FINAL CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet
held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Monday,
April 26th, 1920 at 12 Noon.

PRESENT:
The Rt. Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P., (in the Chair),
Lord Privy Seal.


THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:
Sir D.J. Shackleton, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour.


Mr. Thomas Jones, Acting Secretary.
With reference to Conclusion 5 of Cabinet 10(20), the Cabinet had before them a letter from the Council of the League of Nations inviting the British Government to appoint representatives to attend an International Conference in Brussels in May next to study the financial crisis and to look for means of remedying it and of mitigating the dangerous consequences arising from it. (C.P. 1119).

The Cabinet requested the Chancellor of the Exchequer to invite the following gentlemen to act as British representatives:

- Lord Chalmers,
- Lord Cullon,
- Mr McKenna,

and to choose who should serve as Head of the Delegation and to issue any instructions required.
In connection with the forthcoming International Financial Conference referred to in the previous Minute, the attention of the Cabinet was called to a Memorandum on Foreign Policy and Inter-Allied Debts which had been circulated by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (CP.1003) and to the telegrams which had been exchanged between the British Embassy at Washington and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the International Financial Situation (CP. 564 and 842).

It was suggested that it might be desirable at the Financial Conference to support, at any rate indirectly through some neutral representatives, a policy of cancelling inter-allied debts and that therefore our representatives should be so instructed. It was urged that support of any such policy should be contingent on the United States participating in it.

The Cabinet:

(1) Took note that the paper circulated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was circulated for the information of the Cabinet and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not pledged to support a policy of cancellation of inter-allied indebtedness, irrespective of American action.

(2) Decided that no step should be taken to further such policy without previous Cabinet sanction and pending the return of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when the subject should again be examined.
(3) The attention of the Cabinet was called to questions which were being put in Parliament in reference to the decision to punish H. Jabotinsky and others for their share in the recent riots in Jerusalem. H. Jabotinsky had been sentenced to 15 years penal servitude and others to 3 years imprisonment for being in possession of firearms and for taking measures to stir up the Jewish Defence Organisation and thus disturbing the city. Lord Allenby had upheld and confirmed the verdict. The Cabinet were reminded that H. Jabotinsky had been a zealous supporter of this country throughout the war and was held in high esteem at the War Office and at the Colonial Office.

The Cabinet decided:

To request the Secretary of State for War
(a) to represent to Lord Allenby that the sentence on H. Jabotinsky seemed to the Cabinet on the evidence before it to be unreasonable and to ask Lord Allenby personally to review the whole circumstances of the case.

(b) To reply to questions in the House of Commons that the Government was in communication with Lord Allenby on the matter and would inform the House of the result at the earliest opportunity.
SOUTH RUSSIA.

(4) The attention of the Cabinet was called to telegrams which were being exchanged with the Soviet Government by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and to the serious situation threatening Rumania.

It was agreed that the matter should be raised on the return of the Prime Minister.
(5) With reference to Conclusion 9 (iv) of Cabinet 15 (20), the Cabinet had before them letters from Sir Malcolm Delovinno, Sir David Shackleton, and the International Labour Office of the League of Nations dealing with the nomination of delegates to the special Conference to be held in Genoa in June to deal with questions relating to seamen. (C.P. 1136).

The Cabinet decided:

To refer the matter for decision to
The Minister of Labour (Convener)
The Home Secretary,
The President of the Board of Trade.
The Cabinet had before them the following memoranda dealing with the recommendations contained in the Report of the Advisory Committee on London Traffic (Cd. 656) dated 20th March 1920.

Memorandum by the Minister of Transport (C. P. 104)
Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (C. P. 1104)
Memorandum by the Minister of Health (C. P. 1155).

The Advisory Committee recommend the creation of a London Traffic Authority as necessary for the comfort, health, and financial interest of the public—a policy which had been recommended on four occasions by various responsible bodies during the last 15 years. In the view of the Committee, the traffic facilities of London were no longer equal to the demands put upon them: new tubes and tramways were required and a more scientific development of omnibus traffic. This programme could only be carried out at present in wasteful and uncoordinated ways even if the funds were available, but the various transport companies were, in fact, in serious financial straits. The Committee therefore recommended a permanent statutory body under the Ministry of Transport coterminous with an area not less than that of the Metropolitan Police and with power to override Local Authorities in certain circumstances.

The Cabinet were impressed with the following considerations against taking immediate action on the lines advocated in the Report:

(a) The effect of adopting the Report would probably be to throw upon the Exchequer the burden of new extensions and to relieve the local rates, and at the same time to bring upon the Government much criticism for defects in transport facilities.
(b) Any action taken by the Government in relation to London Traffic would be used as a precedent for demanding similar action and financial support in other congested areas like the districts around Manchester and Birmingham.

(c) It should be possible to secure the co-ordinating authority, which all agree to be necessary, by some voluntary union on the part of the Local Authorities concerned on lines analogous to those followed by Main Drainage Boards or the Port of London Authority.

It was pointed out, on the other hand, that, while securing the Central Authority, care could be taken in the Draft Bill to exclude the possibility of any new burden falling upon the taxpayers and that the cost of the regulating authority itself could be made to fall on the transport services themselves and not on the Treasury.

After further discussion the Cabinet decided:

(1) That the Minister of Transport should prepare and circulate to the Cabinet a Draft Bill for the creation of a Central Authority, on the understanding that no fresh burden should thereby be imposed upon the Exchequer.

(2) That, in reply to a question to be asked in the House of Commons that day, the Minister of Transport should state that, while the Government were of the opinion that a Central Authority was needed, the project raised so many financial and administrative difficulties in the relations of the Parliamentary and the Local Authorities concerned that the Cabinet needed further time for their consideration and negotiation.

(3) That the Lord Privy Seal should convey to Mr. Kennedy Jones, M.P., the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, the thanks of the Cabinet for his services and invite his co-operation in the drafting of the Bill.

It was understood that the Minister of Transport did not regard the town-planning and other powers of the proposed Commission as required in the sense suggested by the Minister of Health in his Memorandum and the Minister of Transport undertook to discuss the points and endeavour to come to an arrangement with the Minister of Health.
(7) With reference to the Cabinet 655 Minute 9, the Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (C.P.274) and by the Minister of Transport (C.P.1102) dealing with the present number and control of official motor cars.

The Cabinet were informed that, exclusive of the fighting services, the number of cars used in London and under the control of the Ministry of Transport had been reduced from 41 to 27, and, while the work done had been somewhat increased, there had been an improvement of nearly 50% in running efficiency. The number of cars used by the Admiralty had been reduced to 6 with 2 in reserve. In the War Office there were 20 cars together with 7 allotted to the London District and 4 for the Eastern Command. The Air Force had 11 cars. The cars belonging to the War Office and Air Force were centrally administered from one garage and were driven by military drivers. No specific individual had a car allotted to him; all officers had to draw on the pool.

The Cabinet were agreed that there had been material improvement in the economical use of cars and that the complaints which were formerly rife had practically disappeared.

The Cabinet decided:

(1) That the administration of cars as between the Civilian and Fighting Departments should remain as at present.

(2) That every effort should be made to apply the regulations enforced in the case of Civilian cars to the cars used by the Military, Naval and Air Force.

The Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty undertook to furnish the Chancellor of the Exchequer from time to time with reports showing particulars of the running of cars under their control for his observation.
(8) The Cabinet had before them a memorandum by the Minister of Transport dealing with the necessity for revising the railway and tramway fares charged to workmen. (C.P. 1120). It was pointed out that recent changes in railway administration such as the reduction of hours and increase of rates had placed workmen's fares on a thoroughly illogical basis and that workmen were now being subsidised at the expense of the railway users.

The Cabinet decided:

To refer the matter for consideration and report to the Rates Advisory Committee under Section 21 of the Ministry of Transport Act 1919, with the following terms of reference:

(a) The Minister having determined that workmen’s fares, which are still on a pro-war basis, are now generally unreasonable, the Committee are desired to advise as to the best means of revising those fares both as regard the rates and the times during which those fares are in operation, having due regard to the changes which have taken place in industrial and social conditions and in hours of employment since workmen's fares were instituted and to the effect of such revision upon railway, tramway and omnibus passenger traffic, and also upon housing and labour generally.

(b) In connection with this reference the whole question of travelling facilities by railway, tramway or omnibus at rates lower than ordinary passenger fares should be reviewed, and the Committee should also advise as to what modifications, if any, should be made in those lower rates concurrently with any revision of workmen's fares.
INDUSTRY DURING INDUSTRIAL DISTURBANCES.

(c) With reference to Cabinet 10 (20), Minute 8 (a), the Cabinet took note of a Memorandum by the Chairman of the Supply and Transport Committee (C.P.968) and a Joint Memorandum by the Home Secretary and the Secretary for Scotland (C.P.860) in which attention was drawn to the responsibility of the Cabinet as a whole for the decision not to increase the armed forces of the Crown in order to meet the risk of civil disorder arising out of industrial disturbances.

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.C.
April 26th 1923.
Mr Sylvester

Please show this to the Secretary on his return. I think it had better be kept with the A. Minutes. It is not suitable for general circulation - at any rate in its present form. I could, of course, camouflage it and boil it down for circulation, if necessary.

T. J.

30. 4. 20

It will be sufficient to put this record in the file.

M. P. & Nunky

1 May 1920
The Prime Minister had a conversation at 10 Downing Street on the Irish Situation with the Viceroy, the Chief Secretary and the Attorney-General. There were also present Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Long, Mr. F. Kerr, Sir Maurice Hankey and Mr. T. Jones.

Lord French, in response to the request of the Prime Minister, gave an account of the present position. He said that it was now a question either of making a truce with the rebels or taking measures of war against them. They had declared war against us and it was open to us to try to arrange a truce, to ask what the rebels wanted and see if we were able to satisfy them. The movement had been at its climax at the time of the last General Election. Then the Sinn Feiners had swept the country and had thought that they would make us yield. They had established their Parliament, appointed Consuls, entered into communication with Foreign Powers, and had thought in this way to rouse the world. But nothing had happened. Then about August or September 1919 the outrage and murder party told the more moderate Sinn Feiners that, if they could not attain better results, they (the extremists) would take the matter in hand. The more moderate men—idealists, as they are sometimes called—at first strongly objected; but the extremists represented that they were making war upon the English and were therefore not guilty of murder. Gradually they appear to have brought the Sinn Feiners round to their view and the whole organisation was now imbued with the idea of war and justified murder on that ground. The organisation had grown in strength and could be ousted only by force. The rebels had the advantage of using methods of war and these methods were denied to us. It would be more effective to put the struggle on a war basis, as had been done in the Boer War when the rebels were seized and put into concentration camps. The alternative plan would be to arrange a truce, to stop murders on the one hand and arrests on the other, and enter into a conference in order to see if some arrangement could be reached. It would be difficult to arrange such a conference. He had made some tentative efforts in that direction at the time of the difficulties with the Mountjoy prisoners. On that occasion he had been assured by the Lord Mayor of Dublin that not five per cent of the Irish people wanted a Republic and that what was really wanted was Colonial Home Rule for the whole of Ireland. He (the Viceroy) had made it clear that the Government would not go back on their undertaking to Ulster any more than they would yield to recognition of a Republic. The Lord Mayor, who
had described himself as an advanced Nationalist rather than as a Sinn Feiner, was at the moment endeavouring to ascertain the chances of a truce and had promised to give a reply in 10 or 12 days - but it was doubtful whether he was sufficiently influential to act as an efficient medium. He moderate leaders, it was fairly certain, were in favour of a truce; but the difficulty was to bring the advanced men to agree to that course. His (Lord French's) impression was that the advanced party were command of the others who simply did what they were told, and that, whereas a year ago John McNeill and Arthur Griffiths objected to the murders, they now regarded them as incidents in the war against us.

Mr Bonar Law stated that, at a recent deputation which had waited upon him, Sir Edward Carson had urged that the situation should be dealt with on the lines adopted in previous years under similar circumstances. Sir Edward Carson was at a loss to know why the Irish Government had given up keeping police in small districts: the moment the police were removed the district fell outside British control and anyone who objected to law breaking was left defenceless. In the past they had found it impossible to control disturbances from the centre, and, in Sir Edward Carson's view, Ireland should be divided into districts - and not only into military areas - and those districts should be under the direction of an intelligent responsible Magistrate who, while subject to the final authority of the Irish Government, should be free to move the forces about and to take action. Sir Edward Carson called attention to the fact that the soldiers in Ireland were little more than boys, that their officers also were young; and he suggested that it should be possible to second to the Irish regiments a leavening of experienced officers who could take responsibility and be counted upon to act with judgment. In his view, the military should not themselves attempt to be the controlling forces but should rather be present to support the police force in the discharge of their duties. He strongly recommended making the police force larger and giving it adequate military support. He was doubtful about the good effects of deportations and thought that a large number of arrests only played into the hands of the rebels. He held that arrests should be as far as possible, unless the prisoners could be tried, and that the number of raids should be restricted. It was important to give protection
to threatened persons, as, without this, all faith in the British power would be gone.

Lord French said that raids were useful not so much for obtaining arms as information. There was a district organisation with military support in force at present and there were private houses in which troops were lodged. But it was not possible to use soldiers as policemen and there were not enough troops to distribute over and support all places. To do so would require three times the number of effectives now in Ireland - i.e. 19,500.

The Chief Secretary said that three forms of conspiracy could be distinguished in Ireland - agrarian, Labour and murder. Murder was the spear-head of the rebellion and short of it there were all shades of terrorism. Probably the few who were engaged on murder were well known in the main and the question of isolating the murderers and dealing effectively with them was quite a different thing from keeping the country quiet. Measures ought to be taken to make the army much more mobile so that it could be moved about quickly to the centres of attack. For this purpose more motor cars and armoured cars were essential.
The Attorney General agreed that more armoured cars were necessary. They had proved very effective in County Clare. It possibly had been a mistake to move the police from the barracks but there was no alternative. The barracks were small buildings with no accommodation for troops. As to the general situation it was difficult to suggest a remedy. At the last Winter Assizes there had been a good many convictions obtained but in the murder cases it has difficult to get evidence. The venue of the trials had been repeatedly changed. The really bad areas were Cork, Galway, Clare and Dublin and a portion of Co. Tipperary. More soldiers were needed in these counties and they should be more mobile.

In reply to a question he said that Courts Martial could be used for offences under L.O.E.A. though they (the Courts Martial) could not try capital charges or give sentences of death. They could go up to 15 years penal servitude and they had given sharp sentences for carrying arms and explosives. He thought that gradually the South Irish would fall into two camps.

In reply to a suggestion that more aeroplanes should be available it was stated that Gen. Macdonogh was looking into this and similar matters.

The Prime Minister said that the disorder must be put down at whatever cost. If there were a truce it would be an admission that we were beaten and it might lead to our having to give up Ireland. It was very probable that the number of troops was inadequate but whatever was necessary the Irish Government should get. The first thing was for the Chief Secretary to go over to Ireland and remain there for three weeks in order to get a preliminary view and to reach some provisional conclusions. He could take it that the Cabinet would support any demand to maintain order. Home Rule would be an utter failure unless and until order were restored. On the one hand they had to restore order and ensure the sympathy of moderate people and on the other they ought in Parliament to be proceeding simultaneously with the provision of remedial measures.

Lord French: Would you go so far as to declare war? Mr Bonar Law: That would be a confession of failure. The Prime Minister: You do not declare war against rebels.

The Chief Secretary called attention to an amendment which had been made as required. Orders for deportation to be signed by the Lord Lieutenant, as political head he was responsible to the House of Commons. Lord French stated that he did not want the change to be made owing to the absence of the late Chief Secretary in the South of France. Mr Bonar Law asked whether it was possible to set up an advisory Committee as was done after the Rebellion to examine the evidence on which the men were committed to prison without trial, e.g., a judge and two Members of Parliament.

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The Attorney General pointed out that it was open to these men to lodge an appeal within 7 days but they did not do this because they defied the law.

Mr Bonar Law said that the initiative could be taken by the Irish Government.

The Chief Secretary replied that that would weaken the Irish Executive and would in fact be an English Court supervising the actions of the Irish Executive. He agreed that at this stage it was not possible to declare war.

The Prime Minister said that he did not wish any decision taken until the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary had had time to examine the situation. There were now new Officers,
the Chief Secretary and Gen. Maudey, and they should not be embarrassed nor rushed into decisions by the House of Commons until they had had time to consider the position.

April 30th 1920