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'File 8/18 Iraq: Review of Events, 1933'

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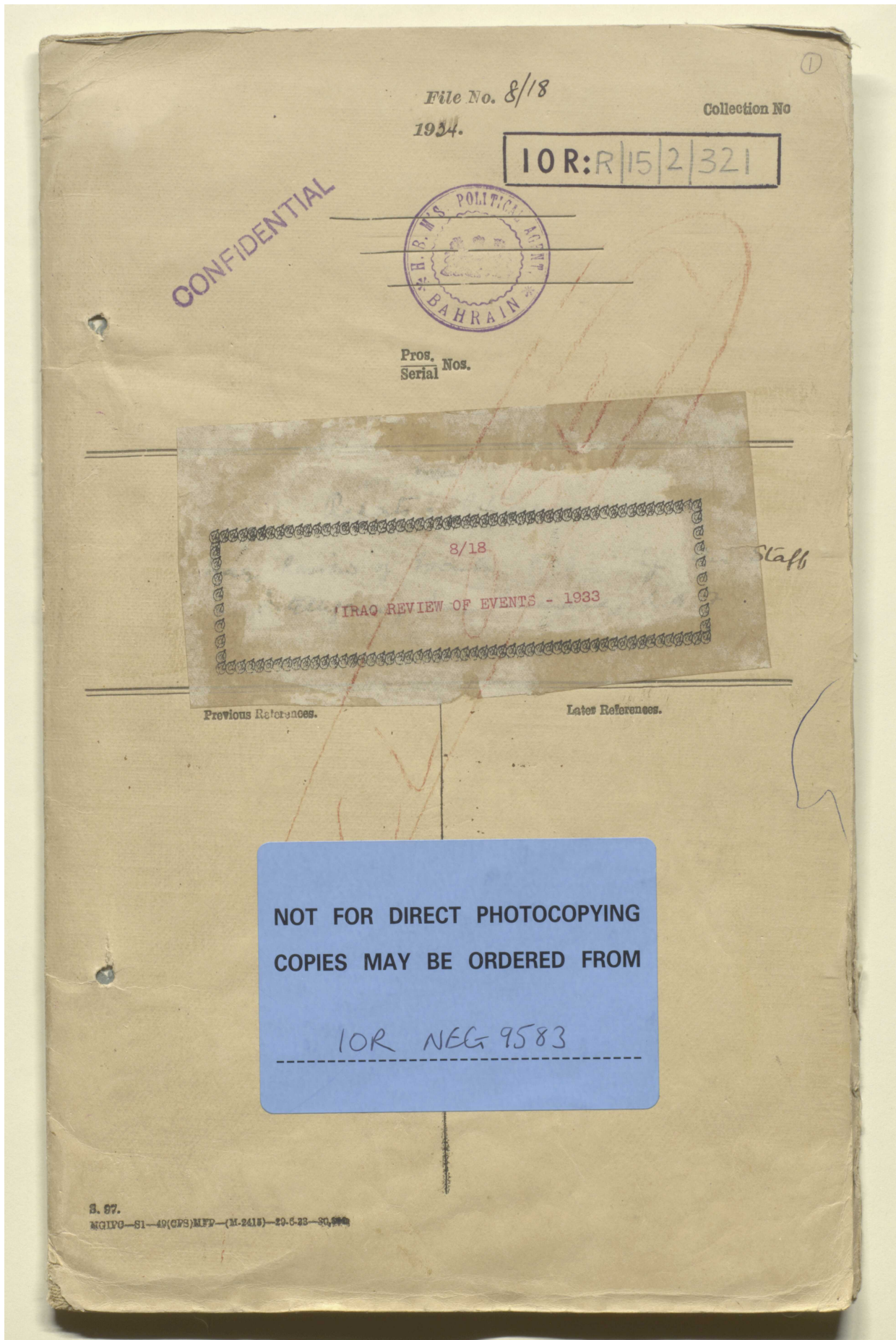
About this record

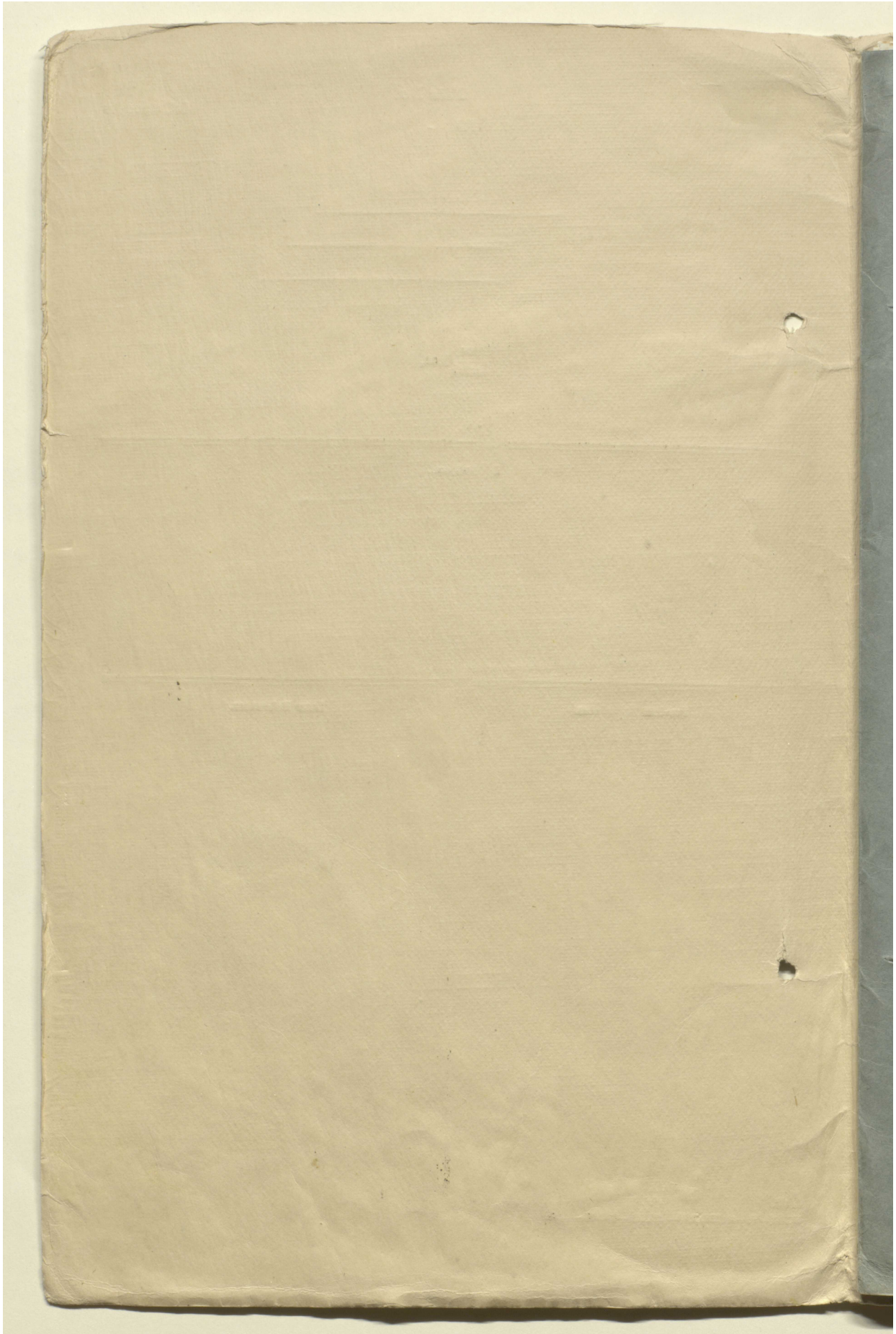
The file contains an intelligence report and analysis of events and affairs in Iraq during the year 1933, produced by British Air Headquarters at Hinaidi, Iraq. The report is written by Wing Commander John L Vachell of Air Staff Intelligence.

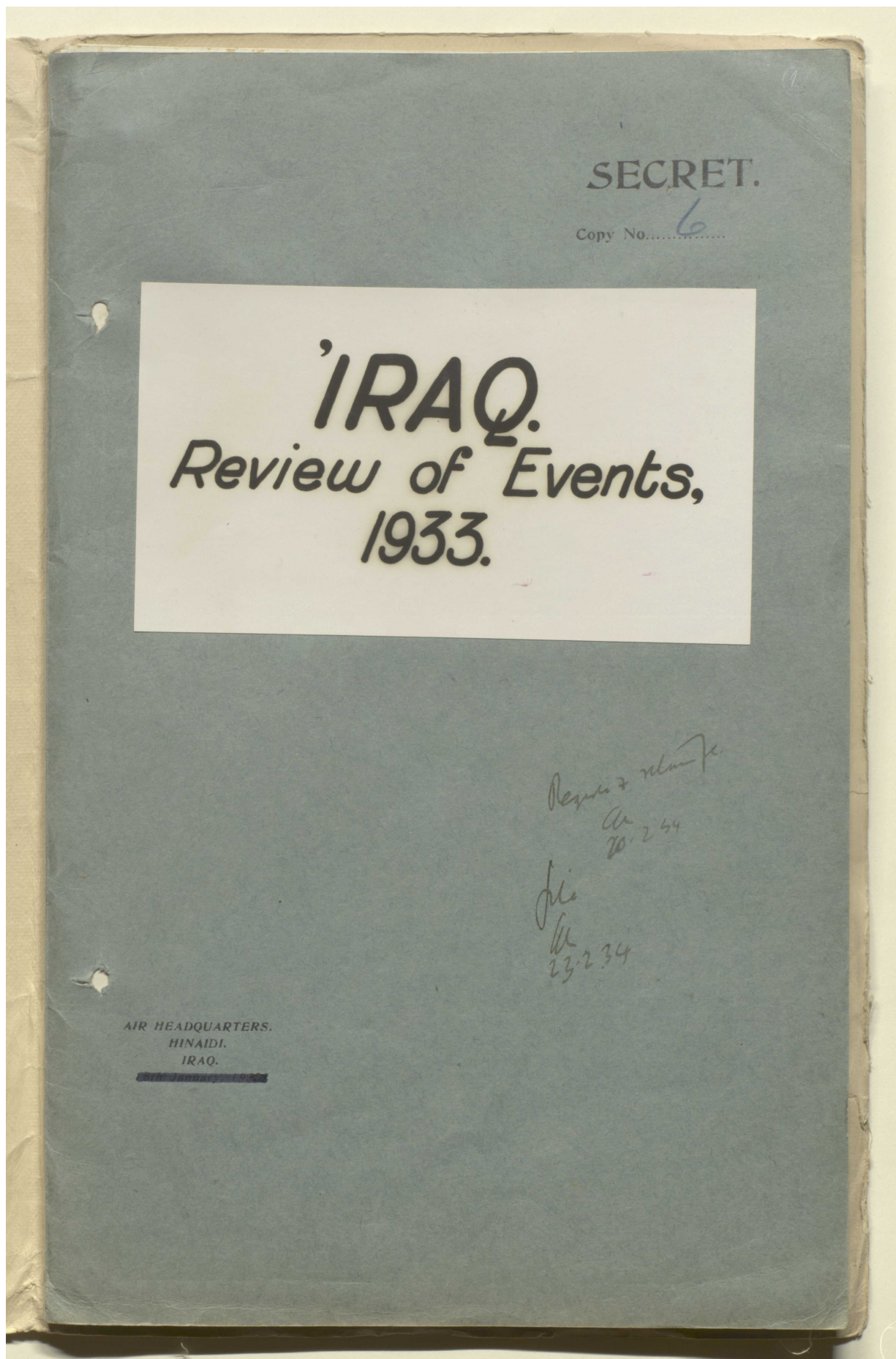
The report is divided into five main sections relating to a different subject. Each of these is further divided into sub-sections with a different focus, as follows:

- Section I - Political and Social: Home Politics; Social and Economic;
- Section II - Internal Security: Northern Iraq; Central and Southern Iraq;
- Section III - Industries and Resources: General Survey; Oil; Civil Aviation; The Desert Route;
- Section IV - Army and Air Forces: Iraq Army; Royal Iraq Air Force;
- Section V - Foreign Relations: Turkey; Persia; Saudi Arabia; Palestine; Syria.

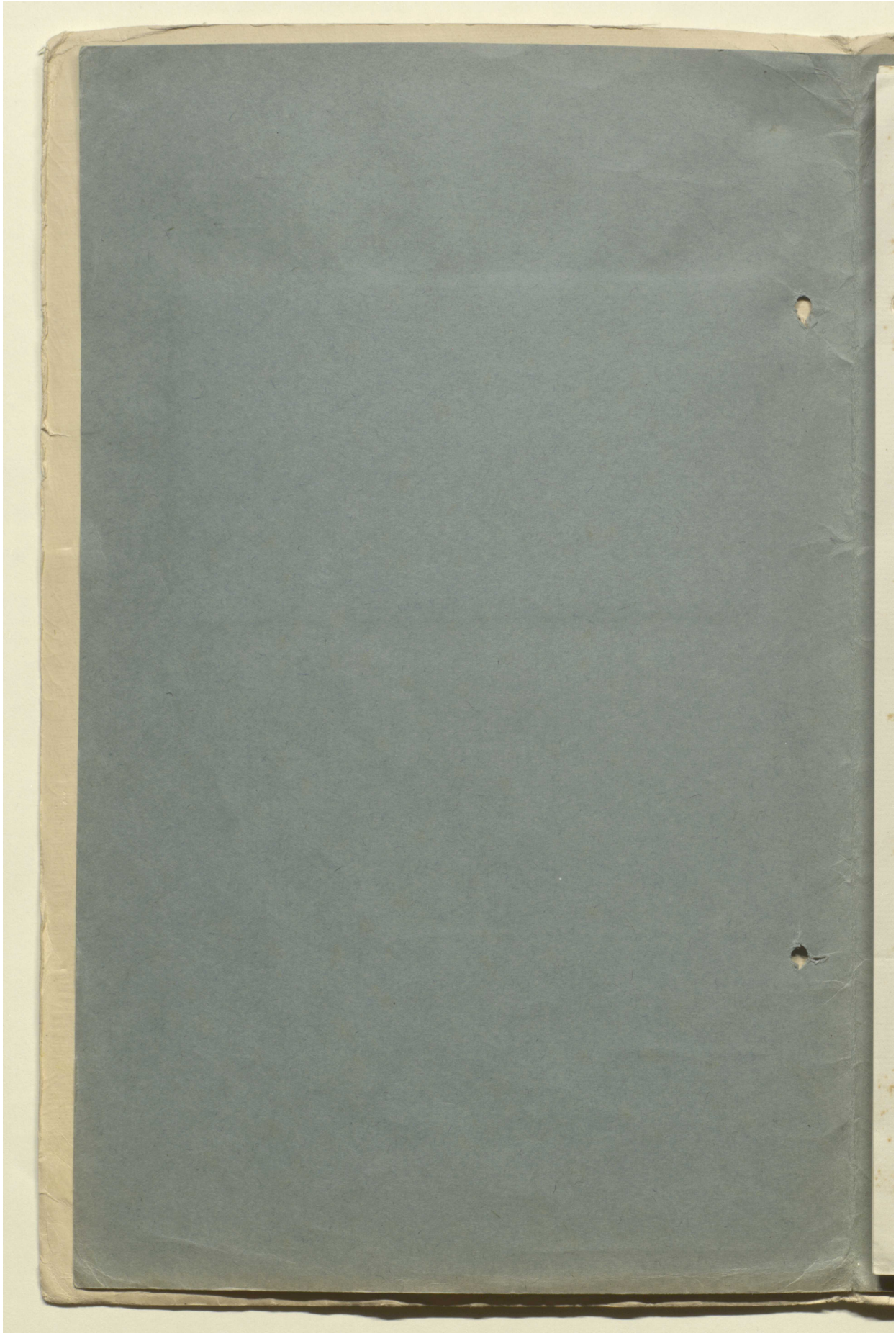
'File 8/18 Iraq: Review of Events, 1933' [front] (1/56)

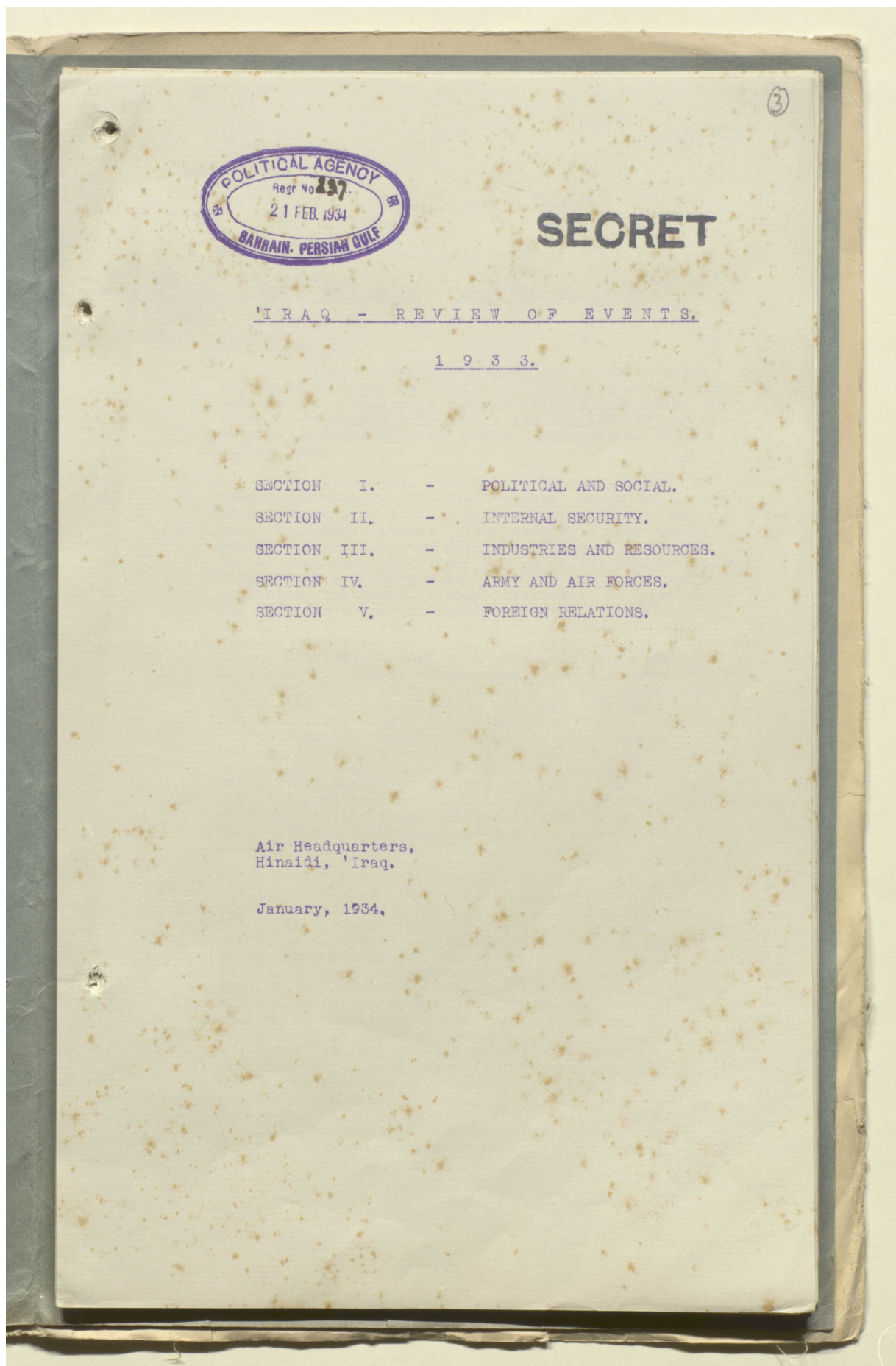






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'File 8/18 Iraq: Review of Events, 1933' [3v] (6/56)



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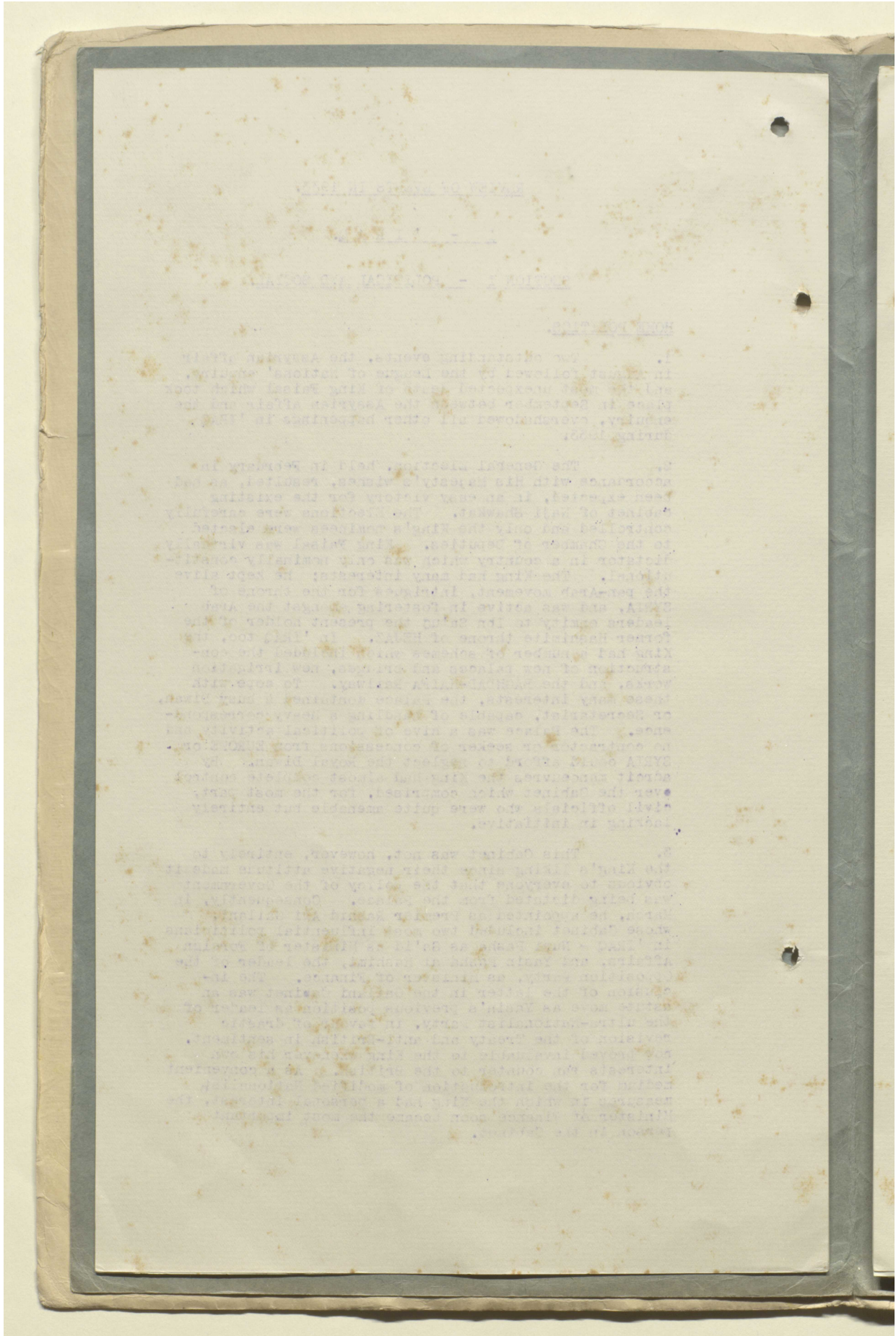
REVIEW OF EVENTS IN 1933.

I - 'IRAQ.

SECTION I - POLITICAL AND SOCIAL.

HOME POLITICS.

1. Two outstanding events, the Assyrian affair in August followed by the League of Nations' enquiry, and the most unexpected death of King Faisal which took place in September between the Assyrian affair and the enquiry, overshadowed all other happenings in 'IRAQ during 1933.
2. The General Election, held in February in accordance with His Majesty's wishes, resulted, as had been expected, in an easy victory for the existing cabinet of Naji Shawkat. The Elections were carefully controlled and only the King's nominees were elected to the Chamber of Deputies. King Faisal was virtually dictator in a country which was only nominally constitutional. The King had many interests; he kept alive the pan-Arab movement, intrigues for the throne of SYRIA, and was active in fostering amongst the Arab leaders enmity to Ibn Sa'ud the present holder of the former Hashimite throne of HEJAZ. In 'IRAQ too, the King had a number of schemes which included the construction of new palaces and bridges, new irrigation works, and the BAGHDAD-HAIFA Railway. To cope with these many interests, the Palace contained a busy Diwan, or Secretariat, capable of handling a heavy correspondence. The Palace was a hive of political activity and no contractor or seeker of concessions from EUROPE or SYRIA could afford to neglect the Royal Diwan. By adroit manoeuvres the King had almost complete control over the Cabinet which comprised, for the most part, civil officials who were quite amenable but entirely lacking in initiative.
3. This Cabinet was not, however, entirely to the King's liking since their negative attitude made it obvious to everyone that the policy of the Government was being dictated from the Palace. Consequently, in March, he appointed as Premier Rashid Ali Gailani, whose Cabinet included two most influential politicians in 'IRAQ - Nuri Pasha as Sa'id as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Yasin Pasha al Hashimi, the leader of the Opposition Party, as Minister of Finance. The inclusion of the latter in the Gailani Cabinet was an astute move as Yasin's previous position as leader of the ultra-Nationalist Party, in favour of drastic revision of the Treaty and anti-British in sentiment, now proved invaluable to the King whenever his own interests ran counter to the British. As a convenient medium for the introduction of modified Nationalist measures in which the King had a personal interest, the Minister of Finance soon became the most important person in the Cabinet.



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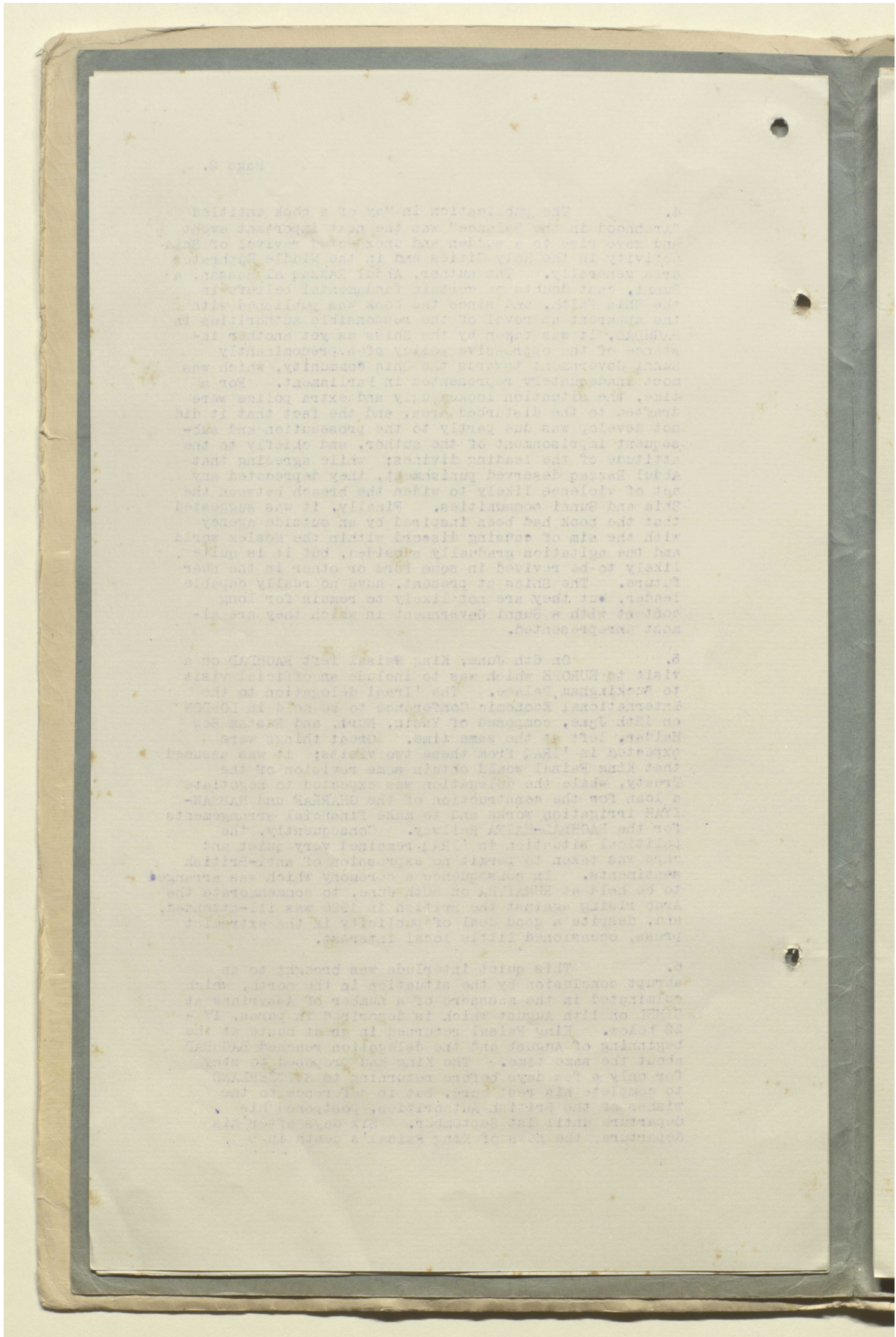
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4. The publication in May of a book entitled "Arabhood in the Balance" was the next important event and gave rise to a sudden and unexpected revival of Shia activity in the Holy Cities and in the Middle Euphrates area generally. The author, Abdul Razzaq al Hassan, a Sunni, cast doubts on certain fundamental beliefs in the Shia faith, and since the book was published with the apparent approval of the responsible authorities in BAGHDAD, it was taken by the Shias as yet another instance of the oppressive policy of a predominantly Sunni Government towards the Shia Community, which was most inadequately represented in Parliament. For a time, the situation looked ugly and extra police were drafted to the disturbed area, and the fact that it did not develop was due partly to the prosecution and subsequent imprisonment of the author, and chiefly to the attitude of the leading divines; while agreeing that Abdul Razzaq deserved punishment, they deprecated any act of violence likely to widen the breach between the Shia and Sunni Communities. Finally, it was suggested that the book had been inspired by an outside agency with the aim of causing discord within the Moslem world and the agitation gradually subsided, but it is quite likely to be revived in some form or other in the near future. The Shias at present, have no really capable leader, but they are not likely to remain for long content with a Sunni Government in which they are almost unrepresented.

5. On 6th June, King Faisal left BAGHDAD on a visit to EUROPE which was to include an official visit to Buckingham Palace. The 'Iraqi delegation to the International Economic Conference to be held in LONDON on 12th June, composed of Yasin, Nuri, and Rustam Beg Haidar, left at the same time. Great things were expected in 'IRAQ from these two visits; it was assumed that King Faisal would obtain some revision of the Treaty, while the delegation was expected to negotiate a loan for the construction of the GHARRAF and HABBANIYAH irrigation works and to make financial arrangements for the BAGHDAD-HAIFA Railway. Consequently, the political situation in 'IRAQ remained very quiet and care was taken to permit no expression of anti-British sentiments. In consequence a ceremony which was arranged to be held at RUMAITHA on 30th June, to commemorate the Arab rising against the British in 1926 was ill-attended, and, despite a good deal of publicity in the extremist press, occasioned little local interest.

6. This quiet interlude was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the situation in the north, which culminated in the massacre of a number of Assyrians at SIMEL on 11th August which is described in paras. 17 - 22 below. King Faisal returned in great haste at the beginning of August and the delegation reached BAGHDAD about the same time. The King had proposed to stay for only a few days before returning to SWITZERLAND to complete his rest cure, but in deference to the wishes of the British Authorities, postponed his departure until 1st September. Six days after his departure, the news of King Faisal's death in

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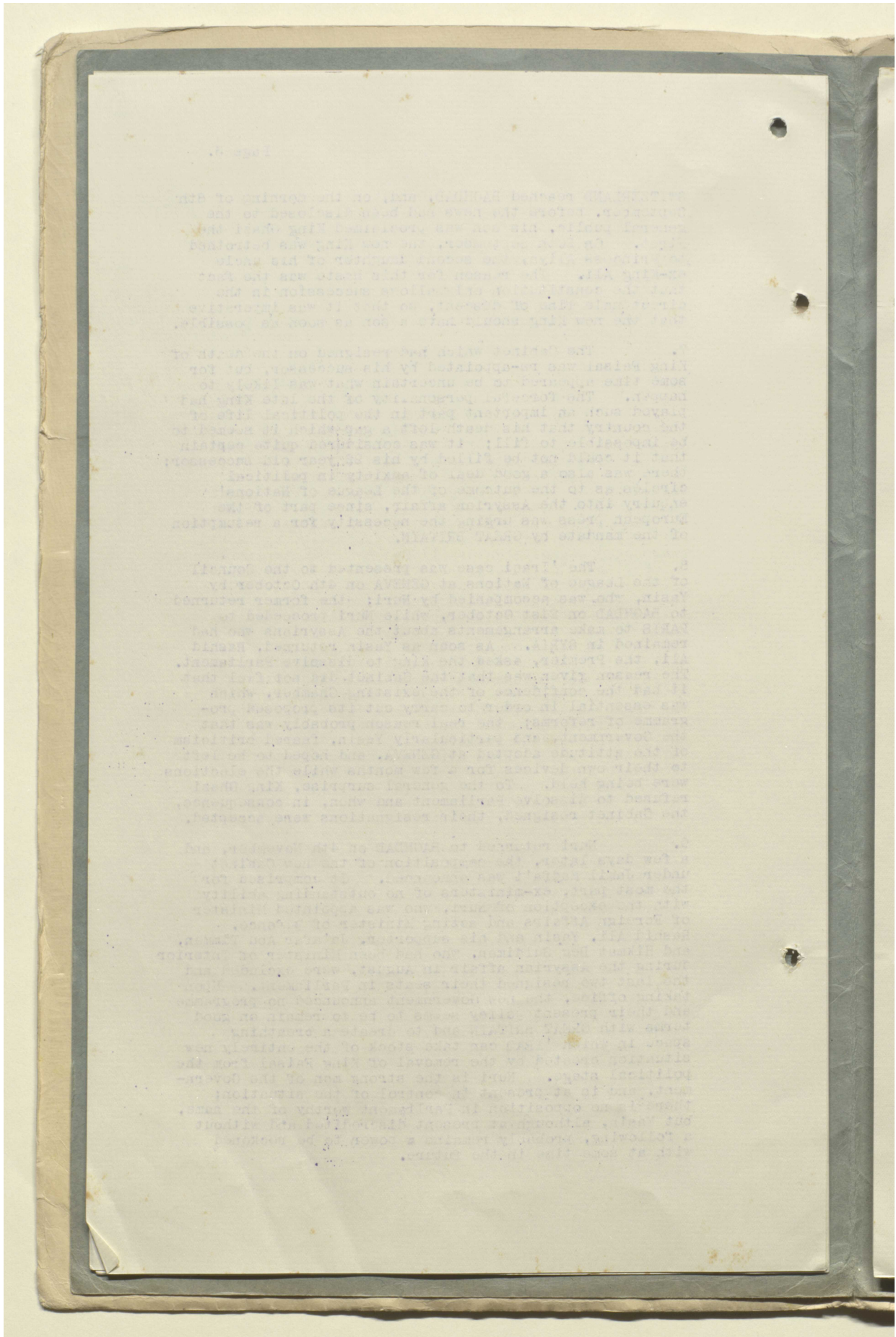
SWITZERLAND reached BAGHDAD, and, on the morning of 8th September, before the news had been disclosed to the general public, his son was proclaimed King Ghazi the First. On 20th September, the new King was betrothed to Princess Aliya, the second daughter of his uncle ex-King Ali. The reason for this haste was the fact that the constitution only allows succession in the direct male line of descent, so that it was imperative that the new King should have a son as soon as possible.

7. The Cabinet which had resigned on the death of King Faisal was re-appointed by his successor, but for some time appeared to be uncertain what was likely to happen. The forceful personality of the late King had played such an important part in the political life of the country that his death left a gap which it seemed to be impossible to fill; it was considered quite certain that it could not be filled by his 22 year old successor; there was also a good deal of anxiety in political circles as to the outcome of the League of Nations' enquiry into the Assyrian affair, since part of the European press was urging the necessity for a resumption of the mandate by GREAT BRITAIN.

8. The 'Iraqi case was presented to the Council of the League of Nations at GENEVA on 4th October by Yasin, who was accompanied by Nuri; the former returned to BAGHDAD on 21st October, while Nuri proceeded to PARIS to make arrangements about the Assyrians who had remained in SYRIA. As soon as Yasin returned, Rashid Ali, the Premier, asked the King to dissolve Parliament. The reason given was that the Cabinet did not feel that it had the confidence of the existing Chamber, which was essential in order to carry out its proposed programme of reforms; the real reason probably was that the Government, and particularly Yasin, feared criticism of the attitude adopted at GENEVA, and hoped to be left to their own devices for a few months while the elections were being held. To the general surprise, King Ghazi refused to dissolve Parliament and when, in consequence, the Cabinet resigned, their resignations were accepted.

9. Nuri returned to BAGHDAD on 4th November, and a few days later, the composition of the new Cabinet under Jamil Madfa'i was announced. It comprised for the most part, ex-ministers of no outstanding ability with the exception of Nuri, who was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and acting Minister of Defence. Rashid Ali, Yasin and his supporter, Ja'afar Abu Timman, and Hikmat Beg Sulaiman, who had been Minister of Interior during the Assyrian affair in August, were excluded and the last two resigned their seats in Parliament. Upon taking office, the new Government announced no programme and their present policy seems to be to remain on good terms with GREAT BRITAIN and to create a breathing space in which 'IRAQ can take stock of the entirely new situation created by the removal of King Faisal from the political stage. Nuri is the strong man of the Government, and is at present in control of the situation; there is no opposition in Parliament worthy of the name, but Yasin, although at present discredited and without a following, probably remains a power to be reckoned with at some time in the future.

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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC.

10. There has during the past year been a steady reduction in the number of British advisers employed by the 'Iraqi Government and almost all those retained have been withdrawn from the Provinces to BAGHDAD. The usefulness of the British adviser has also decreased since it is noticeable that the 'Iraqi official is reluctant to seek advice and often prefers to take action in his own way even though such action may land him in difficulties.

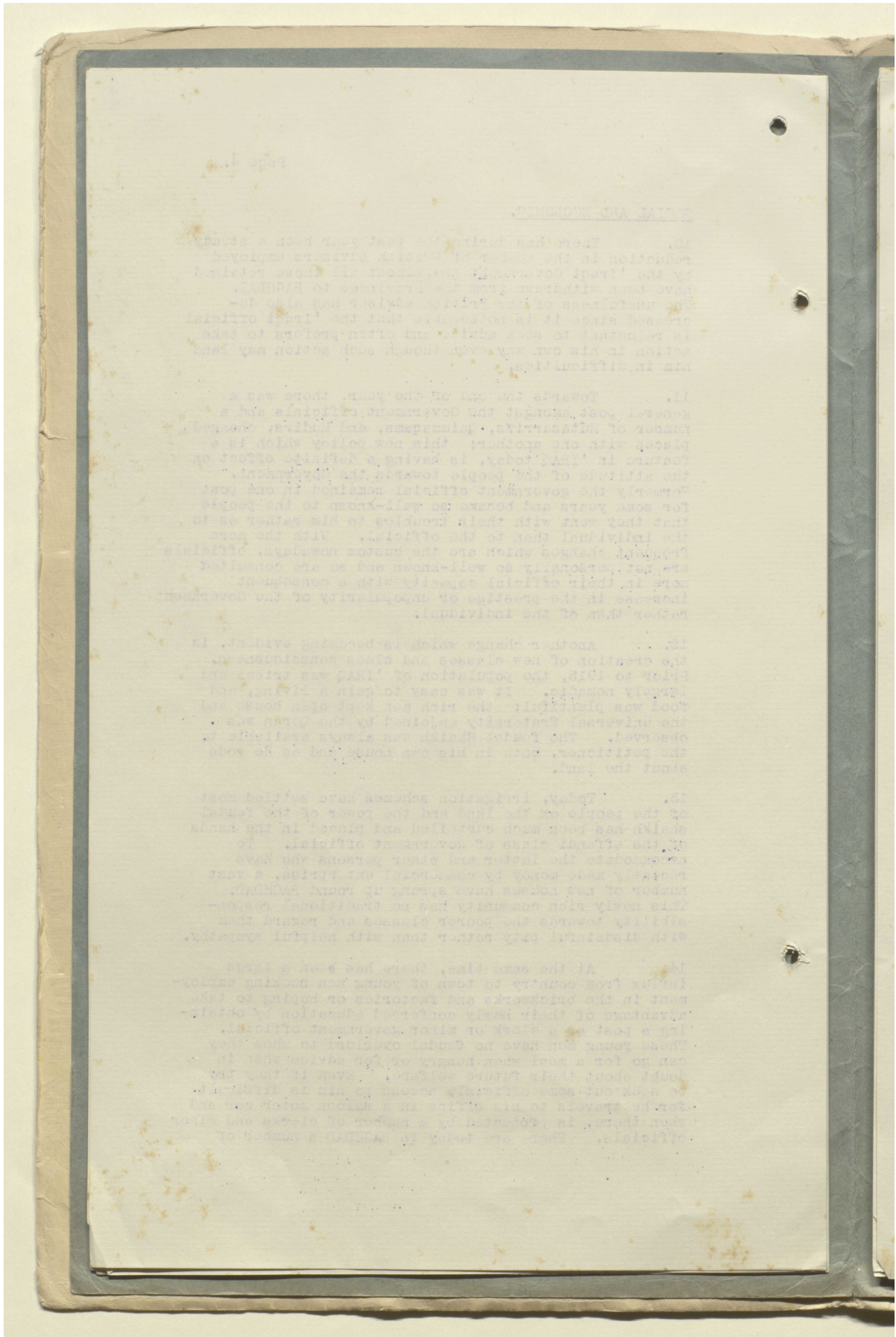
11. Towards the end of the year, there was a general post amongst the Government officials and a number of Mutasarrifs, Qaimmaqams, and Mudirs, changed places with one another; this new policy which is a feature in 'IRAQ today, is having a definite effect on the attitude of the people towards the Government. Formerly the government official remained in one post for some years and became so well-known to the people that they went with their troubles to him rather as to the individual than to the official. With the more frequent changes which are the custom nowadays, officials are not personally so well-known and so are consulted more in their official capacity with a consequent increase in the prestige or unpopularity of the Government rather than of the individual.

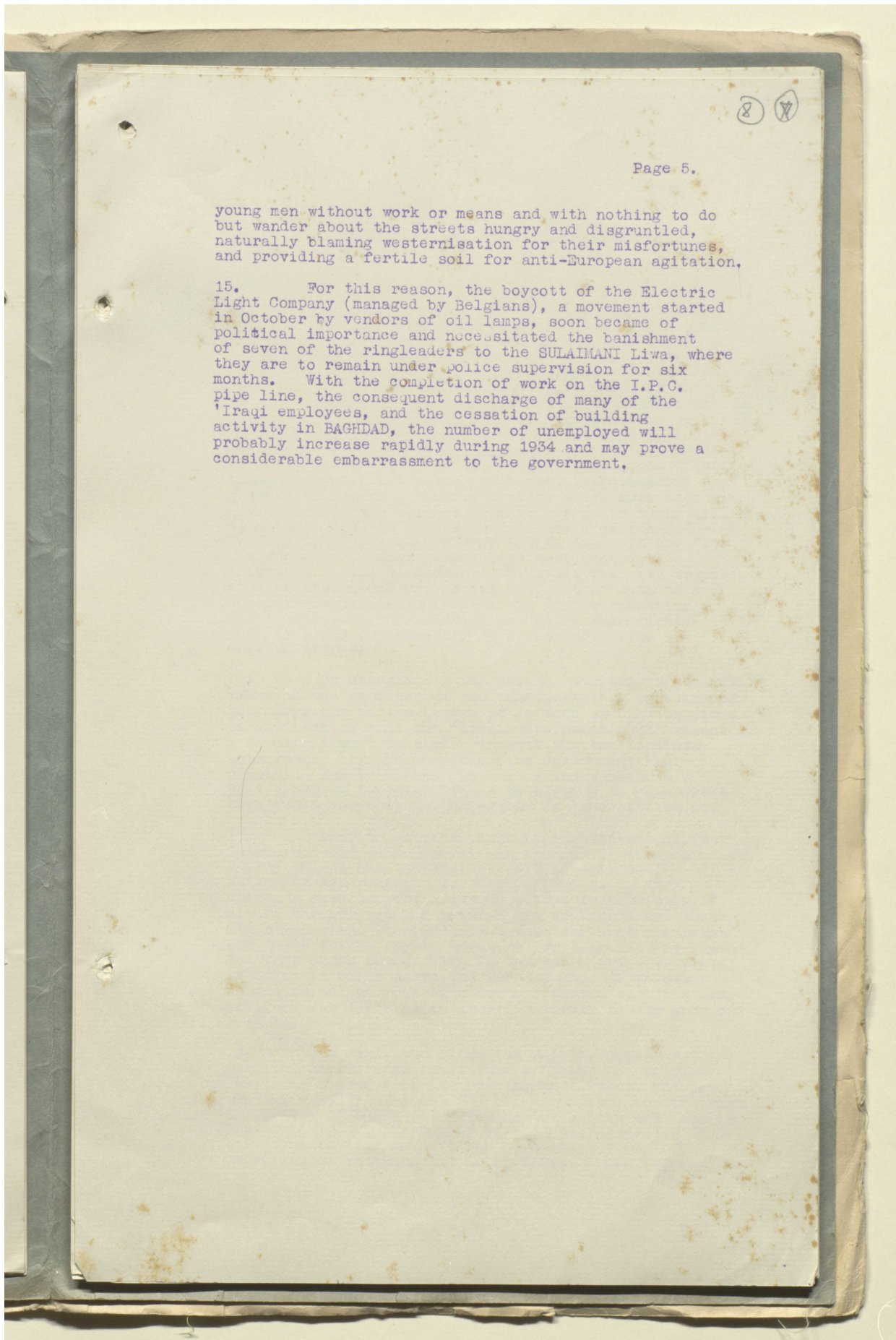
12. Another change which is becoming evident, is the creation of new classes and class consciousness. Prior to 1915, the population of 'IRAQ was tribal and largely nomadic. It was easy to gain a living, and food was plentiful; the rich men kept open house and the universal fraternity enjoined by the Qoran was observed. The feudal Shaikh was always available to the petitioner, both in his own house and as he rode about the land.

13. Today, irrigation schemes have settled most of the people on the land and the power of the feudal shaikh has been much curtailed and placed in the hands of the effendi class of government official. To accommodate the latter and other persons who have recently made money by commercial enterprise, a vast number of new houses have sprung up round BAGHDAD. This newly rich community has no traditional responsibility towards the poorer classes and regard them with disdainful pity rather than with helpful sympathy.

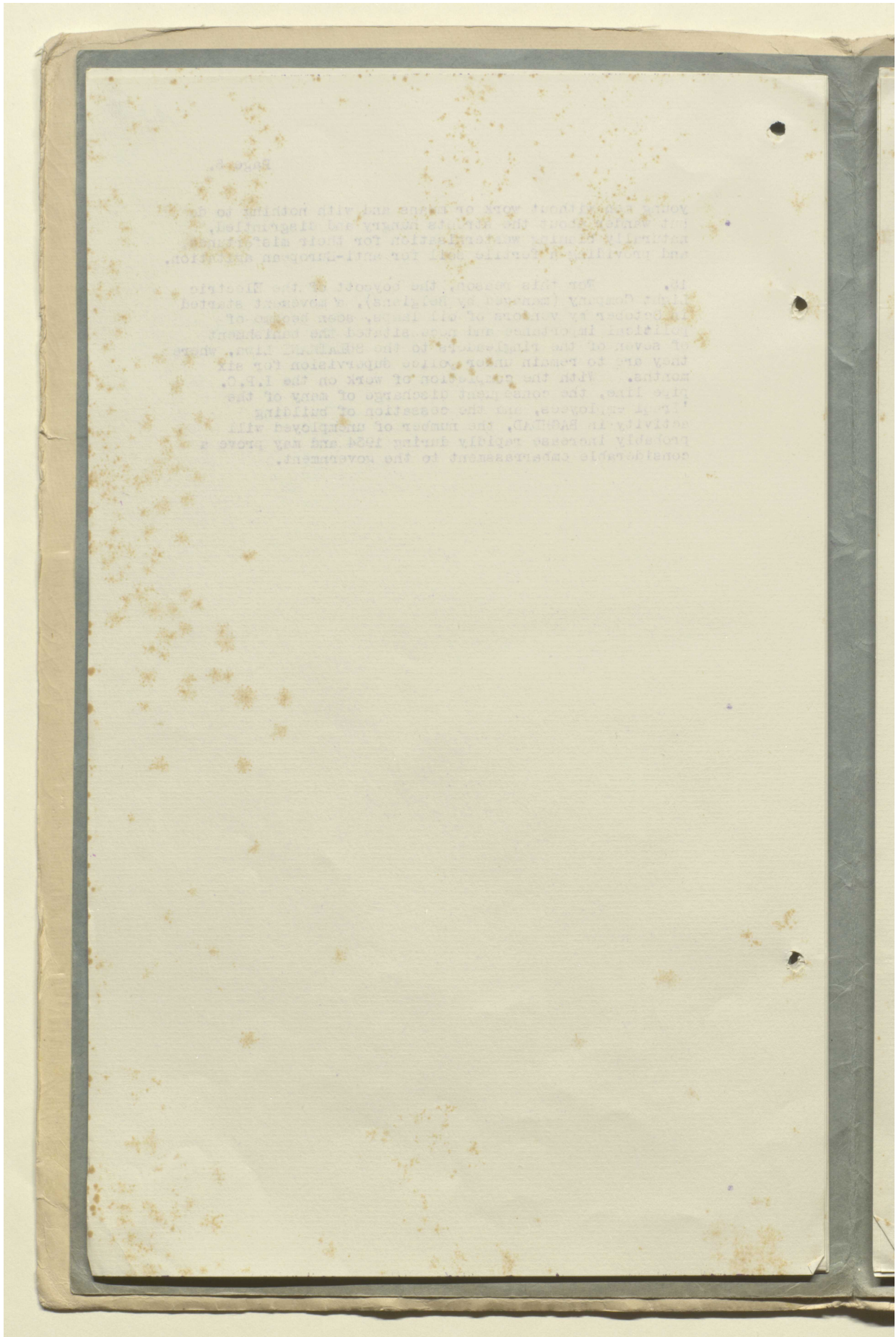
14. At the same time, there has been a large influx from country to town of young men seeking employment in the brickworks and factories or hoping to take advantage of their newly conferred education by obtaining a post as a clerk or minor government official. These young men have no feudal overlord to whom they can go for a meal when hungry or for advice when in doubt about their future welfare. Even if they try to seek out some official, access to him is difficult for he travels to his office in a saloon motor car and when there, is protected by a number of clerks and minor officials. There are today in BAGHDAD a number of

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SECTION II - INTERNAL SECURITY.

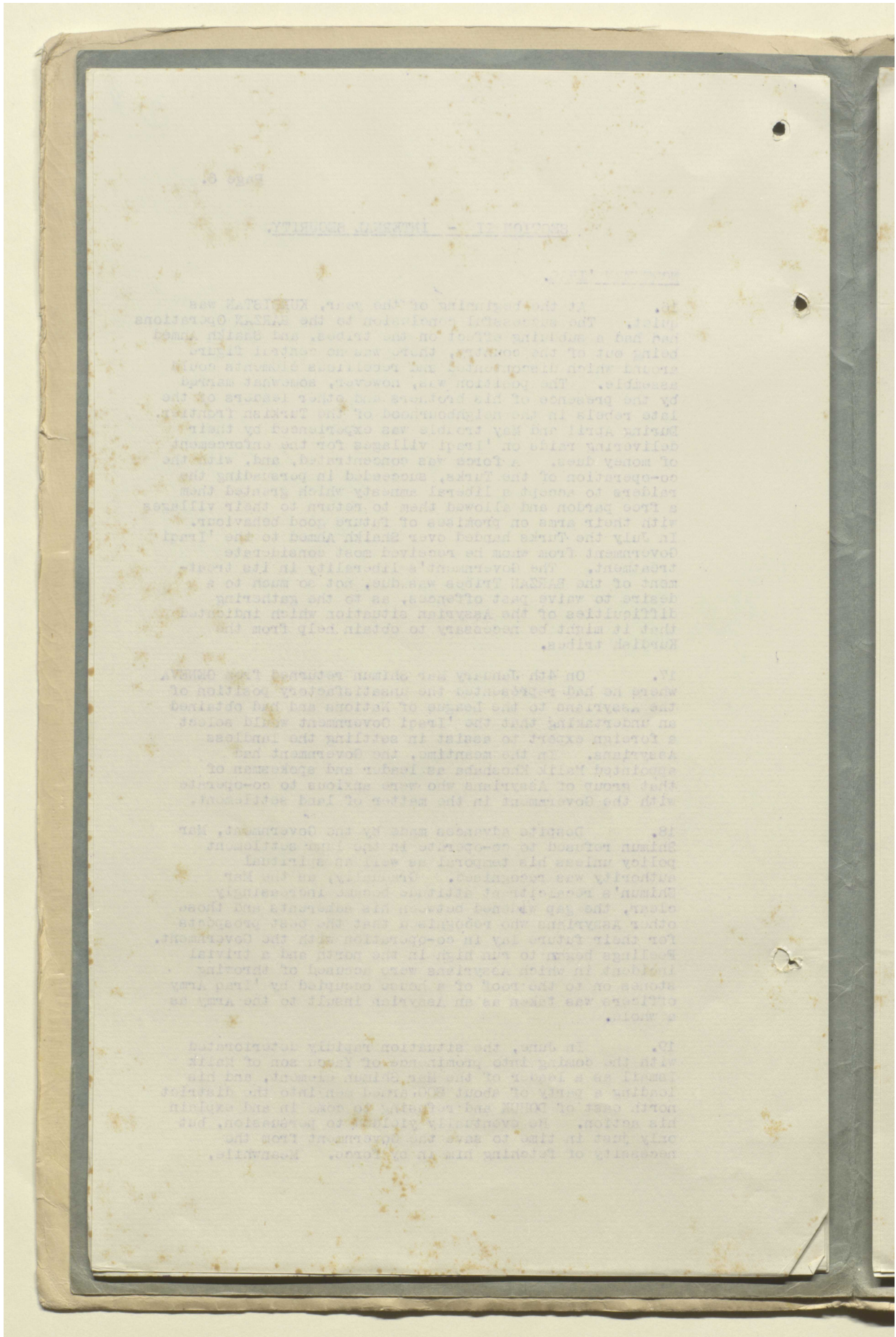
NORTHERN IRAQ.

16. At the beginning of the year, KURDISTAN was quiet. The successful conclusion to the BARZAN Operations had had a subduing effect on the tribes, and Shaikh Ahmed being out of the country, there was no central figure around which discontented and rebellious elements could assemble. The position was, however, somewhat marred by the presence of his brothers and other leaders of the late rebels in the neighbourhood of the Turkish frontier. During April and May trouble was experienced by their delivering raids on 'Iraqi villages for the enforcement of money dues. A force was concentrated, and, with the co-operation of the Turks, succeeded in persuading the raiders to accept a liberal amnesty which granted them a free pardon and allowed them to return to their villages with their arms on promises of future good behaviour. In July the Turks handed over Shaikh Ahmed to the 'Iraqi Government from whom he received most considerate treatment. The Government's liberality in its treatment of the BARZAN Tribes was due, not so much to a desire to waive past offences, as to the gathering difficulties of the Assyrian situation which indicated that it might be necessary to obtain help from the Kurdish tribes.

17. On 4th January Mar Shimun returned from GENEVA where he had represented the unsatisfactory position of the Assyrians to the League of Nations and had obtained an undertaking that the 'Iraqi Government would select a foreign expert to assist in settling the landless Assyrians. In the meantime, the Government had appointed Malik Khoshaba as leader and spokesman of that group of Assyrians who were anxious to co-operate with the Government in the matter of land settlement.

18. Despite advances made by the Government, Mar Shimun refused to co-operate in the land settlement policy unless his temporal as well as spiritual authority was recognised. Gradually, as the Mar Shimun's recalcitrant attitude became increasingly clear, the gap widened between his adherents and those other Assyrians who recognised that the best prospects for their future lay in co-operation with the Government. Feelings began to run high in the north and a trivial incident in which Assyrians were accused of throwing stones on to the roof of a house occupied by 'Iraq Army officers was taken as an Assyrian insult to the Army as a whole.

19. In June, the situation rapidly deteriorated with the coming into prominence of Yacou son of Malik Ismail as a leader of the Mar Shimun element, and his leading a party of about 200 armed men into the district north east of DOHUK and refusing to come in and explain his action. He eventually yielded to persuasion, but only just in time to save the Government from the necessity of fetching him in by force. Meanwhile,



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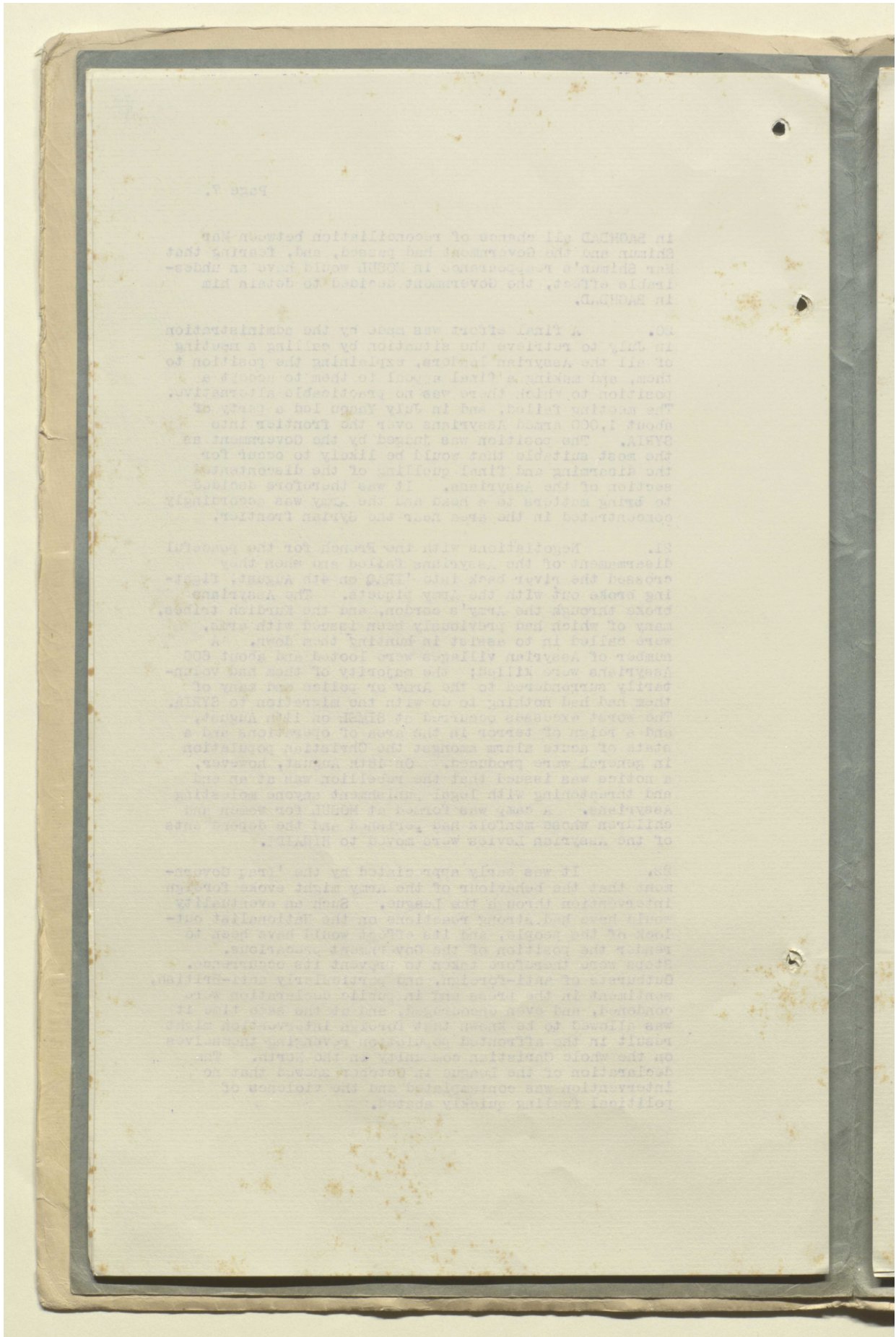
in BAGHDAD all chance of reconciliation between Mar Shimun and the Government had passed, and, fearing that Mar Shimun's reappearance in MOSUL would have an undesirable effect, the Government decided to detain him in BAGHDAD.

20. A final effort was made by the administration in July to retrieve the situation by calling a meeting of all the Assyrian leaders, explaining the position to them, and making a final appeal to them to accept a position to which there was no practicable alternative. The meeting failed, and in July Yacou led a party of about 1,000 armed Assyrians over the frontier into SYRIA. The position was judged by the Government as the most suitable that would be likely to occur for the disarming and final quelling of the discontented section of the Assyrians. It was therefore decided to bring matters to a head and the Army was accordingly concentrated in the area near the Syrian frontier.

21. Negotiations with the French for the peaceful disarmament of the Assyrians failed and when they crossed the river back into 'IRAQ on 4th August, fighting broke out with the Army piquets. The Assyrians broke through the Army's cordon, and the Kurdish tribes, many of which had previously been issued with arms, were called in to assist in hunting them down. A number of Assyrian villages were looted and about 600 Assyrians were killed; the majority of them had voluntarily surrendered to the Army or police and many of them had had nothing to do with the migration to SYRIA. The worst excesses occurred at SIMEL on 11th August, and a reign of terror in the area of operations and a state of acute alarm amongst the Christian population in general were produced. On 18th August, however, a notice was issued that the rebellion was at an end and threatening with legal punishment anyone molesting Assyrians. A camp was formed at MOSUL for women and children whose menfolk had perished and the dependents of the Assyrian Levies were moved to HINAIDI.

22. It was early appreciated by the 'Iraq Government that the behaviour of the Army might evoke foreign intervention through the League. Such an eventuality would have had strong reactions on the Nationalist outlook of the people, and its effect would have been to render the position of the Government precarious. Steps were therefore taken to prevent its occurrence. Outbursts of anti-foreign, and particularly anti-British, sentiment in the press and in public declaration were condoned, and even encouraged, and at the same time it was allowed to be known that foreign intervention might result in the affronted population revenging themselves on the whole Christian community in the North. The declaration of the League in October showed that no intervention was contemplated and the violence of political feeling quickly abated.

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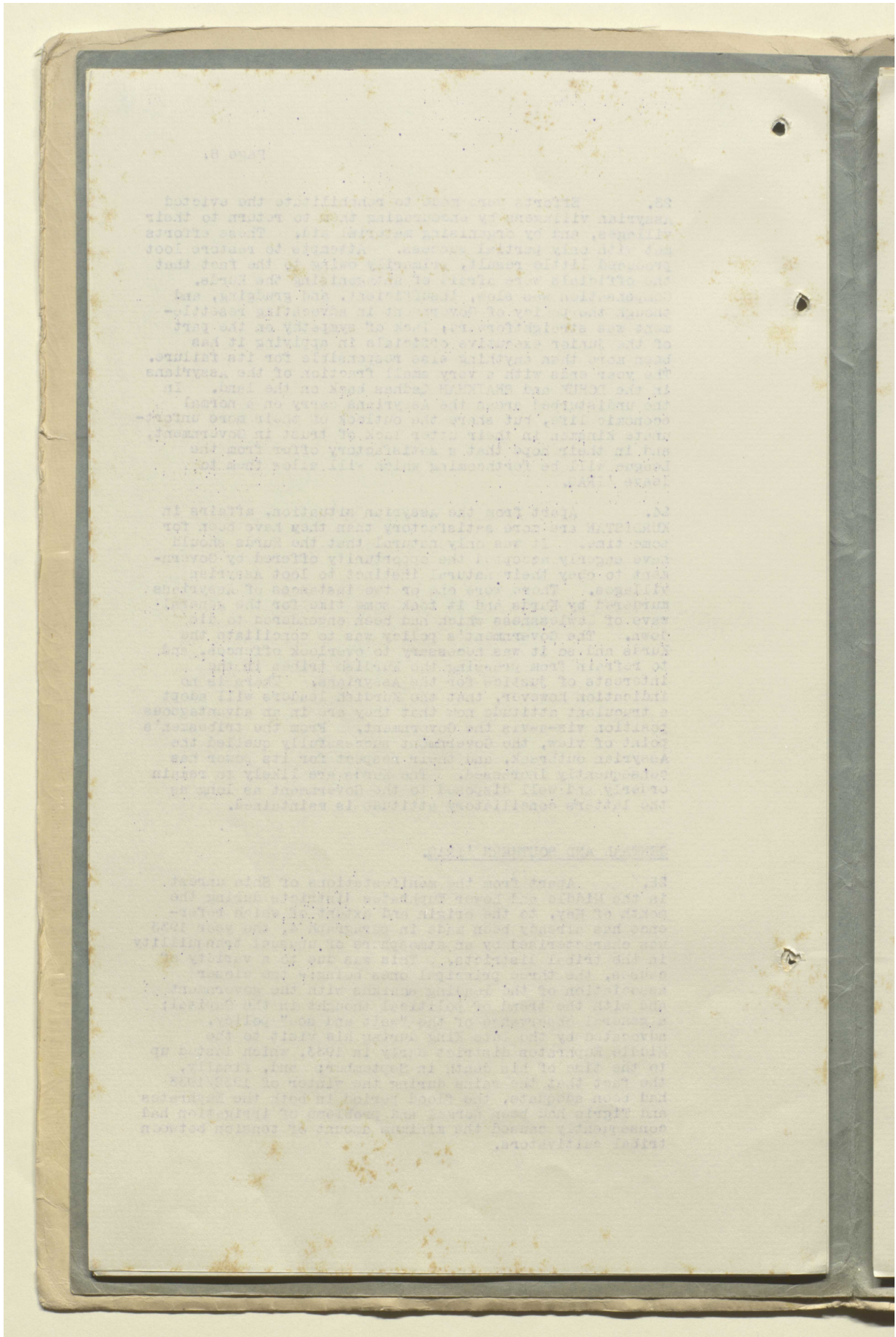
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23. Efforts were made to rehabilitate the evicted Assyrian villagers by encouraging them to return to their villages, and by organising material aid. These efforts met with only partial success. Attempts to restore loot produced little result, primarily owing to the fact that the officials were afraid of antagonising the Kurds. Compensation was slow, insufficient, and grudging, and though the policy of Government in advocating resettlement was straightforward, lack of sympathy on the part of the junior executive officials in applying it has been more than anything else responsible for its failure. The year ends with a very small fraction of the Assyrians in the DOHUK and SHAIKHAN Qadhas back on the land. In the undisturbed areas the Assyrians carry on a normal economic life, but share the outlook of their more unfortunate kinsmen in their utter lack of trust in Government, and in their hope that a satisfactory offer from the League will be forthcoming which will allow them to leave 'IRAQ.

24. Apart from the Assyrian situation, affairs in KURDISTAN are more satisfactory than they have been for some time. It was only natural that the Kurds should have eagerly accepted the opportunity offered by Government to obey their natural instinct to loot Assyrian villages. There were one or two instances of Assyrians murdered by Kurds and it took some time for the general wave of lawlessness which had been engendered to die down. The Government's policy was to conciliate the Kurds and so it was necessary to overlook offences, and to refrain from pressing the Kurdish tribes in the interests of justice for the Assyrians. There is no indication however, that the Kurdish leaders will adopt a truculent attitude now that they are in an advantageous position vis-a-vis the Government. From the tribesmen's point of view, the Government successfully quelled the Assyrian outbreak, and their respect for its power has consequently increased. The Kurds are likely to remain orderly and well disposed to the Government as long as the latter's conciliatory attitude is maintained.

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN 'IRAQ.

25. Apart from the manifestations of Shia unrest in the Middle and Lower Euphrates districts during the month of May, to the origin and extent of which reference has already been made in paragraph 4, the year 1933 was characterised by an atmosphere of unusual tranquillity in the tribal districts. This was due to a variety of causes, the three principal ones being:- the closer association of the leading shaikhs with the government and with the trend of political thought in the Capital; a general observance of the "wait and see" policy, advocated by the late King during his visit to the Middle Euphrates district early in 1933, which lasted up to the time of his death in September; and, finally, the fact that the rains during the winter of 1932/1933 had been adequate, the flood period in both the Euphrates and Tigris had been normal and problems of irrigation had consequently caused the minimum amount of tension between tribal cultivators.



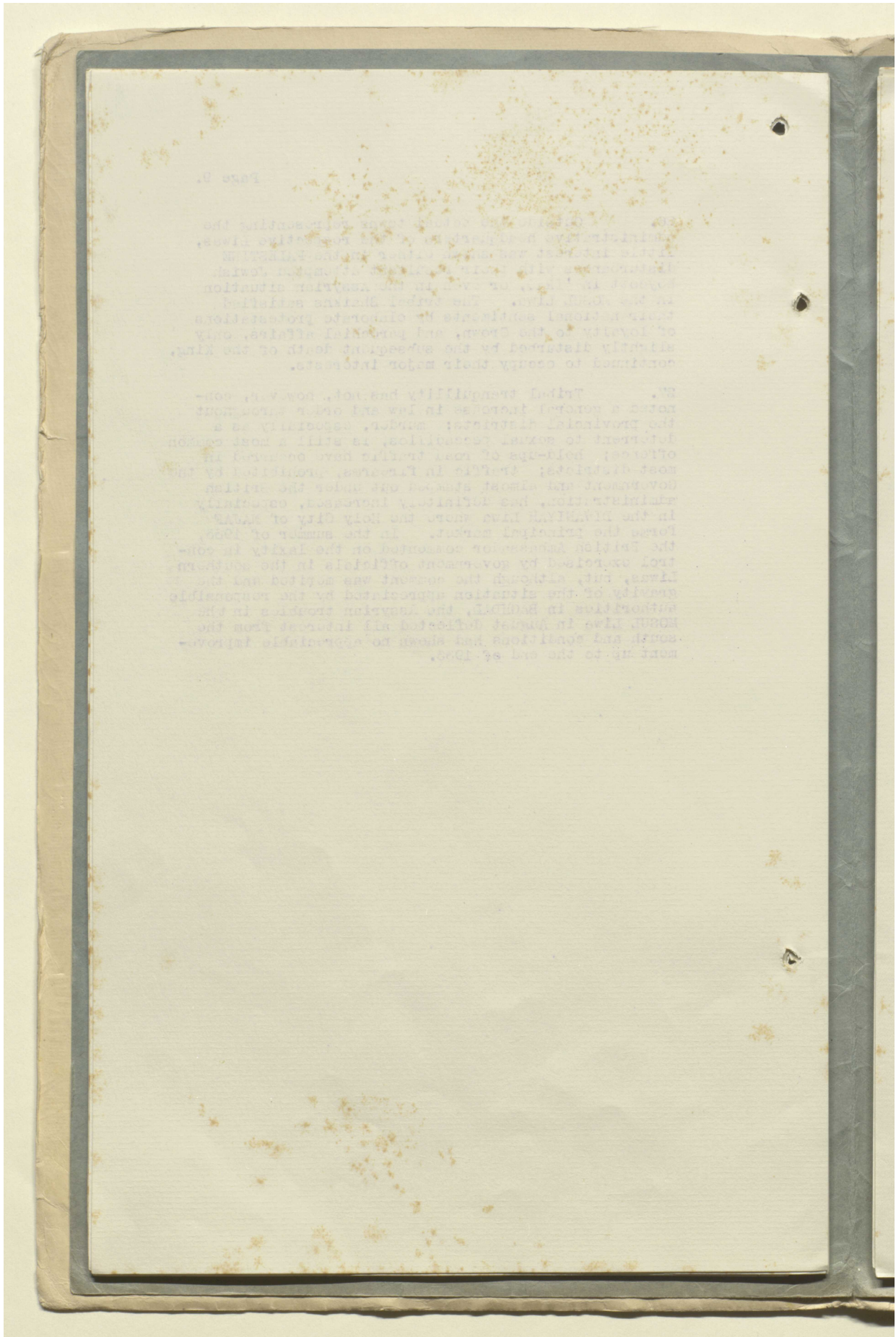
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26. Outside the actual towns representing the administrative headquarters of the respective Liwas, little interest was shown either in the PALESTINE disturbances with their resultant attempted Jewish boycott in 'IRAQ, or even in the Assyrian situation in the MOSUL Liwa. The tribal Shaikhs satisfied their national sentiments by elaborate protestations of loyalty to the Crown, and parochial affairs, only slightly disturbed by the subsequent death of the King, continued to occupy their major interests.

27. Tribal tranquillity has not, however, connoted a general increase in law and order throughout the provincial districts; murder, especially as a deterrent to sexual peccadillos, is still a most common offence; hold-ups of road traffic have occurred in most districts; traffic in firearms, prohibited by the Government and almost stamped out under the British administration, has definitely increased, especially in the DIWANIYAH Liwa where the Holy City of NAJAF forms the principal market. In the summer of 1933, the British Ambassador commented on the laxity in control exercised by government officials in the southern Liwas, but, although the comment was merited and the gravity of the situation appreciated by the responsible authorities in BAGHDAD, the Assyrian troubles in the MOSUL Liwa in August deflected all interest from the south and conditions had shown no appreciable improvement up to the end of 1933.

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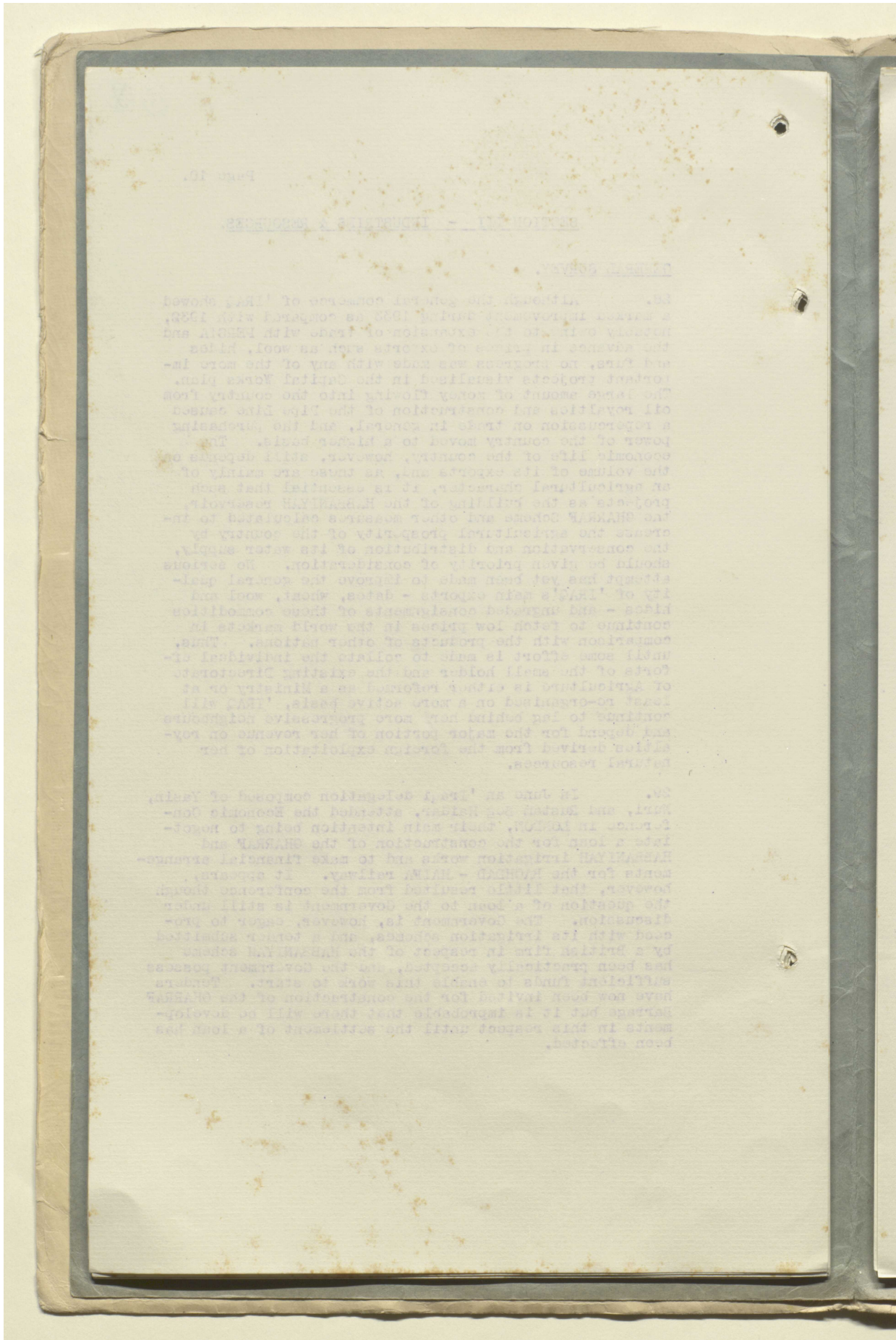
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SECTION III - INDUSTRIES & RESOURCES.

GENERAL SURVEY.

28. Although the general commerce of 'IRAQ showed a marked improvement during 1933 as compared with 1932, notably owing to the expansion of trade with PERSIA and the advance in prices of exports such as wool, hides and furs, no progress was made with any of the more important projects visualised in the Capital Works plan. The large amount of money flowing into the country from oil royalties and construction of the Pipe Line caused a repercussion on trade in general, and the purchasing power of the country moved to a higher basis. The economic life of the country, however, still depends on the volume of its exports and, as these are mainly of an agricultural character, it is essential that such projects as the building of the HABBANIYAH reservoir, the GHARRAF Scheme and other measures calculated to increase the agricultural prosperity of the country by the conservation and distribution of its water supply, should be given priority of consideration. No serious attempt has yet been made to improve the general quality of 'IRAQ's main exports - dates, wheat, wool and hides - and ungraded consignments of these commodities continue to fetch low prices in the world markets in comparison with the products of other nations. Thus, until some effort is made to collate the individual efforts of the small holder and the existing Directorate of Agriculture is either reformed as a Ministry or at least re-organised on a more active basis, 'IRAQ will continue to lag behind her more progressive neighbours and depend for the major portion of her revenue on royalties derived from the foreign exploitation of her natural resources.

29. In June an 'Iraqi delegation composed of Yasin, Nuri, and Rustam Beg Haidar, attended the Economic Conference in LONDON, their main intention being to negotiate a loan for the construction of the GHARRAF and HABBANIYAH irrigation works and to make financial arrangements for the BAGHDAD - HAIFA railway. It appears, however, that little resulted from the conference though the question of a loan to the Government is still under discussion. The Government is, however, eager to proceed with its irrigation schemes, and a tender submitted by a British firm in respect of the HABBANIYAH scheme has been practically accepted, and the Government possess sufficient funds to enable this work to start. Tenders have now been invited for the construction of the GHARRAF Barrage but it is improbable that there will be developments in this respect until the settlement of a loan has been effected.



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OIL.

30. Rapid progress was made by the 'Iraq Petroleum Company during 1933 and the welding and burying of the pipe line is now complete on all three sections, KIRKUK - HADITHA, HADITHA - HAIFA, HADITHA - TRIPOLI, with the exception of the pumping station points which must remain unconnected until those stations are constructed. It is expected that all pumping stations will be completed in 1934. In approximately two months time, it is intended to pump oil along the line from KIRKUK to HADITHA for testing purposes, and with the completion of the pumping stations, it is anticipated that oil will be running along the entire length of pipe line before the end of 1934. The provisions under the amended concession granted to this company by the 'Iraq Government will thus be complied with by a date considerably earlier than had originally been expected.

31. The British Oil Development Company, a subsidiary branch of Mosul Oil Fields Ltd., which was granted a concession by the 'Iraq Government in 1932 to prospect and drill for oil in the lands west of the TIGRIS and north of the 33rd parallel of latitude, was reported to have struck oil towards the end of 1933. Reports regarding the progress of this company have not been given much publicity, but it is probable that 1934 will see a general increase in activity in the SHERGAT Area.

CIVIL AVIATION.

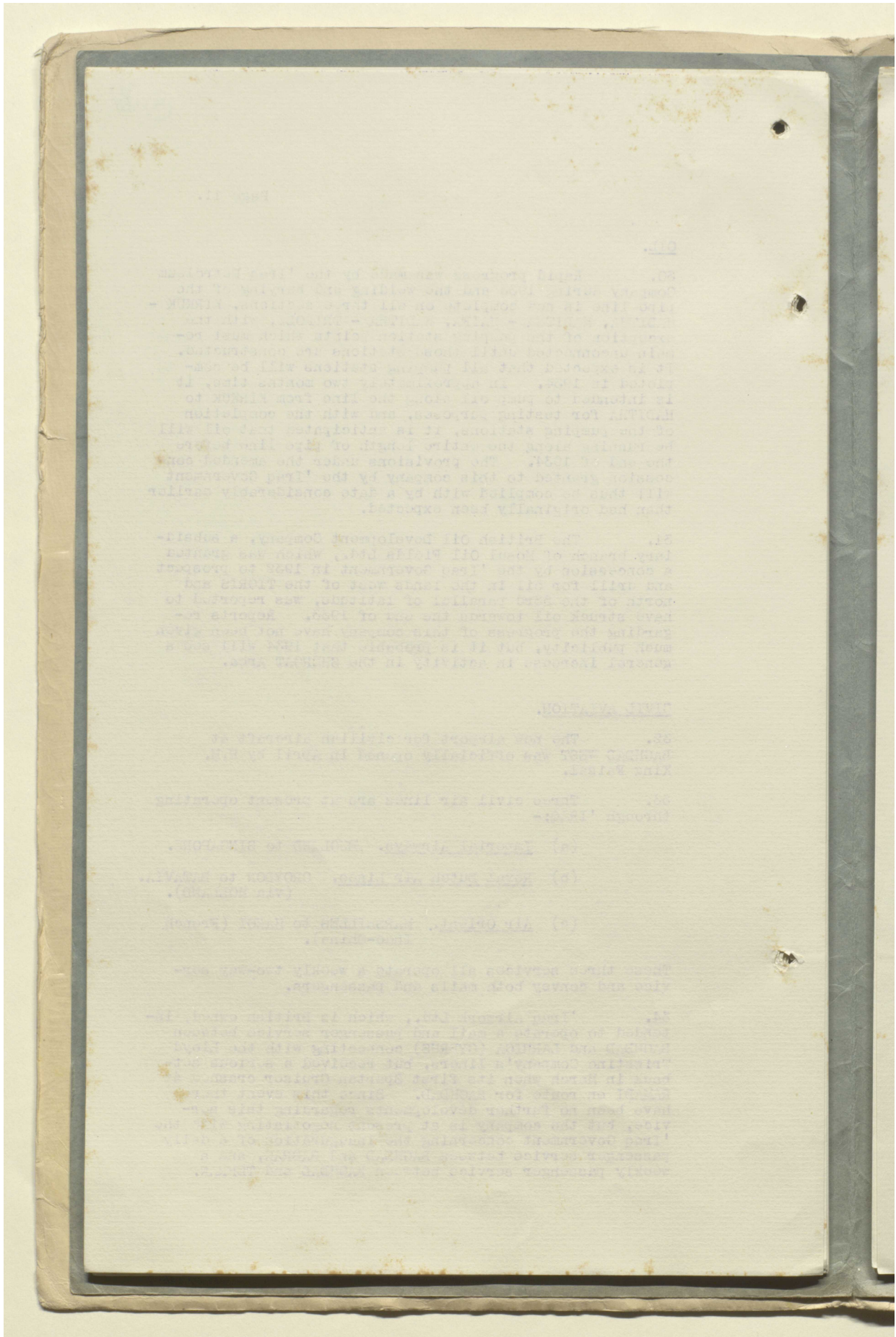
32. The new airport for civilian aircraft at BAGHDAD WEST was officially opened in April by H.M. King Faisal.

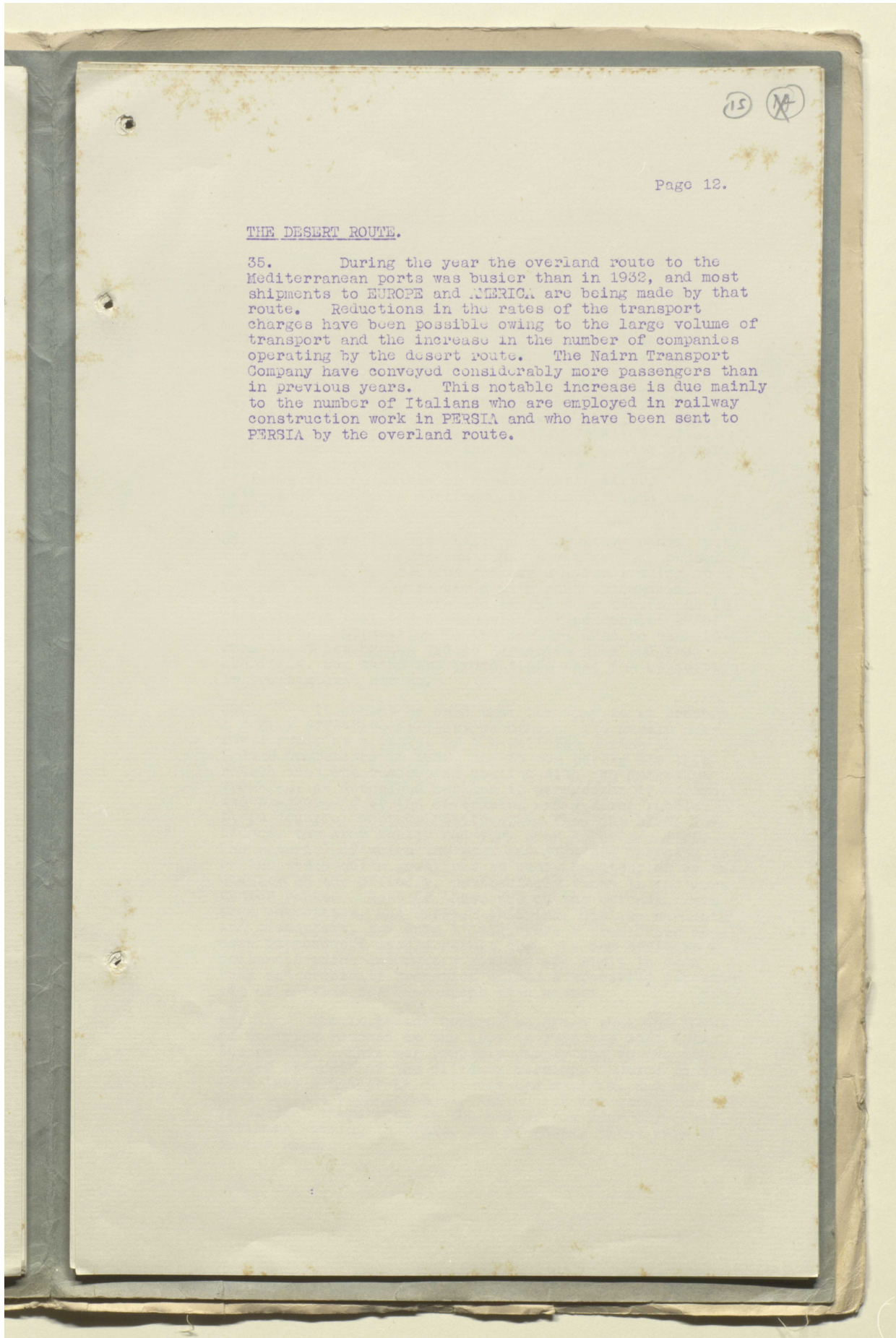
33. Three civil air lines are at present operating through 'IRAQ:-

- (a) Imperial Airways. ENGLAND to SINGAPORE.
- (b) Royal Dutch Air Lines. CROYDON to BATAVIA.
(via HOLLAND).
- (c) Air Orient. MARSEILLES to HANOI (French Indo-China).

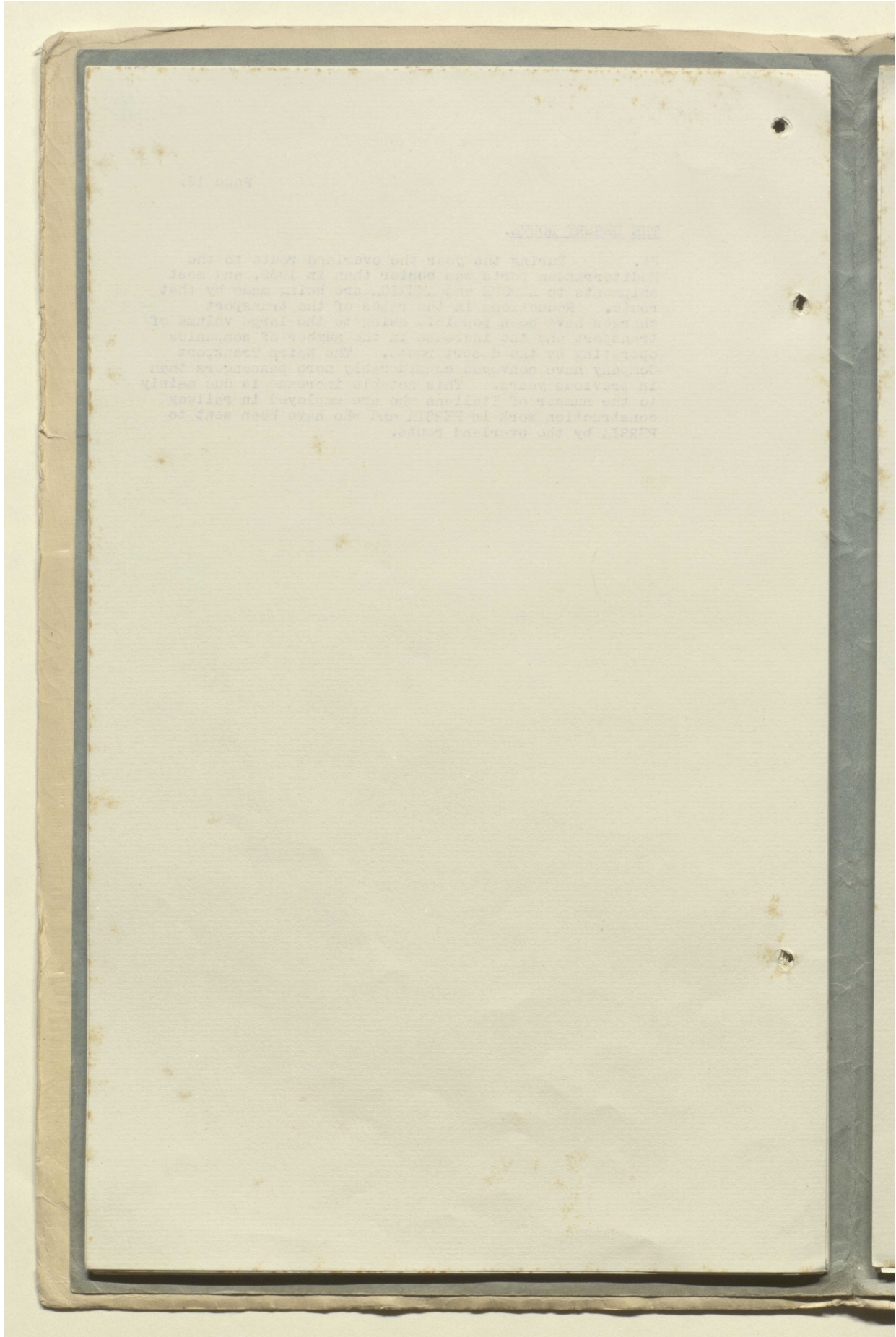
These three services all operate a weekly two-way service and convey both mails and passengers.

34. 'Iraq Airwork Ltd., which is British owned, intended to operate a mail and passenger service between BAGHDAD and LARNICA (CYPRUS) connecting with the Lloyd Triestino Company's liners, but received a serious setback in March when its first Spartan Cruiser crashed at RAMADI en route for BAGHDAD. Since this event there have been no further developments regarding this service, but the company is at present negotiating with the 'Iraq Government concerning the inauguration of a daily passenger service between BAGHDAD and BASRAH, and a weekly passenger service between BAGHDAD and TEHRAN.





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SECTION IV - ARMY AND AIR FORCES.

'IRAQ ARMY.

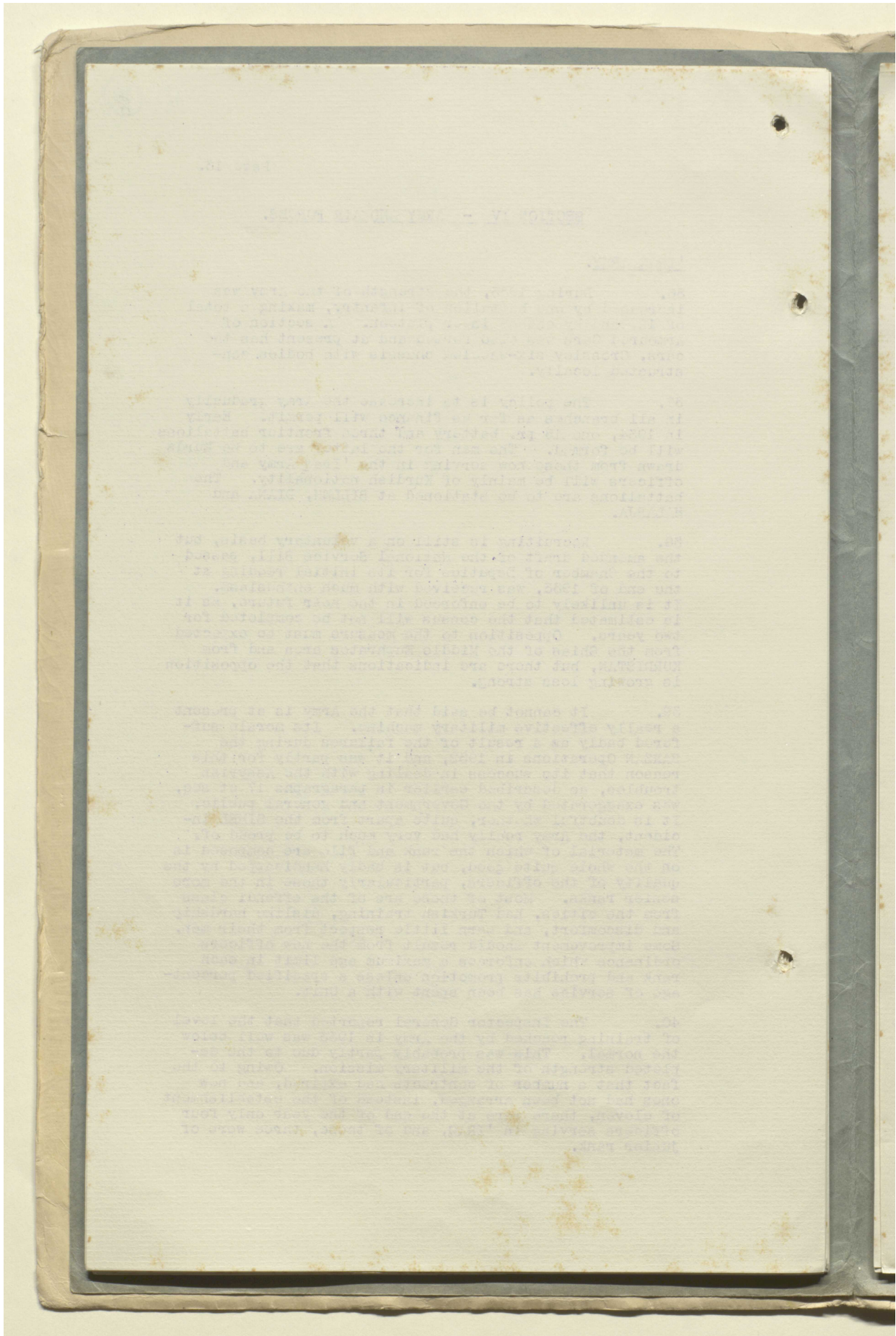
36. During 1933, the strength of the Army was increased by one battalion of infantry, making a total of 12, and by one engineer platoon. A section of Armoured Cars was also formed and at present has two cars, Crossley six-wheeled chassis with bodies constructed locally.

37. The policy is to increase the Army gradually in all branches as far as finance will permit. Early in 1934, one 18 pr. battery and three frontier battalions will be formed. The men for the latter are to be Kurds drawn from those now serving in the 'Iraq Army and officers will be mainly of Kurdish nationality. The battalions are to be stationed at BILLEH, DIANA and HALABJA.

38. Recruiting is still on a voluntary basis, but the amended draft of the National Service Bill, passed to the Chamber of Deputies for its initial reading at the end of 1933, was received with much enthusiasm. It is unlikely to be enforced in the near future, as it is estimated that the census will not be completed for two years. Opposition to the measure must be expected from the Shias of the Middle Euphrates area and from KURDISTAN, but there are indications that the opposition is growing less strong.

39. It cannot be said that the Army is at present a really effective military machine. Its morale suffered badly as a result of the failures during the BARZAN Operations in 1932, and it was partly for this reason that its success in dealing with the Assyrian troubles, as described earlier in paragraphs 17 et seq, was exaggerated by the Government and general public. It is doubtful whether, quite apart from the SIMEL incident, the Army really had very much to be proud of. The material of which the rank and file are composed is on the whole quite good, but is badly handicapped by the quality of the officers, particularly those in the more senior ranks. Most of these are of the effendi class from the cities, had Turkish training, dislike hardship and discomfort, and earn little respect from their men. Some improvement should result from the new officers ordinance which enforces a maximum age limit in each rank and prohibits promotion unless a specified percentage of service has been spent with a Unit.

40. The Inspector General reported that the level of training reached by the Army in 1933 was well below the normal. This was probably partly due to the depleted strength of the military mission. Owing to the fact that a number of contracts had expired, and new ones had not been arranged, instead of the establishment of eleven, there were at the end of the year only four officers serving in 'IRAQ, and of these, three were of junior rank.



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ROYAL 'IRAQ AIR FORCE.

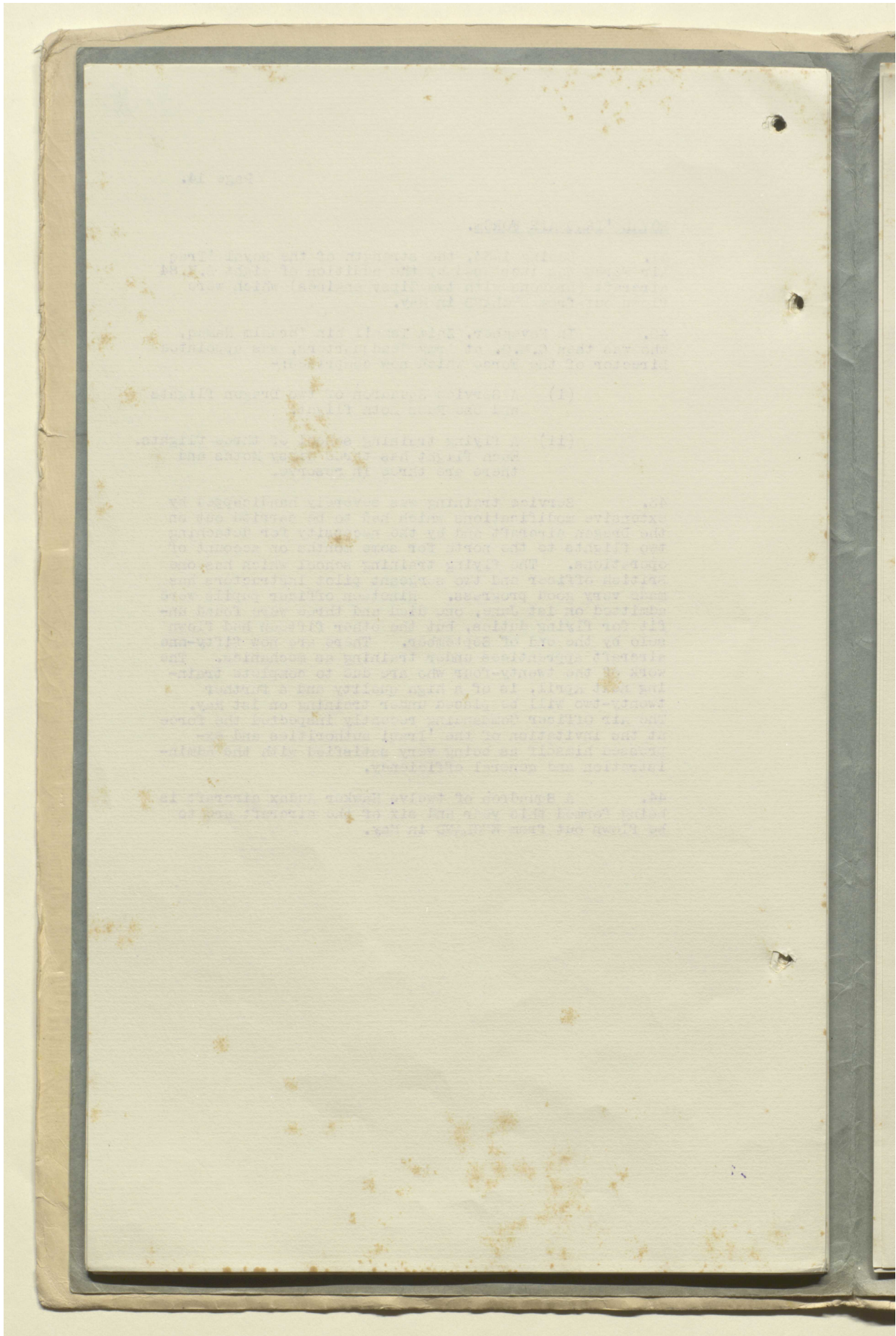
41. During 1933, the strength of the Royal 'Iraq Air Force was increased by the addition of eight D.H.84 aircraft (Dragons with two Gipsy engines) which were flown out from ENGLAND in May.

42. In November, Zaim Ismail bin Ibrahim Namuq, who was then C.M.G. at Army Headquarters, was appointed Director of the Force which now comprises:-

- (i) A Service Squadron of two Dragon flights and one Puss Moth flight.
- (ii) A flying training school of three flights. Each flight has three Gipsy Moths and there are three in reserve.

43. Service training was severely handicapped by extensive modifications which had to be carried out on the Dragon aircraft and by the necessity for detaching two flights to the north for some months on account of operations. The flying training school which has one British officer and two sergeant pilot instructors has made very good progress. Nineteen officer pupils were admitted on 1st June, one died and three were found unfit for flying duties, but the other fifteen had flown solo by the end of September. There are now fifty-one aircraft apprentices under training as mechanics. The work of the twenty-four who are due to complete training next April, is of a high quality and a further twenty-two will be placed under training on 1st May. The Air Officer Commanding recently inspected the force at the invitation of the 'Iraqi authorities and expressed himself as being very satisfied with the administration and general efficiency.

44. A Squadron of twelve Hawker Audax aircraft is being formed this year and six of the aircraft are to be flown out from ENGLAND in May.



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SECTION V - FOREIGN RELATIONS.

TURKEY.

45. Little information has been obtained from TURKEY during the past year and during recent months it has been confined to one or two articles in the newspapers. The most important event seems to have been the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic. A reception was held by the Turkish Minister in BAGHDAD while in TURKEY the celebrations lasted three days and a special feature was the broadcast of speeches throughout the country on the benefits which have been bestowed by the Republic. A military review, in which a whole Army Corps took part, was held at ANKARA and the drill and bearing of the troops is reported to have been excellent. It was noticeable that the representatives of the U.S.S.R. were treated as the chief guests of honour throughout the celebrations.

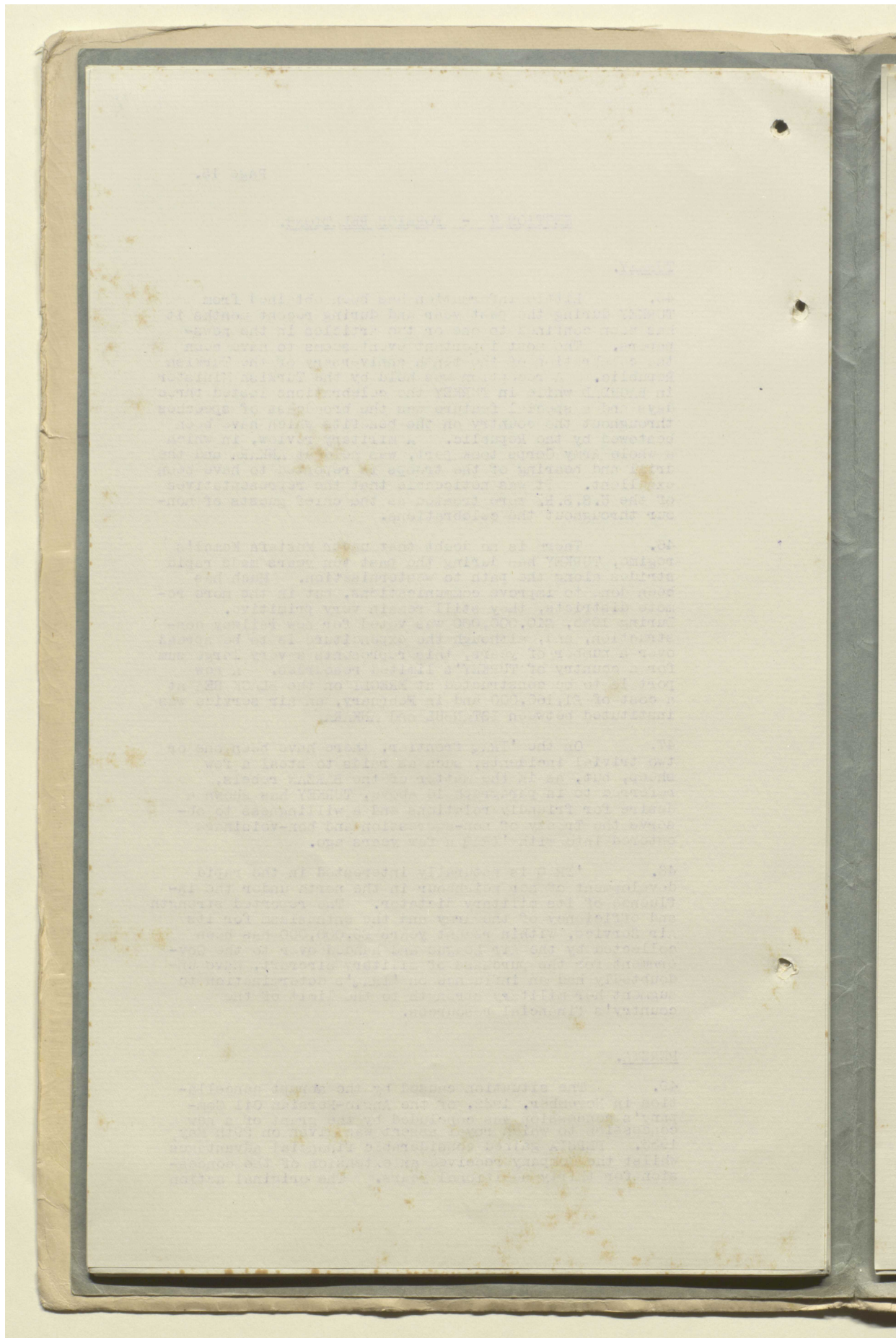
46. There is no doubt that under Mustafa Kemal's regime, TURKEY has during the past ten years made rapid strides along the path to westernisation. Much has been done to improve communications, but in the more remote districts, they still remain very primitive. During 1933, £10,000,000 was voted for new railway construction, and, although the expenditure is to be spread over a number of years, this represents a very large sum for a country of TURKEY's limited resources. A new port is to be constructed at EREGLI on the BLACK SEA at a cost of £1,160,000 and in February, an air service was instituted between ISTANBUL and ANKARA.

47. On the 'IRAQ frontier, there have been one or two trivial incidents, such as raids to steal a few sheep, but, as in the matter of the BARZAN rebels, referred to in paragraph 16 above, TURKEY has shown a desire for friendly relations and a willingness to observe the Treaty of non-aggression and bon-voisinage entered into with 'IRAQ a few years ago.

48. 'IRAQ is naturally interested in the rapid development of her neighbour in the north under the influence of its military dictator. The reported strength and efficiency of the Army and the enthusiasm for its Air Service, within recent years £5,000,000 has been collected by the Air League and handed over to the Government for the purchase of military aircraft, have undoubtedly had an influence on 'IRAQ's determination to augment her military strength to the limit of the country's financial resources.

PERSIA.

49. The situation caused by the abrupt cancellation in November, 1932, of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's concession was concluded by the grant of a new concession to which royal assent was given on 29th May, 1933. PERSIA gained considerable financial advantages whilst the Company received an extension of the concession for thirty additional years. The original action



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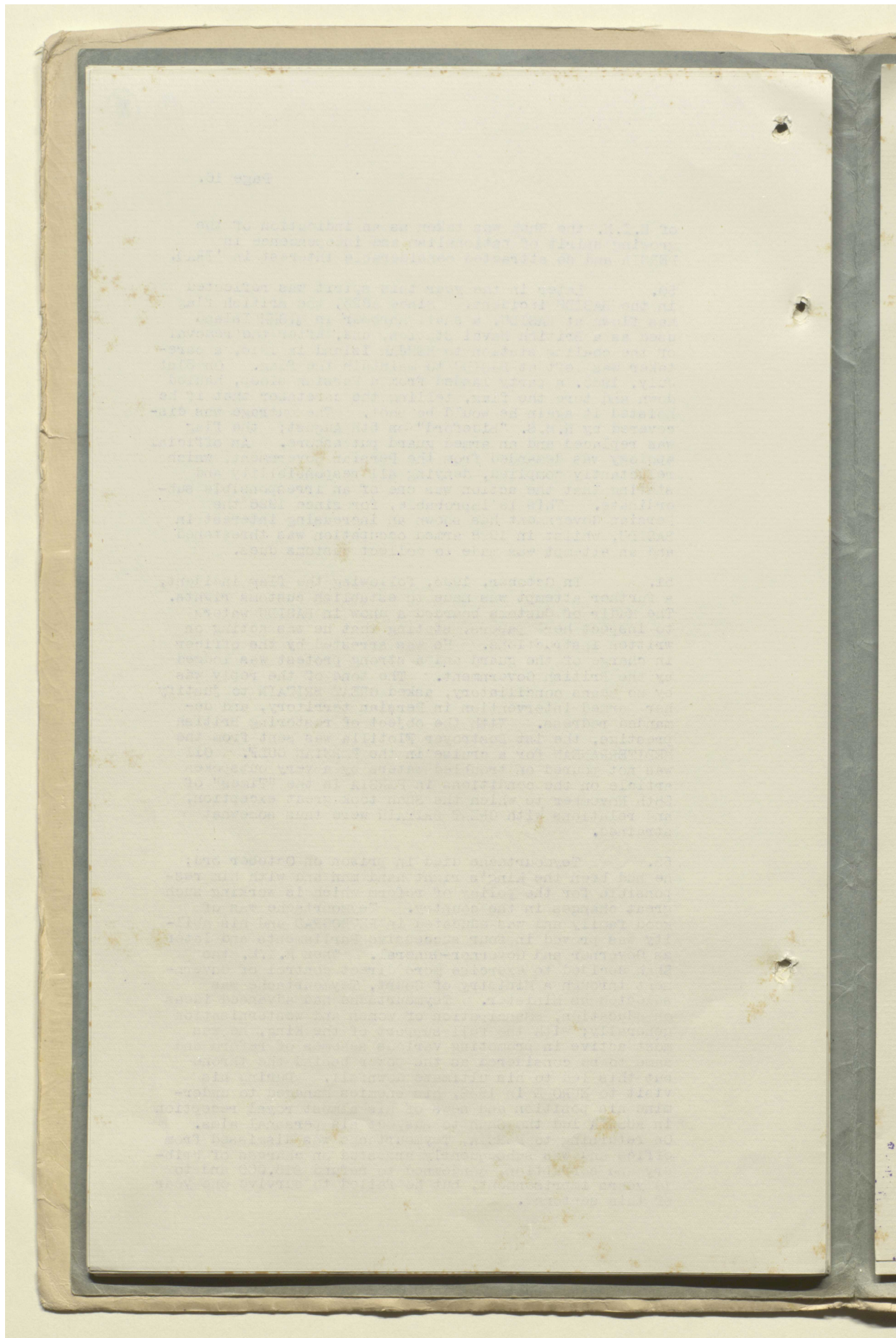
of H.I.M. the Shah was taken as an indication of the growing spirit of nationalism and independence in PERSIA and so attracted considerable interest in 'IRAQ.

50. Later in the year this spirit was reflected in the BASIDU incident. Since 1823, the British flag has flown at BASIDU, a small harbour in QISHM Island used as a British Naval Station, and, after the removal of the coaling station to HENJAM Island in 1913, a caretaker was left at BASIDU to maintain the flag. On 31st July, 1933, a party landed from a Persian sloop, hauled down and tore the flag, telling the caretaker that if he hoisted it again he would be shot. The outrage was discovered by H.M.S. "Bideford" on 5th August; the flag was replaced and an armed guard put ashore. An official apology was demanded from the Persian Government, which reluctantly complied, denying all responsibility and stating that the action was one of an irresponsible subordinate. This is improbable, for since 1926 the Persian Government has shown an increasing interest in BASIDU, whilst in 1928 armed occupation was threatened and an attempt was made to collect customs dues.

51. In October, 1933, following the flag incident, a further attempt was made to establish customs rights. The Mudir of Customs boarded a dhow in BASIDU waters to inspect her papers, stating that he was acting on written instructions. He was arrested by the officer in charge of the guard and a strong protest was lodged by the British Government. The tone of the reply was by no means conciliatory, asked GREAT BRITAIN to justify her armed intervention in Persian territory, and demanded redress. With the object of restoring British prestige, the 1st Destroyer Flotilla was sent from the MEDITERRANEAN for a cruise in the PERSIAN GULF. Oil was not poured on troubled waters by a very outspoken article on the conditions in PERSIA in the "Times" of 28th November to which the Shah took great exception, and relations with GREAT BRITAIN were thus somewhat strained.

52. Teymourtache died in prison on October 3rd; he had been the King's right hand man and with him responsible for the policy of reform which is working such great changes in the country. Teymourtache was of good family and was educated in PETROGRAD and his ability was proved in four successive Parliaments and later as Governor and Governor-General. When H.I.M. the Shah decided to exercise more direct control of Government through a Ministry of Court, Teymourtache was selected as Minister. Teymourtache had advanced ideas on education, emancipation of women and westernisation generally; with the full support of the King, he was most active in promoting various schemes of reform and came to be considered as the power behind the throne but this led to his ultimate downfall. During his visit to EUROPE in 1932, his enemies managed to undermine his position and news of his almost royal reception in RUSSIA led the Shah to suspect his personal aims. On returning to PERSIA, Teymourtache was dismissed from office and was subsequently arrested on charges of bribery and corruption, condemned to refund £16,000 and to 10 years imprisonment, but he failed to survive one year of this sentence.

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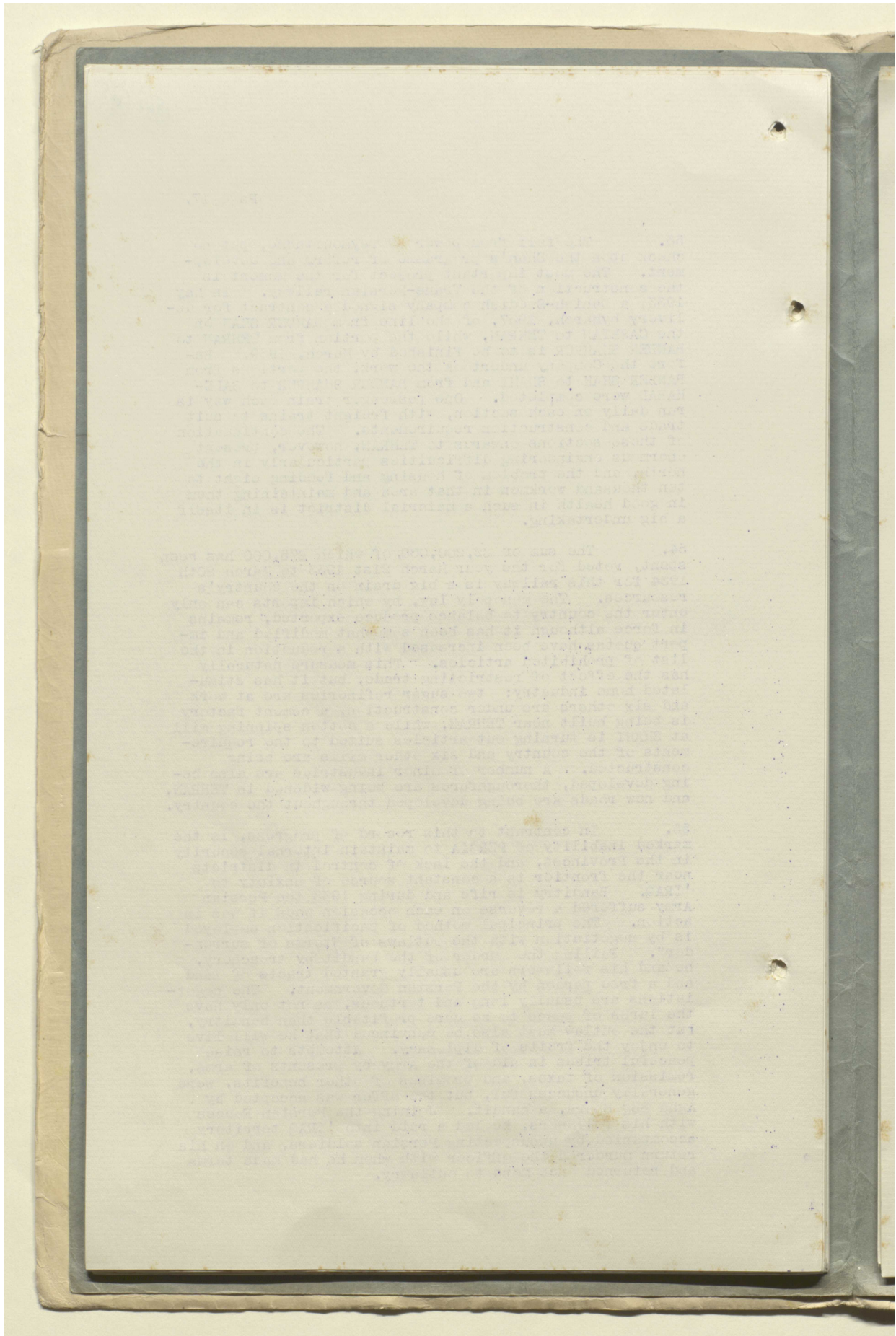
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53. The fall from power of Teymouratche, put no check upon the Shah's programme of reform and development. The most important project for the moment is the construction of the Trans-Persian railway. In May 1933, a Danish-Swedish company signed a contract for delivery by March, 1937, of the line from BANDER SHAH on the CASPIAN to TEHRAN, while the portion from TEHRAN to BANDER SHAHPUR is to be finished by March, 1939. Before the Company undertook the work, the portions from BANDER SHAH to SHAHI and from BANDER SHAHPUR to SALEHABAD were completed. One passenger train each way is run daily on each section, with freight trains to suit trade and construction requirements. The continuation of these sections onwards to TEHRAN, however, present enormous engineering difficulties particularly in the north, and the problem of housing and feeding eight to ten thousand workmen in that area and maintaining them in good health in such a malarial district is in itself a big undertaking.

54. The sum of 22,200,000, of which 275,000 has been spent, voted for the year March 21st 1933 to March 20th 1934 for this railway is a big drain on the country's resources. The monopoly law, by which imports can only enter the country to balance produce exported, remains in force although it has been somewhat modified and import quotas have been increased with a reduction in the list of prohibited articles. This measure naturally has the effect of restricting trade, but it has stimulated home industry; two sugar refineries are at work and six others are under construction, a cement factory is being built near TEHRAN, while a cotton spinning mill at SHAHI is turning out articles suited to the requirements of the country and six other mills are being constructed. A number of minor industries are also being developed, thoroughfares are being widened in TEHRAN, and new roads are being developed throughout the country.

55. In contrast to this record of progress, is the marked inability of PERSIA to maintain internal security in the Provinces, and the lack of control in districts near the frontier is a constant source of anxiety to 'IRAQ. Banditry is rife and during 1933 the Persian Army suffered a reverse on each occasion when it was in action. The principal method of pacification employed is by negotiation with the outlaws of "terms of surrender". Failing the murder of the bandit by treachery, he and his followers are usually granted tracts of land and a free pardon by the Persian Government. The negotiations are usually long and tortuous, as not only have the lures of peace to be more profitable than banditry, but the outlaw must also be convinced that he will live to enjoy the fruits of diplomacy. Attempts to raise peaceful tribes in aid of the Army by presents of arms, remission of taxes, and promises of other benefits, were generally unsuccessful, but the offer was accepted by Agha Beg Shara, a bandit. Joining the Persian Forces with his followers, he led a raid into 'IRAQ territory accompanied by unsuspecting Persian soldiers, and on his return murdered the officer with whom he had made terms and returned once more to outlawry.

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56. The lack of aptitude of the Persian Army in guerilla warfare should not obscure the fact that seen through 'Iraqi eyes and judged by their standards, it is a powerful and well-equipped force. Accurate information about the Persian Army is difficult to obtain, but £2,102,000 was allotted for the upkeep of the fighting forces for the year ending 30th March, 1934, and an order for thirty Audax aircraft has been placed with Messrs. Hawkers. This undoubtedly had a big influence on 'IRAQ's decision to purchase the same type of aeroplane and on the enthusiasm with which the National Service Bill was received in her Parliament.

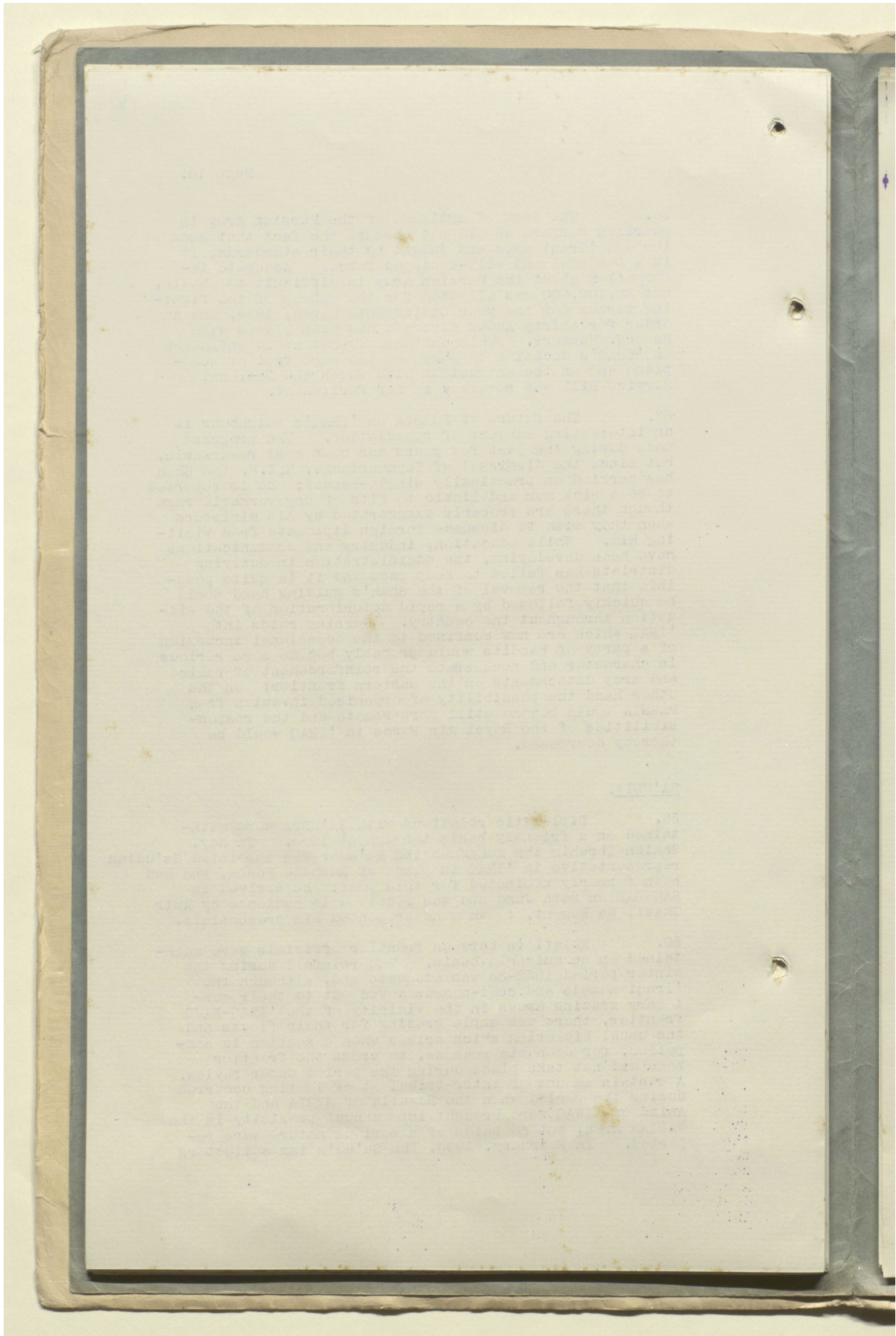
57. The future of PERSIA as 'IRAQ's neighbour is an interesting subject of speculation. The progress made during the past few years has been most remarkable, but since the dismissal of Teymouratche, H.I.M. the Shah has carried on practically single-handed; he is reported to be a sick man and liable to fits of ungovernable rage though these are probably exaggerated by his ministers when they wish to dissuade foreign diplomats from visiting him. While education, industry and communications have been developing, the administration in outlying districts has failed to keep pace and it is quite possible that the removal of the Shah's guiding hand would be quickly followed by a rapid deterioration of the situation throughout the country. Persian raids into 'IRAQ which are now confined to the occasional incursion of a party of bandits would probably become more serious in character and necessitate the reinforcement of police and army detachments on the eastern frontier; on the other hand the possibility of organised invasion from PERSIA would become still more remote and the responsibilities of the Royal Air Force in 'IRAQ would be thereby decreased.

SA'UDIA.

58. Diplomatic relations with SA'UDIA were maintained on a friendly basis throughout 1933. In May, Shaikh Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Mu'amar was appointed Sa'udian representative in 'IRAQ in place of Rushaid Pasha, who had been formerly nominated for this post; he arrived in BAGHDAD on 24th June and was received in audience by Amir Ghazi, as Regent, to whom he presented his credentials.

59. Relations between frontier officials were maintained on an amicable basis. The rainfall during the winter period 1932-33 was adequate and, although the 'Iraqi nomads and semi-nomads moved out to their customary grazing areas in the vicinity of the 'IRAQ-NAJD frontier, there was ample grazing for their flocks and the usual bickering which arises when a section is compelled, for economic reasons, to cross the frontier zone did not take place during the period under review. A certain amount of inter-tribal stock looting occurred during the period when the Ruwalla of SYRIA and the Aniza of 'IRAQ were brought into annual proximity in the WADIAN Area, but no raids of a serious nature were reported. In February, 1933, Ibn Sa'ud's tax collectors

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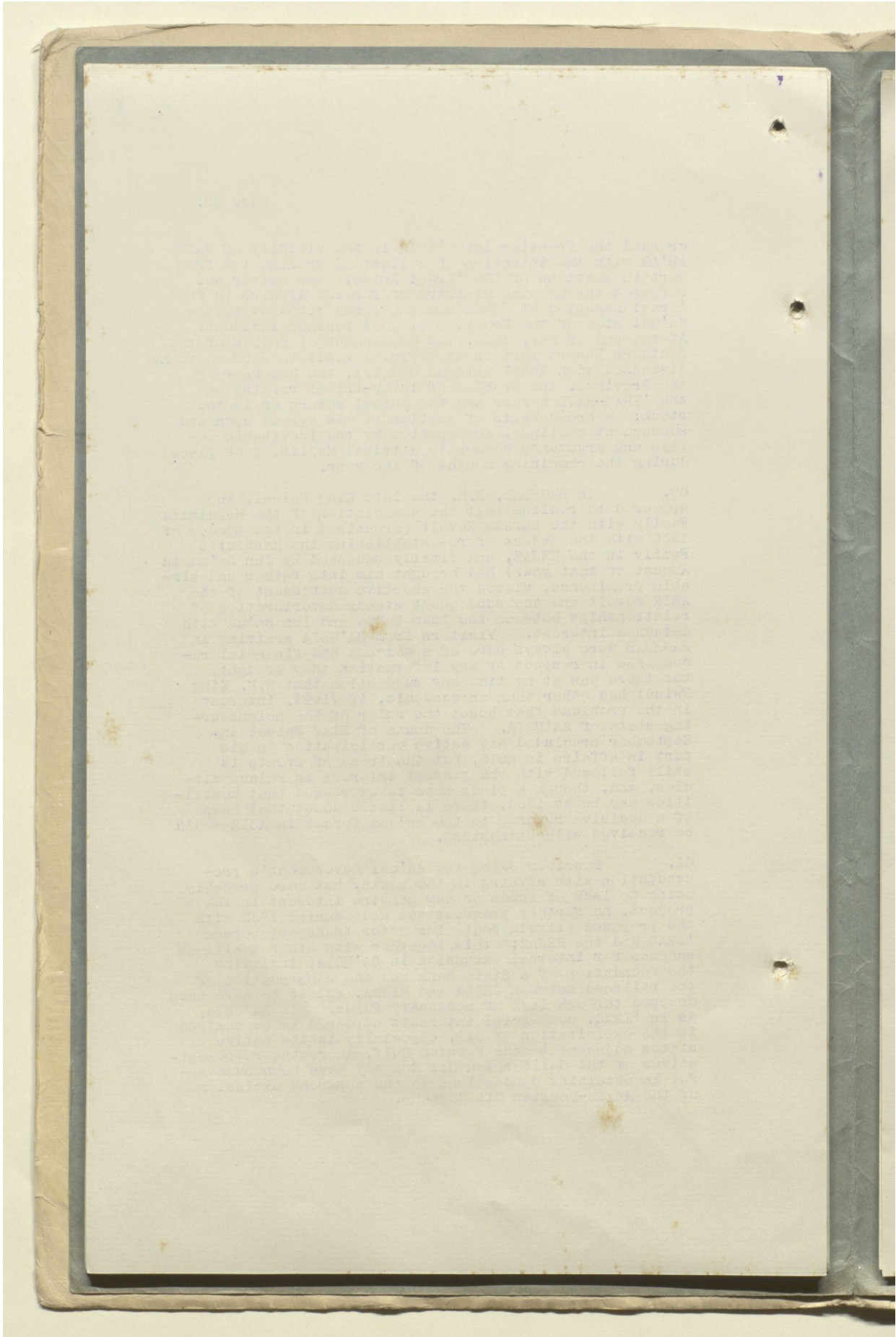
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crossed the frontier into 'IRAQ in the vicinity of WADI AR'AR with the intention of collecting grazing tax from certain sections of the 'Iraqi Aniza; the matter was referred through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the 'Iraqi Legation at JEDDA and the party withdrew to the Sa'udi side of the frontier without further incident. At the end of May, 1933, the Commandant of Police of the Southern Desert left on an official visit to JAUF where he discussed with Abdul Aziz as Sudairi, the Governor of the Province, the problem of inter-tribal raiding on the 'IRAQ-NAJD border and the mutual return of looted stock; a broad basis of settlement was agreed upon and subsequent meetings, accompanied by the inevitable delays and arguments common to a tribal Majlis, took place during the remaining months of the year.

60. In BAGHDAD, H.M. the late King Faisal, who appeared to realise that the association of the Hashimite Family with the Rafada Revolt (organised in the summer of 1932 with the object of re-establishing the Hashimite Family in the HEJAZ, and finally squashed by Ibn Sa'ud in August of that year) had brought him into rather undesirable prominence, viewed the abortive settlement of the ASIR revolt and the subsequent steady deterioration of relationships between the Imam Yahya and Ibn Sa'ud with detached interest. Visitors from SA'UDIA arriving in BAGHDAD were always sure of a welcome and financial recompense in respect of any information they brought, but there was at no time any suggestion that H.M. King Faisal had other than an academic, if vivid, interest in the problems that beset the ruler of the neighbouring state of SA'UDIA. The death of King Faisal in September precluded any active participation on his part in affairs in ASIR, but the trend of events is still followed with the keenest interest in Palace circles, and, though a pious hope is expressed that hostilities may be avoided, there is little doubt that news of a decisive reverse to the Sa'udi forces in ASIR would be received with enthusiasm.

61. Possibly owing the Sa'udi Government's pre-occupation with affairs in the south, but more probably owing to lack of funds or any genuine interest in the project, no further progress was made during 1933 with the proposed pilgrim route for motor transport between 'IRAQ and the HEJAZ; this, together with other ambitious schemes for internal expansion in SA'UDIA, including the foundation of a State Bank and the construction of the railroad between JEDDA and MECCA, appear to have been dropped through lack of necessary funds. In SA'UDIA, as in 'IRAQ, commercial interests appeared to be centred in the exploitation of oil, especially in the native states adjacent to the Persian Gulf, where the representatives of the Californian Oil Company have been successful in obtaining concessions to the apparent exclusion of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

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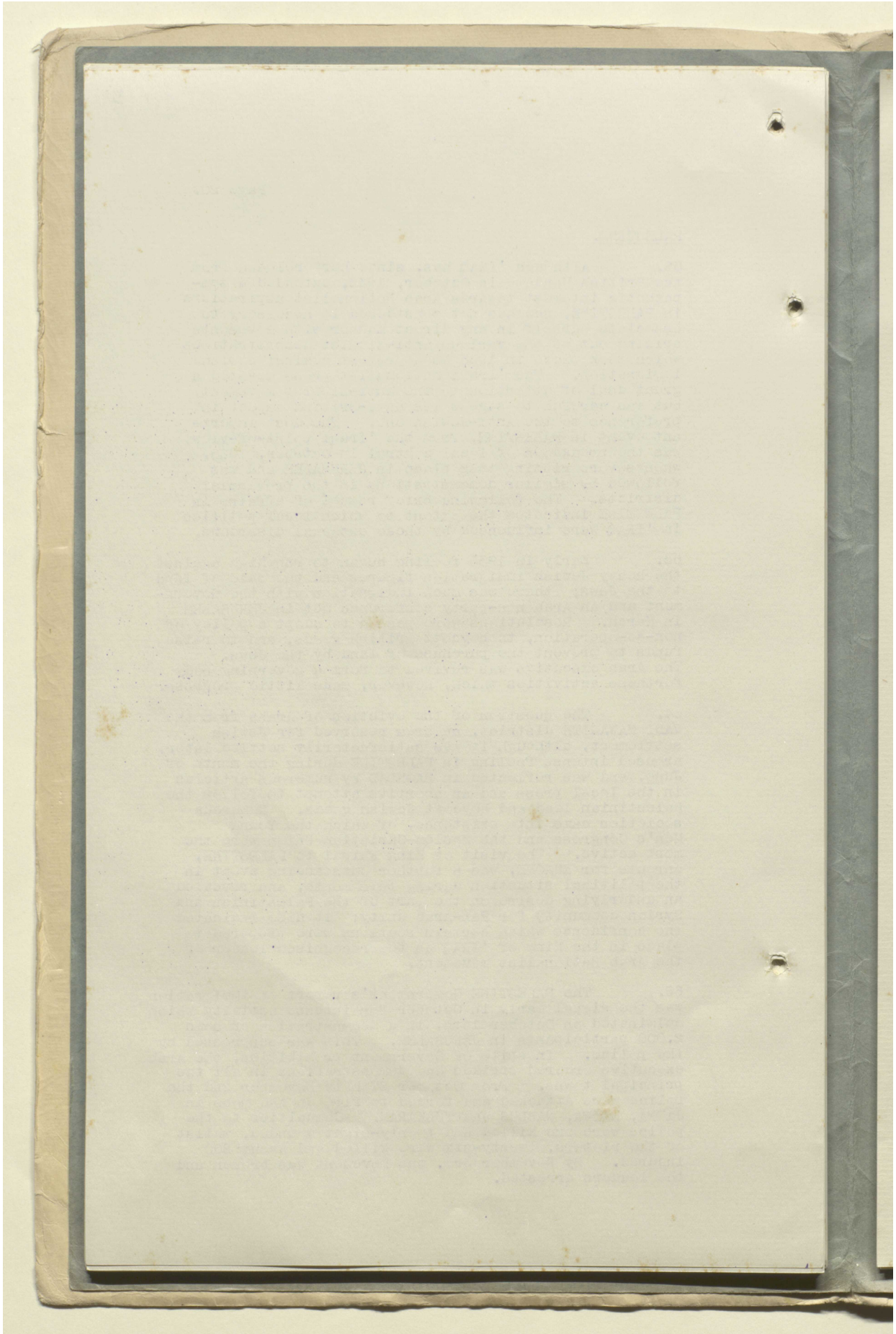
PALESTINE.

62. Although 'IRAQ has, since her release from the British Mandate in October, 1932, extended a sympathetic interest towards Arab Nationalist aspirations in PALESTINE, she has not considered it necessary to associate herself in any direct manner with movements arising out of the various anti-Zionist demonstrations which took place in 1933 as a protest against Jewish immigration. The 'Iraqi nationalist press devoted a great deal of attention to the anti-Zionist movement, but was careful to stress its anti-British aspect in preference to the Anti-Jewish one. The most important event in PALESTINE, from the 'Iraqi point-of-view, was the breakdown of local control in October, 1933, when severe rioting took place in JERUSALEM and was followed by similar demonstrations in the provincial districts. The following brief resumé of affairs in PALESTINE indicates the extent to which local politics in 'IRAQ were influenced by these external disorders.

63. Early in 1933 feeling began to run high against the heavy Jewish immigration figures and the sale of land to the Jews; there was much indignation with the Government and an Arab non-party conference met in JERUSALEM in March. Resolutions were passed to adopt a policy of non-co-operation, to boycott British goods, and to raise funds to prevent the purchase of land by the Jews. The Arab executive was revived to form a governing body for these activities which, however, made little progress.

64. The question of the eviction of Arabs from the WADI HAWARITH district, an area reserved for Jewish settlement, although it was satisfactorily settled later, aroused intense feeling in PALESTINE during the month of June, and was reflected in BAGHDAD by numerous articles in the local press and an abortive attempt to follow the Palestinian lead and boycott Jewish goods. Numerous societies came into existence, of which the Young Men's Congress and the Moslem-Christian Union were the most active. The visit of King Faisal to PALESTINE, enroute for EUROPE, was a further outstanding event in the political situation during this month, and revealed an underlying desire on the part of the Palestinian and Syrian community for Pan-Arab unity; it also indicated the confidence which certain sections were prepared to place in the King of 'IRAQ as the recognised leader of the Arab Nationalist movement.

65. The PALESTINE Government's report on immigration was the signal early in October for intense activity which culminated on October 13th, in a demonstration of some 2,000 participants in JERUSALEM. This was suppressed by the police. In spite of Government prohibition, the Arab executive ordered strikes and demonstrations in all the principal towns. From October 27th to November 2nd the police were attacked and forced to fire on the mobs in JAFFA, HAIFA, NABLUS and TULKARAM. Casualties to the police were one killed and twenty-eight wounded, whilst of the rioters, twenty-six were killed and about 200 injured. By November 3rd, the movement was broken and the leaders arrested.



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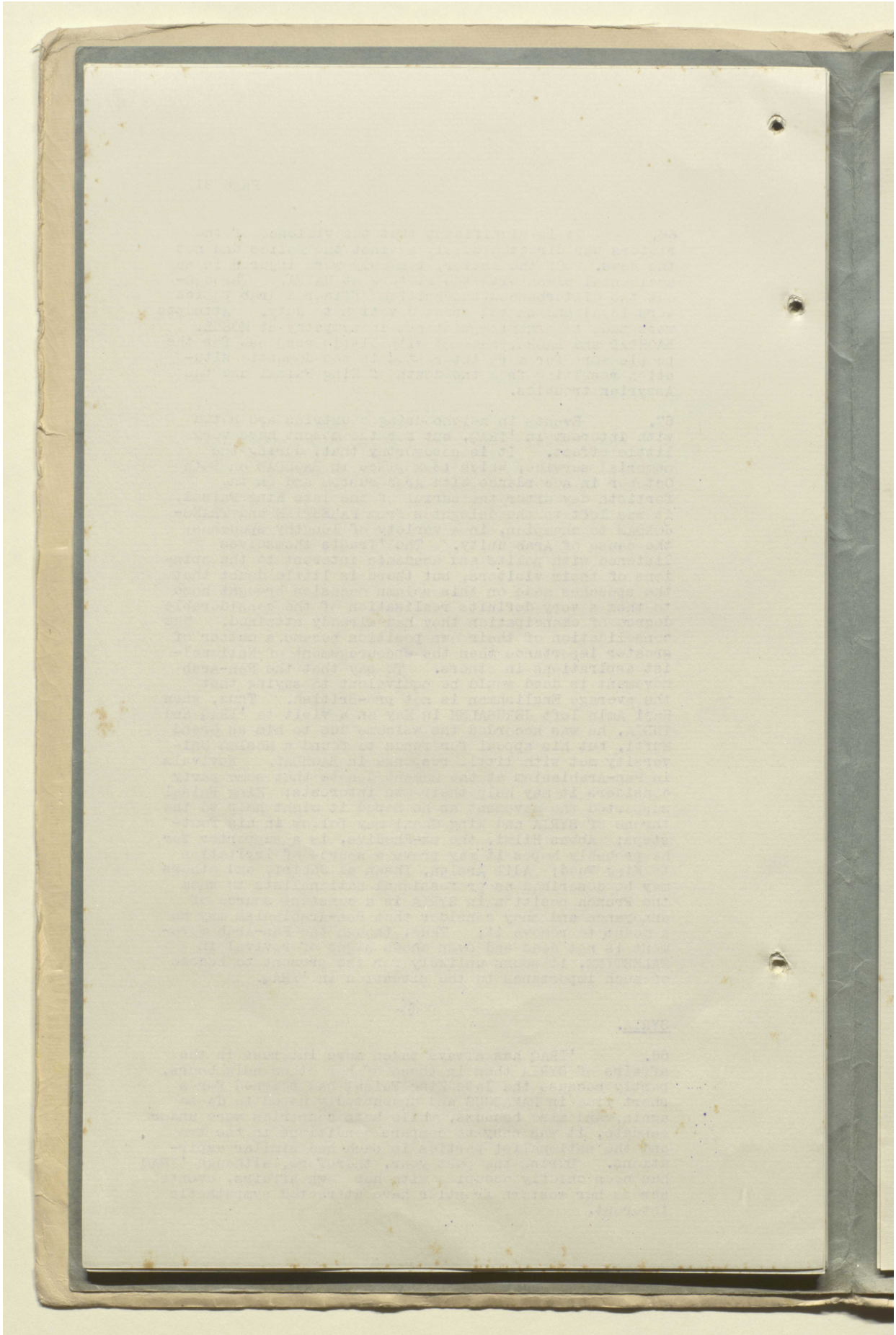
66. It is significant that the violence of the rioters was directed solely against the Police and not the Jews. Of the latter, ten only were injured in an accidental clash with the rioters at HAIFA. Throughout the disturbances, the British officered Arab police were loyal and showed great devotion to duty. Attempts were made to organise meetings in sympathy at MOSUL, BAGHDAD and BASRA, but met with little response for the people were far more interested in the domestic situation resulting from the death of King Faisal and the Assyrian troubles.

67. Events in neighbouring countries are noted with interest in 'IRAQ, but for the moment have very little effect. It is noteworthy that, during the memorial service, which took place in BAGHDAD on 24th October in accordance with Arab custom and on the fortieth day after the burial of the late King Faisal, it was left to the delegates from PALESTINE and TRANS-JORDAN to champion, in a variety of lengthy speeches, the cause of Arab unity. The 'Iraqis themselves listened with polite and academic interest to the opinions of their visitors, but there is little doubt that the speeches made on this solemn occasion brought home to them a very definite realisation of the considerable degree of emancipation they had already attained. The consolidation of their own position became a matter of greater importance than the encouragement of Nationalist aspirations in others. To say that the Pan-Arab movement is dead would be equivalent to saying that the average Englishman is not pro-British. Thus, when Haji Amin left JERUSALEM in May on a visit to 'IRAQ and INDIA, he was accorded the welcome due to him as Grand Mufti, but his appeal for funds to found a Moslem University met with little response in BAGHDAD. Revivals in Pan-Arabianism at the moment denote that some party considers it may help their own interests; King Faisal supported the movement as he hoped it might help to the throne of SYRIA and King Ghazi may follow in his footsteps; Abbas Hilmi, the ex-Khedive, is a supporter for he probably hopes it may prove a source of irritation to King Fuad; Adil Arslan, Ihsan al Jabiri, and others may be described as professional nationalists to whom the French position in SYRIA is a constant source of annoyance and they consider that Pan-Arabianism may be a means to remove it. Thus, though the Pan-Arab movement is not dead and even shows signs of revival in PALESTINE, it seems unlikely for the present to become of much importance to the situation in 'IRAQ.

SYRIA.

68. 'IRAQ has always taken more interest in the affairs of SYRIA than in those of her other neighbours, partly because the late King Faisal had reigned for a short time in DAMASCUS and undoubtedly hoped to do so again, and also because, while both countries were under mandate, it was easy to compare conditions in the two and the nationalist parties in each had similar aspirations. During the past year, therefore, although 'IRAQ has been chiefly occupied with her own affairs, events across her western frontier have attracted sympathetic interest.

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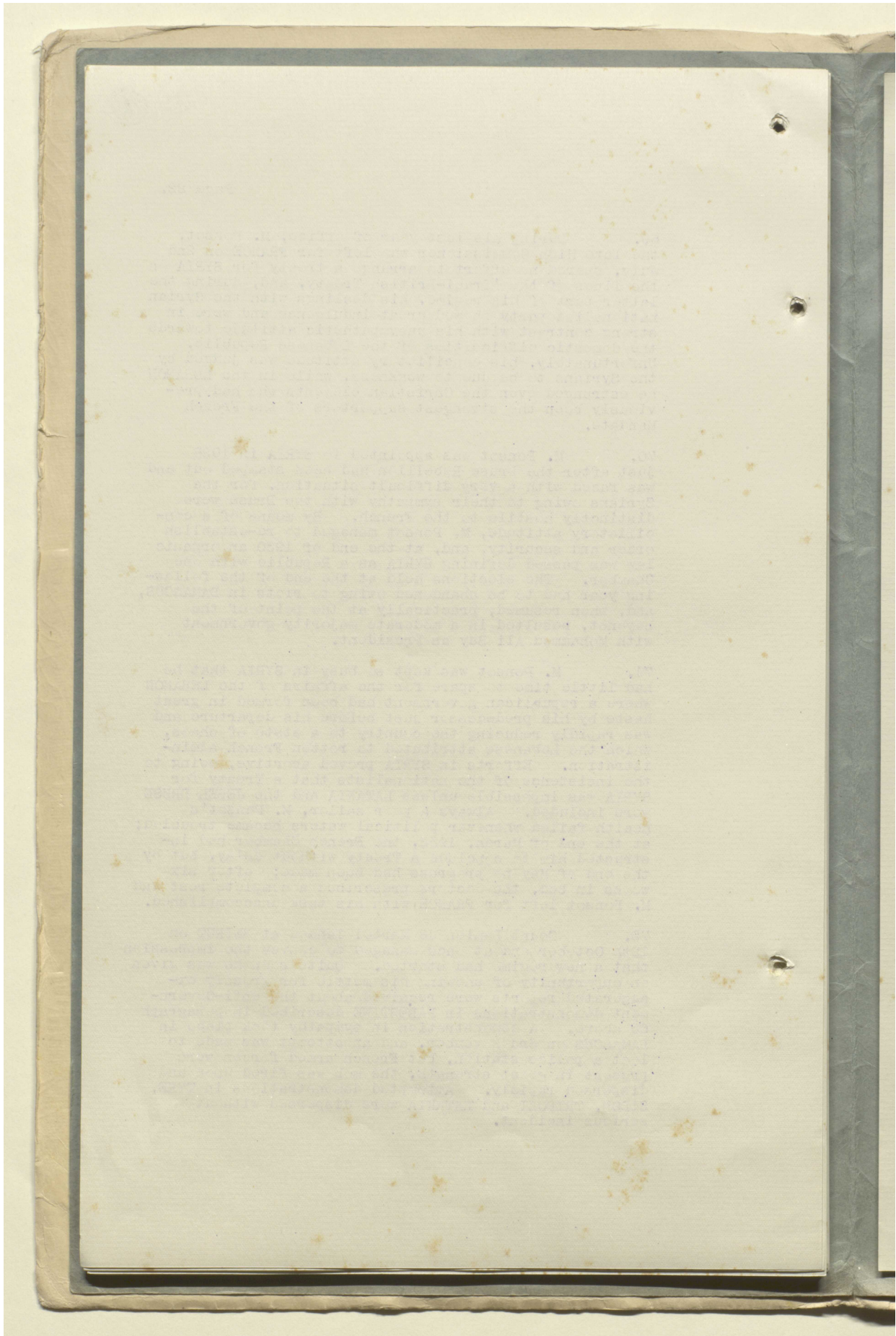
69. During his last year of office, M. Ponsot, the late High Commissioner who left for FRANCE on 2nd July, spared no effort to arrange a treaty for SYRIA on the lines of the 'Iraqi-British Treaty, and, during the latter part of his regime, his dealings with the Syrian nationalist party showed great indulgence and were in strong contrast with his unsympathetic attitude towards the domestic difficulties of the Lebanese Republic. Unfortunately, his conciliatory attitude was judged by the Syrians to be due to weakness, while in the LEBANON he estranged even the Christian elements who had previously been the strongest supporters of the French Mandate.

70. M. Ponsot was appointed to SYRIA in 1926 just after the Druze Rebellion had been stamped out and was faced with a very difficult situation, for the Syrians owing to their sympathy with the Druze were distinctly hostile to the French. By means of a conciliatory attitude, M. Ponsot managed to re-establish order and security, and, at the end of 1930 an organic law was passed defining SYRIA as a Republic with one Chamber. The elections held at the end of the following year had to be abandoned owing to riots in DAMASCUS, and, when resumed, practically at the point of the bayonet, resulted in a moderate majority government with Mohammed Ali Bey as President.

71. M. Ponsot was kept so busy in SYRIA that he had little time to spare for the affairs of the LEBANON where a republican government had been formed in great haste by his predecessor just before his departure and was rapidly reducing the country to a state of chaos, which the Lebanese attributed to rotten French administration. Efforts in SYRIA proved abortive, owing to the insistence of the nationalists that a Treaty for SYRIA was impossible unless LATAKIA and the JEBEL DRUSE were included. Always a poor sailor, M. Ponsot's health failed whenever political waters became troubled; at the end of March, 1933, the French Chamber had instructed him to conclude a Treaty without delay, but by the end of May no progress had been made; after six weeks in bed, the doctors prescribed a complete rest and M. Ponsot left for FRANCE with his task unaccomplished.

72. Count Damien de Martel landed at BEIRUT on 12th October and at once managed to convey the impression that a new regime had started. Quite soon he was given an opportunity of showing his mettle for grossly exaggerated reports were received about the anti-Government demonstrations in PALESTINE described in paragraph 65 above. A demonstration in sympathy took place in DAMASCUS on 3rd November, and an attempt was made to loot a police station, but French armed forces were present in great strength, the mob was fired upon and dispersed rapidly. Attempted demonstrations in TYRE, SIDON, TRIPOLI and LATAKIA were dispersed without serious incident.

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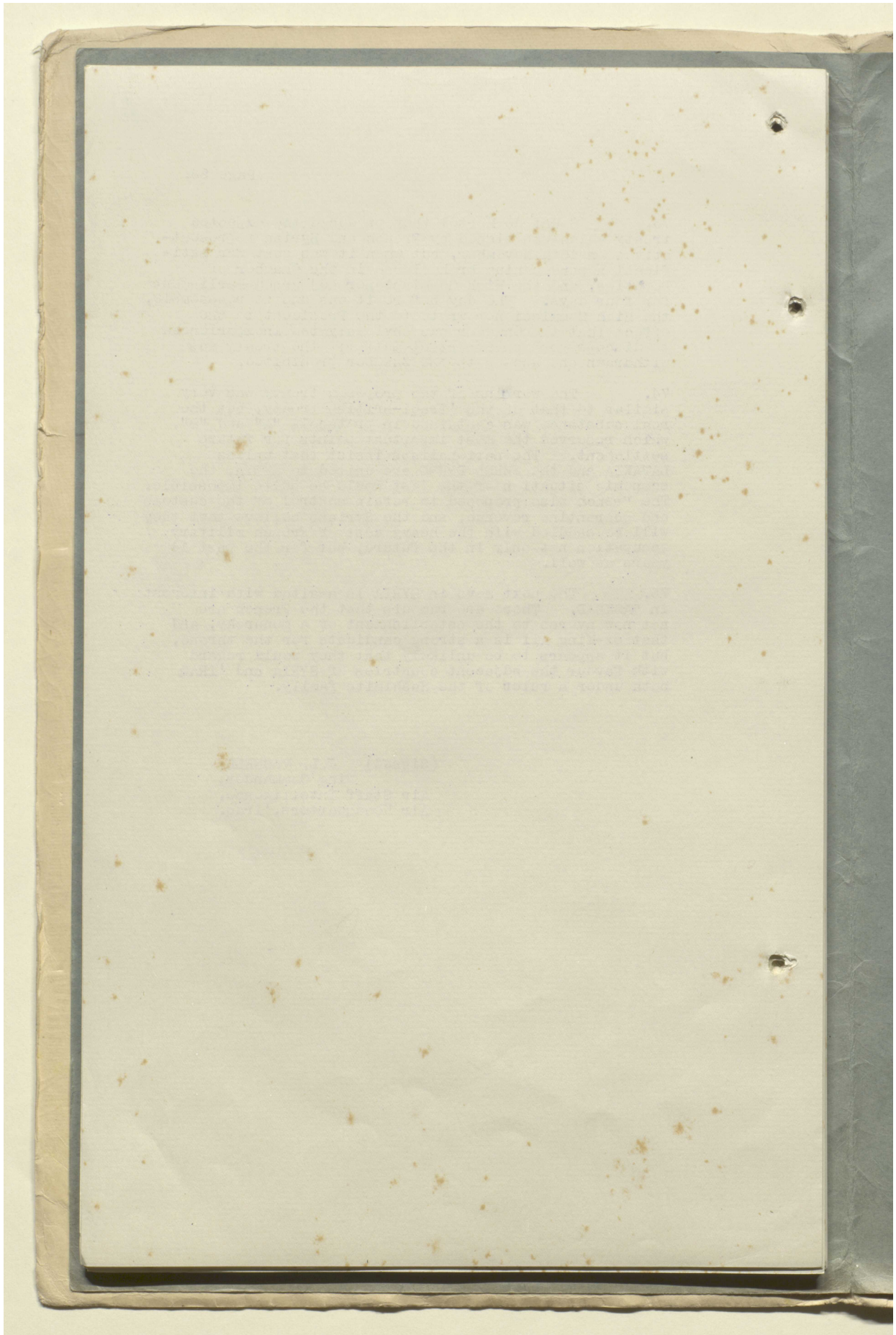
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73. Count de Martel then produced the expected treaty which was signed by French and Syrian representatives on 16th November, but when it was sent for ratification pandemonium broke loose in the Chamber of Deputies, and the High Commissioner adjourned Parliament for four days. The day before it was due to reassemble, the High Commissioner wrote to the President to the effect that the Chamber was obviously too inexperienced to discuss such an important matter; the treaty was withdrawn and access to the Chamber prohibited.

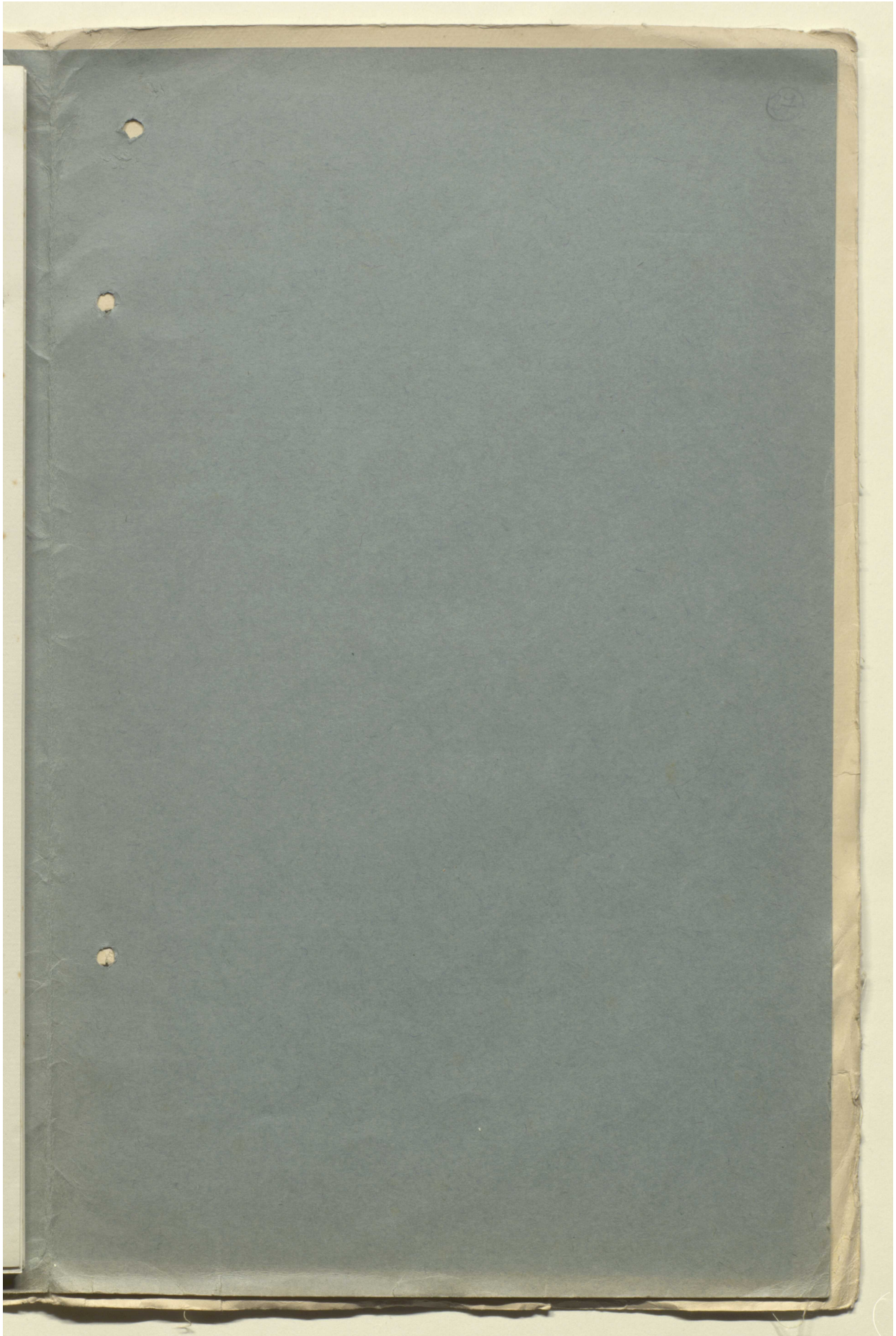
74. The wording of the proposed treaty was very similar to that of the 'Iraqi-British treaty, but the real substance was contained in protocols "A" and "B", which reserved the most important points for future settlement. The nationalists insist that unless LATAKIA and the JEBEL DRUSE are united to SYRIA, the economic situation of the last would be quite impossible. The French also proposed to retain control of the customs and quarantine revenue, and the Syrians believe that they will be saddled with the heavy cost of French military occupation not only in the future, but for the past 14 years as well.

75. The next move in SYRIA is awaited with interest in BAGHDAD. There are rumours that the French are not now averse to the establishment of a monarchy, and that ex-King Ali is a strong candidate for the throne, but it appears to be unlikely that they would regard with favour the adjacent countries of SYRIA and IRAQ both under a ruler of the Hashimite family.

(Signed) J.L. VACHELL
Wing Commander,
Air Staff Intelligence,
Air Headquarters, Iraq.



'File 8/18 Iraq: Review of Events, 1933' [27r] (53/56)



'File 8/18 Iraq: Review of Events, 1933' [27v] (54/56)

