
ARTS & LETTERS

St. Denis dazzled audiences in New York, Chicago, and Boston with her extravagant costumes and staging. But the key to her stardom was her personality. With a wink or a smirk, she won the confidence of her audiences and made them feel at ease with the "artistic" side of the dance.

The pioneers of modern dancing in America, great as they were, Kendall observes, unfortunately encouraged a crop of amateurs determined to display their own undisciplined talents, claiming that they were "sky-taught" and "nature-inspired." By 1913, she writes, "seriousness had come and gone from American dance, which now belonged to society ladies, little girls, and vaudeville funnymen." Modern dance did not really revive until the 1930s.

OTHER NATIONS
*Surviving
in Iceland*

"A Millenium of Misery: The Demography of the Icelanders" by Richard F. Tomasson, in *Population Studies* (Nov. 1977), Population Investigation Committee, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, Aldwych, London WC2A 2AE.

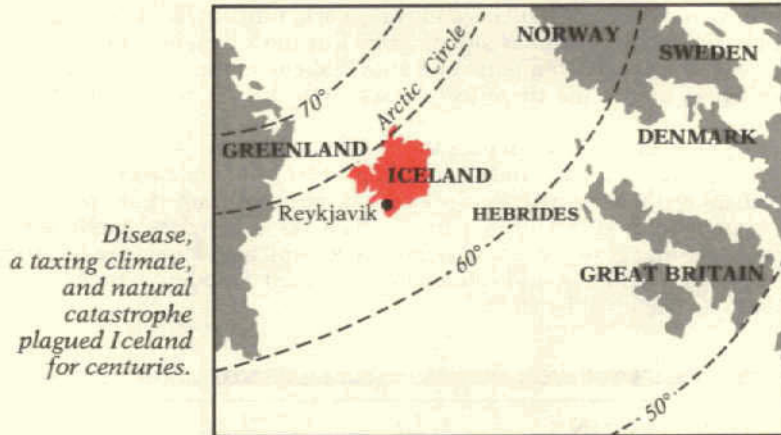
The 11 centuries of Iceland's known history provide the most consistently bleak record of death and suffering a European nation has ever known. Thanks to the Icelanders' passion for genealogy and their early development of popular literacy (in the 13th century), scholars have unparalleled written evidence of their capacity to endure what University of New Mexico sociologist Tomasson calls "the most extreme inhospitable environment in which a European people has been able to survive and maintain its culture."

Since the original 400 Norsemen and Celts arrived as settlers (mostly by way of Britain, Ireland, and the Hebrides) between 870 and 930 A.D., fewer than 2 million Icelanders have been born. Until the mid-19th century, due to disease and starvation, fewer than half of those born survived to adulthood.

Lying just below the Arctic Circle, Iceland has a maritime climate made temperate by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream. But the growing season is short (four to five months). Until the end of the last century, the size of the Icelandic population was largely determined by how well the summer grasses grew, so great was the dependence on fodder for sheep and other livestock. (Fishing was an unimportant source of food until the mid-19th century.)

Only remarkable fertility allowed the Icelandic people to survive intermittent calamities. The Black Death (bubonic plague) of 1402-04 killed 80,000 people, two-thirds of the population. In 1707, a smallpox

OTHER NATIONS



epidemic took 18,000 lives, one-third of the island's population at that time. Famine and disease in the aftermath of volcanic eruptions in 1783-84 claimed 9,936, or about one-fifth of the total. Unusually precise records reveal that 190,488 sheep (82 percent of the total) died of starvation because of damage to grasslands during that time.

Thanks to a long-standing tolerance of illegitimacy (some two-thirds of all first-borns are illegitimate), a high birth rate, and a rapid drop in mortality rates, the Icelandic population is expected to increase sharply in the years ahead. Barring some new calamity, it should grow by at least 40 percent, to more than 300,000, by the year 2000.

*Cuba's Taste
for Adventure*

"The Cuban Operation in Angola: Costs and Benefits for the Armed Forces" by Jorge I. Dominguez, in *Cuban Studies* (Jan. 1978), Center for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15260.

Cuba's victorious intervention on the pro-Soviet side in Angola's 1975-76 civil war bolstered Fidel Castro's prestige in much of Africa. The venture also had a significant impact on Cuba's military establishment, writes Dominguez, Research Fellow at Harvard's Center for International Affairs.

The African expedition gave an important new mission to Cuba's Soviet-equipped, 180,000-man armed forces—readiness to engage in combat overseas. Internal order, contributions to economic production, and deterrence of (unlikely) U.S. attack are no longer the only justifications for a big military budget. Since Angola, the Cuban military has a special stake in the continuation of Castro's activist policy in Africa.

Reliable casualty figures are not available, but the Angolan war imposed a variety of direct costs on Cuba. Over half the 10,000 troops sent