CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet, held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 1920, at 12 Noon.

PRESENT:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).

The Right Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P., Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. A. Chamberlain, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. W.S. Churchill, M.P., Secretary of State for War and Air.

The Right Hon. R. Munro, K.C., M.P., Secretary for Scotland.

The Right Hon. T.J. Macnamara, M.P., Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon. H.A.L. Fisher, M.P., President of the Board of Education.

The following were also present:

Mr A. Neal, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport (For Conclusion 7.)

Mr Thomas Jones ......... Acting Secretary.

Lieut.-Col. L. Storr, C.B., Assistant Secretary.
(1) With reference to Cabinet 47 (20), Conclusion 4, the attention of the Cabinet was drawn to the British High Commissioner at Constantinople's telegram No. 926 (R), dated August 16, 1920, stating that Admiral de Robeek had been informed by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief that he was not permitted to give any kind of assistance to the forces of General Wrangel without the sanction of the War Office, and asking that the War Office should be suitably approached on the subject.

Doubt having been expressed as to the meaning of the telegram, it was suggested that reference was possibly made to certain Bulgarian rifles which had been collected and deposited at Constantinople and were temporarily in British charge. In this connection the Cabinet were reminded that instructions had been sent, in accordance with Conclusion 4 of Cabinet 47 (20), that these rifles were not to be moved pending further orders. The French were under the impression that they were entitled to make use of these rifles — a view which was shared by the Military Section of the Naval, Military and Air Council in Paris — and were in all probability proposing to hand them over to General Wrangel. It was clear, however, that the permission of all the Allies was necessary before the rifles could be released; and it was agreed —

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be asked to enquire further into the matter.

It subsequently transpired that the telegram under discussion referred to Medical Supplies.

(2) With reference to Cabinet 33 (20), Appendix I (4), the attention of the Cabinet was further directed to an open communication to the Prime Minister from M. Kameneff, which had appeared in the Press that morning. The Cabinet were informed that evidence existed showing that M. Kameneff and M. Krassin had, during their present mission to London, indulged in propaganda and generally been guilty of conduct
which was not compatible with the conditions under which their Mission had been permitted to proceed to England. It was suggested that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should write to N. Kameneff pointing out that the recent activities of himself and his Mission violated the obligations into which they entered when they came to England, and asking for an explanation. A further proposal was made that a complete dossier should be prepared, disclosing how the Soviet Mission, acting under instructions from the Bolshevist Government, had abused its privileged position, and that this dossier should be published to the world through the medium of a newspaper in a neutral country. In this connection the view was expressed that the time had arrived to take definite proceedings against certain revolutionary organs in this country which were known to be subsidised from Moscow and which constituted a formidable danger to the State, owing to the skilful manner in which revolutionary doctrines were disseminated among the working-classes generally, and the servants of the State in particular.

After some discussion it was agreed:

(a) That it was undesirable that the Soviet Mission should be given its centre at the present moment, and that the Government should wait until the situation in Poland had further developed, when the bona fide or otherwise of the Bolshevist Government would be fully established:

(b) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Home Secretary, should prepare for the approval of the Prime Minister a draft of a communication to the Russian Delegation requiring an explanation of the breaches of the conditions on which they were received in this country.

It was decided after the meeting by the Prime Minister, in consultation with Mr. Bonar Law and the Foreign Secretary, that the actual presentation of the communication to M. Kameneff should be delayed for the present.
With reference to Cabinet 47 (20), Conclusion 3, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the Cabinet that he had been in communication during the last week with the British Ambassador in Paris and with the French Chargé d'Affaires in London in respect of the announcement of the French Government that they intended to support General Wrangel, and that he had just received a letter from Lord Derby on the subject. It appeared that the French Government were conscious of their mistake and wanted to make an amende; and, as the French Government could hardly be expected to apologise or completely to withdraw from their position, Lord Derby, at the instance of M. Paléologue, had asked him (Lord Curzon) to suggest some formula which would meet the case. He had telephoned the previous day to Lord Derby saying that the only practical thing was for the French to recommend the Poles to accept the terms offered, if these terms secured their independence; and, second, that the French should inform General Wrangel that if the terms to the Poles were reasonable and accepted, the French Government would refrain from rendering General Wrangel any further assistance. Lord Curzon then read out two drafts which had been prepared by M. Paléologue (but had not yet been submitted to R. Hilleand) and which had been forwarded by Lord Derby. The first was to the effect that if the Soviet Government offers to Poland reasonable conditions securing the political independence and the ethnographical integrity of their country in accordance with the Lyskne agreement, the French would use all their influence to get Poland to accept. The second draft was in the sense that, in case reasonable terms were obtained at Minsk, the Government of the Republic would use their influence with General Wrangel to get him to accept similar terms, and they would not give him military support unless he had to defend himself against an attack by the Red Army; and, further, that any support that was sent would not be in the form of French troops. These drafts, Lord Curzon thought,
indicated a rather notable advance on the part of the French, having regard to their previous attitude.

Considerable discussion followed, in the course of which it was suggested that the matter should be left for the present where it stood. Events were moving rapidly, and the next few days would prove whether or not the Russians were acting in good faith—a point which had always been strongly disputed by the French. The moment for any attempt to compose the differences between the French and ourselves was not ripe. Moreover, every new declaration merely tended to emphasize the great and radical difference between the respective points of view of the two nations. On the other hand it was pointed out that the formula of M. Paleologue reproduced very closely a sentence in the recent speech of the Prime Minister in Parliament, and that if the French were at once to use their influence with the Poles with a view to inducing them to act in the way suggested by the British Government, this could not fail to have a most favourable effect upon the negotiations shortly to be conducted at Minsk. In support of the former proposition attention was drawn to the general position, and the possible developments during the next two or three weeks. There could be no doubt that the French had always in view their intention ultimately to occupy the Ruhr Valley. The correspondence which had just been communicated to the Cabinet showed no real desire to make amends; it more probably covered a diplomatic manoeuvre the object of which was to appear to defer to the British point of view in respect of Poland in order that, later, this concession might be utilised to induce the British to give way on the Ruhr question. Was it in the British interest at the present moment to try and compose the differences, or to say frankly to the French that the latter had broken several agreements and that the fact must be accepted that a real divergence of view existed? Within the last few days, in despite of the Boulogne agreement and without any reference to the British Government, the French had made a public
communication to the United States Government which emphasized still further this divergence.

The general trend of opinion was that events should not be allowed to take their course for the present, and that Lord Derby should approve neither of the proposed formulae.

The Prime Minister undertook, in the course of his journey through Paris on the following day, to acquaint Lord Derby with the views of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet had under consideration a Paper by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (C.P.-1777) on the subject of the question of a Middle Eastern Department, stating that there appeared to be general agreement, (1) that it was impracticable at present to create a new Ministry for the Middle East, (2) that there was no space in which to house a new Department, (3) that it was impossible to sever from the Foreign Office countries or areas at present under Foreign Office control, (4) that Egypt, the Sudan, Palestine, Arabia, Aden and Mesopotamia should be assigned to a new organisation with a staff specially collected for the purpose, (5) that it was probably desirable that a new Middle East service should be created. The Paper pointed out that if it were impossible to create a new Ministry, the two alternatives remaining were, (a) to appoint a new Parliamentary Secretary, (b) to appoint the existing Parliamentary Secretary as the Head of the new Department, and expressed the view that it was generally agreed that for the time being the said Department must be placed in the Foreign Office. Summed up, the Foreign Secretary's proposals were: (a) that a new Department be created as from October 1 next, (b) that if a new Under-Secretary be not appointed to the Department, Mr Harmsworth be invited to assume charge, (c) that he be given a non- Foreign Office staff, drawn from the countries concerned.

In the course of the discussion which ensued, several Ministers stated that the proposals of the Foreign Secretary were based upon assumptions in which his colleagues did not concur.
It was agreed —

and that the further discussion of the question should be adjourned for the present the existing arrangements should be continued.

INSTRUCTIONS TO SIR PERCY COX.

(5) The Secretary of State for India stated that, in accordance with Conclusion 1 of Finance Committee Minutes 25, Draft Instructions had been prepared for the guidance of Sir Percy Cox, and these had been laid before the Prime Minister.

After a brief discussion it was agreed, at the Prime Minister's suggestion —

(a) That Sir Percy Cox, as High Commissioner, was to endeavour to give effect to the policy of His Majesty's Government in Mesopotamia as publicly declared;

(b) That, subject to this, the Instructions (with the exception of No. 9, which should be eliminated) be approved generally, but that they should be regarded by Sir Percy Cox as intended for his personal use and guidance only and as an indication of His Majesty's Government's conception of the general lines on which he should proceed, and as not intended for publication.

MESOPOTAMIAN RAILWAYS.

(6) The Secretary of State for War asked whether the Cabinet approved of his pushing on the railways in Mesopotamia, the construction of which he had urged as an imperative necessity in various Papers which had been circulated to his colleagues.

It was agreed —

(a) That railway construction in Mesopotamia should be suspended until Sir Percy Cox had returned to that country and had had time to report on the situation;

(b) That the Secretary of State for War should arrange for the necessary accommodations to be constructed in Mesopotamia and Persia for the accommodation and protection of our troops in those countries during the coming winter.

INDUSTRIAL SITUATION ARISING OUT OF THE DECISION OF THE MINERS' FEDERATION TO TAKE A STRIKE BALLOT.

(7) With reference to Conclusion 2 of Finance Committee 27, the Cabinet were informed that the result of the Miners' Strike Ballot would be known on the 30th of the present month, and that on the following day the miners' leaders would meet the Triple Alliance in order to discuss their future action. The ballot would probably result in a
Large majority in favour of a strike, although it was possible that a considerable number of miners were not really anxious to drop work. It seemed unlikely that any big strike could materialise before September 15. The Supply and Transport Committee of the Cabinet, which was charged with the organisation of Government measures to meet a possible strike, was meeting constantly and was actively engaged in making the necessary preparations. Meanwhile, the miners were equally active, on their part, in making arrangements for food supplies and for the distribution of propaganda. Cabinet authority was required for the Propaganda Sub-Committee of the Supply and Transport Committee to start its functions, and also for the provision of accommodation for the Committee in the courtyard behind the Ministry of Education. An exceptionally troublesome and bitter struggle was to be anticipated; in fact, it might turn out to be the crucial contest with Labour, and the Government were bound to make the best possible preparations to meet the crisis.

In reply to a question, the attitude of the Transport Workers and Railwaymen was stated to be at present uncertain.

The Cabinet took note of and approved the following action:

(a) By the Chancellor of the Exchequer, instructing Treasury officials to regard the situation arising out of a big industrial crisis, such as was threatened by the impending coal strike, as comparable to a state of war, and authorising them to make financial provision accordingly;

(b) By the Supply and Transport Committee, appointing the Right Hon. F.G. Kellaway, M.P., an additional member of the Committee, and as the Committee's Chief Civil Commissioner, in the place of Mr. L. Worthington Evans, resigned;

(c) By the President of the Board of Education, releasing to the Propaganda Sub-Committee of the Supply and Transport Committee the premises in the courtyard behind the Ministry of Education.

It was further agreed —

To authorise the Supply and Transport Committee to initiate such preliminary action as might, in their view, be essential in order to meet certain contingencies.
(6) The Cabinet took note of —

(a) The following Conclusions of a Meeting of the Finance Committee of the Cabinet, held on August 12, 1920 (F.C. 27th Minutes):

1. PERSIA AND HISSOPOTAMIA.
   (2) SITUATION ARISING OUT OF THE DECISION OF THE MINERS' FEDERATION TO TAKE A STRIKE BALLOT.
   (3) EXCESS NAVAL EXPENDITURE.
   (4) WORKS IN PALESTINE. (Appendix IV.

(b) The following Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, held in the Leader of the House's Room at the House of Commons on Tuesday, August 10, 1920, at 7 p.m.:—

RUSSIA AND POLAND. (Appendix II).

... ... ...

E. Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1,
August 17, 1920.
FINANCE COMMITTEE No. 7.

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Finance Committee held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1., on Thursday, August 12th, 1920, at 5 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Prime Minister (in the Chair).
The Rt.Hon. The Viscount Milner, G.C. B., Secretary of State for the Colonies.
The Rt.Hon. Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Bart., K.B.E.,

The following were also present:

The Rt.Hon. R. Munro, K.C., K.B.E., Secretary for Scotland. (for Conclusion 3).
Sir Arthur Hirtzel, K.C.B., Assistant Under Secretary, India Office.


Mr. Thomas Jones, Acting Secretary, Cabinet.
Mr. R.B. Howorth, Secretary to the Committee.
(1) The Committee were informed that since the last meeting the situation both in Persia and Mesopotamia had eased considerably. With regard to Persia, the latest telegrams from Mervarain had made the position clearer and demonstrated that the Persian Government honestly intended to summon Parliament at an early date with a view to the ratification of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Similarly, the military situation was brighter, and order was being rapidly restored in Northern Persia. The Persian Government was in need of money, and it was suggested that permission might be given to make small advances, the amount of which might be deducted from the balance of the loan to be made on the ratification of the Agreement. The British forces in Persia should be maintained and if necessary strengthened so as to enable them to assist in the pacification of North Persia. The situation in Mesopotamia was also better, and it was urged that Sir Percy Cox should be sent out without delay with a view to solving the question by giving the inhabitants the kind of Government and ruler they desired. In this connection the Committee were informed that at the Conference at Lympne our difficulties in Mesopotamia had been explained, and the French had been told that, in the event of the Arabs asking for the appointment of Feisal as Emir, it was the intention of the British Government to raise no difficulty in the way of such an appointment. The French had protested very strongly against the adoption of this proposal, and had gone so far as to say that they would regard it as an unfriendly act. It was clear that Feisal's appointment would have to be made by the British Government on their own responsibility and without French concurrence. It was more than possible that Sir Percy Cox would find that different forms of Government were required in different areas in Mesopotamia, and that the Arabs at first might not wish for a single ruler.
Under the proposed Mandate, a period of two years must elapse before the organic law had to be submitted to the League of Nations, and possibly by the expiration of that time opinion in Mesopotamia would have coalesced in favour of Feisal, and French opposition to him might have died down.

The Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff again repeated their strong objections on military grounds to the retention of the British troops in Persia. The proposal that the Persian Parliament should consider the Anglo-Persian Agreement in three months' time was one which afforded no finality, unless, indeed, the Agreement was rejected, when our troops could be withdrawn. If the Agreement was ratified, military occupation must be prolonged for a considerable time, in order that opportunity should be given for the organisation of the Persian forces; and, in this event, under the most favourable conditions withdrawal could not take effect until at least six months from the date of ratification. Not only would it be necessary to provide the troops with proper accommodation during the winter, but they would remain in Persia in great danger from the Bolsheviks or from the local tribes, and it would be most difficult to effect a rescue. If it was decided not to withdraw the troops, then the War Office should be authorised to provide winter accommodation and to arrange for reinforcements sufficiently strong to ensure the security of the troops in Persia until they were withdrawn. More drivers and transport would be required, and it must be remembered that we had no available white troops, and therefore native troops from India must be sent. The balance of native troops over white troops was already very unfavourable, and the native troops thought that they were being exploited.

In reply to a question, Sir Percy Cox stated that the Anglo-Persian Agreement was not unpopular in Persia except
in certain extremist and interested circles. He himself was
doubtful as to the necessity for reinforcements for the troops
in Persia. In his opinion, judging from Mr. Norman's recent
telegrams there was ground to hope that the Persian Parliament
would ratify the Anglo-Persian Agreement in October, with
certain reservations, such as limiting it to 15 years and an
alteration of the preamble, which would not be unacceptable to us.

In the subsequent discussion it appeared that the
number of troops in Persia on ration strength was something
between 10,000 and 13,000 in all, and that these forces were
 costing about £3,500,000 per annum, which, of course, must be
increased by the cost of winter accommodation and of any
reinforcements which it might be necessary to send.

It was pointed out that the evacuation of Persia would
probably mean the setting up of hostile forces on the
Persian-Afghanistan frontier, and possibly endangering the
Persian oilfields. While, no doubt, the proper line of
defence of India was the North-West Frontier, the setting up
of a Bolshevist Government in Persia would undoubtedly react
on Afghanistan.

In reply to a question, Sir Percy Cox said that in his
opinion a separate Department for the administration of
Middle Eastern affairs should be established. He thought
that no existing Department of State could properly do the
work. Until the personnel of the new Department had
settled down, he thought that such personnel should be attached
to the Foreign Office. Pending any arrangements being made,
he assumed that the Secretary of State for India would
continue to take responsibility for Mesopotamia.

(At this point the Experts withdrew.)

After some further discussion, in the course of which
the arguments for and against the evacuation of Persia were
summarised by the Prime Minister, the Committee decided —
the Secretary of State for War dissenting —
(a) That the British forces in Persia should not be withdrawn, but should be maintained at their present strength until the result of the discussion in the Persian Parliament on the question of the ratification of the Anglo-Persian Agreement was known.

(b) That Sir Percy Cox should proceed as soon as possible to Mesopotamia, to take up the duties of high Commissioner at Baghdad.

(c) That the instructions to be given to Sir Percy Cox should be submitted to the Prime Minister for approval before Sir Percy's departure.

At this stage the Minister of Transport, the Home Secretary, the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary for Scotland arrived from a meeting of the Supply and Transport Committee.

**SITUATION**

With reference to Cabinet 45 (3o), Conclusion 2, the Finance Committee were informed of the decision just reached by the Miners' Federation to take a ballot in favour of a strike, and, in the event of a strike, to appeal to the other members of the Triple Alliance for support. The ballot papers would be in by August 31st, when the Prime Minister would probably be approached with a view to seeing whether the Government would make any further offer. In the event of no offer being made, a strike might be anticipated in the first or second week of September. The determining factors which had influenced the Federation were, no doubt, the decision with regard to the Bread subsidy, the Irish troubles and the decision to increase the railway fares.

It was suggested that the moment had now arrived when the strike operations of the Supply and Transport Committee should begin. It was also represented that Parliament should be invited forthwith to give the Government powers to deal with the situation by passing the Emergency Powers Bill.

The Chairman of the Supply and Transport Committee said that his Committee could do nothing further until open action could be taken.
It was pointed out that without legislation it would not be possible to make arrangements for pumping the mines and maintaining the electric light stations. The Government were in a weaker position in many respects than on the occasion of the railway strike, and it might be necessary to bring back 10 or 12 Battalions from Ireland and to withdraw the troops on the Rhine, except, perhaps, one Battalion. Moreover two white Battalions might be withdrawn from Constantinople. On the other hand, it was stated that any attempt at the moment to pass the Emergency Powers Bill would provoke most violent opposition from Labour, and would do much to precipitate the crisis. Further, the adjournment of Parliament had been postponed for a specific purpose, and it might be difficult to justify keeping the House sitting for another week to deal with the Bill. It would be better to rely on the inherent powers of the Crown and obtain indemnity from Parliament afterwards. If necessary, Parliament could always be urgently summoned when the crisis had arisen, to pass the emergency legislation.

The Finance Committee decided to recommend to the Cabinet:

(a) That no emergency legislation should be proceeded with before the adjournment of Parliament;

(b) That, in the event of further powers being required, the Cabinet should consider later whether to exercise such powers and obtain an indemnity thereafter, or to summon Parliament with a view to the passage of the Emergency Powers Bill;

(c) That in the meantime the Supply and Transport Committee should not take open measures to meet the crisis until the matter was further considered by the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister undertook to consider the selection of suitable personnel for the conduct of Government propaganda.
(3) With reference to Finance Committee, 23rd Minutes, Conclusion 8, the Committee had before them a Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Paper F.C.-47) relative to the Dockyard discharges.

It was agreed —

(a) That the Dockyards should arrange their discharges on the basis of securing a discharge of not less than 80 a week from now until the end of October, 1920;

(b) That the question should, if necessary, be further considered by the Finance Committee as soon as possible after the Recess.

(4) The Committee had under consideration a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War (Paper C.P.-1669) giving the minimum War Office requirements for land purchase and accommodation in Palestine for the coming winter.

On the understanding that the expenditure would be limited to essentials necessary for the health and comfort of the troops, the Committee decided —

To approve the proposals specified in paragraph 8 of the Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.

August 12th, 1920.
MINUTES of a CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS held in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons, on TUESDAY, 10th AUGUST, 1919 at 7 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Right Hon. D. Lloyd George, C.M., M.P. (in the Chair)
Prime Minister,

The Rt. Hon. A. Bonar Law, M.P.
(Lord Privy Seal)

The Rt. Hon. A.J. Balfour, C.M., M.P.
(Lord President of the Council)

The Rt. Hon. W.S. Churchill, M.P.
Secretary of State for War & Air

The Rt. Hon. A. Balfour, M.P.
(Vice-President of the Council)
Secretary of State for War & Air

The Rt. Hon. H.A. L. Fisher, M.P.,
Kedleston, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., President of the Board of
Education.

Sir L. Worthington Evans, Bt., M.P.
The Rt. Hon. C. Addison, M.P.,
Minister of Health.

The Rt. Hon. J. Austen Chamberlain,
M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Rt. Hon. H. Asquith, M.P.,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., Secretary of
State for the Colonies.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Philip Kerr, C.H.
Lieut.-Col. L. Storr, C.B., Assistant Secretary.

The Prime Minister said that he had hurriedly summoned
a conference of his colleagues as he had just received a
communication from M. Kameneff which contained the terms of the
Armistice and the preliminaries for peace which would be sub­
mitt ed at Minsk by the Russian Delegates. In making this
communication M. Kameneff made the reservation that these terms
might be supplemented by details of secondary moment. (The
Prime Minister then read out to the Conference the communication
from M. Kameneff, Appendix 1.)
The Prime Minister, continuing, said that the terms were not nearly so severe as had been imposed by the Allies upon Germany and Austria, and he did not think that Great Britain could make war in order to secure better conditions than those. There were two things which required decision. First, was this communication to be submitted to France, with or without an expression of opinion by His Majesty's Government? If it was decided to transmit it, what comment should the British Government make? Second, should it be sent to Poland, and, if so, should the Government state their opinion of the terms? The Leader of the House had another difficulty to put to the Conference, but this might be discussed later; it was that Asquith and Mr. Clynes had both pressed (a) that the League of Nations should be asked to decide the terms of Peace between Soviet Russia and Poland, and (b) that the Cabinet should come to no final decision without consulting Parliament again.

If the terms were communicated to Paris there was the danger that they would be negatived by the French Government. The French almost invariably adopted the negative attitude in the first instance. Their Representatives had come to the Lympne Conference with the idea of asking the British Delegates to agree to the publication of a proclamation of a most violent and impossible character. France was passionately anti-bolshevist, as the French had had experience of communism. The present case had, however, nothing to do with communism.

It was generally agreed, however, that it was impossible to communicate the terms to Poland without submitting them first or simultaneously to the French Government. The French were apprehensive that the terms might include the establishment of a Soviet Government in Poland with Marshal Pilsudski at the head of it, and they would undoubtedly be relieved
to find that the present communication contained no such conditions.

As regards the terms themselves it was generally agreed that they were as reasonable as could be expected, but that certain items, viz. the future strength of the Polish Army and the final frontiers might require further examination. A great cause of satisfaction was that the conditions secured the independence of Poland and - assuming the bona-fides of the Soviet Government and its delegates - it was felt, in London - the British Government could not, without a serious breach of faith, now proceed with the hostile measures contemplated at the Lympne Conference, in the event of affairs taking a sinister turn.

On the other hand it was strongly urged that it was essential for the Allies to contemplate the possibility of bad faith on the part of the Soviets, and attention was drawn to the condition which laid down that all arms over and above such as may be required for the needs of the reduced Army, as well as of the Civic Militia, shall be handed over to Soviet Russia and the Ukraine, and it was suggested that this might mean that the arms were required for a Red Army in Poland.

After a further short discussion, it was decided:

(a) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should draft a telegram to the British Minister at Warsaw, giving him the text of the Soviet terms and instructing him to communicate them immediately to the Polish Government, with the comment that His Majesty's Government are of opinion that provided these terms are bona-fide offered at Minsk and that substantial addition is made to them, they would appear to leave the independence of Poland within her ethnographic frontiers unimpaired; the British Government could not assume responsibility of taking hostile action against Russia if the conditions now offered in their general substance were refused; although the Poles were, of course, at liberty to secure by negotiation better terms if they could.
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should similarly communicate the terms to the French Government through the British Ambassador in Paris, stating that the document had been telegraphed to Warsaw and that the British Minister at that capital had been instructed in the sense of (c) above; that the Cabinet, after the Debate in the House of Commons that day, were unanimous in thinking that public opinion in Parliament and in the country would not justify the British Government in undertaking hostilities against Russia in order to secure better terms; and expressing the hope that the French Government would be disposed to give similar instructions to their Minister at Warsaw.
The Prime Minister said that the next matter on which he desired to consult his colleagues was this. Two questions had been raised by the leader of the Liberal Party and by Mr. Clynes, on behalf of the Labour Party, in the Debate in the House of Commons that afternoon.

The first of these questions required an immediate answer. Mr. Asquith had urged that, from the point of view of the Liberal Party and still more so from that of the House of Commons, when the present negotiations terminated, Parliament should have an opportunity of reviewing the situation before any warlike steps were taken. The other suggestion of Mr. Asquith was that the whole question ought to be referred to an impartial and representative Tribunal and that if the present negotiations broke down, the machinery of the League of Nations should be brought in to deal with the situation. The first suggestion required an answer that evening. The second could be deferred until the following day. Mr. Lloyd George said that he himself was afraid of the very serious effect if, owing to the strength of Labour opposition as supported by Mr. Asquith, he had to summon Parliament again. The Bolsheviks would be certain to make capital out of it and he himself was opposed to giving any such undertaking, at any rate that night.

It was pointed out, on the other hand, that Labour was in a very irritable frame of mind at present, and that pressure outside Parliament might compel the Government to give some such undertaking as Mr. Asquith had suggested. The suggestion, indeed, had been made in such a way as to place the Government in a false position. It made it appear as if the Government asked to be the sole judges of the question, and to be empowered to act arbitrarily...
and thus to impair the authority of Parliament. This view would certainly be shared by a considerable number of the Government supporters, and a new cry would be raised that the House of Commons was not only tame, but that it was flouted and ignored. The Government would probably be in a stronger position if a reply were given in the sense that while they hoped that there would be no breakdown in the negotiations, yet if this unfortunately should occur, the House would at once be summoned.

The view was expressed that it might be as well to challenge a division and take advantage of a favourable vote in the House that evening - although that vote could not be unanimous - in order to secure general approval of the Government policy. There was no doubt that the atmosphere in and outside Parliament was dead against a new war, and people were greatly afraid of being dragged into fresh hostilities of any kind. It was most important that the Government should carry Parliament with them, and that they should not play into the hands of agitators. It was difficult for the Government to ask for a blank cheque, and to refuse to give the undertaking sought by Mr. Asquith might create a bad impression; such a refusal might stimulate opposition in the country and increase the difficulties that were to be anticipated at Minsk. It was suggested that while the Government might be perfectly justified in retaining their right to persevere in their warlike preparations in anticipation of the worst, they were not justified in going beyond those preparations without consulting Parliament.

It was generally felt that the reply to Mr. Asquith might be somewhat on the following lines --

"The Debate to-day in the House shows that if the contingency arises that Polish independence is... threatened
threatened the Government have the support of the House. The Government could not undertake to take no action, whatever emergency might arise.

It was quite possible, that, in the event of a but crisis, immediate action might be necessary, in at once summoned and that case the House would be asked later to accord its approval."

It was decided:

That the Prime Minister or the Leader of the House should that evening reply to the effect that he hoped that the Government would not be pressed that night to give the undertaking asked for by the leaders of the Opposition. If the Opposition were still of the same opinion on Thursday, they might put the same question again.

2 Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
11th August, 1920.
APPENDIX I.

M. Kameneff presents his compliments to the right Hon. Mr. Lloyd George, and begs to communicate to him the terms of the armistice and preliminaries for peace which will be submitted at Minsk by the Russian delegates. M. Kameneff makes the reservation that these terms may be supplemented by details of secondary moment.

The following are the terms of the armistice and preliminaries for peace with Poland:

1. The strength of the Polish army shall be reduced to one annual contingent up to 50,000 men, and the command and administration of the army to an aggregate of 10,000 men.

2. The demobilisation shall take place within one month.

3. All arms over and above such as may be required for the needs of the army, as reduced above, as well as of the civic militia, shall be handed over to Soviet Russia and the Ukraine.

4. All war industries shall be demobilised.

5. No foreign help.

6. No troops or war material shall be allowed to come from abroad.

7. The line Volkovisk-Bielostok-Grajewo shall be placed fully at the disposal of Russia for commercial transit from and to the Baltic.

8. The families of all Polish citizens killed, wounded or incapacitated in the war shall be given lands free.

On the other hand,

1. Parallel with the demobilisation, the Russian and Ukrainian troops shall withdraw from the Polish front.

2. Upon the termination of these operations the number of Russian troops on the Russian frontier line shall be considerably reduced, and fixed at a figure to be agreed upon.
(3) The armistice line shall be the status quo, but not further east than the one indicated in the note of Lord Curzon of Kedleston of July 20. The Polish army shall withdraw to a distance of 50 versts (53 miles) from that line, the zone between the two lines being neutral.

(4) The final frontier of the independent State of Poland shall in the main be identical with the lines indicated in the Note of Lord Curzon of Kedleston of July 20, but additional territory shall be given to Poland on the east in the regions of Bialystok and Kholm.
IRISH SITUATION
IMPRISONMENT OF LORD MAYOR OF CORK.

Notes of Meeting held at 10 Downing Street,
August 25th, 1920, at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Mr Balfour, Mr Shortt, Mr Churchill, Sir E.Blackwell,
Mr Philip Kerr, Mr J.C.Davidson.

Mr Shortt explained that the situation had become serious in connection with the case of Mr McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork. He explained that there was a growing demand on all sides for his release from Brixton Prison and practically the whole Press took this line. That in addition to public opinion there were special circumstances which made a strong case for his release. In the first place it was a fact and was known to the public that the prisoner had been described by the Irish Government as a political prisoner, in the second place owing to his physical condition he was not amenable to forcible feeding, and in the third place, the Home Secretary laid stress on the fact that the first act of the very representative body of men under the Chairmanship of Sir Nugent Everard, calling itself the Peace Conference, which met yesterday in Dublin, had been the passing of an unanimous resolution urging the Government to release immediately the Lord Mayor of Cork. The Labour Party also, he pointed out, were agitating for his release.

Mr Balfour pointed out that in logic the case against his release was indisputable and that to give in to hunger-striking meant paralysis of the law.

Sir E.Blackwell drew attention to the fact that there was a very distinct line of demarcation in the public mind between a political and criminal prisoner: that it would be hopeless to attempt to apply the cat and mouse act in this case as McSwiney had stated quite definitely that he would only begin to eat again in receipt of a statement in writing that he would be unconditionally released. He further pointed out that the position of
of the prisoner was extremely critical: that a specialist had been called in yesterday who had confirmed the prison doctor's diagnosis that what had hitherto been latent had become active tuberculosis.

At this point Mr Churchill entered the meeting. Considerable discussion took place with regard to the effect on the country of the apparent climb down of the Government if he were released, in the course of which it was made clear by Mr Shortt that it would not be possible to make public what was known of his criminal activities and that many specious defences might be put up for his unlawful possession of the key of the Police Code of which he had been convicted.

General regret was expressed that no representative of the Irish Executive was available to take part in the discussion. It was finally decided that an urgent telegram (Copy attached) should be sent to General Macready asking for his opinion as to the effect in Ireland of the release of McSwiney. It was decided that if General Macready expressed strong views against his release then the Cabinet decision should stand.

This Note was taken by Mr Davidson and not circulated except to Mr Balfour, and I think Mr Shortt.

T.J.

2nd September 1920