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The History of the Icelandic Communist Party with special reference to its relations with the Comintern

1. Introduction

National development in a national setting is to some extent an integral part of the international trend. This paper is divided into three parts. The first part looks at the Icelandic Communist movement during the Comintern's existence and the second part gives an overview of the present state of research. The third part summarizes the analysis and indicates what must still be done to clarify peculiarities and which fields are yet to be explored. Two things will strike the reader immediately. Firstly, that the Icelandic Communist Party (*Kommúnistaflokkur Íslands*; KFÍ) was not founded until late in the year 1930. Secondly, that the leadership of the party decided to dissolve the party as early as 1938, despite increasing support within the trade-union movement and in the general elections. What were the reasons for these extraordinary steps and what role did the Comintern play during the period? The period from 1938 onwards of the United Socialist Party (*Sózialistaflokkurinn-Sameiningarflokkur alþýðu*), which was a merger of the KFÍ and a splinter group from the (social democratic) Labour Party, is not covered in this article.

I would like to emphasize the methodological need of examining in a more "dialectical manner" the relations between the central bodies of the Comintern and those of the national parties. The tendency in research and in particular in the media has been to see Comintern "dictates" as one-sided commands given without suggestions from and approval by the leaders of the national parties. Even slight nuances, added together, might change the overall picture of the Comintern.

It is beyond shadow of doubt that some nations were more important than others for the revolutionary movement and to the Soviet Union as the first socialist state. One might therefore assume that Iceland was of peripheral importance - given its geopolitical position in the North-Atlantic, small population (around 110,000 inhabitants in 1930) and socio-economic structure; an enclave economy, due to the importance of fishing and fish processing for its exports. But even so, some pattern might be revealed when examining the cases where the relationship was on a small scale - perhaps even "routine" in the Comintern's organizational procedure when compared with how it dealt with countries it considered more important.

2. Available Sources and Research

The archival situation concerning the KFÍ and the Labour Party is fairly good, although much still remains in private hands and is difficult of access. This author has been able to go through the minutes of many local KFÍ sections but, despite requests, not through Central Committee sources. Comintern documents dealing with the Icelandic question are in Moscow. Inquiries about the archives in 1988 had negative results - in a letter the Institute for Marxism-Leninism claimed that the archives were not there at all. This is incorrect as has since transpired. Another attempt, accompanied by the correct permits, might provide access to these documents. Therefore this report is a preliminary one, that may later have to be reinforced by Comintern data.

Most of the Icelandic Communists have contributed to the book market with their memoirs, notably Einar Olgeirsson, who is believed to have influenced a generation of Socialists by his talented interpretative ability. He had almost a monopoly in the historical interpretation of the left-wing movements (including the Social Democrats). On the other hand the Social Democrats have been reluctant to tell their side of the story or have not been able to write it uninfluenced by Einar Olgeirsson's version.¹

Surprisingly the Comintern's mouthpieces, *The Communist International*, *Rundschau* and *Inprecorr* have been used only sporadically in Icelandic research. The present author discovered the lack of material in Jane Degras' fine edition of Comintern documents² when it comes to small countries like Iceland. Therefore many

¹ See his writings throughout the magazine *Réttur* (from the year 1924 to today) and Einar Olgeirsson, *Kraftaverk einnar kynslóðar. Jón Guðnason skráði* (Reykjavík, 1983).

² Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents*, 3 vols. (London, 1956-1965).

points that could have illuminated Iceland's participation in international matters have been unavailable to Icelandic scholars who limited their use of sources to Degras' edition.

Almost no other topic in modern Icelandic research has been so popular as Communism. Historiographically speaking this interest had its roots in the upswing of the era of the '68-generation and the broadening of academic studies at university. Many of the works were not advanced studies but nevertheless contributed to our knowledge of Communism in Iceland.³ In the Western hemisphere little attention was paid to politics by scholars studying social history; in contrast Icelandic research had concentrated on politics at the expense of social history.

The first work on Communism in Iceland, however, dates from before this boom occurred. I will mention three works on Communists which are of particular interest.

Arnór Hannibalsson, born 1934, is today a professor of philosophy. He published two books on our subject in 1963 and in 1964.⁴ The first contained essays about Soviet society in general; the second was about Communism and the left-wing movement in Iceland. Arnór Hannibalsson's background is important. After his undergraduate time in Reykjavik, in 1954 transferred to Moscow university, where he studied philosophy and psychology and took his degree in 1959. He went on to post-graduate studies at the universities in Krakow and Warsaw (1959-1960). Hannibalsson became a convinced anti-Stalinist and saw it as his mission to inform the Icelandic public about the flaws in the Soviet system and, in addition, to criticize the strong ideological sentiments felt in Iceland by the proponents of the left. His thesis was that the worship of Lenin and Stalin had replaced the worship of the 13th-century Icelandic saga heroes. Because his books were not accepted by the influential publisher *Mál & Menning*, controlled by those same "worshippers", he wrote that their aim was rather to deceive, than to achieve knowledge. The minister of education, a Social Democrat, was also against supporting his research, according to Arnór Hannibalsson's preface. Needless to say his book on Communism in Iceland is not a historical work, as he himself points out in the preface,⁵ but a biased polemic investigation of some political ideas in Icelandic society.

His main thesis was that Icelandic Communists believed blindly in the construction of socialist society in the Soviet Union. The course they wanted to adopt for Iceland was both naive and destructively simple: it should voluntarily become a Soviet republic and the bulk of its exports and imports should be dealt with by the Soviet Union. The revolution and evolution debate which Einar Olgeirsson (a Communist) and Jónas Jónsson (an ideological leader and Progressive Party minister) started in the thirties was not described in a very academic way by Hannibalsson. Instead of reasoning, he makes many value-judgements and presents Einar Olgeirsson's criticism of Jónas Jónsson as a Fascist, or Mussolini-like, as if it were his alone, when in fact it was a widely-used label for him in Icelandic politics, from both the right and the left.

Arnór Hannibalsson compares the leaders of the KFÍ to Jesuits in the days of the Inquisition. Brynjólfur Bjarnason, the chairman of the KFÍ, was the high priest.⁶ The KFÍ was a sect and should accordingly be analyzed as such.⁷ The party leaders were guardians and sole keepers of the truth and each member had to believe in their sayings and execute the party line without hesitation.⁸ The period of "Social Fascism" was treated a-historically. Arnór Hannibalsson had the bad habit of using quotations from the wrong period. According to him, the Comintern's sharp turn to the left in 1928 was much welcomed by Icelandic leaders, especially by Brynjólfur Bjarnason. To show that this was the case he quoted Brynjólfur Bjarnason's words from

³ See, for example, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, *Vinstri andstaðan í Alþýðuflokknum 1926-1930* (Reykjavik, 1979), who studies the opposition within the Labour Party from 1926 to 1930. She had access to the minutes of Sparta, an association mentioned later in this article.

⁴ Arnór Hannibalsson, *Valdið og þjóðin* (Reykjavik, 1963); id., *Kommúnismi og vinstri hreyfing* (Reykjavik, 1964).

⁵ Arnór Hannibalsson, *Kommúnismi og vinstri hreyfing*, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-79.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Verklýðsblaðið.⁹ The problem is that these words were said in 1933 at a special political conjuncture in the history of the Comintern and KFI.¹⁰ Arnór Hannibalsson did take into account the changed policy of the CPSU in 1933 when the party again renewed its Bolshevization course, increasing its need to wipe out all elements which did not accept its hard line.¹¹

It can be said that Arnór Hannibalsson emphasizes the monolithic world view of the KFI and, for that matter, of the succeeding party. They were blind and regarded the Comintern as a World Communist Party, not as an organ dedicated to the interests of the Soviet state, in a world divided between rival power blocs.

Arnór Hannibalsson's main sources were *Verklýðsblaðið* and *Réttur*. He did not look at the way Communists actually worked inside the trade unions. The formal organization structure and tasks were described, but without empirical backing.

In 1979 a book was published by the historian Þór Whitehead.¹² Whitehead is today a professor of history at the University of Iceland. The book was originally part of his BA history thesis and was slightly amended before being printed. The topic was the development of a Communist movement in Iceland in 1921-1934.

Whitehead relies on the same printed sources as Arnór Hannibalsson but uses interviews and other articles which were not available at the time of the latter's books. Whitehead, in my view, gives a fairly reasonable account of the structure of the party, its dependent organizations and electoral base. His account of international contacts and trade-union activities is typical of a BA-thesis.

Whitehead looks at the formal structure of decision-making and, like Arnór Hannibalsson, comes to the conclusion that the power hierarchy of the Comintern and its sections explain every step taken. Therefore, in his book *Communists* "take orders" and "receive new lines" and so forth, which may well be true in most cases, but is treated as almost axiomatic. The concept of the state in Marxism and Leninism is misunderstood and sometimes this leads the writer to come to conclusions that would otherwise have been different.¹³ He covers the struggle between the Communists and the Social Democrats over the trade unions. He points out that the former's position was stronger than their electoral results implied.

The third scholar is Svanur Kristjánsson, who today is a professor of political science. In a forty-page-long article written in 1984¹⁴ he gives a balanced account of the Communists based on earlier research by himself and others, seeking both endogenous and exogenous variables to answer the big question: what made their work gain ground?

Svanur Kristjánsson's answer lies in the performance of the leadership in a milieu where advanced industrialism was not on hand but in the process of developing. In Iceland, work was seasonal, division of labour was not vastly developed and many tasks awaited immediate solution.¹⁵ Svanur Kristjánsson's key word is 'pragmatic'. The Communists were pragmatic and that paid off in the eyes of trade-union members and many others. It was the circumstances themselves that made the party adapt itself, rather than the party programme or ideology that enabled the party by good fortune to avoid all dangerous obstacles. Svanur Kristjánsson did not say that the Comintern played no part in this; on the contrary he comes to the conclusion that the path laid down by the Comintern was clearly visible in Iceland. Conditions in Iceland made some of the programmes futile, like, for instance, the creation of cells at working places. There were few big factories in Iceland and consequently

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67s.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹ See the renewed emphasis of the Comintern in 1933 on matters of discipline and on the criticism of Social Democrats. O. Bever, "Party discipline in the light of the decisions of the XII. plenum of the E.C.C.I.", *The Communist International*, 1 February 1933.

¹² Þór Whitehead, *Kommúnistahreyfingin á Íslandi 1921-1934* (Reykjavík, 1979).

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 58s.

¹⁴ Svanur Kristjánsson, "Kommúnistahreyfingin á Íslandi. Þjóðlegir verklýðssinnar eða handbendi Stalíns?", *Saga*, XXII (1984), pp. 201-241.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 229s.

Communist workers established, at most, quarter cells.

Some of the shortcomings of the works referred to above are natural, due to the limited availability of sources and also the time when they were written. They are all stimulating and would have benefited from better access to sources and from wider comparisons.

3. *The Evolution of a Democratic Labour Party*

The Icelandic working class organized itself into a political party a year before the Russian Revolution took place. The ideology of the working-class movement was reformist right from the start. *The Icelandic Federation of Labour* (IFL or Labour Party) was founded on 12 March 1916 by seven trade unions and this organisation constituted at the same time a leftist political party. The (federal) organizational structure of the British Labour Party can be seen as its precedent and prototype. Collective affiliation made the party grow when membership of the affiliated trade unions increased. Domestic politics based on conflicting class interests began to constitute the main issue after the national question of gaining independence from Denmark was no longer the main point on the agenda. That matter was all but solved in 1918 and Iceland did not become an independent republic until 1944. The party copied the programme of the Danish Social Democratic Party, a mixture of socio-liberal ideology and pragmatic socialism. After the Communist Party was founded in 1930, it accused the Icelandic bourgeoisie of deception: as to "the national question of complete independence, they flirt with the Danish bourgeoisie and royalty".¹⁶ This showed the pride Communists took in the national question.

The task of the working-class movement during the twenties was immense: a) to gain seats in town councils and in Parliament, b) to organize the labouring classes in trade unions.

The Labour Party leaders had good relations with Denmark. Many of them had received their education in Copenhagen and had participated in trade-union activities there. One of them was Ólafur Friðriksson. A charismatic character, he was the editor of a socialist weekly. Friðriksson had attended the Eighth Congress of the Second International in Copenhagen in 1910.¹⁷ Things changed when young Icelandic students who had experienced the political turbulence in Germany entered Iceland's political scene at the beginning of the twenties. A hard core of Marxist-Leninists started to debate in the *Socialist Association of Reykjavik* and began to question the social-democratic policy of the party. They put their trust in the older and more experienced Ólafur Friðriksson, but he was not easily persuaded, although he was all ears, eager to keep track of events in Russia and even to go to the Third and Fourth International Congresses, in 1921 and 1922. He was, however, not very prone to esoteric intellectual reasoning, and soon it became clear that he was a "national" Communist in the manner of Martin Tranmæl in Norway. A combination of radical rhetoric and an international perspective overlaid his prime interest in the development of Icelandic society, as can be seen by reading his newspaper columns. However, the Danish Social Democrats began to doubt, in the years 1922-1923, whether the Icelandic Labour Party was following solely reformist lines. The reason was that Ólafur Friðriksson had actually gone to the Soviet-Union in 1921 and again the year after, giving interviews in Denmark that did not disperse the Communist shimmer around him, and he travelled with the Danish Communist representatives to the Comintern Congress.

The winter of 1920-1921 has been labelled the Red Season in Icelandic left-wing politics.¹⁸ It was the time when the first Labour Party candidate was elected to parliament, the first book inspired by Marxism-Leninism was published¹⁹ and new international channels of socialism opened up. Hendrik Ottósson and Brynjólfur Bjarnason went to the Soviet Union in July 1920.²⁰ They went as individuals, not on behalf of

¹⁶ An address to the Icelandic working class from the KFÍ, 15 January 1931, Andrés Straumland's collection, kept at the labour movement's archives in Reykjavik.

¹⁷ See Ólafur Friðriksson's report (1910), reprinted in *Réttur*, 1977, pp. 38-41.

¹⁸ Einar Olgeirsson, "Kommúnistaávarpið 1924. Og um alþjóðatengsl íslenskra kommúnista um þærmundir", *Réttur*, 1977, pp. 42-50.

¹⁹ Stefán Pétursson, *Byltingin í Rússlandi* (Reykjavik, 1921).

²⁰ Brynjólfur Bjarnason, *Saga Kommúnistaflokks Íslands* (Reykjavik, 1938).

any organization. The effect of their attending the Comintern's Second Congress soon became apparent. Brynjólfur Bjarnason was then studying in Copenhagen and Hendrik Ottósson was writing articles, mainly on international socialist politics, in *Alþýðublaðið*, where he was a journalist.

The first step towards division within the socialist movement began in 1921. The question that the *Socialist Association of Reykjavik* had to address was whether to send a representative to the Third Comintern Congress.²¹ The year before, as mentioned above, two Icelanders had gone to Moscow. Hendrik Ottósson later wrote several books of memoirs (in 1948, 1951 and 1962).²² He was a student, son of the first chairman of the Labour Party, and multi-lingual, speaking Danish, German, English, French and a few other languages (including Slavonic ones). His conclusions about events and their interpretation seem, on the whole, to be quite accurate, if allowance is made for his political bias. He said that he had talked with Jón Baldvinsson, the Labour Party's chairman (1916-1938), about the idea of accepting the invitation to attend the Second Comintern Congress. The chairman told him that he could undertake the journey, but not as an *Alþýðublaðið* journalist. Frederick Borgbjerg, the Danish editor of the newspaper *Social-Demokraten*, would probably disapprove, and the Danes were helping the party. Jón Baldvinsson gave Hendrik Ottósson some money for travelling expenses. In Stockholm Hendrik Ottósson was to meet Fredrik Ström, who had wired an invitation to the Comintern Congress. In Copenhagen Hendrik Ottósson met Litvinov and in Oslo he and Brynjólfur Bjarnason had discussions with Tranmæl, who helped them to make a safe journey through Norway and into the Soviet Union.²³

In December 1924 the Danish Social Democrats put questions to Baldvinsson concerning Ólafur Friðriksson's role within the party, since he was a candidate in the coming parliamentary elections and held the post of party spokesman. To the Danes this question was important because the Icelandic party had asked for economic assistance in building up its political activities, i.e. the newspaper. They could not afford to lend a party money that allowed Communists to stand for election.²⁴ The Icelandic Social Democrats gave straight answers, stating that the party was a democratic socialist party, which controlled the party apparatus, while the Bolsheviks were a minority in the party and their actual number was small. Ólafur Friðriksson, they assured the Danes in January 1925, was a "National-Communist", a label intended to prove that the Labour Party was in no way likely to follow a Bolshevik pattern or be liable to fulfil Bolshevik obligations.²⁵

The Council of the IFL came to an agreement in 1922 about Communist and Social Democrat co-existence. The party would stay outside the Internationals and members would not attack each other in public. By then four out of the nine members were believed to be Communists, but that number includes Ólafur Friðriksson. Two years later, after the party congress in 1924, the Council was controlled solely by the Social Democrats and they felt more sure of having the organizational power in their hands; the pact signed two years before was then just a piece of paper.

It is quite obvious that Jón Baldvinsson knew early of the rift between Communists and Social Democrats on the international scene. Consequently he wanted to avoid this problem in Iceland and protect the Labour Party from dealing with the affiliation issue: whether or not to join the Internationals. Hendrik Ottósson wanted, in 1922, to send Ólafur Friðriksson as a *Socialist Association of Reykjavik* delegate to the Comintern Congress to be held in November; not only that but also to send a telegram to the Comintern declaring the

²¹ Ólafur R. Einarsson, "Tjórnmálaágreiningur innan verkalýðreyfingarinnar 1916-1930" (stencil, 1975), has utilized the protocols of the above-mentioned *Association*.

²² Hendrik Ottósson, *Frá Hliðarhúsum til Bjarmalands* (Reykjavik, 1979; 1st edition 1948); id., *Vegamót og vopnagnýr* (Reykjavik, 1951); id., *Hvíta stríðið* (Reykjavik, 1980; 1st edition 1962).

²³ Hendrik Ottósson, *Frá Hliðarhúsum til Bjarmalands*, pp. 189-232.

²⁴ See Þorleifur Friðriksson, "Economic Assistance from the Nordic Social Democratic Parties to Icelandic Social Democracy, 1918-1939: Internationalism or Manipulation?", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, No. 2/3.

²⁵ Stefán F. Hjartarson, *Kampen om fackföreningsrörelsen. Ideologi och politisk aktivitet på Island 1920-1938* (Uppsala, 1989), pp. 72 (n. 34), 73, 253.

Association's complete solidarity with Comintern policy.²⁶

Trouble now ensued. This arose sooner than either Ólafur Friðriksson or Jón Baldvinsson had expected. Hendrik Ottósson put forward the proposal at a meeting of the Reykjavik Association. Jón Baldvinsson left the meeting with more than twenty other Social Democrats and formed a new association. To him the political line was clear-cut: the Third International was of no value to the Icelandic movement. Friðriksson stayed in the *Socialist Association of Reykjavik* and, despite the dispute, went to the Fourth Comintern Congress in Moscow.

4. The Formation of the Communist Party of Iceland

a) Early Comintern Contacts

Although some aspects of the first organized contacts between Icelandic Communists and the Comintern may seem obscure, there is a fairly clear picture of how the Comintern got involved with Iceland. The participation of Icelandic activists in Comintern Congresses has been mentioned. Now we look at the agents the Comintern actually sent to Iceland in order to increase the work of the Communist opposition within the Labour Party.

The Comintern decided to send a delegate to Iceland in 1924. This was the Norwegian Olaf Vegheim, who was to organize an effective Communist opposition. Vegheim came to Iceland in November and managed to establish a *Cultural Association of Communists* (Fræðslufélag kommúnista) with thirty-four members. For tactical reasons Ólafur Friðriksson was retained as a member of its council. The *Cultural Association* decided that Communists would form a faction within every trade union. This was completely in line with the Comintern resolution described below. Ólafur Friðriksson was against it, because he thought the idea was wrong and futile. This led ultimately to the end of the *Cultural Association*.²⁷

A resolution about Iceland was taken at the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924, which Brynjólfur Bjarnason attended. In 1930 he became the KFI's first and - as things turned out - only chairman. Besides the strategic plan of factions within the trade unions they discussed preparations for founding a Communist Party and establishing contact with the Scandinavian Federation of Communist Parties (an organization mediating the Comintern and its sections, founded in January 1924).²⁸ "Making" a Communist Party could mean that the Labour Party would be changed into a Communist Party from inside.

The *Scandinavian Youth Association* was founded some weeks after the Scandinavian Federation and this generated the formation of an *Icelandic Communist Youth Association* (FUK), a section of the Comintern. Iceland was seen as one of the Scandinavian countries, or, as one can read in the Profintern's resolution for Scandinavia in 1924, "Iceland also belongs to these countries".²⁹ The significance of this was that the Icelandic Communist movement had already established close contact with the international revolutionary organization and operated as a part of it, despite the lack of a formal Communist Party. They started publishing a periodical *Rauði fjáninn* heavily criticizing the Social Democrats and carrying propaganda in favour of the Soviet Union.

The Third Profintern Congress in July 1924 came to the conclusion that the revolutionary movement in Scandinavia should intensify its opposition work within the reformist organizations. Denmark and Iceland were grouped together, because there the Bolsheviks were weaker than the reformists: "In Denmark and in Iceland, where the organizations of the revolutionary proletariat, compared to the reformist ones, are weak and insufficiently structured most of the measures valid for the rest of Scandinavia can be equally applied. Without delay, the revolutionary proletariat has to put every effort into founding and building up a revolutionary opposition within the reformist unions. Following the Swedish pattern, it must develop an activity that is directed against the reformist leaders in a more systematic and lively manner. The R.I.L.U. and its revolutionary activity

²⁶ Ólafur R. Einarsson, "Stjórnmálaágreiðingur innan verkalyðshreyfingarinnar 1916-1930".

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ About the Scandinavian Federation see Erland F. Josephson, *SKP och Komintern 1921-1924* (Uppsala, 1976), pp. 323-334.

²⁹ "Zu diesen Ländern gehört auch Island". *Protokoll über den Dritten Kongress der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale*. 1924 (Berlin, 1924), p. 401.

must be brought to the attention of the working masses."³⁰

Attempts were made in Iceland to do exactly what the resolution demanded but, no major breakthrough to the central level of the Labour Party lay ahead.

The FUK sought affiliation to the IFL in 1924. The blunt refusal to accept it as a member was a clear sign of the hostility felt towards the Communists and showed how politically homogenous the Council was. At the Labour Party's congress in 1924 thirty-five delegates voted against the membership of the FUK and twenty-five voted in favour, but seen by the weight of the general votes the difference was greater than might be anticipated: 2,293 to 1,278.

Inside the trade unions, by dedicated day-to-day work, the Communist opposition gained new ground, especially by agitation in areas previously without unions. It was easier to persuade newly-founded trade unions to take a stand with the Communist opposition.

In 1926 the ECCI published a report from the Scandinavian secretariat (with its centre in Oslo, under the leadership of the Norwegian Arvid G. Hansen). On 14 October 1925 the secretariat, with an Icelandic member of the FUK present, took the following decision about Iceland: "Trade union issues must be given the utmost attention. Factions are to be formed and consolidated. For the time being the FUK Central Committee is to function as the central organ of the Communist movement and to unify all Socialist organizations in a common line. [...] The question of forming a Communist Party of Iceland is to be given further consideration."³¹

This confirmed that the organizational link between the Comintern and the Icelandic Communists was the FUK; furthermore the question of having a Communist Party in Iceland was rather one of timing, than of whether there should be one or not. In 1926 the *Socialist Association Sparta* was founded. The name implies the offensive role it was given as well as the Marxist-Leninist austerity of its approach. Its function was to become the organized faction within the Labour Party, but as the Labour Party's congress turned down its application for affiliation it turned its attention instead to propaganda by publishing Marxist (and Bolshevik) literature.

In 1925 Kobetskij, the former Comintern secretary, became the Soviet Union's new ambassador to Denmark. According to Hendrik Ottósson, who states that they had regular contact, many letters and reports were passed to him from Iceland in the following years.³²

From 1926 onwards there were no Communists on the Council of the IFL. The Communists had lost the battle over the most important visible apparatus. At the Labour Party congress they were still represented and could influence the course taken. This was a challenge both to the Communists and to the Council. The chairman of the IFL, Jón Baldvinsson, was prepared to compromise if necessary, to hold the party together, and he wanted the Communists to stay, as otherwise the worker's movement would lose many energetic members, who, he hoped, would slowly grow up and give up the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, he was well aware of the significance of their presence for the movement and how it was perceived by the Scandinavian brother-parties. Jón Baldvinsson was right where Ólafur Friðriksson was concerned. By the end of 1927 the latter would no longer co-operate with the Communists under any circumstances. The chairman of IFL worked deliberately to safeguard the IFL against too great a Communist influence.

³⁰ "In Dänemark und in Island, wo die Organisationen des revolutionären Proletariats im Vergleich zu den reformistischen noch verhältnismäßig schwach und ungenügend ausgebaut sind, kann meist all das zur Anwendung kommen, was auch für die übrigen skandinavischen Länder gilt. Das revolutionäre Proletariat hat unverzüglich an die Schaffung einer revolutionären Opposition innerhalb der reformistischen Verbände und an ihren Ausbau nach dem Muster von Schweden heranzutreten und innerhalb der reformistischen Organisationen eine systematischere und aktivere, gegen die reformistischen Führer gerichtete Tätigkeit zu entfalten. Die RGI. und ihre revolutionäre Betätigung sollen zur Kenntnis der breitesten Arbeitermassen gebracht werden." *Protokoll über den Dritten Kongress der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale*, p. 404.

³¹ "Das Hauptaugenmerk ist auf die gewerkschaftliche Arbeit zu richten. Die Fraktionen sind auszubilden und zu festigen. Das Jugend-ZK fungiert bis auf weiteres als Zentralorgan der kommunistischen Bewegung und vereinigt alle sozialistischen Organisationen auf gemeinsamer Linie. [...] Die Frage der eventuellen Bildung einer kommunistischen Partei auf Island soll noch weiter geprüft werden." *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf. Tätigkeitsbericht der Exekutive der Kommunistischen Internationale 1925-1926* (Hamburg, 1926), p. 205.

³² Ottósson, *Vegamót og vopnagnýr*, pp. 153 and 158.

To this end two steps were taken to make sure that the Labour Party would be presentable in the Nordic and International Social Democratic communities. The first was seeking affiliation to the Second International in the winter of 1926-1927, which filled the Communist opposition in the party with impotent fury. The second, changing the statute of the party at the tenth party congress in November 1930 to deprive the Communists of the right to be elected to the trade-union congress (which was also the Labour Party congress).

By entering the Second International, the leadership of the party gave strong signals that could not be misunderstood domestically or abroad. One signal was sent to the Nordic Social Democrats, who now knew for sure that the Icelandic Labour Party was a brother-party, which no longer had Communists in charge. It was valuable for Friedrich Adler, the secretary of the Second International, to be able to give this news to the Norwegian Socialists, who at that time were engaged in serious discussions about merging the small Social Democratic Labour Party (*Norges sosialdemokratiske Arbeiderparti*; NSA) with the larger Labour Party (*Det norske Arbeiderparti*; DNA). Another signal was directed at a would-be coalition partner in Iceland, the Progressive Party, a farmers' party. General election were to be held in 1927 and the Conservative Party tried to scare farmers from giving their vote to the Progressive Party because, as the right-wing newspaper wrote, it was in reality a concealed Bolshevik Party co-operating with the Labour Party, that was clearly a Communist Party. By its affiliation to the Second International the Labour Party exposed the falsity of this last accusation and paved the way for political co-operation between farmers and workers.³³

When the Progressive Party formed a government in 1927, it was made possible by the neutral support of the Labour Party. The main goal of the left-wing movement was to keep the Conservative Party out of power. One underlying aspect of the affiliation was the need for economic support from the Scandinavian Social Democrats, which was more readily given when the party was clearly homogeneously headed by fellow Social Democrats. In 1934, Social Democrats joined the government, together with the Progressive Party. The Nordic pattern of workers' and farmers' parties forming governments was by then completed (with the exception of Finland). However, the Social Democrats did not gain strong support in the following years although the party still played a significant role in Icelandic politics because of its pivotal position. We will return to that subject later.

The Swede, Hugo Sillén, went to Iceland in 1928 on behalf of the Comintern, to find out if it was possible to establish a Communist Party. He was soon convinced that the Communists in Iceland were right in claiming that the prerequisites were not yet fulfilled, since there were too few of them to form a party and the Labour Party had firm organizational ties with the unions. Sillén came back two years later. With him came the Norwegian, Viggo Hansteen. This time there was no hesitation about whether or not to form a Communist Party. The only questions were: which method to apply and when. Two other foreign delegates came to Iceland that year, the Swede, Harry Levin, and the German, Willi Mielenz.³⁴ They came on the behalf of the Communist Youth International (CYI).

b) *The Creation of a Communist Party*

At the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress in November that year, 1930, the Communists left the congress after having lost in every vote on international issues. This minority formed a new party, the KFI, just at the beginning of the Great Depression.

In the Social Democratic newspaper *Alþýðublaðið* on 14 December 1930 the board of the IFL said farewell to its former political partners - the Communist opposition: "Among the 'Communists' there are some that have an excellent record in the worker's struggle. We are grateful to them for their former co-operation. We are sad that they now intend to break out of the organization, but just to humour them the large congress majority could not enter paths considered damaging to the people, paths that the 'Communist' parties in Denmark, Norway and Sweden have chosen. But those parties are diminishing so rapidly each year, that they can hardly any longer be looked upon as parties."

The KFI issued the following statement as a programmatic declaration: "The Communist Party of

³³ ³³ See Stef_n F. Hjartarson, *Saga Al_†usambands _slands*. [The History of the Icelandic Federation of Labour]. (Forthcoming).

³⁴ Whitehead, *Kommúnistahreyfingin á Íslandi*, p. 54.

Iceland will do everything in its power to defend the solidarity of the Icelandic working class against the attack of the Social Democrats. We Communists will make every effort to prevent a split in the Icelandic Federation of Trade Unions and we advise the workers' unions still outside the Federation to join it, not because the Federation, as it is now conducted, can be of any help to them in the class struggle, but merely in order to unite the working class, as such unity is necessary in all cases. The working class needs unity in order to overthrow the rule of the Social Democrats. At the same time, the KFI will, in connection with the radical workers' unions in the country, carry on more actively than before its struggle for the unification of the working class of Iceland into one workers' union based on class struggle."³⁵

During its short existence the KFI was never banned. The democratic institutions and the political situation in Iceland have always been stable. Some conflicts led to street-fighting, the worst occurring on 9 November 1932, when furious workers, both Social Democrats and Communists, protested against the Reykjavik municipal government's plan of a reduction in pay for relief work and a decrease in the availability of such work. By the end of the day the police force in Reykjavik was out of action. This outburst of anger had nothing to do with party politics and nobody planned to seize power by violence.

The KFI published vigorously during its existence. The party had its own newspaper, *Verklýðsblaðið*, which began publication at the beginning of 1930, more than half a year before the formation of the KFI. Some of the many front-organizations occasionally published material. Quite a lot of brochures and pamphlets were printed. Programmatic documents, like the "Programme for action", printed in 1931, give insights into the plans of the party and how it was placed in the Icelandic political arena.³⁶ The programme took the local conditions as a point of departure, and so many remarks concern poor peasants and fishermen. The party pleaded for farmers to be freed from heavy interest on their loans. "The Communists must do everything in their power to unite the small peasantry and tenants in the struggle against commercial and bank capital." The struggle against major finance and to free the small peasants from the influence of the big farmers was of major importance. The regulation of working hours on land and on trawlers and on the bigger fishing boats was heavily emphasized. "Two weeks holiday with full payment every year and no unloading of fish by the fisherman", are examples of the demands.

5. The Relationship with the Trade Unions

By 1920 about one fifth of the working force outside agriculture was unionized. Ten years later over one third was organized and by the end of the thirties the rate was around 80%. The Icelandic Federation of Labour had 5,620 members in 1930. In Reykjavik about 62% of the working class was then in unions.³⁷ This meant that in Iceland the labourers were rather quick to build up unions. Stiff resistance was sometimes encountered from employers in the private sector but they de facto recognized the unions as representing the workers. This delayed until 1938 the passing of an all-embracing Labour Bill in Parliament.

The theme of not splitting the trade unions resounded in all Communist speeches. Awareness of the necessity of keeping the trade unions intact was high. The main effort of the KFI was directed at undoing party-political ties connecting the Social Democrats with the IFL. The Communists emphasized that the unity of all workers in one national trade-union federation would permit all workers, regardless of their party-political views, to be elected to the congresses. They would inevitably become political and become involved with the daily class struggle.

At the first KFI congress, held from 29 November to 3 December 1930, the following resolution was passed: "The Communist Party of Iceland will, insofar as it is possible, work as a faction inside the Icelandic Federation of Trade Unions and encourage all its groups to apply for affiliation to the Icelandic Federation of

³⁵ An address to the Icelandic working class from the KFI, 15 January 1931.

³⁶ *Hvað vill Kommúnistaflokkur Íslands? Til Íslenzkrar alþýðu frá stofnþingi K.F.Í.* (Reykjavik, 1931). See an English version in Andrés Straumland's collection, kept at the labour movement's archives in Reykjavik, *Programme for action of the Communist Party of Iceland*.

³⁷ Magnús S. Magnússon, *Iceland in Transition. Labour and socio-economic change before 1940* (Lund, 1985), pp. 196-207.

Trade Unions.³⁸

This statement gave the KFÍ a chance to say that they were not trying to split the trade-union movement; however, they hoped that the Social Democrats would soon cease to hold their monopolist position. During the thirties the KFÍ and the Conservatives tried together to abolish the Social Democratic organizational structure of a political party and a central trade union. The former to enable more workers to join the unions and thereby become politically involved, without necessarily becoming party members (because of collective membership). The latter to make workers less political. These parties, among them the Labour Party, wanted to change the unjust electoral system that gave the rural Progressive Party disproportional power in Iceland's Parliament.

In some trade unions the Communists gained control, mostly in the northern part of Iceland. In the capital of Iceland, Reykjavik, the reformists were in the majority. When it became apparent to the leadership of the Labour Party in the thirties that they could not succeed in diminishing the power of the Communists in the North, they decided to form breakaway unions, to make sure that no trade union whatsoever was infiltrated by the Communists. All empirical research shows that the trade-union split in Iceland was caused by the Social Democrats,³⁹ not the Communists, even though the Social Democrats strongly insisted that it was. They based this claim mostly on the strong words in the Strasbourg theses of 1929. All Communist societies and trade unions were expelled from the Icelandic Federation of Trade Unions within a short time. That process did not reflect credit on the Social Democrats; rather the opposite, it made them unpopular in places where the international trend, the political conjuncture, was little known. This was the case in most of the fishing areas.

6. *The Withering away of a Revolutionary Party?*

The Seventh Comintern Congress, the last ever to take place, proved to be very helpful for a support-winning mass-policy in the remaining democratic countries. The invitation to co-operate with all anti-Fascist forces, imbedded in the Popular Front policy, was to free Communists of their previous sectarian character and make them leave their earlier isolated existence. In Iceland this change was welcomed. A Fascist movement was never a real threat in Iceland, even though a party was formed.

Freedom of manoeuvre within national boundaries - not in foreign policy - was now a vital part of the Comintern's course.⁴⁰ The theme of a Popular Front had meaning only in those countries where Communists played an important role. In other places, where Social Democrats had the electoral, governing power, and also strongly guided the trade-union movement, they could afford largely to ignore the moving appeals. This solid type of Social Democratic hegemony was lacking in Iceland. Just as in England, the Social Democrats had to stay awake and fight on every front against the Communists in order not to lose any ground.

The KFÍ had not ceased to be part of Icelandic politics in 1937. Its continuous appeals to the Social Democrats, that they should stop fighting each other and unite against Fascism, gained it favour with the electorate. At the beginning of the year the fact that there was a joint list of some Social Democrat and Communist candidates for the town council elections in Reykjavik put the leadership of the Labour Party under severe pressure. The vice-chairman of the party, Héðinn Valdimarsson, who was the chairman of the largest unskilled labour union, *Dagsbrún*, advocated that Communists and Social Democrats should join together and form a new party. He forced his party to start the negotiating process, which it reluctantly did. The outcome of the town council elections was a disappointment for the advocates of the joint list. The majority of the Labour Party Council thought it could act very tactically by setting unacceptable conditions, so that the KFÍ would be forced to reject them and by so doing be exposed to the public as an impossible coalition partner or a subversive group in the party. The Social Democrat newspaper announced on 10 February 1938: "Héðinn Valdimarsson is expelled from the party."

His efforts had resulted in the dissolution of the KFÍ. His motives stemmed mainly from the result of the 1937 parliamentary elections and his strong belief that the Communists could not be ignored any longer - because they were a real power in the trade unions - provided they were sincere about their change of position.

³⁸ An address to the Icelandic working class from the KFÍ, 15 January 1931.

³⁹ Stefán F. Hjartarson, *Kampen om fackföreningsrörelsen*, pp. 132-178.

⁴⁰ E. H. Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930-1935* (Hong Kong, 1982), pp. 403-427.

In Norway, during the years 1934 to 1938, the Labour Party had to deal with the Communists' invitation to form a Popular Front. The leadership of the Labour Party decided on 9 January that there were no grounds at all for a fusion of these two parties. One can see the ongoing debate in Norway about merging the parties as a parallel to the Icelandic case. By referring to the fact that the Norwegian Communist Party (*Norges kommunistiske parti*; NKP) was a section of the Comintern, and therefore obliged to take orders from Moscow, the Labour Party could easily explain to its supporters and to society at large that fusion was out of the question. In Iceland this argument could not be used in the year 1938. The Social Democratic newspaper gave extensive coverage to the development in Norway in order to make the readers understand why the party in Iceland should not believe the soft talk of the Communists. The conditions suggested by the Norwegian Communists for a merger with the Labour Party were, on the whole, rather similar to those in the negotiations in Iceland. Therefore, the newspaper asserted, reporting on Oscar Torps' experience of negotiating with the Norwegian Communists: "But we cannot help the fact that these [conditions] will appear familiar to many workers in this country. Because they are word for word the same conditions, and the same slogans, that the Communist Party let the question of amalgamation founder upon, both in autumn and this winter: 'A Marxist Party', independent of the bourgeoisie class, and 'unconditional support of Soviet-Russia', permit no hostile view concerning it in the party press; 'fight firmly against the counter-revolutionary Trotskyism', does not tolerate Trotskyism's being given space in the party media; 'support the policy of the Third International', permits no hostility to the Comintern - these are the interests that the Communist Parties of Iceland and of Norway put above the unity and welfare of the workers in their respective countries. And now there should not be much doubt, even for those who might sometimes have doubted it, as to where these conditions originate. They were not invented in Iceland or Norway; they have no roots and no place in the labour movements of Iceland or Norway. Both these Communist Parties have received them as a command from their common superior: The Communist International east, in Moscow."⁴¹

It should have been impossible, according to the statutes of the Comintern, for a section party to abandon the organization and dissolve itself as the Communist Party of Iceland did. The author of this article interviewed Einar Olgeirsson (born 1902) about this puzzle. He was one of the key actors in the decision-making of 1937-1938. He said that the decision was taken in full consensus with the Comintern. The party did not act without getting proper permission. The new party was, however, to stay out of the Second International, remain a Marxist party, and last, but not least, be a good friend to the Soviet Union. The previous contacts with the Comintern were to continue. Documents from the Comintern archives, when available, should support this view.

How did the KFÍ manage to do what the NKP did not accomplish? In Norway the Communist position was weaker, and the electoral base for the Social Democrats was broader. By 1937 the Icelandic Labour Party had come to a standstill and the Communists were of the opinion that something drastic must be done. It was a prerequisite for radical change to have, within the Labour Party, a heavy weight who occupied a powerful position in the trade-union movement. The vice-chairman of the Labour Party, Héðinn Valdimarsson, also, incidentally the director of British Petroleum in Iceland, fulfilled this criterion. He was the decisive factor behind the Communists' successful breakthrough, but he probably acted alone at the beginning; he took the initial step. He had had enough of the coalition with the Progressive Party and thought that the farmers' party, where more conservative elements were in charge, was paying less and less attention to the workers' movement.⁴² Nor can the appeal of the anti-Fascist campaign be disregarded.

R. Neal Tannahill includes Iceland in his comparative study, *The Communist Parties of Western Europe*.⁴³ He is right in asserting that during the twenties the Communists formed an opposition within the Labour Party "on the advice of the Comintern", but it is not sufficient simply to state about the thirties that the KFÍ "broke away from the Comintern".⁴⁴ Nevertheless, it is true that the Icelandic Communists did have greater

⁴¹ *Alþýðublaðið*, 5 February 1938.

⁴² See Héðinn Valdimarsson's political statement in 1938 where he declares his reasons for abandoning the right-wing Social Democrats: Héðinn Valdimarsson, *Skuldaskil Jónasar Jónssonar við sóstalismann* (Reykjavik, 1938).

⁴³ R. Neal Tannahill, *The Communist Parties of Western Europe. A comparative study* (Westport, CO, and London, 1978).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

freedom to manoeuvre than their counterparts in many other countries.

7. The Electoral Base of the Labour Party and the KFI in the National Assembly

The KFI's nucleus was an intelligentsia with strong roots in the trade unions, which were open to all non-entrepreneurs, and among the workers in the fishing localities, where seasonal employment was typical. When the party started it had 150 members. By June 1932 605 persons had joined the party. Of these, 14% were women and 90% belonged to trade unions. One third of the members lived in Reykjavik, but a sizeable number came from Siglufjörður (89) and the island of Vestmannaeyjar (78). These towns had an unusually high number of young workers. In the voting register for Siglufjörður in 1934, 76.5% were aged 21-50. To a certain extent the workers' radicalism can be explained by the age structure in the communities.⁴⁵

The result at the Icelandic ballot was as follows, 1931-1937:

Party	1931	1933	1934	1937
SD	16,1%	19,2%	21,7%	19,0%
KFI	3,0%	7,5%	6,0%	8,5%

In the 1927 election, before the rift between the Communists and the Social Democrats in 1930, the Labour Party received 19.1% of the total vote. Ten years later they were still receiving only 19%, which can be regarded as a considerable disappointment for the party. In all the other Nordic countries the Social Democrats were progressing and gaining new votes. The extraordinary thing is that the KFI managed to increase its vote in absolute terms during its life-span. It received 3% of the vote - nearly 1,200 votes - less than a year after its appearance in the electoral arena. It got more than double that number in the next election in 1933, with 7.5%. One can thus speak of an early success. At least the KFI halted the advance of the Social Democrats. This happened when the Social Democrats used all their efforts to crush the Communists by isolating them in the unions, which forced the KFI to go on the defensive and to leave aside "self-criticism" within the party. In other words, the Social Democrats pushed the Communists into being martyrs. They were defending the unemployed at a time of economic crisis and they survived during hard-fought strikes which they led in the fishing areas. In many cases pragmatism characterized their methods. They wanted - as in the case of the city of Akureyri during the Novaconflict in 1933 - to get signed agreements with their contractual partners in a wage dispute.⁴⁶ There 34.7% of the voters voted for the KFI. The personal popularity of Einar Olgeirsson was one of the explanations of this phenomenon. During 1931-1934 only about 6.5% of the Social Democrat voters were from the northern part of Iceland.

The KFI did not have any illusions about its chances of making a breakthrough in Parliament, since the electoral system prevented the urban areas from having proportionally as many members of parliament as the rural areas. The party was an urban class party with its electoral base mainly in the north of the country and on the southern island of Vestmannaeyjar, where the fishing industry was growing rapidly. The KFI used the same international conceptualization as all other Comintern sections. This meant that the idea of armed revolution was presented, but many leaders of the party spoke of their belief in a democratic parliamentary way of seizing power. During the period 1932-1934 the aggressive policy of the third Comintern period (deriving from some of the resolutions at the Sixth Comintern Congress) left its mark on the party. "Self-criticism" led to expulsion from the party. The Icelandic students at the Lenin School (there were about fifteen) were active in implementing the new line of harsh criticism of the Social Democrats, saying that those not willing to use the right terminology were objectively in the Fascist role. This seems to have been common to all the Nordic countries: the young Communists criticizing the "elderly" in the party for being too tolerant and displaying a weak fighting spirit against the Social Democrats.

On 3 October 1933 the Comintern wrote a critical open letter to the KFI, which was published in *Verklýðsblaðið*. As one party member, Stefán Pétursson, did not comply with the directives given, he was called to Moscow for questioning in November 1933. He went, took fright and fled to the Danish Legation to avoid

⁴⁵ Stefán F. Hjartarson, *Kampen om fackföreningsrörelsen*, pp. 60, 229.

⁴⁶ For a report on this conflict, see *Rundschau*, 2 June 1933.

violent death. This internal fight within the party, as well as effective Social Democratic political propaganda, took some toll of the party in the succeeding period. The mouthpiece of the Labour Party, *Alþýðublaðið*, wrote on 15 May 1934: "The destiny of the Icelandic Communist Party seems to be imitating that of every other Communist Party in every other country. In the beginning they get some support, but as soon as the 'novelty' wears off, the group falls behind, as it can no longer live solely on slogans and big words. The KFÍ is rapidly on its way down to the bottom. They still act noisily, but there is nothing behind it."

In the election the KFÍ got 6% of the vote, which was a disappointment to the Social Democrats, and perhaps to the Communists themselves, since they had dropped from 7.5% in 1933. After the curse of the internal struggle had ended and the Popular Front period began, things began to prosper for the KFÍ. Many so-called fellow-travellers helped the party. The writer Halldór Kiljan Laxness (who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1955) was among the supportive intellectuals. Without exaggeration it can be stated that the most influential writers were on the side of the KFÍ. As Einar Olgeirsson said at the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935: "The best Icelandic writers have produced splendid books on the construction of socialism."⁴⁷ Therefore it came as no surprise that in the 1937 elections the party reached the peak of its parliamentary success: 8.5% of the vote. The KFÍ's bargaining position vis-a-vis the Labour Party was better than ever. The KFÍ had three members in the National Assembly. In the first election in which the newly formed United Socialist Party participated, in July 1942, it got 16.1% of the vote and later that year 18.5%!

The Red Army's attack on Finland at the end of November 1939 had great repercussions in Icelandic politics on the left. Héðinn Valdimarsson wanted the party to criticize the behaviour of the Soviet Union. The party's policy was "neutrality", which in fact meant support for the Soviet Union. Héðinn Valdimarsson left politics for good.

8. Final Remarks

The decade before the KFÍ was founded, the twenties, might give the impression that Icelandic Communists did not belong to the Comintern camp, but as has been shown they surely did. The FUK was the substitute for a Communist Party until one was founded. The Communist planet - to use an old metaphor - was discovered quite early in labour politics. In the Icelandic case there was no distinct time lag after the FUK swam into our ken before its identification.

One explanation as to why the reformists managed to remain in power in the trade unions in Reykjavik (and in the surrounding country) is that the first phase of unionization took place there. The organizations were cemented into a reformist position before the Young Communists began their activities. The former chairman of KFÍ, Brynjólfur Bjarnason, expressed this view in 1938, and later it was reaffirmed by the scholar Svanur Kristjánsson in 1984.⁴⁸

The KFÍ succeeded in merging with the left wing of the Labour Party when other countries' Communist Parties were unsuccessfully trying to do the same thing. In Norway the Communists were knocking on the door without getting the ear of the Labour Party apparatus. Probably every action of the KFÍ firstly received the blessing of the Comintern. That is what research so far indicates and there is no reason to revise that view.

What has been lacking in Icelandic research on Communism ever since Arnór Hannibalsson wrote his book, *Communism and the left movement*, is an examination of the dialogue between the Icelandic Communists and the Comintern's representatives. What might be a concession to a national point of view is easily lost because of the uniform vocabulary of the Comintern's utterances.

The Communists in Iceland were on the whole extremely successful in expressing their policy in a nationalistic way. They talked about the historical heritage, the heroes in the Icelandic Sagas, those who would not give up their freedom or the nation's independence but fought against oppression (the reader should bear in mind the former colonial status of Iceland). This method increased their popularity (and was one of the key elements in the anti-Nato campaign in the post-Second-World-War era). In other words, the great performance of the Communist politicians and the trade-union leaders brought them profound - and, one might have thought,

⁴⁷ "Die besten isländischen Schriftsteller haben sehr gute Bücher über den Aufbau des Sozialismus geschrieben." *Rundschau*, 27. August 1935, p. 1943.

⁴⁸ Brynjólfur Bjarnason is quoted in Svanur Kristjánsson, "Kommúnistahreyfingin á Íslandi. Þjóðlegir verkalýðssinnar eða handbendi Stalíns?", p. 217.

long-everlasting (?) - results.

The history of the KFÍ, compared with that of other, similar parties in Scandinavia, is the story of a unique growth. My explanation is that the KFÍ had the luck to be founded at the time of the economic depression, when there were a lot of problems to be solved within the trade unions, and it never had to act as a destroyer of the trade-union movement. The echo of the Strasbourg theses was not to be heard in the Icelandic valleys, giving the rank-and-file a fertile platform. Further research on the assumed validity of the "third period" as a streamline development in the Comintern's history (Profintern included) is desirable.