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Ext 3974/41 'British propaganda in IRAQ'

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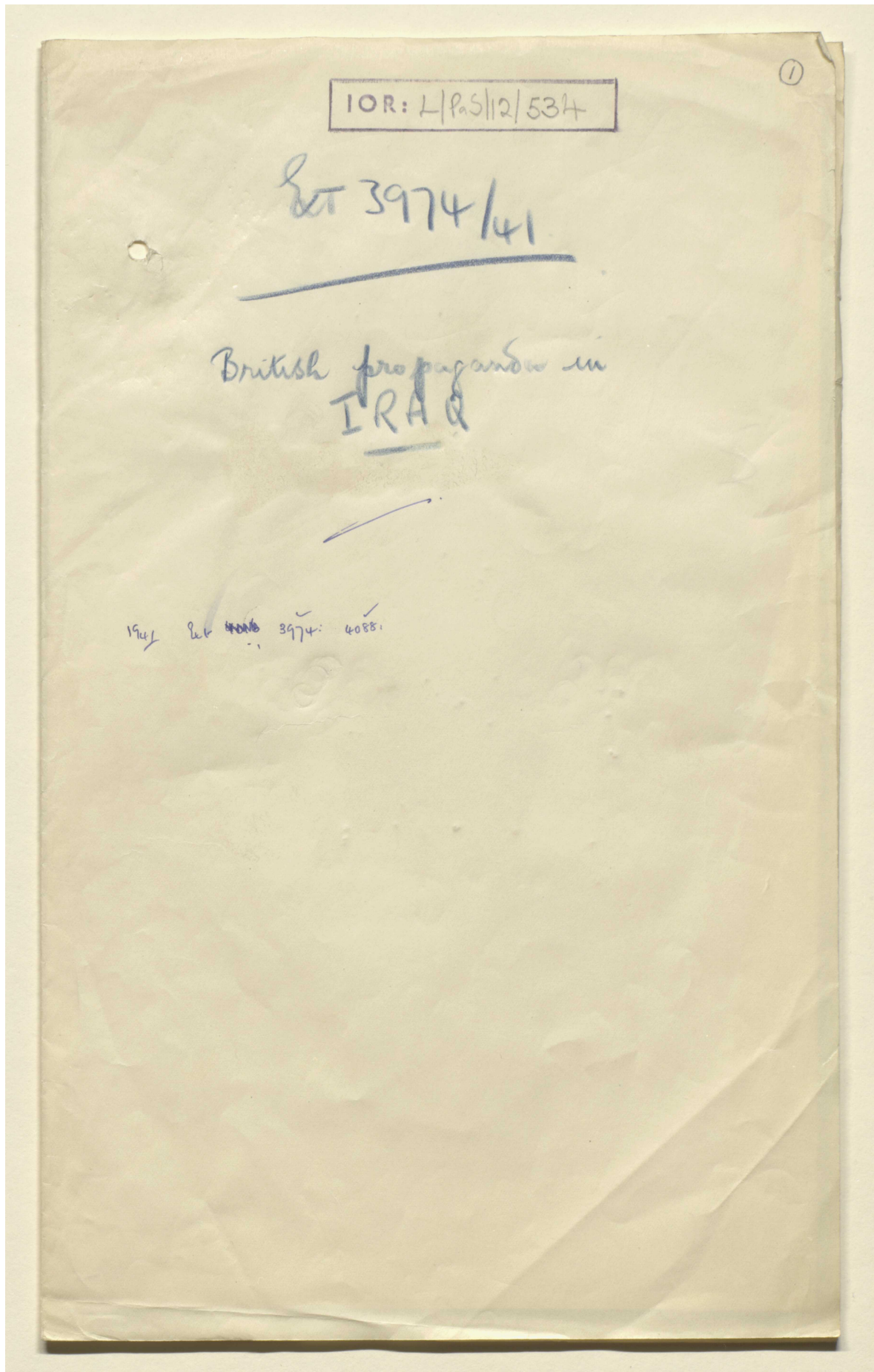


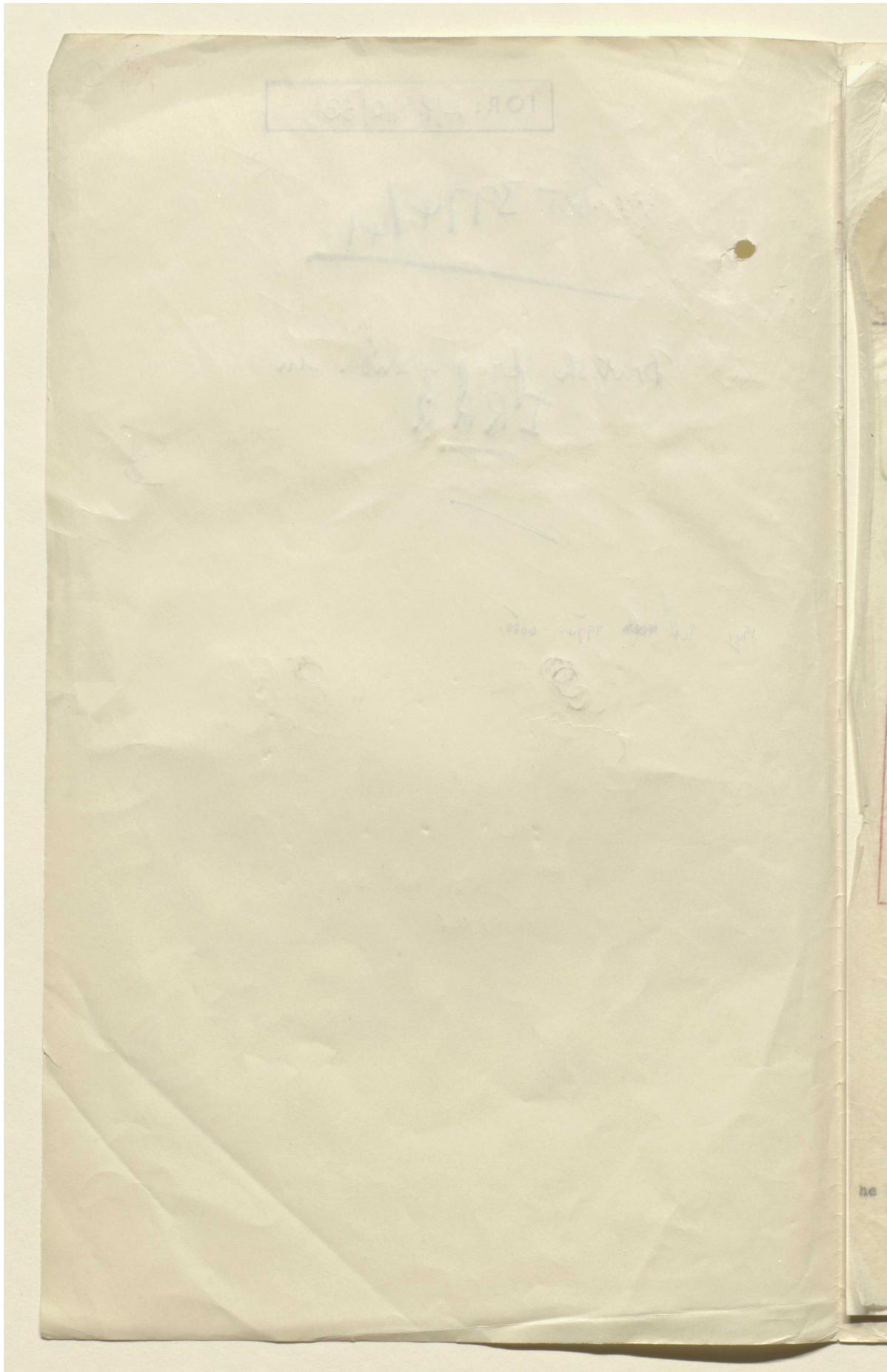
About this record

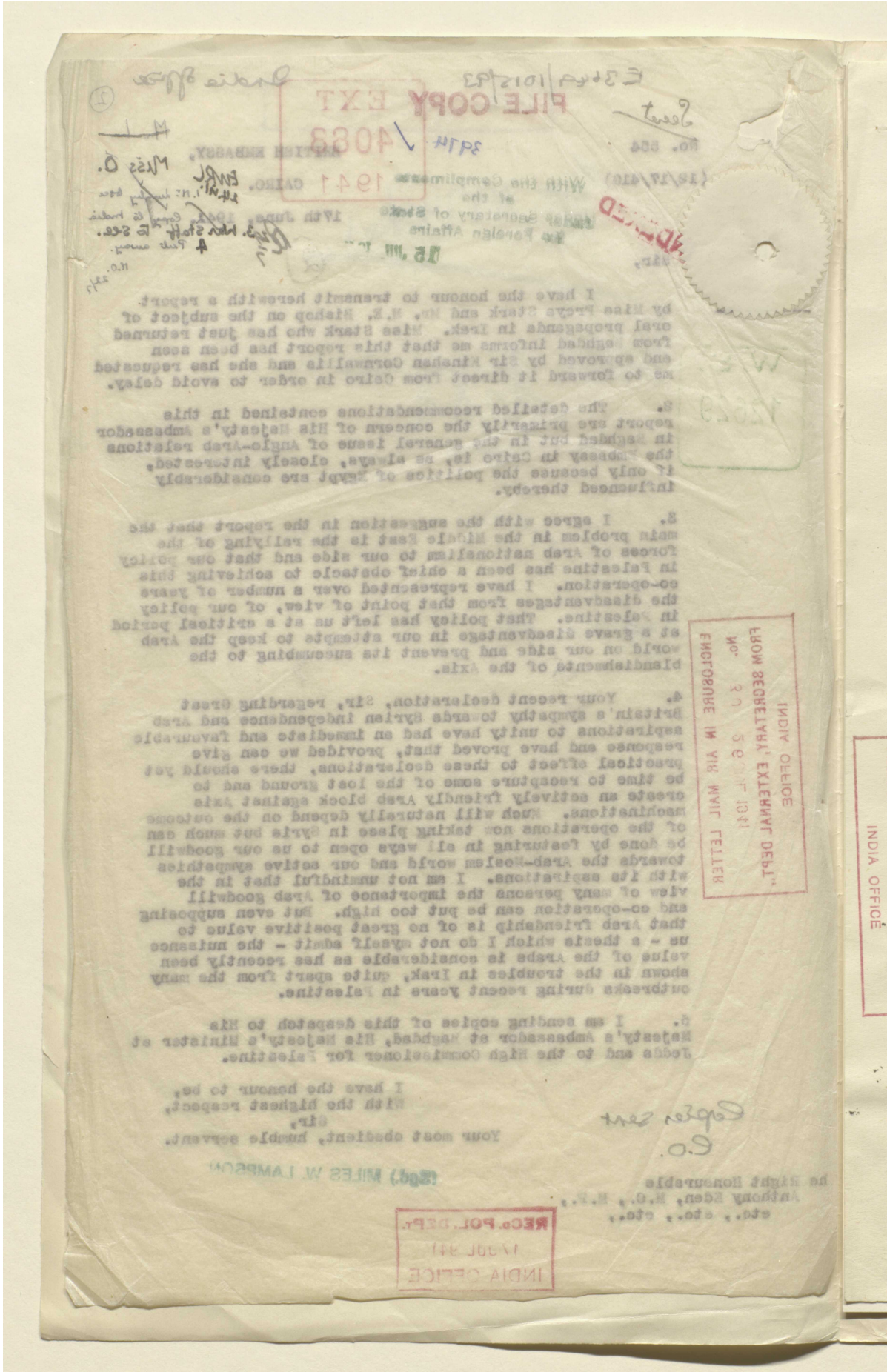
The file contains correspondence from HM Ambassador to Egypt, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, forwarding with comment a report written by Freya Stark and HE Bishop. The report discusses the available means of harnessing the aspirations of Arab nationalism in order to gain support for Britain, and turn opinion against Germany, in Iraq and across the wider Arab world.

A list of correspondence references contained in the file appears on the front cover.

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Ext 3974/41 'British propaganda in IRAQ' [3r] (5/14)

ORAL PROPAGANDA IN IRAQ

EXT. 4088

We feel that it cannot be too clearly stated nor too often repeated that there is only one difficulty at the root of all our relations with the Arab world: this difficulty is the absence of any clear statement from His Majesty's Government of their intentions towards Arab nationalism, the future of Syria and Arab confederation, and the still unresolved problem of Palestine. The fact that this has been said ad infinitum must not be taken to lessen in any degree its primary importance and its essential truth; without such a statement the plans suggested below cannot be expected to lead to satisfactory results.

*
[Palestine was the keynote of every Iraqi broadcast during the crisis.]

2. The minority religious and tribal problems, such as Kurd, Yezidis, Assyrian, Christian, Shia and Sunni, etc., are not dealt with in this report since their importance and character are already well known to experts and their peculiarities are more strictly political than propagandist. We here set out to study the best means of bringing to our side a young and growing force, hitherto too much neglected by British influence, and, we believe it soon to be of paramount importance. It is the young nationalist idea in the Middle East.

OBJECTIVES TO MAKE FOR.

3. The main problem in Iraq as in all the Middle East is to rally the forces of nationalism on our side. Any other success is secondary, a mere dabbling in backwaters when our necessity is to regulate the main current of the stream. Because we have no territorial needs in Arab lands, because our interests run parallel with and not against the interests of the Arabs, there is no reason why national and pro-British feeling should not be united. Our aim should be to try to influence nationalism and make it pro-British. To do so we must gain to our side:-

- (a) The Army.
- (b) The disbanded officers and men who might be a serious potential source of trouble.
- (c) Education.
- (d) The young educated population of the towns.

4. It is possible that we have been presented by the present unhappy events with a last chance to achieve satisfactory results in this field. The prestige of the Iraqi Army and its bitterly hostile leaders will be at a low ebb; and equally so the prestige of their German ally, who has failed to bring them effective aid. We repeat however that very little can be done unless the measures suggested in paragraph 1 are attended to in the first place.

OTHER MEANS AVAILABLE TO ATTAIN THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES.

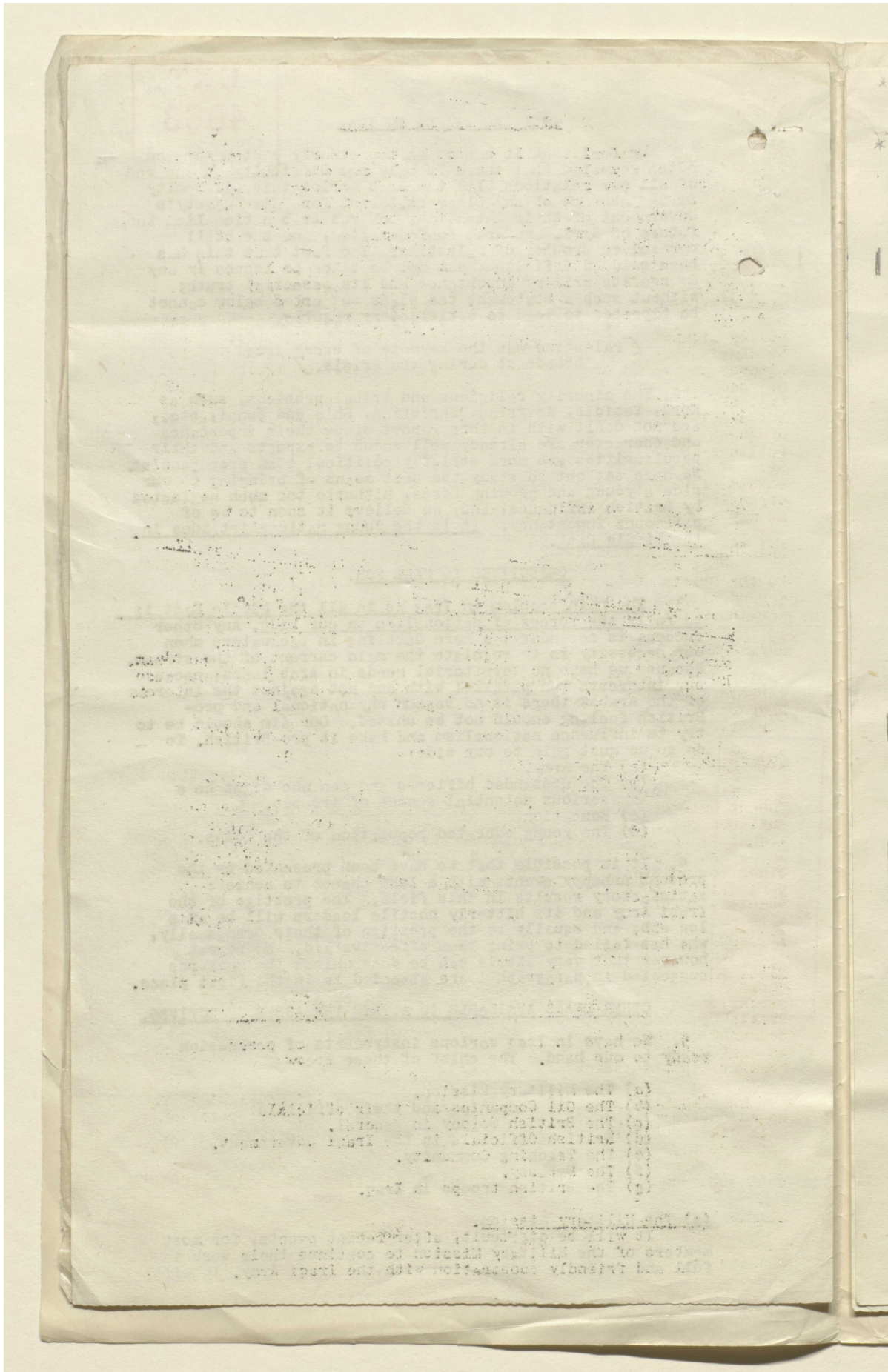
5. We have in Iraq various instruments of persuasion ready to our hand. The chief of these are:-

- (a) The Military Mission.
- (b) The Oil Companies and their officials
- (c) The British Colony in general.
- (d) British Officials in the Iraqi Government.
- (e) The Teaching Community.
- (f) The Embassy.
- (g) The British troops in Iraq.

(a) The Military Mission.

It will be difficult, after recent events, for most members of the Military Mission to continue their work in full and friendly cooperation with the Iraqi Army. It will,

ENCLOSURE IN AIR MAIL LETTER
No. 30 26 JUL 1941
FROM SECRETARY, EXTERNAL DEPT.,
INDIA OFFICE



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however, obviously be of great importance that there should be a strong mission, and we hope that, apart from strictly technical qualifications, any officer selected for this important duty will be fully aware of his responsibility as an agent of understanding and goodwill. He should be selected from such young men as have some knowledge of the Arab world and some sympathy with its aspirations.

(b) The Oil Companies.

By the full implementing of the Treaty British influence in Iraq has been gravely restricted during recent years, and the oil companies stand practically alone in possessing a network throughout Iraq which could and should be a valuable instrument of British policy without in any way wounding Iraqi susceptibilities. The Germans have had to supply this want by the scattering of agents without any valid pretext for their activities, and their success has been made evident by recent events. We do not wish to suggest that the Oil Companies should be turned into propaganda machines, but simply that the speech and conduct of each member is a factor of great importance in the creation and maintenance of friendly feelings in the sphere of their operations. It is clear that in time of war the Oil Companies and some carefully selected employees should be prepared to regard themselves as instruments of any directive given to them by His Majesty's Representative, even though it may not conform with their personal opinions.

(c) The British Colony.

What has been said above of the Oil Companies applies equally to the British Colony in general, every member of which should regard himself or herself as directly responsible for friendly feeling within his own particular circle.

(d) British Officials in the Iraqi Government.

Special attention should be paid to British officials employed by the Iraqi Government who cover the country in their various activities and, unlike the British business community, have contacts more with Moslems than with Jews. They require directives, however, which most of them have hitherto lacked.

(e) The Teaching Community.

We have already pointed out the importance of securing the goodwill of Iraqi nationalist youth. The influence of teachers cannot be overestimated in this field. A scheme had already been outlined for helping the individual teacher to enlarge his circle of acquaintance by the provision of small grants for entertainment which he is not in a position to afford independently. As in the case of other communities, his directive must come from the Embassy and periodical, unofficial and unobtrusive visits and reports should form a valuable means of ensuring unity of effort.

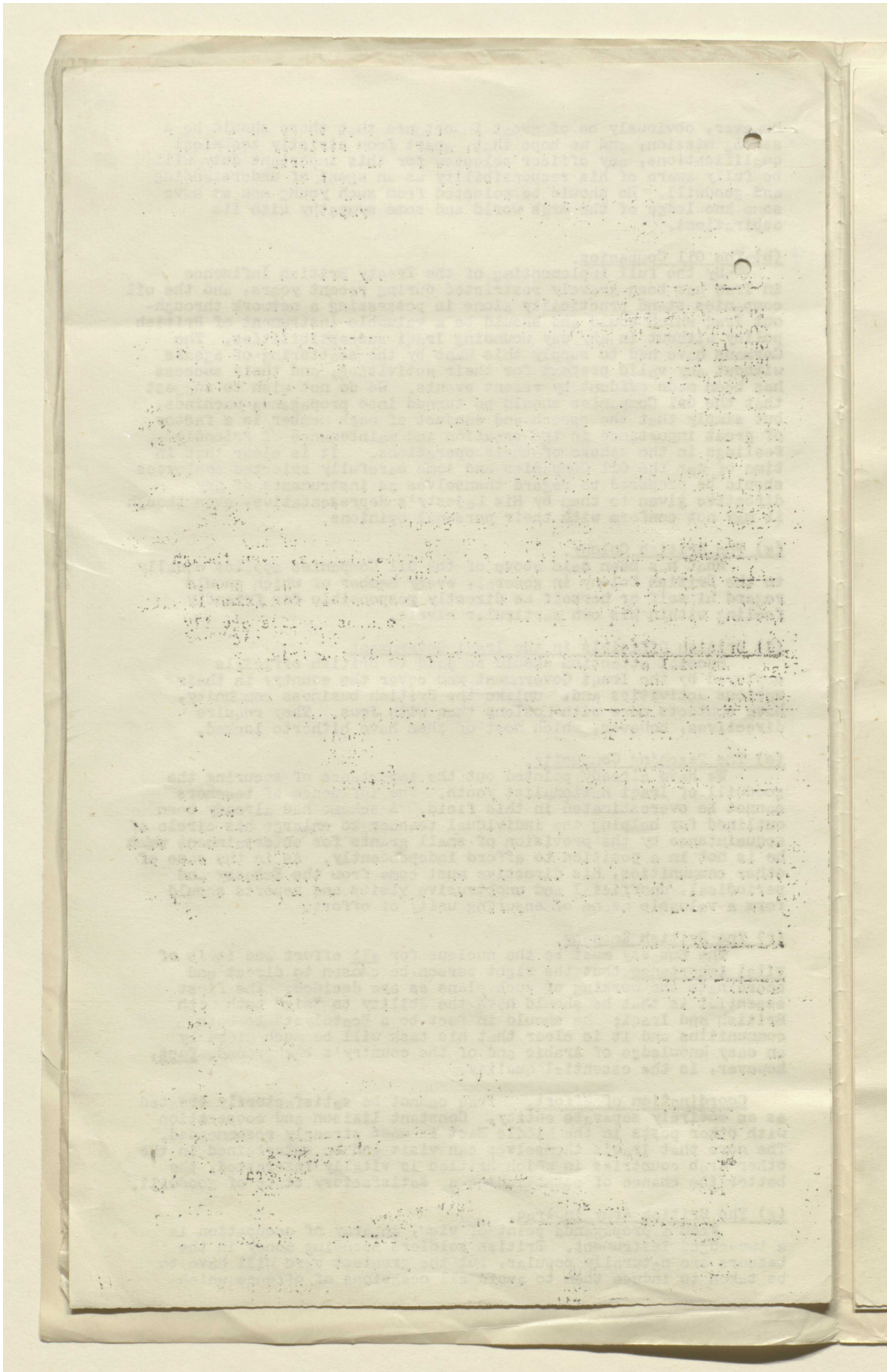
(f) The British Embassy.

The Embassy must be the nucleus for all effort and it is of vital importance that the right person be chosen to direct and coordinate the working of such plans as are decided. The first essential is that he should have the ability to "mix" both with British and Iraqi; he should in fact be a "catalyst" to both communities and it is clear that his task will be much aided by an easy knowledge of Arabic and of the country's background. Tact, however, is the essential quality.

Coordination of effort. Iraq cannot be satisfactorily treated as an entirely separate entity. Constant liaison and cooperation with other posts in the Middle East is most strongly recommended. The more that Iraqis themselves can visit and be entertained in the other Arab countries in which Britain is vitally interested, the better the chance of establishing a satisfactory state of goodwill.

(g) The British Army in Iraq.

From a propaganda point of view, an army of occupation is a two-edged instrument. British soldiers spending money in the bazaars are naturally popular, but the greatest care will have to be taken to induce them to avoid all occasions of offence which



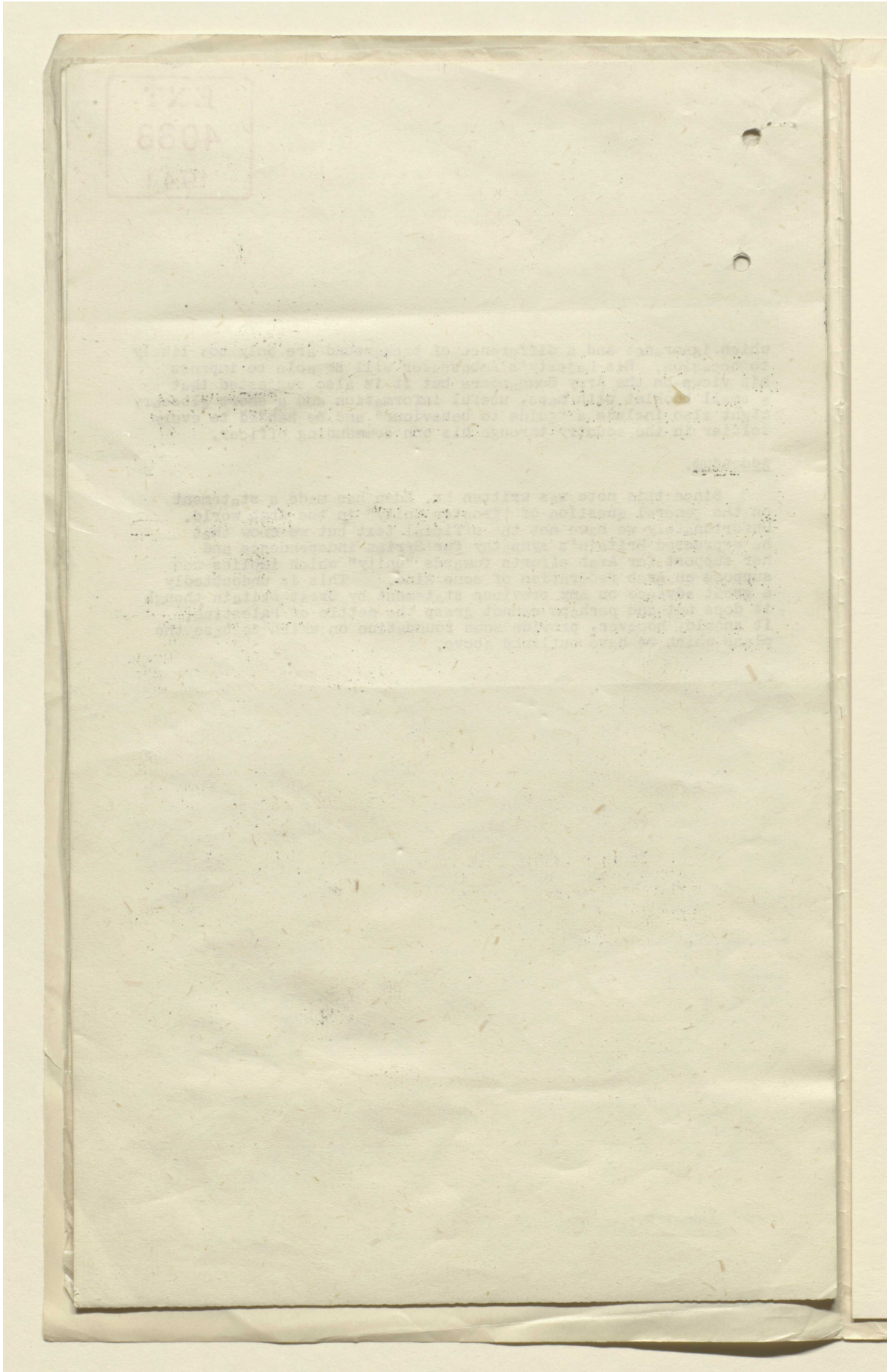
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which ignorance and a difference of background are only too likely to occasion, His Majesty's Ambassador will be able to impress his views on the Army Commanders but it is also suggested that a small booklet with maps, useful information and a short glossary might also include a "guide to behaviour" and be handed to every soldier in the country through his own commanding officer.

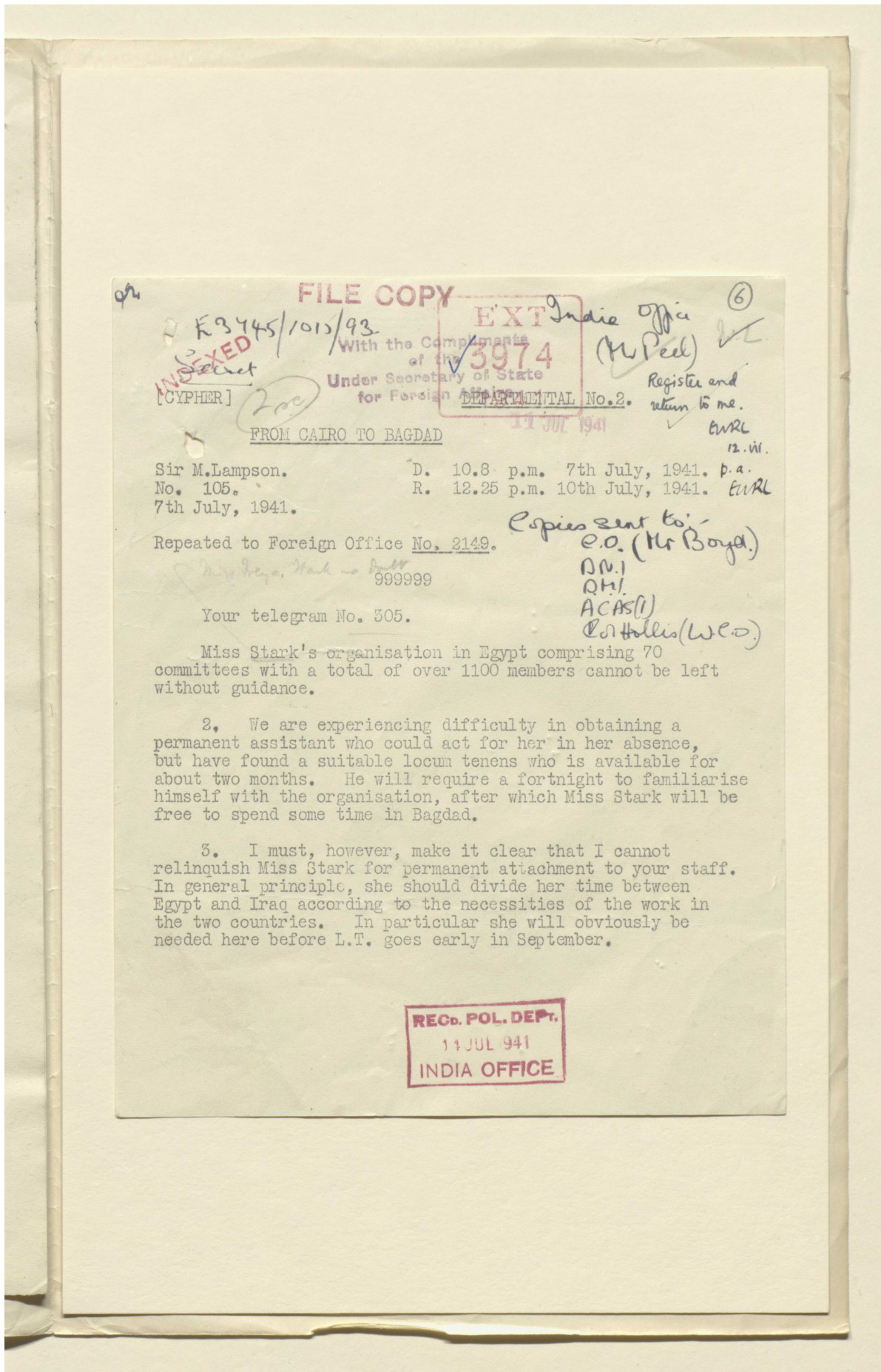
Addendum.

Since this note was written Mr. Eden has made a statement on the general question of "greater unity" in the Arab world. Unfortunately we have not the official text but we know that he expressed Britain's sympathy for Syrian independence and her support for Arab efforts towards "unity" which implies we suppose an Arab federation of some kind. This is undoubtedly a great advance on any previous statement by Great Britain though it does not and perhaps cannot grasp the nettle of Palestine. It should, however, provide some foundation on which to base the plans which we have outlined above.

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Ext 3974/41 'British propaganda in IRAQ' [6r] (11/14)



FILE COPY
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SECRET
EX-105
Under Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs
DEPARTMENTAL No. 2.
11 JUL 1941
India Office (Mr Peel)
Register and return to me.
EWRL
12. vii.
FROM CAIRO TO BAGDAD
Sir M. Lampson. D. 10.8 p.m. 7th July, 1941. p.a.
No. 105. R. 12.25 p.m. 10th July, 1941. EWRL
7th July, 1941.
Repeated to Foreign Office No. 2149.
999999
Your telegram No. 305.
Miss Stark's organisation in Egypt comprising 70 committees with a total of over 1100 members cannot be left without guidance.
2. We are experiencing difficulty in obtaining a permanent assistant who could act for her in her absence, but have found a suitable locum tenens who is available for about two months. He will require a fortnight to familiarise himself with the organisation, after which Miss Stark will be free to spend some time in Bagdad.
3. I must, however, make it clear that I cannot relinquish Miss Stark for permanent attachment to your staff. In general principle, she should divide her time between Egypt and Iraq according to the necessities of the work in the two countries. In particular she will obviously be needed here before L.T. goes early in September.
REC'D. POL. DEPT.
14 JUL 941
INDIA OFFICE
Copies sent to:-
e.o. (Mr Boyd)
D.M.
Q.H.
ACAS(I)
C. H. Hollis (W.C.)

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