



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

25 June 1981

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Dear Mr. East,

Guest of Government Visit by President of Iceland

At the last Royal Visits Committee meeting it was agreed in principle that the President of Iceland, Mrs Vigdis Finnbogadottir, should be invited to visit Britain as a Guest of Government in 1982 and that The Queen and The Prince of Wales should be involved in the programme. It was suggested that, since The Queen's diary is already quite full from March onwards, the visit should take place early in the year.

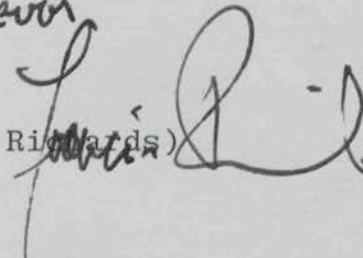
President Vigdis, who is Europe's first elected woman Head of State, paid a State Visit to Denmark in 1980 and is expected to visit Norway, Sweden and the United States in the latter half of 1981. I enclose a copy of the Personalities Report on her.

We have consulted HM Embassy at Reykjavik who advise that the week 14-20 February would be particularly suitable since it coincides with the Icelandic Midwinter Feast (Thorrablót) for which an Anglo/Icelandic celebration involving the Icelandic community in Britain will anyway be arranged.

Icelanders are traditionally well-disposed to Britain. The Cod War is four years behind us and relations are once again very good. Iceland is a small but nevertheless important member of NATO and we want her to remain committed to the Alliance. There has been no official visit to the UK by an Icelandic President since 1967 (although former President Eldjarn visited the Isle of Man, at the invitation of the Manx Government, in 1979).

As President Vigdis would be coming as the guest of the Government, we envisage that the Prime Minister would need to be involved personally, to the extent perhaps of a luncheon and a short talk; I shall write again about details as soon as we have received a reply from Buckingham Palace about Royal involvement in the President's programme. If you can confirm that the Prime Minister is content, we shall approach the Palace.

Yours ever  
 (F N Richards)



M O'D B Alexander Esq  
 10 Downing Street



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PP REYKJAVIK

GRS 169

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FM FCO 171530Z JULY 1981

TO PRIORITY REYKJAVIK

TELEGRAM NUMBER 45 OF 17 JULY

AND TO SAVING OSLO, COPENHAGEN, STOCKHOLM, HELSINKI

FROM WED

GUEST OF GOVERNMENT VISIT BY PRESIDENT VIGDIS FINNBOGADOTTIR

1. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS AGREED THAT PRESIDENT VIGDIS INNBOGADOTTIR SHOULD BE INVITED TO THE UNITED KINGDOM IN FEBRUARY 1982 AND PROPOSES TO OFFER TALKS AT 12 NOON FOLLOWED BY LUNCH ON WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY. THE QUEEN WILL ALSO OFFER LUNCH: THE DATE AND TIME WILL BE CONFIRMED ONCE WE HAVE PRESIDENT VIGDIS'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSED DATES (SEE MIFT). THE PRINCE OF WALES HAS BEEN APPROACHED BUT WE CANNOT EXPECT AN EARLY REPLY. WE SHOULD THEREFORE PREFER TO ISSUE THE FORMAL INVITATION NOW AND EXPLORE THE POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRINCE OF WALES IN DUE COURSE. HMG WILL ALSO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR UP TO SIX OFFICIALS OF THE PRESIDENT'S SUITE WHO ARE TAKING A FULL PART IN THE PROGRAMME. MIFT CONTAINS THE TEXT OF THE FORMAL INVITATION WHICH YOU MAY NOW GIVE TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

CARRINGTON

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MR BULLARD

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G.H.F.

*ef. 2/17*  
*Caroline (for info)*

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*Chi*  
*20/7*



Iceland

29 June 1981

BF

President of Iceland

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 25 June and has agreed to see Mrs. Finnbogadottir for talks at 12 noon, followed by lunch, on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

F.N. Richards, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

R

Prime Minister

Ray we offer

(1)

MR. ALEXANDER

And

Visit by President of Iceland

Talks at 12 noon followed by lunch on Wednesday, 17 February, would be very convenient for the Prime Minister. I am also keeping Wednesday, 10th, free just in case the 17th does not suit Mrs. Finnbogadottir.

C.J.

And

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25 June, 1981.



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FINNBOGADOTTIR, Vigdis

President of Iceland, 1980.

Born 1930, daughter of a well known Professor.

Read French Literature at the Sorbonne, English at University of Iceland and History of the Theatre in Copenhagen.

Librarian at the National Theatre 1962-8, teacher at a Reykjavik High School 1968-72, Director of the Reykjavik City Theatre 1972-80.

She became a candidate in the Presidential Election of 1980 partly to demonstrate that a woman could be considered for the highest office. Besides those supporting her for this reason, she had the support of most left-wing sympathisers (most people involved in the Arts in Iceland tend that way), and her attractive personality and good TV technique secured her 33% of the vote. She thus became President by a margin of 1% over her nearest competitor in a four-cornered contest.

President Vigdis is an avowed opponent of the US military presence in Iceland and took part some years ago in demonstrations against the Keflavik base. But this does not mean she is anti-West: her attitudes are those of an Icelandic nationalist mainly interested in culture. She is likely to seek to play the part of President of the whole nation, not just her supporters, with correct regard to the Constitution which leaves foreign policy to Ministers and Parliament.

Despite her city and cosmopolitan education, she is well versed in the Icelandic countryside, traditions and landscapes and an accomplished guide for visitors.

Was briefly married: has an adopted daughter of 7, called Astridur, under all too little control.

Speaks excellent English and French.

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25 JUN 1981

