CABINET 27 (22).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Tuesday, 16th May, 1922 at 11.30 a.m.

PRESIDENT:-

The Right Hon. A. Chamberlain, M.P.,
Lord Privy Seal. [in the Chair].

The Right Hon. Viscount Birkenhead, Lord Chancellor.

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

The Right Hon. Lord Lee of Farnham,

The Right Hon. Sir Robert Home,

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

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. Sir A. Griffiths,
Bart., M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Right Hon. Sir K. Amor, K.C.,
M.P., Secretary for Scotland.

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

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

The Right Hon. The Earl of Crawford
and Balcarres, K.T., First Commissioner of Works.

The following were also present:-

The Right Hon. Viscount FitzAlan of Derwent, G.C.V.O., M.B.E., Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. (For Conclusion 1.)

Mr. Thomas Jones...........................................Acting Secretary.
Sir John Chancellor, K.C.M.G., D.S.O.,........Principal Assistant Secretary,
G.B.C.,
Mr. R. Bowland..................................................Assistant Secretary.
THE CONFERENCE AT GENOA.

(1) With reference to Cabinet 26 (22) Conclusion 1, the Lord Privy Seal summarised the position reached at Genoa, as shown in the telegrams. It was proposed to forward two replies to the Soviet representatives, one dealing with Propaganda, and the other with the project for a further meeting at the Hague in June of two Commissions to be nominated by the Russians and by the other European Governments respectively. These Commissions would deal with private and public debts and with credits, and would report their findings to their several Governments with whom all decisions would rest. In the meantime there should be a pact binding the Powers to respect existing boundaries, to refrain from attacks on neighbours, and from making separate agreements with Russia. Germany would not be invited to send experts to the Hague but the United States Government was being invited to participate. The French and Belgian representatives had intimated that they could not associate themselves in any communication to Russians which formed part of a correspondence from which they had withdrawn, but they had undertaken to recommend the proposals to their Governments for acceptance.

The Cabinet took note of the Lord Privy Seal's statement.
PRIME MINISTER’S SERVICES AT GENOA.

(2) The Cabinet, at the instance of the Lord Privy Seal, instructed the Acting Secretary to convey to the Prime Minister their profound admiration of the courage and resource he had displayed at Genoa, their appreciation of the way in which, working within the limits of policy laid down by the Cabinet, he has dominated the proceedings by his great personal gifts, raised the influence and authority of all our representatives and officials, and enhanced the prestige of the British Empire among all the nations represented at the Conference.
IRLAND.

(3) MR. CHURCHILL described briefly the Irish situation to the Cabinet. It could not be described as critical but we are witnessing in Ireland a process of rapid social disintegration. We are confronted with no clear-cut issues nor can we foresee a time when clear-cut issues will be presented to us. The situation is indeterminate. In signing the Irish Treaty we thought we were dealing with the plenipotentiaries of the Irish people. Even when serious opposition to the Treaty developed in the Dail we hoped that an immediate vote of the Irish people would be taken which would result in a substantial majority for the acceptance of the Treaty. The Ministers of the Provisional Government live far too much in the narrow circle of their own associates and late associates, and they think only of placating the obscure terrorists who spring up one after another all over Ireland. The opinion of the Irish people and the desire of the Southern Unionists to help in the Irish settlement did not weigh with them as it should, and they have hardly given due thought to the essential measure of going to the Irish people for their opinion on the Treaty. The position was lamentable. The election should have taken place six months or three months ago. De Valera, feeling that an election would be fatal to his position, extorted delay from the Provisional Government. It is now proposed that the election should be held on the 16th June. The policy of delay while it had involved social degeneration in Ireland had led to the political strengthening of the Provisional Government. It is doubtful, however, if the Provisional Government were capable of making use of its advantages. The Government has escaped the
odium of being the instrument of power and authority, and has rather adopted the role of a passive sufferer under the tyranny of the extremist party. The Irish people were in an increasing degree turned against the Rebels. All parties feel acutely the disorganisation and brigandage throughout the country. They deplore the relaxation of respect for law and order and the petty rival tyrannies that have sprung up. If a free election took place now, the Government would probably obtain a large majority in favour of the Treaty. But there appears to be little chance of a free election being held. The Government are showing no capacity for dealing firmly with the situation. The forces of the Free State had indeed lately carried on one or two successful operations, although the fights were not bloody. There is really none too much difference between the Free State and Republican parties and there is a general reluctance to kill one another.

We have good reason to complain of our treatment by the Provisional Government. We have handed over to them authority, arms and property, and treated them with generosity and patience. They have given the Irish people no chance to express an opinion upon the Treaty. Last week, when the Truce between the two parties showed signs of breaking down, Mr. Collins has sent him a message to the effect that the Provisional Government intended to fight. He had asked that he might be supplied with 10,000 additional rifles as well as guns, mortars and other military equipment to enable the Provisional Government to take action against the rebels. He proposed in the first instance to deal with outside areas such as Drogheda and Castlebar and to leave Republicans in Dublin undisturbed.

Mr. Churchill continuing said that he found difficulty in
assenting to further issues of arms on a large scale until he was satisfied that they would be used effectively against the Republican party. He considered that the sincerity of the Provisional Government should be put to a test; that they must prove they intended to deal resolutely with disorder in Dublin. If they showed themselves capable of dealing with the situation in Dublin, he would gladly support them and give them all the arms required to enable them to undertake operations on a larger scale in the country districts; but he could not acquiesce in their sending expeditions into the country districts and continuing to parley with the rebels in Dublin. He thought there was a serious danger of O'Connor beginning to kidnap and assassinate British officers in Dublin with the object of compelling the intervention of the British Army. If he could provoke a collision with the British troops, Collin's supporters, it was believed, would fall away from the Free State, and the Republican Army would probably unite in opposition to the British troops. He understood that it was thought probable that the truce between Regulars and Irregulars would break down, but if a pact were made it was necessary to consider what sort of a pact it would be. The concessions that had been made by the Provisional Government to Republicans and open opponents to the Treaty made their arrangements depart further and further from the basis of the Treaty. He understood that the Provisional Government had entertained the idea that "an agreed election" should be held. That was to say that there would be no electoral contests but that the De Valera party would be allotted say 40 seats and the Provisional Government 80 seats.

-5-
He had written to Mr. Collins last night regarding this Report and had pointed out to him that such an election would be received with world-wide ridicule and reprobation. It would be an outrage on democratic principles for a small and irresponsible body in Dublin to take away from the Irish people their right of deciding as to their own future form of Government. He had expressed a hope that Mr. Collins would enable him to deny in Parliament that such a step was contemplated.
That was the danger of an agreement between the Free State Government and the Republicans. What would happen in the event of a breach between them? We must put it to the Provisional Government that they must take effective action to meet the republican challenge to their authority. He proposed that they should be invited to come over to London, and that we should unfold to them the serious griefs we have at the way the situation is developing and explain to them that no large issue of arms can be made until the situation in Dublin has been cleared up. Of course if they required a trench mortar to enable them to reduce the Four Courts or the Kildare Street Club they should have them, but no large issue of arms should be made until they have shown that they intend to deal resolutely with the rebels. If the Provisional Government were not sincere and we continued to supply them with arms, and the situation got worse, the operation of reasserting ourselves in Ireland would be much more serious and a much more bloody one that it otherwise might have been. At the same time if further issues of arms are made in Southern Ireland, further issues would also have to be made to Ulster so as to keep them well ahead. He had been much concerned to learn that General Macready had recently lost confidence in the intention of the Provisional Government to act. Recruiting in the Free State Army is only open to members of the Irish Republican Army, although it was in theory an anti-republican body. Ex-Service men were not officially allowed to join the Army or to occupy important positions in it.
MR. CHURCHILL informed the Cabinet that it had been decided that Cork should be evacuated today, and that the troops from Cork (four battalions) should be transferred to Ulster. This measure would reassure the Ulster Government. General Macready is of opinion that the increase of the troops in Ulster would strengthen the De Valera faction, but it was not possible to take that factor into consideration. A further point was that the disorder prevailing throughout the country districts was producing a flow of refugees to England. The flow at present was not large in volume, but if the situation became worse and murders became frequent there might be a large stream of refugees to this country, which would have an important political effect in England. He thought that it might ultimately be necessary to establish a pale round Dublin and to make camps in it for the accommodation of the refugees.

The constitution of the Free State. The constitution was now being drafted. He was informed that good progress was being made with it, and that it would probably be shown to him in private next week. He understood that the constitution was very democratic in form.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR pointed out that the situation in regard to the constitution was very difficult. To draft a constitution interpreting accurately the terms of the Treaty was a most complex task, and he was doubtful if the legal advisers of the Free State Government would be capable of accomplishing it. Assuming that the draft constitution would not be before the British Government much before the end of May, and that the election would be held on the 16th June, not much more than a fortnight would be left for His Majesty's Government and Parliament to
to accomplish the most formidable task of studying the constitution, and ensuring that any contraventions of the Treaty were adjusted.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN stated that the Free State Government had been informed that the constitution must be in accordance with the terms of the Treaty and that we must insist upon compliance with the conditions.

LORD FITZALAN expressed the opinion that the Provisional Government would attempt to rush His Majesty's Government, and give them little time to examine the situation. He understood that they wanted to diminish the power of the King's representative. It must be remembered that they were republicans in sentiment, and that probably the constitution would contain many provisions that His Majesty's Government were unable to accept.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN explained that while the constitution would have to be confirmed by an Act of Parliament, that Act would not be passed until after the Election and it had therefore been arranged that we should satisfy ourselves as to the constitution before the election so as to prevent our having to disavow it after the Election.

MR. CHURCHILL stated that he had most strongly warned Mr. Collins not to take a final decision on the constitution, still less to publish it, until we had seen it. It must be remembered that the drafting of the constitution was the business of the Irish Free State, and it concerned His Majesty's Government only in so far as it was in conflict with the Treaty or with the pledge given to the Southern Unionists. He reminded the Cabinet that the lives of the members of the Provisional Government were in danger. They were faced with every kind of difficulty and he was anxious not to put upon them more than they could bear. His advice to the Cabinet was that as soon as the question of
the truce with the Republican Party had been settled the Free State representatives should be invited to come over to this country. If there was a breach we should make sure that there would be a real fight with the Republicans, while if the Truce was continued we should see that it was not on a republican basis. He did not think it would be possible for the members of the Provisional Government to come over to this country until next week.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN said that there were two further points in regard to which he would be glad if Mr. Churchill could give the Cabinet some information. These were the position on the Ulster boundary, and the question of the troops in Dublin. He was anxious lest incidents should occur in Dublin. It was not improbable that the rebels would try to embroil us by kidnapping and murdering British Officers. He put the question as to whether it was necessary in view of the danger to retain troops in Dublin.

MR. CHURCHILL was strongly of opinion that the troops should not be removed from Dublin. He believed that if the troops were removed, a Republic would very likely soon be proclaimed. General Macready has no doubt of his ability to maintain his position in Dublin if our authority were challenged. He thought withdrawal from Dublin at this juncture would be fatal. Dublin was the English Capital of Ireland. If Ireland fell into a state of anarchy, we should have to re-establish a pale again round Dublin prior to reconquest. As regards the Ulster Border the situation was now quieter. He was endeavouring to secure the/
the amalgamation of the Border Liaison Commissions. He
understood Mr. Collins was not unfavourable to the
project. The four battalions going to Ulster from
Cork would help to reassure the people in Ulster.

LORD FITZALAN expressed his general agreement
with Mr. Churchill's description of the situation, but
he believed that the process of degeneration was much
more extensive than had been suggested by him. A free
election was necessary to clear the situation. He was
convinced that an election would lead to an overwhelming
majority in favour of the Free State. The Church was
now solid in support of the Free State, and the recent
manifesto issued by the Church in favour of the Free
State was all to the good although the Church's influence
at the present time was not very strong.

In reply to a suggestion by Lord Crawford that we
should press the Vatican to use its influence in favour
of the Free State, LORD FITZALAN expressed the opinion
that it is undesirable to approach Rome on the subject.
It is undesirable that Rome should intervene at the
present time.

LORD BIRKENHEAD feared from information which had
reached him that the deterioration was so rapid that the
election might not take place in time to arrest it.

In reply to an enquiry from Mr. Chamberlain as to
the action of the Transport Workers, MR. CHURCHILL stated
that the labour party had not been unhelpful. They had
been working for peace, but there was some Sovietism
among them. He regretted to observe that Larkin had been
liberated on bail in America. He thought it probable
that he would escheat his bail and go to Ireland, where
his presence would have a most unfortunate effect.

In summing up the discussion, MR. CHAMBERLAIN stated
that it was necessary to await the result of to-morrow's
meeting between the members of the Provisional Government
and the Republicans. After that the members of the
Provisional Government could be pressed to come over here
to discuss the situation. He hoped that it might be
possible for them to come over next week when the Prime
Minister would probably have returned from Genoa. He
expressed the earnest hope of the Cabinet that Mr. Churchill,
who owing to indisposition contemplated leaving the country
on a brief holiday, would return to London in order to be
present at the meeting with the Provisional Government as
the whole of the negotiations with the Provisional Govern-
ment had been placed in his hands, and he had an intimate
knowledge of the details of the situation.

THE ACTING SECRETARY was instructed to forward
the above Minute to the Prime Minister at Genoa.

-12-
4. The Cabinet were informed that opposition to the Teachers Superannuation Bill was tending to crystallise in the direction of the postponement of any action until the Report of the Departmental Committee was available. The Departmental Committee might take many months to report, and would have to have due regard to the recommendations of Lord Neston’s Committee on the percentage grants system, in view of the fact that the question of teachers’ pensions was connected with the question of the method by which government assistance for Local Authorities would in future be given.

The Cabinet were reminded that the Teachers Superannuation Bill was a rough and ready method of obtaining the saving of £2,000,000 in 1922-23, and that it had never been intended to regard it as a permanent solution of the superannuation question.

The Cabinet agreed —

That proposals to postpone the operation of the Teachers Superannuation Bill should be opposed on the ground that it is imperative to secure the saving of £2,000,000 in the current financial year, but that an undertaking should, however, be given that due regard should be paid to the recommendations contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee, and reference would also be made to the fact that whereas the Committee on National Expenditure had recommended economies on education in England, Scotland, and Wales amounting to £18,000,000, the Government only proposed economies of £6,000,000, inclusive of the superannuation proposals. The difference, namely, £12,000,000 was almost entirely represented by numbers and salaries of teachers, and the decision respecting the exclusion of children under six.
5. The Cabinet were informed that the London County Council were about to approach the Board of Education with a request to be released from their statutory obligation to provide/continuation Schools.

In the case of the London County Council and two or three other authorities where the appointed day had been fixed, the Authorities were under an obligation to provide these Schools, and it was open to any parent to enforce the law by civil process. The London County Council were not in fact compelling children to attend, and the Board of Education had so far refrained from putting any pressure on the Council respecting such attendance.

The Cabinet agreed —

That the necessary legislation should be obtained for relieving those Authorities which are at present under statutory obligation to provide/Continuation Schools for children in their areas.
ROYAL IRISH CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION.

The attention of the Cabinet was called to the debate in the House of Lords on the Royal Irish Constabulary Compensation Bill, and it was suggested that steps should be taken to draft the terms of the financial resolution in such a manner as to enable the Government, should this be necessary, to increase the compensation payable in certain cases, to which special reference had been made in the House of Lords.

The Cabinet agreed -

To draw the attention of the Irish Committee to the specific points raised in the House of Lords, with a view to those points being dealt with by the Committee before the terms of the financial resolution were actually drafted.
7. The Cabinet were informed that the Chairman of the House of Lords Reform Committee (Lord Curzon) had submitted his draft resolutions on the subject of the reform of the House of Lords to the Prime Minister and that, subject to one or two outstanding questions, the latter was in general agreement with the resolutions.
The Lord Privy Seal drew the attention of the Cabinet to the terms of the statement made on the previous day by him in the House of Commons on the subject of the Turkish atrocities. This statement had been carefully prepared in consultation with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Cabinet took note of and approved the terms of the statement made in the House of Commons by the Lord Privy Seal on the subject of Turkish atrocities on Monday, May 15th, 1922.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
16th, May, 1922.