

FINNBOGADOTTIR, VIGDIS

President of the Republic.

Born 1930 (15 April), daughter of a Professor of Civil Engineering.

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

Librarian at the National Theatre 1962-68. 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.

Before becoming President, she was an avowed opponent of the US military presence in Iceland and took part some years ago in demonstrations against the Keflavik Base, but has since kept her opinions to herself. She is certainly not anti-West: her attitudes are those of an Icelandic nationalist with mainly cultural interests. Despite her city and cosmopolitan education, she is well versed in the Icelandic countryside, traditions and landscapes and an accomplished guide to visitors.

She has proved an excellent President, universally popular and a most effective ambassador for Iceland during a number of successful tours abroad, including her official visit to Britain in February 1982 and the Isle of Man in July 1987. Was selected, unopposed, for a second four year term in 1984. In 1988 she was, contrary to tradition, opposed by a housewife from the Western Islands, but was re-elected for a third term by an overwhelming majority.

Was briefly married; has an adopted daughter of 15, called Astridur.

Speaks excellent English and French, as well as a number of other languages.

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