CABINET 23 (22).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in Mr. Chamberlain's Room, House of Commons, S.W., on Wednesday, April 5th, 1922, at 4.15 p.m.

PRESENT:

THE PRIME MINISTER (In the Chair).

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

Capt. The Right Hon. F.E. Guest, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.P., Secretary of State for Air. (For Conclusion 2).

Sir John Shuckburgh, K.C.M.G., C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary, Colonial Office (For Conclusion 2).

Mr. T.E. Lawrence, Colonial Office. (For Conclusion 2).


Mr. Thomas Jones .................................................. Principal Assistant Secretary, Cabinet.
(1) With reference to Cabinet 22 (22), Conclusion 3, the Secretary of State for the Colonies made a statement on the subject of the general position in Ireland (Appendix).

In view of the forthcoming departure of the Prime Minister and several of his Cabinet colleagues, Mr Churchill asked for some general guidance as to the attitude to be taken up by the Cabinet in the not inconceivable contingency of the proclamation of an Irish Republic. He also read a letter from Lord Midleton, describing the difficult situation of Southern Unionists in existing conditions.

Mr Churchill indicated that the serious situation he had depicted might be exaggerated, but, in the circumstances of the Prime Minister's imminent departure, he had felt it necessary to inform the Cabinet of all the difficulties and dangers of the situation.

There followed a general discussion as to the policy to be adopted in the contingency contemplated.

One of the main difficulties of the situation was realised to arise from the fact that Mr Arthur Griffith and Mr Michael Collins considered it vital and indispensable to the success of the policy of the Treaty to avoid striking the first blow against the republicans, or any preparatory steps which might be regarded as provocative. Any British military or police support at the present stage would prove disastrous to the Provisional Government.

It was pointed out that the present position of weakness in which the Provisional Government was placed, and which gave widespread opportunities to the disorderly elements in the population, resulted directly from the insistence of the Provisional Government on the withdrawal of British forces, which they had failed to replace by forces on which they could rely.

Not reproduced, owing to its great secrecy.
There was general approval of the Prime Minister's proposition that the British Government could not allow the republican flag to fly in Ireland. A point might come when it would be necessary to tell Mr Collins that if he was unable to deal with the situation the British Government would have to do so.

Some discussion took place as to the expediency of exerting economic pressure in the contingency contemplated, and, more particularly, as to whether it should take the form of a technical blockade. The Cabinet were informed that the question had been examined by a technical Sub-Committee, which had come to the conclusion that, if foreign countries were not to take advantage of the situation to exploit their own trade with Ireland and to some extent to render our economic pressure nugatory, a technical blockade was the only suitable machinery.

After considerable discussion the Cabinet agreed —

(a) To approve the instructions read by the Secretary of State for War to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Ireland prescribing the action to be taken by him in the event of the proclamation of a Republic in Ireland (Appendix II):

(b) To approve the issue to the Provisional Government of Ireland of the further consignments of arms asked for by them, as recommended by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff:

(c) That the Secretary of State for the Colonies should write to the Provisional Government of Ireland, formally calling attention to the very serious state of affairs in Ireland, and asking for information as to how they proposed to deal with the situation:

(d) That, in order to provide for the personal safety of the Viceroy, who is at present guarded only by the Dublin Metropolitan Constabulary — not a reliable force against an attack by the Irish Republican Army — the Secretary of State for the Colonies should summon the Viceroy to London, ostensibly for purposes of consultation:
(6) That a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence should be appointed to consider the situation and the naval, military, and air measures required to meet certain contingencies which might arise out of the present situation; the said contingencies to be specified by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

IRELAND (2) With reference to Cabinet 6 (22), Conclusion 10, Compensation Commission

the Cabinet -

Approved the appointment of Lord Shaw of Dunfermline as Chairman of the Commission which is to deal with claims for compensation in respect of injuries sustained in the recent conflict in Ireland.

(Paper C.P. 3649)
(5) With reference to Cabinet 13 (22), Conclusion 2, the Cabinet had before them the following documents:

- Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, circulating translation of a letter from King Feisal to Sir Percy Cox, dated February 23, 1922 (Paper G.P.-5903);
- Paraphrase Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq (Paper G.P.-5923);
- Paraphrase Telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Paper G.P.-3924);
- Paraphrase Telegram from the High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Paper G.P.-3925).

The Secretary of State for the Colonies read to the Cabinet telegrams which he had recently exchanged with Sir Percy Cox on the question of Feisal's attitude (a) to Article V of the proposed Treaty with Iraq, and (b) to the Mandate of the League of Nations (Papers G.P.-3923, and G.P.-3924). From the correspondence it appeared that Sir Percy Cox is of opinion that the Foreign Office form of Article V "would injure Feisal's prestige vitally" (Paper G.P.-3903). In addition to the difficulty on this point, Feisal had put forward a request for the formal abrogation of the Mandate, and was not satisfied with the absence of all reference to the mandatory authority in the preamble of the Treaty. He (Mr Churchill) had discussed this point with Sir Arthur Balfour and Mr Fisher, and they were all agreed that to accede to Feisal's request would raise serious international difficulties.

Mr Churchill, continuing, said that there were two courses open to the Cabinet:

(i) To go to the League of Nations and say frankly what the position is — that His Majesty's Government had faithfully carried out the spirit of the Mandate, ask their approval to the last paragraph in Sir Percy Cox's telegram (Paper G.P.-3924) and postpone the conclusion of the Treaty in the meantime.

(ii) To go to the League of Nations and say frankly what the position is — that His Majesty's Government had faithfully carried out the spirit of the Mandate, ask their approval to the last paragraph in Sir Percy Cox's telegram (Paper G.P.-3924) and postpone the conclusion of the Treaty in the meantime.
(ii) To send Faisal a firm telegram complaining of his action in hastily dismissing his ministers without consulting the High Commissioner, and stating that if he is not prepared to go on with the Treaty with Article V revised in his favour we would drop Treaty negotiations altogether. This alternative could be pushed still further, and we could state that we would drop both the Treaty and the Mandate and evacuate Iraq.

On the whole, he preferred the former alternative. Faisal wanted the closest relations with us, but not the Mandate, and in fact the Mandate was of no help to us.

The Prime Minister asked had the subject been discussed with the French Government? It was important that we should march in step with France. He was not sure that we wanted the Mandate, and he did not see what we gained by it.

The President of the Board of Education stated that Faisal was clearly anxious for the rights of representation in this country. Could we not say that we would grant these rights if he accepted the Mandate?

The Lord Privy Seal suggested that we might say in the Treaty that we were prepared to ask the League of Nations to substitute the Treaty for the Mandate.

The President of the Board of Education stated that the Treaty was not inconsistent with the Mandate. It was important to remember that the United States Government, basing themselves on the ground that they had helped to win the War, were making difficulties about the Mandates to Iraq and Palestine, and the Lord President of the Council was strongly against our risking a quarrel with the United States on the subject. It should be possible, after the issue of the Mandate, to go later on to the League of Nations, pointing out that Iraq had achieved the status of an independent nation and that the Mandate ought to be renounced. There would be difficulty with the League of Nations in carrying out Mr Chamberlain's suggestion.
In reply to a question, Sir John Shuckburgh and Mr Lawrence agreed that if the Treaty were not proceeded with it was unlikely that disturbances would take place unless possibly in the event of the resignation of the Prime Minister on the plea that we were again attempting to enslave Iraq.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies read the draft of a reply prepared by the Foreign Office, to Sir Percy Cox's telegram (Appendix III).

The Prime Minister read to the Cabinet a letter he had received from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who was unable to be present (Appendix IV).

The Secretary of State for the Colonies pointed out that on the Foreign Office version of Article V Feisal would have a right to appoint an Agent in London.

The Cabinet agreed —

That the Secretary of State for the Colonies should telegraph to Sir Percy Cox to the effect that we were prepared to conclude a Treaty with Article V amended in the sense of the Colonial Office version, that we were not prepared formally to abrogate the Mandate; and that unless we had Feisal's active co-operation we should have no alternative but to contemplate the evacuation of Iraq.
(4) The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum by the
Patronage Secretaries to the Treasury, with a covering note
by the Lord Privy Seal, dealing with a Bill to amend Section
II of the Coming Act, 1885 (Paper C.1. -3918).

The Cabinet agreed —

To postpone the discussion of the Memorandum until the views of the Lord
Chancellor on the Bill had been ascertained.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.
April 5, 1983.
Mr. T. Jones.

Mr. Churchill has approved of this summary of his note on Ireland being annexed to the Cabinet Minute.

J.A.C.

11.4.22
COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

SUB-COMMITTEE ON IRELAND.

NOTE ON THE SITUATION IN IRELAND.

(Summary of Note by Mr. Churchill)

The situation in Ireland has now taken a turn in which various important contingencies must be considered. There is no reason to doubt the good faith of the Provisional Government nor the good will of the Treaty Party who support them in the Dail. There is every reason to believe that the great mass of the people in Ireland would gladly vote for the Treaty and the Free State. On the other hand the Irish Republican Army, which we have not recognised, but to which we have been forced to hand over a number of barracks (on the assurance that it would obey the Provisional Government) now appears to be largely unreliable, and the Provisional Government appears to be incapable of withstanding the extremists.

2. Upon review of all the circumstances, it seems clear that there may be a strong effort to overthrow the present Provisional Government before the elections under the Treaty can take place in Ireland.

3. It must be understood that we should not recognise or parley with an Irish Republican Government in any circumstances; and that the mere fact of its being brought into being would constitute a state of war between it and the British Empire.

4. His Majesty's Government stand fast by the Treaty as their full and final offer, neither adding to nor detracting from those provisions.
5. It is imperative that the action we should take in the various foreseen or imaginable contingencies should now be carefully thought out by the military, naval and aviation authorities.

6. A coup d'état might take one of at least three possible forms:

(1) A coup d'état might be made in Dublin with the object of forcibly overthrowing the Provisional Government and setting up a Republican Government. In that contingency the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief will at once proclaim martial law, attack the Republican Government and seize all persons taking part in the conspiracy for its establishment. This should be done irrespective of the view taken by the Provisional Government. The present garrison of Dublin is believed to be adequate for all purposes so far as Dublin and its immediate surroundings are concerned. It can be reinforced with great rapidity from England.

(2) A Republican Government might be set up outside Dublin. In that event we should at once call upon the Provisional Government to take effective steps to wage war upon the Republican forces. Such a coup d'état would open up the following alternatives:

(a) It might be resisted by the Provisional Government and other loyal elements. In that event an endeavour should be made to rally the North and all elements in the country favourable to the Treaty on one side and form an army out of......
of them wherewith to march against and attack the Republican forces. It is not improbable that the North would assist, but it is doubtful if the Provisional Government would consent to fight alongside the North for the Treaty.

(b) A coup d'état in the provinces, on the other hand, might not be met by an effective protest on the part of the Provisional Government and other loyal elements. If the whole of the twenty-six counties quietly accepted the Republic and no serious attempt were made to resist it, we should be confronted with a different situation.

There would not then be civil war between the Treaty Party and the Republicans, but only a Republic in which the people of the whole country will have acquiesced, and in all probability civil war between Northern Ireland and the Southern Republic. In that event the British Army should not invade except where convenient the territories of the Republic.

Dublin and possibly certain other ports should be held. Flying columns should attack the centres of the Republican Government wherever set up, but speaking broadly there should be no permanent occupation of towns in Southern Ireland. For the protection of Ulster the British Army should also hold the best military line in the North irrespective of the Ulster boundary (presumably the line from Dundalk to Ballyshannon).

7. Aerodromes should, presumably, be established both in the North and in the neighbourhood of Dublin,
in order that hostile concentration might be dealt with from the air or retaliatory measures taken in case of aggressive attack upon the British forces.

8. A cessation of intercourse with the disaffected counties would be proclaimed, and foreign powers would be notified of their effective blockade.

9. In the preparation of plans to meet the foregoing hypothetical contingencies, the following further points should be taken into account:

(a) The juridical conditions of a conflict between the British Government and an Irish Republic would be, broadly speaking, those between the Union Government and the Confederate States, that is there would be military recognition for persons in uniform. They would not be treated as rebels if they belonged to the army forces of the Republic, but there would be no recognition on our part capable of admitting their rights to recognition by other nations.

(b) In such hostilities we should enjoy the advantage of no longer having direct responsibility for the welfare of the people of Southern Ireland, but we should have heavy responsibilities to refugees. There are 300,000 Unionists living in the 26 counties whose position might at any time become very grave. Veiled threats have already been directed against them at recent Republican meetings. They may be compelled to fly to Dublin or the sea. The aid of the Navy may have to be invoked to remove them from certain points on the coast.
(c) In the event of a collision between British forces and the Republican Government, or even upon the mere establishment of a Republican Government, serious outrages might take place in this country. Against these also precautionary measures must be put in train.

Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
10th April, 1922.
Very Secret

April 6th 1922.

Sir,

I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that the question as to what action should be taken by you in the event of a Republic being declared in Ireland has been considered by His Majesty's Government and I am accordingly to give you the following instructions:-

(1) If a Republic were declared by some body of persons in some part of Ireland remote from Dublin, there would be time to get information as to the nature and importance of the movement from the Provisional Government and to communicate with the Secretary of State for War before taking any steps - other than any military precautions which the situation called for - which might aggravate the then political situation and perhaps cause the resignation of the Provisional Government.

(2) If, however, a Republic were declared in Dublin, it might not be possible to delay action pending such communication. You are therefore authorised in that event to declare martial law in Dublin immediately.

(3) You are now in process of vacating the Curragh and of bringing the stores and the troops into Dublin. If this movement has not been completed when you are called upon to declare martial law, you are authorised immediately to vacate the Curragh, bring the troops into Dublin from the Curragh, any stores remaining being burnt.

(4) In accordance with your verbal request, the Admiralty have been asked to put 2 Destroyers in the river at Dublin, and you will make any local arrangements necessary with the Admiral for co-operation.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(signed) \textit{H.J. CREEDY}

The General Officer
Commanding-in-Chief
THE FORCES IN IRELAND
DUBLIN.
APPENDIX III

PERSONAL AND SECRET

DRAFT TELEGRAM TO SIR PERCY COX.

Your telegram of yesterday. Treaty. Matter was considered by
Cabinet today. I regret that alternative procedure suggested
in your telegram No. 258 will not meet the difficulty. We are
not in a position to ask Allies or League of Nations to alter
character of obligations which we have assumed in Iraq. Feisal
and Naqib must give us credit for understanding international
situation better than they do and must accept our assurance that
what they want cannot be done. Position is in effect that we are
prepared to assist Iraq state on certain conditions that cannot
be materially modified. These conditions are set out in draft
Treaty as approved by H.M.G. If Iraq will not agree to those
terms she must do without our assistance. The King and his
advisers should understand clearly that this is the alternative
before them. I hope that before their final decision is reached
both they and the people of Iraq generally will be made to see
quite clearly how narrow is the issue on which they are risking
so much. There is no difference of substance between what we
offer them and what they are prepared to accept. We are in
substantial agreement about operative part of Treaty, which is
what will regulate our future relations with the Iraq state
and which places them on the basis, not of mandatory authority,
but of an engagement freely entered into between equals. What
they are objecting to is not terms of engagement but source from
which we derive authority to make any engagement at all. They
are in fact criticising our relations not with themselves but
with the League of Nations. I cannot see why they should concern
themselves with the latter. You should put all these arguments
to Feisal and the Naqib and make them understand clearly that
H.M.G. are in earnest in their intention to withdraw support
if abrogation of Mandate is made a condition of its acceptance.

After further discussion the Cabinet are prepared to accept
Colonial Office alternative of Article V of draft mandate. I
leave it to you to make best use of this concession as a lever
for securing agreement on wider question.
My dear Prime Minister,

I see that Churchill is bringing up again this afternoon the question of whether Feisal should or should not have foreign representation.

The Foreign Office propose one formula - The Colonial Office another.

You will remember that on the last occasion that we discussed the matter in Cabinet, you, Balfour and I were opposed to granting Feisal's demand - partly because we did not want another row with the French who would be furious at a decision which could not but react on their position in Syria, and who might be expected to oppose and do their best to defeat any such modification of the mandate at the Council of the League - partly because we did not think that the state of Irak had reached a stage of consolidation to demand or to deserve the right to appoint diplomatic representatives, partly because the multiplication of such representatives is becoming a real source of embarrassment to our diplomacy, and may give us a good deal of trouble in the future.

Churchill was however authorised to wire to Cox as to whether he thought the refusal of this concession would vitally affect French prestige.

Cox, as might be expected, answered in the affirmative. But meanwhile Feisal objects to the mandate altogether.
altogether and wants to sweep it away in toto.

This it is generally recognised is impossible.

Whether his objections can be overcome by surrender on the point of diplomatic representation I cannot say. Personally I doubt it and I am loth to make concessions which may be very troublesome to us, and which almost inevitably lead to a demand for something more.

These are the views which I should have urged had I been able to attend the Cabinet this afternoon.

But if you and the Cabinet think that the situation has changed and that we ought to reverse our previous decision I do not wish — in my absence — to stand in the way, although it is the Foreign Office and not the Colonial Office who will be the sufferers by the surrender.

For, once Feisal attains his representation, he will not have much more to say to the Colonial Office. His man will sit on the doorstep of the Foreign Office and will cause us an amount of diplomatic trouble which I regard with the gravest apprehension and dismay.

Mr. Churchill has been good enough to relieve me of Feisal. The last thing I want is to have him back again.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) CURZON.

You may read this letter if desired.