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SECRET.

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C A B I N E T 90 (21).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Tuesday, 6th December, 1921, at 12.30 p.m.

PRESENT:-

THE PRIME MINISTER (IN THE CHAIR).

The Right Hon. A. Chamberlain, M.P., Lord Privy Seal.

The Right Hon. Sir Robert Horne, G.B.E., K.C., M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon. E. Shortt, K.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

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

The Right Hon. W.S. Churchill, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Right Hon. E.S. Montagu, M.P. Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Bart., M.P., Secretary of State for War.

The Right Hon. S. Baldwin, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon. Sir Alfred Mond, Bart., M.P., Minister of Health.

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

The Right Hon. Sir A. Griffith-Boscawen, M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

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

The Right Hon. Sir Hamar Greenwood, Bart., K.C., M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland.

The Right Hon. Sir Gordon Hewart, K.C., M.P., Attorney-General.

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:-

The Right Hon. The Viscount FitzAlan of Derwent, G.C.V.O., D.S.O., Viceroy of Ireland.

Colonel Leslie Wilson, C.M.G., D.S.O. M.P., Joint Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury.

Mr. Lionel Curtis.

Sir Edward Grigg, K.C.V.O., C.M.G.

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

Mr. R.B. Howorth.....Assistant Secretary.

THE IRISH
SETTLEMENT.

(1) With reference to Cabinet 89 (21), Conclusion 1, the Cabinet had before them a copy of the Articles of Agreement (C.P.3529) which had been signed at 2.30 a.m. that morning by the British and Irish Delegations.

THE PRIME MINISTER informed his colleagues that in his opinion to-day was one of the greatest days in the history of the British Empire. Early this morning a Treaty of Peace had been signed between the representatives of the British and Irish peoples. The disputes and friction between the two peoples had been a source of weakness, not merely to Great Britain but to the Empire and a permanent settlement of the Irish problem would enormously increase Great Britain's prestige in the world and would show that she was still capable of overcoming almost insuperable difficulties. A just and righteous settlement of the Irish question was vitally necessary at the present moment and would have the most beneficial effects in America and elsewhere.

While some difficulties still remained, the greatest had been overcome. Among the latter might be mentioned - (i) the reluctance of the Irish extremists to swear allegiance to the King and to repudiate an Irish Republic; (ii) the difficulty of inducing people with hereditary dislike of the British Empire and all that it represented to agree to enrol themselves as members of the Empire; (iii) to make some settlement acceptable by Ulster, - the rock upon which all previous efforts had been shattered.

For the first time in the history of Ireland the extremists had accepted a situation in which it was open to Ulster to contract out of a united Ireland. She would under the Articles of Agreement have one month in which to make up her mind and it must be noted that the British representatives had adhered absolutely to the pledges given to Ulster. Ulster, under the

arrangements would not be coerced, but if she desired to exercise the option of remaining with the United Kingdom, then she must be prepared to share the burdens and responsibilities of the United Kingdom for better or worse.

If Ulster remained with Great Britain, it would be necessary to fix her boundaries afresh and it had been represented that a Boundary Commission would possibly give Ulster more than she would lose.

The terms of the Oath to be taken by Members of the Parliament of the Irish Free State were remarkable and were better in many respects than the terms of the Oath of Allegiance ordinarily required in Great Britain.

The Prime Minister informed the Cabinet of the difficulties which had been experienced with the Irish Representatives on the previous evening, and it was only at the very end that those representatives had eventually agreed to the terms now incorporated in C.P.3529.

In conclusion the Prime Minister stated that speaking for himself and for his colleagues on the Irish Committee he desired to say how deeply indebted they all felt to their colleagues in the Cabinet for the absolute trust and loyalty which had been displayed during the negotiations. Success would have been impossible but for the absolute confidence which the Cabinet had reposed in the British Representatives.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he wished to express the unanimous feeling of gratitude which filled every member of the Cabinet

towards the Prime Minister and his colleagues for the part which they had played in the recent negotiations. The settlement of the Irish difficulty was one of the most remarkable events in the history of the British Empire and it represented an astonishing victory for the Empire which would have incalculable effects throughout the whole world and in particular would remove a dark cloud which had hung for years over Great Britain's relations with the United States of America. The most cordial thanks of the Cabinet were due to the Prime Minister and his colleagues who had given months of anxious thought and time to this problem, had shown unlimited patience and forbearance, had maintained an unfailing fidelity to the pledges given and had shown throughout indomitable courage. All would, he felt sure, agree that the success attained was mainly attributable to the skill, wisdom, ability and foresight displayed by the Prime Minister, and he, Lord Curzon was proud to have the privilege on this occasion of expressing the views of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed:-

- (i) to express their entire approval of the settlement effected and of the attitude adopted by the British Representatives throughout the negotiations, and
- (ii) to associate themselves with the remarks made by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

IRISH
 AGREEMENT.
 Parliamentary
 Arrangements.

(2.) In the course of the preceding discussion, reference was made to the fact that the Articles of Agreement were to be submitted forthwith by His Majesty's Government for the approval of Parliament and by the Irish representatives to a Meeting summoned for the purpose and the members elected to sit in the House of Commons for Southern Ireland. The latter Meeting would take place in about seven days time and it was urged that as evidence of good faith the British Parliament should be summoned immediately for the sole purpose of ratifying the Articles of Agreement.

It was suggested that the State Opening of Parliament should on this occasion be made as impressive as possible and that Companies from all the Regiments of Guards with massed bands should be stationed in the neighbourhood of the Houses of Parliament.

The Cabinet were informed that His Majesty the King was overjoyed with the result of the negotiations and that it was His Majesty's intention to come specially to London to-morrow for the Meeting of the Privy Council for the summoning of Parliament.

The Cabinet agreed:-

(i) That a Committee composed of -

The Prime Minister (Chairman)
 The Secretary of State for Foreign
 Affairs,
 The Secretary of State for War,
 The Secretary of State for the Colonies,
 Viscount FitzAlan,
 The First Commissioner of Works

Lt. Col. Walker (Secretary)

should make arrangements in connection with the State Opening of Parliament.

(ii) That in order to mark the very special occasion the Clerk to the Privy Council should be requested to summon to the Meeting of the Privy Council to-morrow all the Members of the Cabinet, and the Viceroy.

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TION.

liamentary
cedure.

(3) The Cabinet were informed that a suggestion had been made that Parliament should be summoned to meet on Wednesday, December 14th for the sole purpose of approving or disapproving the Articles of Agreement, This would be in accordance with the precedent set at the time of the Union. It was contemplated that after an address in reply had been made to His Majesty's speech, Resolutions would be introduced in the House of Commons and subsequently in the House of Lords and on their passage through both Houses a joint address would be presented to His Majesty expressing approval of the Articles of Agreement. Parliament would then be prorogued and not adjourned.

It was pointed out that under this procedure there might be two debates, one on the King's speech and a second on the Resolutions. Moreover it would be difficult to prevent other subjects being discussed. A suggestion was then made which met with considerable support that the Resolutions should be introduced simultaneously into the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

It was then pointed out that if the precedent of the Union Resolution was followed it would be very difficult to get the Resolutions passed before Christmas and it was suggested that separate Resolutions were not really necessary and that the address in reply to His Majesty's Speech could be drafted in such a form as to obviate the need for separate Resolutions.

The Cabinet agreed --

To request the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to consider the question of Parliamentary procedure and to decide on the best course to adopt, having regard to the considerations indicated in the discussion.

~~IRISH INTERNEES.~~ 4. ~~The Cabinet were informed that at the present~~
~~moment~~ there were about 3,000 men interned in Ireland, against whom no charge had been made, and that it would be most difficult to keep them in prison throughout the winter. The proposal, had, therefore, been made that directly the Articles of Agreement had been approved by the British Parliament, and ratified by the Irish Parliament, H.M. The King should be advised to order the release of the internees.

The Cabinet agreed --

- (1) That H.M. The King should not be advised to release the Irish internees until after Dail Eireann had ratified the Articles of Agreement;
- (2) That special consideration would have to be given later on to the question of Irish prisoners in connection with any possible amnesty legislation which might be necessary.

5. The attention of the Cabinet was drawn to criticism which might be expected on the lines that the settlement now effected might equally have been reached some time ago. It was generally agreed, however, that a year ago Sinn Fein would not have entertained or even agreed to discuss proposals similar to those which the Irish Representatives had now signed, and that the change in the attitude of Sinn Fein was mainly attributable to the rough treatment to which the Irish extremists had been subjected during the last twelvemonths, and which had brought home to the men in the field the need for some equitable compromise.

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THANKS TO THE
 CHIEF SECRETARY
 FOR IRELAND.

The Prime Minister, on behalf of his colleagues, warmly congratulated the Chief Secretary for Ireland on the able and courageous manner in which he had throughout discharged the very difficult and disagreeable duties entrusted to him; but for the way in which the decisions of the Cabinet had been enforced by the Irish Executive, and particularly by the Chief Secretary, the present settlement would never have come about. The Cabinet unanimously endorsed the views expressed by the Prime Minister.

THE PROVISIONAL
GOVERNMENT FOR
SOUTHERN IRELAND.

6. The Cabinet agreed --

That the Chief Secretary for Ireland and his advisers should consult together forthwith on the arrangements necessary for setting up a Provisional Government in Southern Ireland, in the event of the acceptance by Dail Eireann of the Articles of Agreement.

SIGNING OF THE
ARTICLES OF
AGREEMENT.

7. The Cabinet were informed that the Irish Representatives were anxious that the Articles of Agreement should bear the word "Treaty" in the heading.

The Cabinet agreed --

That there was no objection to this proposal.

PUBLICATION OF THE
ARTICLES OF
AGREEMENT.

8. After the Cabinet had been informed that Sir James Craig would receive the Articles of Agreement about mid-day to-day, it was agreed --

- (1) That the Articles of Agreement should be given to the Press this afternoon, for publication in to-morrow's papers; and
- (2) That in his speech this evening the Lord Privy Seal should announce that the Articles had been signed this morning by all the Irish and British Representatives, and that the British Representatives had signed with the unanimous approval of the Cabinet.

NOTIFICATION OF
THE ARTICLES
OF AGREEMENT TO
THE DOMINIONS,
ETC.

9. The Cabinet agreed —

That a Draft Summary of the Articles of Agreement should be prepared and submitted to the Departments concerned, with a view to despatch to H.R.H. Prince of Wales, Mr. Balfour, the Viceroy of India and the Dominion Premiers respectively.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.

6th December, 1921.