 1940 he gathered together General Manager Corp of the Ivigtut Cryolite Mine and four other officials and established the Greenland Delegation, which was a separate entity from the Commission. The aim was for the Delegation to take over the conduct of Greenland affairs in the U.S. and that Brun would set up permanent office in New York for that purpose.⁷¹ Brun also stayed in New York over the winter, but then returned to Greenland, when he was replaced by Svane in spring 1941.

The dissatisfaction of the conduct of the Commission amongst the Greenland Governors came to a conclusion in September 1941, when the Commission was dissolved. The dissolution apparently happened after a long period of squabble between Kauffmann and Svane, where the latter felt that “some of the members [of the Commission] were endeavouring to bring about a permanent separation of Greenland from Denmark.”⁷²

The evolution of relations between the Danish Legation and the Greenland Delegation over this matter caused the State Department great concern. The State Department also received reports from their Consul in Greenland, who criticised the Greenland Delegation for not “functioning on an efficient or satisfactory basis. This situation is apparently due in part to inefficiency and friction in the organization and in part to shipping, warehousing, and other difficulties arising from the present emergency conditions in the United States,”⁷³ Penfield pointed out.

The result was that only a month after the dissolution of the Commission, the Delegation was, with the State Department’s approval, placed under the Danish Consulate General in New York by Kauffmann. Hereafter it became the Greenland Section, Danish Consulate General.⁷⁴ This organisational change did not appear to affect the conduct of Greenland business in the U.S., as far as the administration in

⁷¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5387, 859B.00//11, report from American Consulate, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 07.10.40

⁷² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/60, Quarterly Political Report by Penfield, July-September 1941, sent to Secretary of State, 02.10.41

⁷³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/49, Quarterly Political Report from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 10.07.41

⁷⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/63, Quarterly Political Report by Penfield, October-December 1941, sent to Secretary of State, 31.12.41

Greenland was concerned. Governor Brun stated to Penfield, that it was his impression that only two changes had taken place: The name "Greenland Delegation" has been dropped, and the fact that Danish Consul General was to see copies of all correspondence. In Greenland the change in status did thus not in itself appear to cause a great deal of surprise or concern, but there was widespread resentment over the fact that no full announcement or explanation of the change was given until after a month and a half had passed.⁷⁵

Kauffmann thus succeeded, albeit great efforts from the Greenland Governors, to minimize the role of the Governors in the United States. Whereas the United States Government initially was ready to acknowledge the authority of the Greenland Governors in all affairs concerning Greenland, this incident helped Kauffmann in his process of taking over the power of Greenland matters in the United States.

b) The Danish representatives and the Greenland Agreement

Less than a month before the signing of the Greenland Agreement Kauffmann received a telegram from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the telegram Kauffmann was informed that in a conversation between Minister of Foreign Affairs Scavenius and Mr. Perkins the latter had pointed out the possibility of an American 'protection' of Greenland according to the Monroe Doctrine. Scavenius had replied that in that case a rumour of a threat to Greenland was not good enough basis for an American protection, there had to be actual danger.⁷⁶ The response from Washington was that continuous flights in low altitude over East Greenland by German reconnaissance planes breaching the neutrality of Greenland, was enough indication of a threat to Greenland.⁷⁷

When discussing the Agreement at the early stages, Kauffmann asked Berle whether he could inform the Greenland Governors of the plans. Berle thought that they should rather wait until the time was ripe and there was consensus within the United

⁷⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/63, Quarterly Political Report by Penfield, October-December 1941, sent to Secretary of State, 31.12.41

⁷⁶ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Bilag til redegørelse for Minister Kauffmann's Holdning ("Graadbog 1"), bilag 54. Telegram from the Foreign Ministry, Copenhagen, to Danish legation in Washington, 18.03.41

⁷⁷ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Bilag til Redegørelse for Minister Kauffmann's Holdning ("Graabog 1"), bilag 57. Telegram from Kauffmann, Washington, to Foreign Ministry, Copenhagen, 10.04.41

States Government to make such an agreement. It was thus not a case of Kauffmann not willing to let the Greenland Governors in on what was going on. Kauffmann, however, did indicate to Berle at this early stage, that he hoped that the negotiations would be taken up with him. Berle was not willing to commit to anything at that point,⁷⁸ but this was to be the line that was followed as the process went on.

The fact that Kauffmann signed the Greenland Agreement without the consent of the Government in Copenhagen caused concern amongst the community of Danish representatives abroad, and especially to those, who felt a strong loyalty towards the King and country. The fact that negotiations had solely been conducted with Kauffmann and not with the participation of the Greenland Governors as well did not help the matter much. The Governors were not notified of the plans to sign the Agreement until a few days before.⁷⁹ When they did so, they were obviously disturbed, not only because they had been kept in the dark, but also because they were given little time to scrutinize the Agreement and hence little but no choice to give their consent to it. Penfield reported that On April 5th 1941 Governor Svane came to see him and informed him that he had received a telegram from Kauffmann where the latter strongly advised him to authorize signature of an agreement, which Svane was yet to see. The terms of the Agreement were to be sent to Penfield, who upon Svane's visit had not received them yet.⁸⁰

According to Penfield's report the telegram arrived later that day and when Penfield went over to Svane to go over the substance of the telegram in detail, Svane "appeared to appreciate the position of the United States but was much more agitated and concerned than I have ever seen him."⁸¹ After a long discussion with Penfield Svane, nevertheless, decided to concur "under extreme force of circumstances." Only after Penfield had secured Svane's assent, was Brun notified of the Agreement,⁸²

⁷⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/346, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 18.02.41

⁷⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/348A, telegram from Department of State to American Consul, Godthaab, 04.04.41

⁸⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B01/351, report from Penfield to Secretary of State 09.04.41

⁸¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B01/351, report from Penfield to Secretary of State 09.04.41

⁸² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B01/351, report from Penfield to Secretary of State 09.04.41

who also had his hesitations with regard to concurring in the Agreement. However, whereas Governor Svane's hesitation was due to his "very personal loyalty to the King", Governor Brun's was "because of the sudden manner in which the matter was presented to him."⁸³

Governor Svane subsequently, without referring with the Consulate, sent a telegram to King Christian X in which he stated that in his opinion the Agreement was illegal and that he had only concurred because of the extreme pressure of circumstances. Governor Brun also telegraphed the King to explain that his decision to concur was motivated purely on the grounds that he believed this to be in the best interests of Denmark and Greenland. The King's reply to both telegrams merely said, "Understand difficulties, hope for brighter times."⁸⁴

It was not only Svane and Brun within the community of Danish representatives who were notified of the Agreement at this very late stage. Blechingberg, who worked with Kauffmann at the Legation in Washington, reported that he got quite surprised when he returned from a couple of days leave on April 6th 1941 to find the Greenland Agreement almost ready to sign, because the matter had not been given much attention as far as he knew. Kauffmann explained the situation by informing him that German airplanes had been spotted over Greenland and thus both the U.S. and the Canadian Governments were convinced that bases would have to be established on the island, in order to secure the supply route to Britain.⁸⁵

The treaty was signed on April 9th 1941, thus on the anniversary of the German invasion of Denmark. There was much controversy attached to the signing of the deal between the United States Government and the Danish Minister in Washington. The legal aspect of the deal was especially dubious, as Kauffmann was operating outside his parameter of his contract as Minister representing the Danish Government. In the aftermath of the signing of the deal an article by Herbert W. Briggs substantiated this notion, because it questioned the legality of the Agreement:

⁸³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/49, Quarterly Political Report from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 10.07.41

⁸⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/49, Quarterly Political Report from Penfield, Godthaab, to Secretary of State, 10.07.41

⁸⁵ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909.45/0002, Kauffmann-Sagen, Referat No. 1, p. 15-6

“Mr. de Kauffmann was apparently without competence to conclude the Agreement, and there is some doubt as to the legal capacity of Denmark.”⁸⁶ The U.S. Government downplayed all criticism and on announcing the deal to the public. President Roosevelt stated that the “present step is a new proof of our continuing friendliness to Denmark.”⁸⁷

As for the reaction overall in Greenland Eske Brun was of the opinion that the response towards the deal and the sympathy towards the Americans would have been of a more positive note if the State Department and Kauffmann at least had given the impression of that the Greenlanders had been involved in the negotiations.⁸⁸

Although Kauffmann acknowledged that the Agreement could have been negotiated and signed by the Governors and U.S., he nevertheless thought it best if he took it upon himself to be in charge; this partly because he doubted the Governors’ capabilities and level of experience in matters like these, but also because he thought it most correct that he was in charge, since he was responsible for the direction the Greenland-negotiations with the U.S. and Canada had taken since the occupation of Denmark, and finally Kauffmann thought that his position as opposed to that of the Governors weighed heavier in the dealings, and hence the respect the Agreement would be shown in the years to come and especially when the time came for occupation to seize.⁸⁹

5.4 Shift of power

Like we saw the Danish Governor in the Faroes, Hilbert, continuously seeking British confirmation and approval of his authority in the Faroe Islands, so did Kauffmann also seek to secure recognition of his authority over Greenland from the State Department. The previous sections have already demonstrated how Kauffmann managed to gain more and more authority over Greenland matters, by acquiring the consent and approval for small actions from both the Greenland Governors and the

⁸⁶ Briggs, “The Validity of the Greenland Agreement”, 1941, p. 507

⁸⁷ SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, Statement by the President announcing the take-over of protection of Greenland, 10.04.41

⁸⁸ SA, 8.S.15/1909-45/0002, Eske Bruun, Greenland, to Kauffmann, Washington, 17.05.41

⁸⁹ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909.45/0002, Kauffmann-Sagen, Referat No. 1, p. 15-6

United States Government. The shift of power that took place over time is best shown in the change of attitude of the United States.

In April 1940, shortly after the German occupation of Denmark, Berle told Kauffmann that the State Department was inclined to “accept the action of Greenland officials as the action of the Danish Government, so far as Greenland concerned, on the theory that it was the surviving remnant of the Danish Government. Were the Minister to present authorization from the Greenland authorities to act, we should consider that authority, and not impossibly would recognize authority derived from that source.”⁹⁰ Kauffmann indicated to Berle that the Governors “apparently were prepared to give him direct authority to act for them in commercial matters, and that they might go so far as to authorize him to take over and administer under his own name, of course pursuant to their instructions, any funds which might be derived from the trade of the Danish monopoly.”⁹¹

Later the same day Kauffmann sent a letter to the Greenland Governors in which he recognised the Governors’ “supreme authority for dealing with all questions arising in Greenland.”⁹² Kauffmann, however, requested that “all questions pertaining not only to Greenland’s position vis-à-vis the U.S.A., but all questions and communications concerning Greenland’s position to other powers,”⁹³ should be dealt with by the Minister. Kauffmann promised that he would work in accordance with the Governors’ wishes in all questions concerning Greenland. Kauffmann closed the letter by requesting the “concurrence of District Administrators and possibly district councils...at the earliest possible.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/152, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann, 20.04.40

⁹¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/152, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann, 20.04.40

⁹² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/233 GRR, telegram from Kauffmann to Svane and Brun sent 20.04.40, attached to report by Penfield (written at Washington DC) sent Secretary of State 10.07.40

⁹³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/233 GRR, telegram from Kauffmann to Svane and Brun sent 20.04.40, attached to report by Penfield (written at Washington DC) sent Secretary of State 10.07.40

⁹⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/233 GRR, telegram from Kauffmann to Svane and Brun sent 20.04.40, attached to report by Penfield (written at Washington DC) sent Secretary of State 10.07.40

As demonstrated earlier Kauffmann tried to have political powers of some sort conferred to the Greenland Committee, which he set up in April 1940 to address Greenland affairs in the United States. In that instance, however, we saw that the State Department did not follow his request.⁹⁵

With all Danish funds in the United States being held back due to the German occupation of Denmark, Kauffmann was anxious to get authority over the money which the Greenland authorities had disposal of from the sale of cryolite from the Ivigtut mine. The State Department supported Kauffmann's request for the necessary funds.

In our opinion the Greenland authorities would be fully warranted in expending \$10,000 on defense measures, especially since the entire proceeds of the cryolite sold this year will be at the disposal of the Greenland authorities instead of being divided with the Copenhagen company, as was formerly the case.⁹⁶

In September 1940 Kauffmann turned to Berle and asked for the reassurance that the United States Government still kept the same line in respect to Greenland, that is, that the U.S. Government dealt directly with the Greenland Administration through him, without going through Copenhagen. The reason for Kauffmann's concern was that following the American notification to the Government in Copenhagen of the establishment of an American Consulate in Godthaab, the Government in Copenhagen had indicated that it expected the U.S. to take up Greenland matters with them.⁹⁷ However, as we saw earlier in this chapter, the Americans made a clear distinction between their dealings with the Government in Copenhagen and those elements of the Danish Government, which acted autonomously from the German controlled Government in Copenhagen. Berle could therefore reassure Kauffmann, that the Government still kept the same line.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/170, memorandum by Berle of conversation with the Canadian Minister, Mr. Christie, 27.04.40

⁹⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.01/184 FP, telegram sent by Hull, Department of State to American consul, Godthaab, 26.05.40

⁹⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/293, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 03.09.40

⁹⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/293, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 03.09.40

As previously mentioned the arrival of Brun to the United States and his subsequent establishment of the Greenland Delegation, which was set up in opposition to the Committee, which Kauffmann had established in April, did not please Kauffmann. In September Kauffmann raised the subject of the presence of the Greenland Governor in the United States with Berle. Berle informed Kauffmann that based on a report from Penfield, which stressed the incapability of Svane who remained in Greenland, he also believed that Brun would be more useful in Greenland rather than in the United States. Kauffmann replied that he had tried to talk Brun into returning back to Greenland. Brun, as we have seen previously, however, always felt that those persons, which represented Greenland affairs in the United States, lacked a true wish for the good of the island and its inhabitants. He thus felt it essential that he, representing the "real Greenland ought to be on the Danish Purchasing Commission."⁹⁹ Kauffmann, however, managed to have the State Department communicating to Svane and Brun, that while the State Department did not wish

to interfere in the execution of their duties, it was our judgment that their presence at their posts of duty in Greenland to handle any emergency situation that might arise transcended in importance such Greenland commercial business as they might wish to undertake in the United States...we hope that upon reflection both officials will themselves conclude that present circumstances require that they remain in Greenland until the situation in the north has further crystallized.¹⁰⁰

The Greenland Agreement was another, maybe the most important, step which helped Kauffmann secure his power over Greenland. The Americans were conscious of the reactions of the Governors to Kauffmann negotiating and signing the Agreement single-handedly, as the Governors had repeatedly "[thrashed] out the delicate question of the boundary between their authority and that of Kauffmann in so far as United States-Greenland relations are concerned."¹⁰¹ In the aftermath of the signing of the Agreement it was therefore proposed to develop the view that

under present circumstances the governors are the local representatives of the Danish crown and sovereignty in Greenland, and as such the United States of course consults and deals with them through its consular officers at Godthaab, particularly as regards local and purely Greenland

⁹⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/301, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann, 30.09.40

¹⁰⁰ NARA, Decimal File, 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/347A, telegram from Department of State Hull to American Consul, Godthaab, 01.04.41

¹⁰¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859.01/373, report from Treasury Department, United States Coast Guard, to Berle, 10.04.41

matters; that on the other hand Kauffmann is minister of Denmark and the representative in the United States of the Danish crown and sovereignty and as such the United States must at this time look primarily to him in matters in the general international field which ordinarily would be taken up with the foreign office in Copenhagen, although we could make attempt to keep the governors as fully informed as possible and seek their views in Greenland matters to the extent practicable.¹⁰²

This suggestion came from the Treasury Department at the United States Coast Guard and the report gives the impression that the author had been in contact with the Governors on a fairly regular basis. He seemed to have a greater insight and understanding than the State Department of the position the Greenland Governors found themselves in with regard to Kauffmann and the Greenland Committee taking over some of their authority with regard to Greenland.

By May 1941 the confusion about Greenland authority and who was in charge of what seemed to peak. While Cumming was away, his replacement, Higgs, had a look through the Greenland files and was "impressed with the lack of clarity in the division of functions between the Governors themselves on the one hand and the Greenland Delegation, Sonne, and Kauffmann on the other, and the lack of coordination of the functions of all of them."¹⁰³ Higgs subsequently suggested that

With regard to the desirability of clarifying the respective spheres for the functions of the Governors, the Delegation, and Kauffmann, it would appear to be advisable to attempt to bring about a canalisation of political and administrative matters, as far as the Department and the Governors are concerned, through Kauffmann and Penfield, and delegate to the Greenland Delegation only those matters strictly pertaining to Greenland-American trade. It would probably be simpler if the Department could handle all matters relating to the Delegation only through Kauffmann and never directly with the Delegation; in other words, reduce to a considerable extent the present quasi-official character of the Delegation. A prerequisite to such a set-up would doubtless be a closer understanding and cooperation between the Governors and Kauffmann which may be somewhat difficult of achievement¹⁰⁴

Whether or not Higgs' suggestions struck a chord is difficult to say. Although steps were taken that clarified the division of functions between the parties, first the

¹⁰² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859.01/373, report from Treasury Department, United States Coast Guard, to Berle, 10.04.41

¹⁰³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/357, Memorandum by Cumming's replacement Higgs??, Division of European Affairs, directed at Berle, 21.05.41

¹⁰⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/357, Memorandum by Cumming's replacement Higgs??, Division of European Affairs, directed at Berle, 21.05.41

dissolution of the commission set up by Kauffmann and second the placing of the Delegation under the Consulate-General in New York, it seems rather that it was the personal problems between Kauffmann and the Governors, which brought these changes about. In August, Kauffman had once again visited Berle at his office and stated that "there were certain difficulties between him and Greenland. Svane was anxious to establish his new-found authority, and sometimes he was not very brilliant about it."¹⁰⁵ Kauffmann thus hoped that the State Department "could emphasize a little the fact the he [Kauffmann] was in the picture and should stay there. He pointed out that in any event he would have to carry the political responsibility for the Greenland arrangements before Denmark, and before Europe."¹⁰⁶

Kauffmann repeated his qualms to Berle in October, this time in relation to the financial situation of Greenland and the Governors' authority over the income from the Ivigtut. Knowing that the State Department was planning to approach Svane on this matter, Kauffmann hoped that before they did so, they could prepare a proposal by which "the authority over these purchases could be transferred to the Danish Legation."¹⁰⁷ Although Berle could see the point in doing as "the situation had got to the point where something had to be done" he had to inform Kauffmann that

the Department had been very unwilling to interfere in the colonial administration of Greenland, since we were endeavouring scrupulously to respect the integrity of that administration. We could therefore only follow the lead of the Danish authorities. But we recognized Mr. De Kauffmann as the representative of the interest of the Kingdom of Denmark here; and would of course give careful consideration to any representations he made on that subject.¹⁰⁸

Two weeks later Hull wrote to Penfield that

the evolution of relations between the Greenland Delegation, the Danish Legation and the United States authorities has given us increasing concern, particularly in view of the reaction in Greenland and among the Danish community here to Svane's interview; of his inefficiency in

¹⁰⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/53, memorandum by Berle of Conversation with Kauffmann 08.08.41

¹⁰⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/53, memorandum by Berle of Conversation with Kauffmann 08.08.41

¹⁰⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/376, memorandum by Berle of Conversation with Kauffmann 08.10.41

¹⁰⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01/376, memorandum by Berle of Conversation with Kauffmann 08.10.41

business relationships and of his failure to consult the Legation, the Treasury or the Department with respect to matters of mutual concern.¹⁰⁹

Hull thus concluded that because this situation made it impossible for Kauffmann to properly supervise Greenland affairs in the United States and satisfactorily discharge his responsibilities as recognized Danish Minister, some radical change had to take place. Hull therefore told Penfield that he could inform Brun of the decision of the State Department. Penfield should also mention that Kauffmann had informed the State Department that "as a matter of course he would propose to leave internal Greenland affairs to the Danish authorities in Greenland exercising a general supervision from here."¹¹⁰

Later in October Kauffmann thus achieved in acquiring a statement, on par with that which Hilbert acquired from the British authorities, acknowledging his power and authority. The statement marked a shift in the position of the United States Government towards the relationship between the Danish Legation in Washington and the Greenland Governors with respect to power and authority. It stated that

...Note has been made of the fact that the Colony of Greenland did not have autonomous powers within the framework of the Danish constitutional system, but that its internal administration and external relationships were in all respects determined and directed by the Government of Denmark. It follows that were the United States to enter into relations with the Colony or the Colonial officials other than through the duly accredited and recognized representative of the Danish Government, it would, in effect, be contributing to a separation of Greenland from its historic and constitutional relationship with Denmark; and such action would therefore tend to be in violation of the obligations assumed by the United States to respect Danish sovereignty over Greenland and to assist Greenland in the maintenance of its status.

...The Secretary of State has accordingly determined that all matters regarding finance, supplies, and the sale of Greenland products in the United States will, as a matter of policy be taken up with the Danish Legation in Washington...American consular officers in Greenland will, of course, continue to transact with the Danish authorities in Greenland such official business as is customarily transacted between a consular officer and the local officials within his consular district."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01B11/5A PS/WHA, telegram from Hull, Department of State, to Penfield, 22.10.41

¹¹⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01B11/5A PS/WHA, telegram from Hull, Department of State, to Penfield, 22.10.41

¹¹¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5389, 859B.01B11/6 PS/PLS, from Secretary of State to Kauffmann, 25.10.41

The United States Government thus changed their position with regard to the level of power of the Governors in order to grant Kauffmann with authority over the most important aspects of Greenland affairs, that is financial aspects, supplies and the sale of Greenland products in the United States. This new interpretation of the level of authority of the Governors may be seen as a golden opportunity for the United States Government to reach a solution to a delicate problem without causing too much damage to the parties involved.

The statement did not go down well with the Governors. In the aftermath Brun notified Kauffmann in a telegram that he did not recognise the final decision that Greenland matters rested with Kauffmann and still less that Kauffmann was entitled to exercise any control normally exercised by the Greenland Administration in Copenhagen. Kauffmann therefore should not expect Brun to submit to Kauffmann other appropriation matters than those, which Brun found it expedient to seek Kauffmann's advice.¹¹² Following Brun's telegram the State Department conveyed a message to him through Penfield where Brun was given a reprimand for his lack of will to cooperate.¹¹³ Brun later stated that

he did not intend to dispute the Minister's control over Greenland funds in the United States, that he felt that he and the Minister were in essential agreement regarding Greenland policies, and that he therefore intended to continue to cooperate fully with Mr. de Kauffmann.¹¹⁴

In the following months Penfield reported that Brun had "reached the point where he will consult and cooperate with the Danish minister at Washington only under pressure."¹¹⁵ Brun's main point of issue was Kauffmann's claim to be "acting in the place of the Greenland Office at Copenhagen in so far as appropriations [were] concerned, a claim which the United States Government [had] in effect recognized but which the Governor [maintained] he [was] legally unable to admit."¹¹⁶

¹¹² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5370, 859.01 B 11/16 ½ PS/ET (drafts of 3 telegrams)

¹¹³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5370, 859.01 B 11/16 ½ PS/ET (drafts of 3 telegrams)

¹¹⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/67 PS/VFZ, Political Report April-May 1942 from Penfield, Godthaab, sent to Secretary of State 04.06.42

¹¹⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/70, General Political Report, August 1942, sent to Secretary of State from Penfield 12.10.42

¹¹⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5388, 859B.00/70, General Political Report, August 1942, sent to Secretary of State from Penfield 12.10.42

The difficulties between Kauffmann and Brun did not stop and in June 1944 Kauffmann still conveyed his concerns to Berle. Kauffmann told Berle that “matters were getting increasingly difficult with Brun, as they once had with Governor Svane,”¹¹⁷ and once more requested the State Department to make a statement with regard to whom the United States Government were dealing with, that is, the Legation in the U.S. rather than the Governors.¹¹⁸ Reassuring Kauffmann Berle said that he would “inquire whether something could not be done”¹¹⁹ and that the State Department “had never wavered from our policy of dealing with the Legation as the representative of the Danish Government, with which, when liberated, we should have to regulate any questions arising out of the arrangement.”¹²⁰

The outline of the struggle for power between Kauffmann and the Greenland Governors bears some similarities to that between Hilbert and Thorstein Petersen in the Faroe Islands. In both cases the most important aspect in gaining or maintaining power was to have the means and opportunity to influence the key persons in the administration of the occupying power. Thus, like Hilbert and Reventlow, Kauffmann was, through his position in Washington, able to regularly be in contact with key persons at the State Department, whereas those opportunities were scarce to the other parties. However, whereas Hilbert never held the same central strategic position in British war plans, Kauffmann’s role with regard to U.S. strategy in the North Atlantic was paramount.

B. DANISH REPRESENTATIVES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR: A POWER-STRUGGLE

The lack of a Danish Government in exile had a big effect on the Danish representatives abroad. The sudden break in communications with Copenhagen meant that most of the Danish representatives in the Allied world were left without anyone to turn to if a situation arose that needed consultation. The situation saw the

¹¹⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5369, 859.001/6-2844, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 28.06.44

¹¹⁸ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5369, 859.001/6-2844, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 28.06.44

¹¹⁹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5369, 859.001/6-2844, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 28.06.44

¹²⁰ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5369, 859.001/6-2844, memorandum by Berle of conversation with Kauffmann 28.06.44

emergence of two power centres of Danish authority in exile, in London and in Washington. In London the most prominent persons were Christmas Møller and Reventlow, while in Washington it was Kauffmann.

Although their Government in Copenhagen was still operating it was clear to everyone that it was not operating completely independent from its occupiers, despite such claims of both the Government itself and the Germans.¹²¹ Thus, unlike the Norwegians, who had a King and Government in exile in London to refer to, the situation of the Danish representatives became unclear and ambiguous. Their continued presence and operations in the respective host countries in the allied world became dependent upon that they acted independently from the Government in Copenhagen.

Why, then, did the Danish King and Government remain in Denmark rather than follow the Norwegian example? To answer that Reventlow pointed out that the situation of Denmark was remarkably different from that of Norway. It would not have been perceived as a laudable deed if Prime Minister Stauning and Foreign Minister Munch had fled the country, when it was their respective parties and Government, who were to blame for the defenceless state Denmark found herself in at the outbreak of war. Thus, there was no other option open for them but to stay in Denmark and try to make the most of the situation, which they had created. And, without a government there was no point for the King to go into exile, since such a move on his own would have little actual effect,¹²² Reventlow argued.

With no government in exile the Danes tried to set up other means of a centralised organization, which could gather all Danes abroad in their common cause to work for in the interest of the liberation of Denmark. One of the most acute aims was to restore the international reputation of Denmark and the Danes remaining there during the war. The lack of resistance put up against the German invasion and the subsequent open collaboration by the Government with its occupiers had shattered the Danish image.

¹²¹ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Bilag til Redegørelse for Minister Kauffmann's Holdning ("Graabog I"), bilag 8, Telegram til Gesandtskaber og udsendte Konsulater i neutrale Lande, 06.05.40

¹²² SA, 3.F.London13.pk.12/1982/0002, Letter from Reventlow to Mrs. B. Grinling, 10.10.41

As demonstrated in Chapter III, IV and V the level of influence exercised by the Danish representatives with regard to the Faroes, Iceland and the United States was to a varying degree dependent upon the attitude of the Foreign Office in London and the State Department in Washington towards the situation in Denmark. In case of Hilbert in Chapter III, the situation in Denmark played quite a central factor to the attitude of the British towards him throughout the occupation. With regard to Fontenay in Iceland, he chose to keep a minimal profile during the occupation and thus did not end up in a situation where the occupiers questioned about their attitude towards him as a representative of a German controlled Government. The situation of Svane, Brun and Kauffmann, again differed slightly from the other in this respect. In the case of Svane and Brun their positions were never questioned by the Americans although their continued allegiances to the King and country were to some degree frowned upon. As for the Danish Legation in Washington and Danish representatives elsewhere the situation in Denmark was very much vital to their scope of operation and especially the prospect of securing Danish interests and the future of Denmark as a part of the allied world after the war. Kauffmann's central role with respect to Greenland, however, put him in a particular position. After his denunciation of the Government in Copenhagen the situation in Denmark did not affect his position as such, but it did to all the Danish subjects, he represented in the United States and he therefore was also anxious to uphold a good picture of Denmark to the U.S. Government and American people.

1. Reputation of Denmark and Danes after the German occupation

Taken into account that common knowledge abroad of a small country like Denmark was limited, critical writings about the situation in Denmark, such as Joachim Joesten's book with the title "Rats in the Larder,"¹²³ were easily taken at face value by the local population. The Danes therefore realised that they needed to put an effort into constantly distancing themselves from the Germans, who controlled their Government. They also needed to escape from the stigma of being a people, who did not put up a fight in order to defend their neutrality but chose to cooperate with the enemy. If they did not do this they would lose any goodwill from the Allies.

¹²³ SA, 8.U.13/1/1964/516, referred to by Kauffmann in a letter to Scavenius, 04.09.40

Kauffmann thus sent out a despatch to the other Danish representatives providing guidelines to be followed when official and unofficial statements were being made about the Danes situation and Denmark and Danish in general. This in order to minimize the chances of any damage being made to the Danish reputation and profile amongst the Allies. The Danish were very worried that they would be classified with the Balkan states “which more or less of their own volition have joined the Axis”¹²⁴

There were incidents, where Danish subjects did feel the brunt of their Government’s decision to collaborate with the Germans. Danish Consul at the Royal Vice-Consulate of Denmark in Philadelphia, P.A. wrote to his colleague, Consul General George Bech, New York, upon discovering that he had been by-passed by the British Consul in Philadelphia. Someone had made a remark that this was perhaps because he was a “persona non grata on account of conditions in Denmark.”¹²⁵

Propaganda could, to some extent help change the view of the Danes and the situation Denmark found herself in. However, as long as Danish representatives abroad did not speak with one voice, this was difficult to achieve. The establishment of an institution to operate as the highest Danish authority abroad, therefore, seemed utmost important.

2. The Danish Council and the “Free Denmark” movement

The two competing institutions for becoming the overriding Danish authority in the absence of a government in exile became the Danish Council in London and the “Free Denmark” movement with Danish Minister in Washington, Kauffmann, at the forefront.

a) Danish Council

The Danish Council in London was established in September 1940 by prominent Danes, who, with the absence of a government in exile, wanted to set up an institution for coordination of all Danish interests. The Council conducted a

¹²⁴ SA, 5.D.8/7/1983/516, Memorandum by Kauffmann, 14.10.41

¹²⁵ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad Blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Danske Udenrigstjenestemænd udenfor Tysk magtområde, letter from L.T. Brehm, Royal Vice-Consulate of Denmark, Philadelphia, P.A., to Consul General George Bech, Esq., New York, 15.01.41

widespread number of activities that would enhance the Danish independence cause during the war. Although it was contemplated by the British that the Council could receive recognition as a Danish Government in exile, these plans were never materialised. This was partly because the Council, with the lack of support from Reventlow, did not have any leadership material during the first two year of its existence.¹²⁶ Another reason was that the British feared that such a recognition would cause a crisis in the relations between London and Washington; a British recognition of the Danish Council as the national authority of all Danes in exile would undermine the authority of the Danish Minister in Washington.¹²⁷

Upon the news of Kauffmann's disassociation with the Government in Copenhagen it was anticipated by the Foreign Office that Kauffmann's next step would be to establish a "Free Denmark" movement in the United States. Such an establishment, the Foreign Office recognised, would become a contender to the Danish Council in London.

On the other hand, the Committee felt that, if it should transpire that M. de Kauffmann's intentions were now to set up a "Free Danish Movement" in the US and that, in this, he had the full backing and support of the U.S. Government, careful consideration would have to be given to the question whether the time had not come for H.M.G. to give a more extended recognition and official support to the Danish Council than it had hitherto received. This would ipso facto involve the "Free Danish Movement" being treated more or less on a par with the "Free French" organisation, in which case all official dealing would thereafter be conducted with the Danish council and it would be necessary to put the question to the Danish Minister whether he supported the "Free Danish Movement" or not. In the event of an unfavourable reply he would logically have to be informed that H.M.G. could no longer have any dealings with him and would cease to afford him any diplomatic immunities or courtesies.¹²⁸

The British worries were, however, calmed by a telegram from their Embassy in Washington stating that "the Minister has not discussed with the State Department anything on the lines of the Danish Council. The State Department

¹²⁶ Christmas Møller, who later became the chairman of the Danish Council, did not arrive in Britain until late 1942

¹²⁷ Hans Kirchhoff, J.T. Lauridsen & A. Trommer ed. Gads leksikon om dansk besættelsestid 1940-45, Gads Forlag, København, 2002, p. 114

¹²⁸ PRO, FO 371/23904, FO Minute by Sir J. Dashwood, "Agreement between United States Government and Danish Minister in Washington regarding Greenland," 15.04.41

feel, as you do, that there is no scope for a Danish equivalent to the Free French movement.”¹²⁹

b) “The Free Denmark” movement

The “Free Denmark” movement had national branches in most countries with a substantial population of Danish nationals or people with Danish ancestries. In some countries the Free Denmark movement was viewed with suspect by onlookers. This was, as we saw in Chapter III, especially the case in the Faroes where Hilbert was reluctant to openly join the movement in fear of the repercussions such a move would have on his position in the Faroes. His reluctance, however, was read by some as a reluctance to take sides, as long as there was no clear indication, who would come out of the war as the victorious.¹³⁰

It was also pointed out by some, that the ambiguous position of the Danish representative abroad resulted in that many Danes were very cautious as to not to make any commitment to the Free Denmark movement, because they were afraid that such a move would not be welcomed by the Government in Copenhagen and therefore would have a negative effect on their future and the prospect of being included in the build up of the country after the war. (translated)¹³¹

In his request to President Roosevelt for a statement on the American support for the freedom fighters in Denmark, Kauffmann also requested that the President should mention “the Danish official representatives in Washington and London as trustees for Danish interests outside Denmark, “working for the liberation of Denmark together with the Free Danish organizations all over the world”.”¹³² Kauffmann pointed out that “he put this in partly to remind the existence of the Danish Council in London and partly to indicate that the Danish Council was not the only such

¹²⁹ PRO, FO 371/23904, FO Minute by Sir J. Dashwood, “Agreement between United States Government and Danish Minister in Washington regarding Greenland,” 15.04.41

¹³⁰ RA, UD/9974/2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, Fra Wendelbo, Tórshavn, til UD, London, 02.09.42

¹³¹ RA, UD/9974/2.23, De ulønte stasjoner: Tórshavn. Bind II, Fra Wendelbo, Tórshavn, til UD, London, 02.09.42

¹³² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum of Conversation by A.A. Berle between him and Kauffmann, 04.09.43

Council in existence.”¹³³ Kauffmann thought that there were larger Danish societies in the United States which were far more entitled to be recognised than the handful of Danish business and shipping men who lived in London¹³⁴ Kauffmann also admitted that “the effect of such a statement would be in part to build up his own position a little, but under the circumstances he thought this was allowable.”¹³⁵ By this remark, Kauffmann meant that his position was being compromised by the Danish Council in London. Although Kauffmann made no mention of it, Berle nevertheless sensed that ” he had in mind the fact that the juniors in the British Foreign Office have indicated a slight tendency to try to take over control of the whole Danish matter by emphasizing the position of Christmas Møller in London.”¹³⁶

Berle noted that the idea of such a statement was not a bad one. He recognised that the American interest in the Danish situation was on par with that of the British, if not larger. This primarily because of Greenland but also their responsibility in connection with their occupation of Iceland. Berle concluded by stating that Kauffmann probably was the strongest Danish figure outside Denmark, and that Berle believed that Kauffmann “would probably be accepted in Denmark as the Dane outside the country best qualified to handle the Danish interests.”¹³⁷

These passages clearly accentuate the argument that the importance of Greenland and Iceland to the Americans made Kauffmann’s position very strong and fortified his ability to influence not only the Americans, but also the British and his fellow Danish representatives elsewhere.

¹³³ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum of Conversation by A.A. Berle between him and Kauffmann, 04.09.43

¹³⁴ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum of Conversation by A.A. Berle between him and Kauffmann, 04.09.43

¹³⁵ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum of Conversation by A.A. Berle between him and Kauffmann, 04.09.43

¹³⁶ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum of Conversation by A.A. Berle between him and Kauffmann, 04.09.43

¹³⁷ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 5366, F.W. 859.00/1068, memorandum of Conversation by A.A. Berle between him and Kauffmann, 04.09.43

2.1 Kauffmann's relations with the other Danish representatives

Because of his early announcement that he disassociated himself from the Government in Copenhagen, thus turning his back on the authority, who had appointed him to his post, Kauffmann was put under much scrutiny by some of his colleagues, who would not compromise their pledges of loyalty to the King and Government.

It can only be contemplated whether Kauffmann had any aspirations to enhance his position, that is, to expand it further than the frames of his diplomatic position allowed him, prior to the war or whether the situation brought that about. Nevertheless, it was noted by Tscherning¹³⁸, amongst others, that once Denmark was occupied, Kauffmann certainly viewed the situation as an opportunity to exceed the parameters of his position as merely a Minister. Blechingberg's allegations that such a change occurred in Kauffmann's objectives after the German occupation of Denmark can to a degree be supported with how Kauffmann himself described the situation in a letter to Svane and Brun a year after Denmark was occupied. In the letter Kaufmann noted that the "occupation certainly put the three of them in a problematic situation, which nevertheless presented them with some extraordinary opportunities, which do not fall into every man's hands."¹³⁹

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, acquiring the authority over the funds derived from the cryolite mine in Ivigtut became an important issue to Kauffmann. With the money from sales of cryolite Kauffmann became the only Danish representative abroad with a considerable economical means. Bo Lidegaard indicates that Kauffmann at one point stepped outside his parameters and began to utilise this profit from the cryolite mine at Ivigtut for other purposes than what they had been designated to, namely Greenland matters.¹⁴⁰ Instead, Kauffmann used the money to the built up a network of Free Denmark movements.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Report 2: Referater om Kauffmannsagen, Referat Nr. 2.d, p. 2

¹³⁹ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad Blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Grønland, Bilag 21 (Letter from Kauffmann to Svane and Brun, 04.03.41)

¹⁴⁰ Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn*, 1999, p. 229

¹⁴¹ Lidegaard, *I Kongens Navn*, 1999, p. 230

The first part of this chapter also demonstrated the importance Kauffmann placed upon the acknowledgment of the State Department of his power and authority. This was not only important in relation to his position *vis a vis* the Greenland Governors and his authority over Greenland affairs, but also towards the community of Danish representatives abroad. The recognition of him by the State Department as a central role with regard to Greenland meant that when Kauffmann's personae and position was contested, for example by the Germans who wanted to replace him with his colleague Blechingberg, the Americans would not succumb to the request. Rather they reinforced the statement that they would continue to recognise Kauffmann as the "authorized Minister of Denmark at Washington."¹⁴²

After the German occupation of Denmark Kauffmann listed the three options open to all Danish representatives abroad: 1) to resign, 2) to continue to take orders from Copenhagen at any rate, or 3) to act to a certain degree on their own, i.e. not necessarily act on order from Copenhagen, but only when they found the orders to work to serve Danish interests at best. Kauffmann then added, that in his case all three options were open to him, and the reason why he chose the option he did, was with regard to the opinion of the American public, which grew more and more unfriendly towards the German cause, and he therefore wanted to avoid being put in the same basket.¹⁴³

Kauffmann wanted to ensure that he had the support of all the other Danish representatives abroad. By achieving this, he would strengthen his position not only during the war but also after. After his dismissal by the Danish Government the issue of whose backing Kauffmann could count on and who disassociated themselves from him reached a conclusion. A final stand was necessary. In order to sway those, who still had not made up their mind, Kauffmann proclaimed that he had the full backing of all Danish representatives in America. Despite knowing that this was not quite true, Kauffmann also knew that as long as he was not dismissed by the State

¹⁴² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1856, 701.5911/356, memorandum of conversation between Blechingberg and Berle, 28.04.41

¹⁴³ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909.45/0002, Kauffmann-Sagen, Referat No. 1, p, 4

Department, everyone probably went along.¹⁴⁴ To the State Department Kauffmann also stated that he had the full backing of all other Danish representatives in the United States¹⁴⁵ although this was not quite the case.

2.3 Kauffmann's opposition amongst the Danish representatives

For the Danish representatives in the Americas the question whether to answer to Kauffmann or Copenhagen became acute after the signing of the Greenland Agreement. Kauffmann stressed to his colleagues that for the future of Danish relations with the United States it was of utmost importance that he could present a note to Hull with the full back-up of his fellow envoys that he should refuse to follow his dismissal order from Copenhagen. He reminded everyone that they had already given him their loyalty a year earlier. Therefore, if there were some who were not ready to follow him in the present standpoint, he would have to inform the State Department of those.¹⁴⁶ There were in particular three Danish representatives in the United States, who openly disagreed with Kauffmann: Blechingberg, Helmut Møller, and Tscherning.

Blechingberg was the Danish Minister in Mexico at the time of the German occupation of Denmark. Upon the request from Kauffmann, he joined the Legation in Washington. Blechingberg, however did not agree to Kauffmann's overall policy.¹⁴⁷ Blechingberg also questioned the 'full back-up' that Kauffmann declared that he had amongst his fellow Danish representatives in the United States. It seemed to him that the question was not

whether the other representatives were willing to continue to take orders from Copenhagen or not, but rather whether they dared to go against Kauffmann, who, according to Blechingberg, to some extent pressurised some of his colleagues to follow him and confirm their loyalty to him as opposed to the Government in Copenhagen.¹⁴⁸

Tscherning was also one of those representatives, who stuck to his loyalty pledge to his King and Government. He was thus surprised to find that Kauffmann was "ready

¹⁴⁴ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad Blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Legationsraadens tjenstlige korrespondance fra 16.4 til 12.7.1941, Telegram from Kauffmann to Copenhagen 25.04.41.

¹⁴⁵ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Report 2: Referater om Kauffmannsagen, p. 31

¹⁴⁶ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Report 2: Referater om Kauffmannsagen, p. 32

¹⁴⁷ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Report 2: Referater om Kauffmannsagen, pp. 28-30

¹⁴⁸ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Report 2: Referater om Kauffmannsagen, p. 28-30

to go outside the normal parameters of a diplomat and take up the position of a politician.”¹⁴⁹

After Blechingberg, Tscherning and Helmuth Møller had openly taken distance from Kauffmann they were dismissed or had to retreat from their posts. Subsequently, they found that they were being monitored, but they did not know for certain by whom. The purpose, they believed, was not only to try to catch them in doing something wrong, but also to intimidate them and others from taking contact. Their guess, however, that Kauffmann along with the State Department was behind this¹⁵⁰ was not far from the truth. Berle had namely requested that the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) should keep “a careful watch on Mr. Einar Blechingberg...and Messrs. Helmuth Ingemann Møller and Adam Tobias Tscherning.”¹⁵¹ This request came following a conversation with Bang-Jensen, who was Kauffmann’s prodigy, where Bang-Jensen said that Tscherning “may be definitely pro-Nazi”¹⁵² Reflecting upon this unpleasant experience Tscherning wrote:

The ever-ready Mr. Berle handled the case personally, and did it in a manner which can only be described as a flagrant violation of international courtesy as well as of plain human decency. It was an insidious campaign to embarrass the three men out of the country without giving them or their Government a chance to discuss things in a sensible manner.....although it was clear beyond doubt that none of them had any German affiliations whatsoever, and that they would, in fact, have acted against the interests of their country if they had established any such contacts, Berle, nevertheless, with the aid of de Kauffmann convinced the State Department that they were Nazis and that, consequently, it was necessary to take all measures to prevent them from fulfilling their sinister plans of sabotage, spying, and other deviltry.....He [Berle] is a master in the art of underhand tricks and coercion.¹⁵³

2.4 Kauffmann versus the Danish contingency in London

While Kauffmann was busy gathering supporters for the Free Denmark movement and the stance against the Government in Copenhagen, Reventlow, to Kauffmann’s

¹⁴⁹ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Report 2: Referater om Kauffmannsagen, Referat Nr. 2.d, p. 2

¹⁵⁰ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Legationsraad Blechingbergs Akter vedr. Minister Kauffmanns Politik: Legationsraadens tjenstlige korrespondance fra 16.4 til 12.7.1941, Letter from Møller, Montclair, N.J. to Blechingberg, 10.06.41

¹⁵¹ NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1856, 701.5911/360A, Berle to Hoover, FBI, 08.05.41

¹⁵² NARA, Decimal File 1940-44, RG 59, Box 1856, 701.5911/361, Department of State, Division of European Affairs Memorandum 01.05.41

¹⁵³ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Vicekonsil Tschernings materiale til ev. Brug for artiklen in den amerikanske presse om Kauffmann., Letter from Tscherning to Mr. Dudley Swim, 09.07.41.

dismay, kept more quiet, and was reluctant to react to any of Kauffmann's queries and encouragements for an official announcement of his allegiance to the Free Denmark movement.

a) Reventlow

Reventlow was, as pointed out in Chapter III, reluctant to follow Kauffmann in announcing himself independent from his Government in Copenhagen. Although it was in the interest both of the Foreign Office and members of the Danish Council in London that Reventlow should do so, his decision was respected. It was accepted that forcing Reventlow would not likely produce the desired result. Also it was acknowledged that "if Count Reventlow were forced into a position where he would have to resign, this would inevitably lead to a most serious split in, and consequent weakening of, the Council itself."¹⁵⁴

In a conversation with Collier shortly after the German occupation Reventlow had expressed that due to his loyalty to his King he could not adopt the same position as Kaufmann, "who had apparently proclaimed himself the representative of "Free Denmark" regardless of the wishes of the King and Government...His Majesty's Government could [however] rest assure that his sympathies were with their cause and that he would never commit, or allow his staff to commit, any act contrary to their interests."¹⁵⁵ Reventlow did not break with Copenhagen till late 1941 following the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact by the Danish Government in November 1941.

It was only after reading a report on Greenland in November 1940, that Reventlow wrote to Kauffmann on the matter. He did not condemn Kauffmann's standpoint, but remarked that

to each separate post to a certain extent special conditions apply. I did not deem it expedient or necessary here to issue any declaration of a political nature. My work has been continued as heretofore – with such alterations in its character and the conditions for its execution as the unhappy events in Denmark have necessitated. According to what Else, who spent the first

¹⁵⁴ PRO, FO 371/23904, FO Minute by Sir J. Dashwood, "Agreement between United States Government and Danish Minister in Washington regarding Greenland," 15.04.41

¹⁵⁵ PRO, FO 371/24784, N 4567/4220/15, memorandum of conversation between Collier and Reventlow by Collier, 16.04.40

fortnight after the occupation in Denmark, has told me this was in accordance with the King's and the Government's wishes.¹⁵⁶

b) Christmas Møller

John Christmas Møller did not arrive in London till 1942. He had thus remained in Denmark after the German invasion and had even held the post as Minister of Trade and Commerce after the arrival of the German occupiers. Møller's aspiration to give the Danish population some insight to aspects of the collaboration so that the Danes would understand the rationale behind the Government's decision to collaborate, was not welcomed by the Germans. Consequently Møller had to leave his post as minister. Over the course of the year he became more and more critical of the Germans and was subsequently pushed out of all other political posts he held. Despite being met by criticism by Danes upon his arrival in London, he nevertheless soon became attached to the Danish Council in London. Since Reventlow refrained from making any public denouncement of the Government in Copenhagen and subsequently declined requests by his fellow Danes in London to take up the post as the Chairman of the Danish Council, the Council was in desperate need of a strong leader to act as a counterpart to the strong position Kauffmann was gaining in the United States. Christmas Møller's arrival in London was thus welcomed and he became the chairman of the Danish Council shortly after.

3. Level of success of the Danish representatives' quest to restore Danish reputation:
Danes comparatively higher in estimate than the Norwegians

During the war members of the Norwegian Royal family frequently visited Roosevelt's summer residence at Hyde Park. While King Haakon and Prince Olav spent most of their time in London with the Norwegian Government in exile, Princess Märtha and her children were sent to the United States to escape the atrocities of war, and most of that time, they were Roosevelt's guests. However, although the Norwegian Royals experienced much hospitality and contributed a great deal to Norway's good image in the United States¹⁵⁷, this goodwill was not reflected in the State Department. Time after time the Norwegians complained that they and

¹⁵⁶ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909-45/0002, Minister Kauffmanns Politik, Legationsraad E. Blechingberg og Fuldmægtig A. Tscherning (1. eks.), p. 79 (letter from Reventlow to Kauffmann, 14.11.40)

¹⁵⁷ SA, 8.U.13/1/1964/516, letter from Kauffmann to Foreign Minister Scavenius, 04.09.40

Norway were overlooked by the United States,¹⁵⁸ especially as compared to the attention and treatment the Danish representatives were given.

There is no doubt that the fact that Greenland was under the authority of the Danish and not the Norwegians played a major role in the level of importance attached to the representatives of the two countries by the Americans. One example of this was when the Kauffmann was allowed to travel from Britain to the United States, while his Norwegian colleague, Morgenstierne, was denied permission.¹⁵⁹ The permission for Kauffmann to travel was given on the grounds that because of Greenland it was important to the Americans to have the Danish Minister, whom they regarded as the rightful representative of the Danish Government, in the United States.¹⁶⁰ Morgenstierne, however, was admitted to travel back to the United States some weeks later, after he had placed a complaint on the matter.¹⁶¹

The Norwegians also felt that it was not correct that the Danish Minister was given the same status as the Norwegians at the Inter-allied meeting in Washington on December 27th 1941 despite the fact that the Danish Government was collaborating with the Germans¹⁶² and thus did not hold the status as an ally, like all other participants of the meeting. The Norwegian representatives in the United States especially found it degrading towards the Norwegians that the Americans did not make any distinctions between the Scandinavian countries, despite their different conducts and experiences during the war.¹⁶³

Another event which augmented the Norwegian sense of partiality shown by the Americans towards the Danes was with regard to the status given to the Danes as compared to that of the Norwegians. When a conference on supplies to the war stricken Europe (which was the forerunner to the UNRRA, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) was about to take place in Washington, Welles

¹⁵⁸ RA, UD/579, 34.1/2a, Memo from T. Lie, UD, London, 05.01.45

¹⁵⁹ RA, UD/10181/15, Diplomaters og konsulers status i fremmede land, Oversettelse La Razon, 31.05.44

¹⁶⁰ RA, UD/10384/25.1, Minute of conversation with Collier, FO, by Lie, 05.05.44

¹⁶¹ RA, UD/10181/15, Minute from meeting with Under Secretary Stettinius by Moregenstierne, Washington, 17.07.44

¹⁶² RA, UD/579, 34.1/2a, Minute from meeting with Mr. Biddle, by Lie, UD, London 31.12.41

¹⁶³ RA, UD/579, 34.1/2a, letter from C.J. Hambro, Princeton; New Jersey to Ambassador Morgenstierne, Washington D.C., 17.08.42

turned to the Norwegians to notify them that it was in the interest of the Americans that Kauffmann was invited along as an observer. Such a move would be of great importance to improve the morale of the freedom fighters in Denmark, Welles believed.¹⁶⁴ The Norwegians, on the other hand, were afraid that showing such little difference in the attitude towards the two people, the Norwegians and the Danes, would have a negative impact on the morale of the freedom fighters in occupied Norway, who had suffered much greater hardship under the Nazis than their neighbours had.¹⁶⁵

C. CONCLUSION

The main question set in this chapter was: How was Kauffmann able to exert the level of influence he did to the extent that he nearly got unconditional support from the State Department as compared to the Greenland Governors?

Apart from examining the relationship between the Americans and the Danish representatives with regard to Greenland, this chapter also examined the power struggle that arose amongst the Danish representatives abroad due to the lack of a Danish Government in exile. One can argue that this power struggle was two-levelled and on both levels Kauffmann was the central person. Whereas the Danish representatives in Iceland and the Faroes had to compete with the natives for power and influence on the occupiers, this chapter shows that in the case of Greenland the contest was amongst the Danes themselves.

While the first part examined the struggle at a lower level, that is, between Kauffmann on the one hand and Governors Svane and Brun on the other, the second part of the chapter examined the struggle at an international level, that is amongst the community of Danish representatives world wide. Both levels had one common power factor that proved to be decisive in both struggles: the authority over Greenland affairs.

¹⁶⁴ RA, UD/10386/25.1, Utenriksministerens samtaler i USA, Minute from conversation with Sumner Welles, State Department, by Lie, 20.04.43

¹⁶⁵ RA, UD/10386-25.1, Utenriksministerens samtaler i USA, Minutes from conversation with Sumner Welles, by Lie, 23.3.43

Before the occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940, the administration of Greenland was run from the central administration, the Greenland Office, in Copenhagen, and carried out by two Governors in Greenland, one in the South and one in the North. Even the smallest actions of the officials in Greenland were circumscribed by regulations, from which departure was not permitted without special authority from Denmark. Greenland was thus a territory guarded and run by a small group of people and it was difficult for others outside the group to have any influence on Greenland matters. This was also demonstrated in Chapter I where criticisms of the lack of will of the Greenland Office to open up the Greenland border to the outside world were introduced to the debate. The following passage from a report by the Canadian consulate in Greenland during the war depicts the circumstances in which Greenland and the two Governors in Greenland found themselves with regard to the governance of Greenland after communications with Copenhagen were severed: "Most of those now in the service grew up during the regime of a Director of the central office in Copenhagen – Daugaard-Jensen – who was something of an autocrat (a Danish "Little Emperor") who did not look kindly on ideas not originating in his own person."¹⁶⁶ The report thus indicated that the Governors were very much bound by what the Greenland Office stipulated. This was, as was evident in this chapter, especially applicable to Governor Svane, who had long served as Governor in South Greenland. Governor Brun on the other hand had just recently arrived in Greenland and turned out to be more independent from the Greenland Office and thus more adjustable once the connection with Copenhagen was severed.

Although the Americans continued to correspond with the Danish Government and kept their Legation in Denmark open until they entered the war, they nevertheless distinguished between the dealings with Copenhagen and those representatives that acted independently from their German controlled home Government.

The chapter showed that the United States Government initially had the policy that all matters relating to Greenland should be dealt with by the Governors in Greenland. Kauffmann, however, had a close relationship with Berle, who saw the interest of

¹⁶⁶ PRO, FO 371/47273, Report from the Canadian Consulate Greenland, Godthaab, 12.04.45

U.S. further involvement in the war being served by granting Kauffmann more authority over Greenland.

The difference between Kauffmann and the Greenland Governors was that whereas the latter two never wavered from their loyalty to the King and country, Kauffmann saw it serving his and Danish interest best that he broke off with the German controlled Government in Copenhagen and declared himself independent. As regards Greenland the three of them also had different ideas as to what would be the best policy. Whereas the Governors put much importance into securing the best conditions for the island and its inhabitants, Kauffmann merely saw Greenland as a means to acquire influence and power. This was particularly evident in the case of the signing of the Greenland Agreement. As the discussion in the chapter shows, the Agreement lacked a great deal, both legally and with regard to aspects relating to the future of Greenland.

The chapter showed that the American willingness to continue to recognise Kauffmann as a representative of Denmark was very much connected with the American strategic interest in Greenland. From early on Kauffmann and Berle recognised the mutual need for each other in their pursuit for separate goals. Berle's goal was American involvement in Greenland, which would inevitably mean further involvement in the war. Kauffmann's goal was to gain influence over the Americans and secure their support in his quest to safeguard Danish interests in the United States and the future role of Denmark in the post-war world.

Since American Consul Penfield quickly had formed a disapproving opinion of the two Greenland Governors, and the State Department was repeatedly given the similar impression from Kauffmann, the Greenland Governors soon found it difficult to acquire any influence of such on the Americans. Kauffmann's and Berle's similar views with regard to the role of Greenland during the war, as opposed to that of the Greenland Governors, did not improve the chances of the Governors in gaining any influence to their advantage. Realising the importance of Greenland in acquiring influence, Kauffmann convinced the Americans that the Governors should only have the powers over internal matters in Greenland bestowed upon them, whereas the rest

should fall within his authority, despite the Americans initially recognising the full power and authority of the Governors in matters relating to Greenland.

Kauffmann's move to declare himself as independent from the German controlled Danish Government and the subsequent taking in charge the affairs of Greenland has been described as a personal move from being an official to becoming a politician.¹⁶⁷

As was demonstrated in this chapter, there were some who questioned the motives behind Kauffmann's deeds and it was speculated whether he was using his position during the war to secure himself a role in the building up of a liberated Denmark. Kauffmann was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Government after the liberation of Denmark. The appointment was not received with universal approval in Denmark. This reservation towards Kauffmann was not so much due to his activities during the war, but rather due to the fact that he had been away for the past 20 years and the fact that he was a diplomat by trade and not a politician.¹⁶⁸

Kauffmann's denunciation of the Government in Copenhagen and the subsequent central role he gained in relations to the U.S. Government following the signing of the Greenland Agreement also helped his quest to become the highest Danish authority outside Denmark. Helped by the mutual interest the State Department supported him to get established in that role in opposition to the Danish Council in London, which was backed by the British Government.

The authority over Greenland and its affairs thus proved to be central to the level of influence Kauffmann was able to exert on the Americans. It not only helped him to become the highest Danish authority abroad, but it also helped him in securing Danish interests, which was the main task of the Danish representatives while their Government and country was occupied by the Germans. Thus, by the end of the war, it was noted by the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Lie, that during the war Kauffmann

¹⁶⁷ SA, 84.B.2.a/1909.45/0002, Kauffmann-Sagen, Referat No. 1, p. 1

¹⁶⁸ RA, UD/10465 Danmark Bind II-III, Memorandum by Per Johansen, Norwegian Legation in Stockholm, 04.01.44

had “succeeded in securing himself a strong position by the help of the Americans, who perceived him as sort of a ‘Danish *de facto* government’”.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ RA, UD/10384/25.1, Minute of conversation with Collier, FO, by Lie, 05.05.44

CONCLUSION

The thesis set out to examine U.S. and British policies towards the Danish North Atlantic territories during Second World War and the extent to which the Danish representatives were able to influence these policies.

The thesis shows that although representing a government collaborating with the enemy the Danish representatives were to a large extent able to exert influence on the respective occupying power or host government to the extent that they to a varying degree were successful in securing Danish interests in the North Atlantic territories and the position of Denmark as part of the allied world in the post-war period.

The thesis demonstrates, that although the Danish representatives in charge of the North Atlantic Territories found themselves in a similar problematic situation, as their communications with the Government in Copenhagen were cut off, their roles in the respective territories were quite dissimilar due to the different prerequisites attached to the situation of the territories during the duration of the Second World War: Firstly, the different constitutional status of each territory; secondly the level of strategic importance attached to each territory by the occupiers, and thirdly the difference in personality of the Danish representatives.

The common objective of all Danish representatives was to secure Danish interests and maintain status quo in the North Atlantic territories and elsewhere while their Government was occupied. With regard to the different level of status within the Danish Kingdom, that is, the different level of independence, ranging from home-rule governed semi-autonomous Iceland to the colony of Greenland, the thesis showed that this aspect reflected the various levels of competition for influence in each territory. In the Faroes, then a Danish county with a parliament acting as an advisory body to the Governor, the Danish Governor faced fierce competition from members of the Faroese independence movement. In the case of colonised Greenland the Danish representatives did not experience competence from the natives, but were rather competing amongst themselves for the authority over Greenland. In Iceland, on the other hand, where the Icelandic Government had taken over the authority over all her affairs, the Danish representative sensed that nothing was to gain from

challenging the Icelandic rule and therefore remained passive, as this would serve the Danish cause the best.

The thesis also demonstrated that the different level of strategic importance paid by the Allies to the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland affected the level of interest and involvement of the Allies in internal affairs of the respective territories. As we saw in Chapter III the lack of strategic importance paid by the British to the Faroes was not only reflected by the choice of diplomatic envoy to the islands but also by the decision to decline the request of the Admiralty to have an aerodrome built in the islands in the early stages of war. An additional factor, which most probably played a role in the limited strategic importance of the Faroes, was the lack of interest shown by the Americans to the islands. Subsequently, the occupation of the Faroes only became a matter of guarding the islands from a German occupation, which would have placed the British islands in immediate danger. What happened internally in the Faroes would, therefore, not jeopardise the overall strategy of the British in the North Atlantic. There was therefore never any serious need of the British to take a stance or get involved in the internal struggle between the Governor and the Home Rulers and the support shown to either side very much depended upon the change of attitude of the British themselves.

With an aerodrome built in the island and the U.S. interest in a guarded Iceland coinciding with the debate in the U.S. on whether or not Iceland was to be included in the Western Hemisphere, the strategic importance of Iceland was remarkably higher than that of the Faroes. The strong indications of a post-war independent Iceland also increased the interest of the future strategic importance of Iceland amongst the Allies. There was therefore an interest amongst the Allies to be as forthcoming and accommodating to the Icelanders as possible.

The strategic importance of Greenland to the U.S. and consequently to the Danes and their situation in the Allied World during and after the war was not lost neither to the Americans nor the Danish representative in Washington. The strategic importance of Greenland therefore placed the representative with the most authority over the island in a very favourable situation vis-à-vis the United States.

The level of strategic importance attached to Greenland also helped strengthening the position of the Danish Minister in Washington vis-à-vis his colleagues in the power struggle to become the most acknowledged Danish authority abroad in the absence of a government in exile.

As we saw in the chapters on each of the three territories, the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland, the level of activity of the representative varied. In addition to the already mentioned factors such as the level of independence of each territory, the level of strategic importance and external interest in the territory, the level of influence exercised by each respective representative was also down to how he personally perceived his role and aim and the policy he applied in achieving that aim.

In order to address the hypothesis two questions had to be asked. The first one was: How were the Danish representatives in the North Atlantic territories, London and Washington DC able to exert influence on the British and Americans in their policies towards the North Atlantic territories when they were representing a Government, which was under the influence of the enemy? The second question was: What were their actions and policies in achieving this?

In order to address these questions the scene had to be set first. Thus, in chapter I and II the reader was introduced to the historical background of the relationship between Denmark and the North Atlantic Territories, and British and American relations to the Danish Kingdom, including her territories, in the period up to the German occupation of Denmark on April 9th 1940. This gave the reader an understanding of the prerequisites for the representative's role in each respective territory. Chapter I also introduced the reader to the historical background of the Danish decision to stay neutral in the first place and why the Danish Government then decided to collaborate with the German occupiers. Decisions, which would have a bearing to the attitude of the host territory's occupying forces towards the Danish representatives.

In chapter III we were introduced to the main actors with regard to the British occupation of the Faroes, Governor Hilbert, Danish Minister in London Reventlow, Consul Mason, and Thorstein Petersen of the People's Party. The chapter saw an

intense struggle for influence between Hilbert on the one side and Petersen and his colleagues of the People's Party and at the Norwegian Consulate on the other side.

Upon arrival in the Faroes the British occupying forces and newly appointed Consul Mason issued a loosely worded declaration, stating that the British would not interfere with internal matters. The reason why the declaration was so vaguely worded was because of the situation in Denmark immediately after the German occupation and the ambiguous attitude the Danish Government was applying to the Germans. The vague declaration and the fact that Consul Mason was young and inexperienced allowed room for influence on the British policies towards the Faroes. Governor Hilbert quickly acknowledged this and struck up a close relationship with the young British Consul. Hilbert and Reventlow also recognised the opportunity to influence the British through their communications with one another which they knew would be checked by the British due to the censorship that accompanied war-time. Hilbert was therefore able to exert a great level of influence in concert with Reventlow. Hilbert also exerted some degree of influence on the Commander-in-Chief of the occupying forces on the island. The British headquarter was in the capital, which was very small area and population wise, and therefore fraternisation between those in power was frequent. Hilbert was renowned for keeping a tight circle of people of importance around him, and that included both Mason and the Commander-in-Chief.

The fact that Hilbert's success in influencing British policies towards the Faroes was due to his impact upon Consul Mason became evident in two cases. Firstly, when Mason left the islands, and secondly when new forces arrived in the Faroes in connection with the building of the aerodrome. This meant that London began receiving information and reports from staff elsewhere in the Faroes, upon whom Hilbert did not exercise any influence. Consequently the picture and attitude in London towards Hilbert changed.

The role of the Danish Minister in Iceland, Fontenay, was quite dissimilar to that of Hilbert. Because Iceland had declared herself in charge of her foreign affairs following the German occupation of Denmark, Fontenay's role in Iceland was very limited compared to that of Hilbert in the Faroe Islands. Fontenay's limited role was also due to his personal stance on the situation he found himself in. Unlike Hilbert,

who very actively tried to influence the British in order to secure Danish interests in the Faroes, Fontenay reasoned that based on the constitutional situation of Iceland within the Danish Kingdom at the outbreak of war, it was inevitable that she would leave the Union before the war was over. Rather than fight against the inevitable, Fontenay reasoned that he would serve Danish future interests in Iceland best by keeping a low profile and not create a scene, which could generate ill feeling amongst the Icelanders towards Denmark. The exception was when the Icelanders planned to leave the Union with Denmark prematurely. In this matter Fontenay believed that such a step by the Icelandic Government would harm Danish-Icelandic relations and he therefore took action. Together with Reventlow in London, Fontenay succeeded in influencing the British and Americans by pointing out the unfortunate repercussions an early Icelandic departure would have on the British and U.S. reputation and on the conduct of occupation in the other Danish territories. Fontenay's warnings struck a chord to such an extent that the Icelanders, on request from the British and Americans, postponed their plans to leave the Union prematurely.

Although Hilbert and Reventlow enjoyed great success in influencing the British with regard to their policies towards the Faroes, it was the Danish Minister in Washington, Kauffmann, who became the strongest player of all the Danish representatives. His level of influence, both on the Americans and his colleagues, was very much strengthened by the fact that the Americans placed so much importance on Greenland. He was subsequently shown much goodwill by the State Department and that had a great bearing on the force of his actions. His counterparts were the Greenland Governors, Svane and Brun, who with their reluctance to depart from their loyalty to the King, restricted themselves and their opportunities to use their authority over Greenland to influence the Americans. Thus, when Kauffmann declared himself independent of the German controlled Government in Copenhagen he created a possibility for the Americans to recognise him as the acting Danish authority in the absence of a free operating Danish Government. The subsequent signing by Kauffmann of the Greenland Agreement provided him with a great level of American support and influence on the State Department to the extent that he was able to secure Danish interests in the United States and the future position of Denmark in the post-war era; a position, which otherwise because of the German

collaboration of the Danish Government, was bleak at one point during the war. Exercising this level of influence on the Americans made it easy for Kauffmann to have the power and authority over the more important Greenland matters conferred to him rather than the Greenland Governors, where these powers originally lay. With the support of the State Department Kauffmann was also able to establish himself as the counterpart to the Danish Council in London, which aspired to take up the role as Danish Government in exile.

Thus, despite representing a Government, which collaborated with the enemy, Danish representatives were to a great extent, due to their resources and innovations, able to influence the allied policies towards the North Atlantic and other Danish interests during the war. This became especially evident when comparing to the level of influence their Norwegian neighbours, who had fought against the Germans and therefore had achieved more sympathy for their causes from the Allies than the Danes had.

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