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Coll 17/16(5)(S) 'Settlement of the Assyrians'

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	IOR/L/PS/12/2876
Date(s)	18 Jul 1945-2 Aug 1945 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 file (14 folios)
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About this record

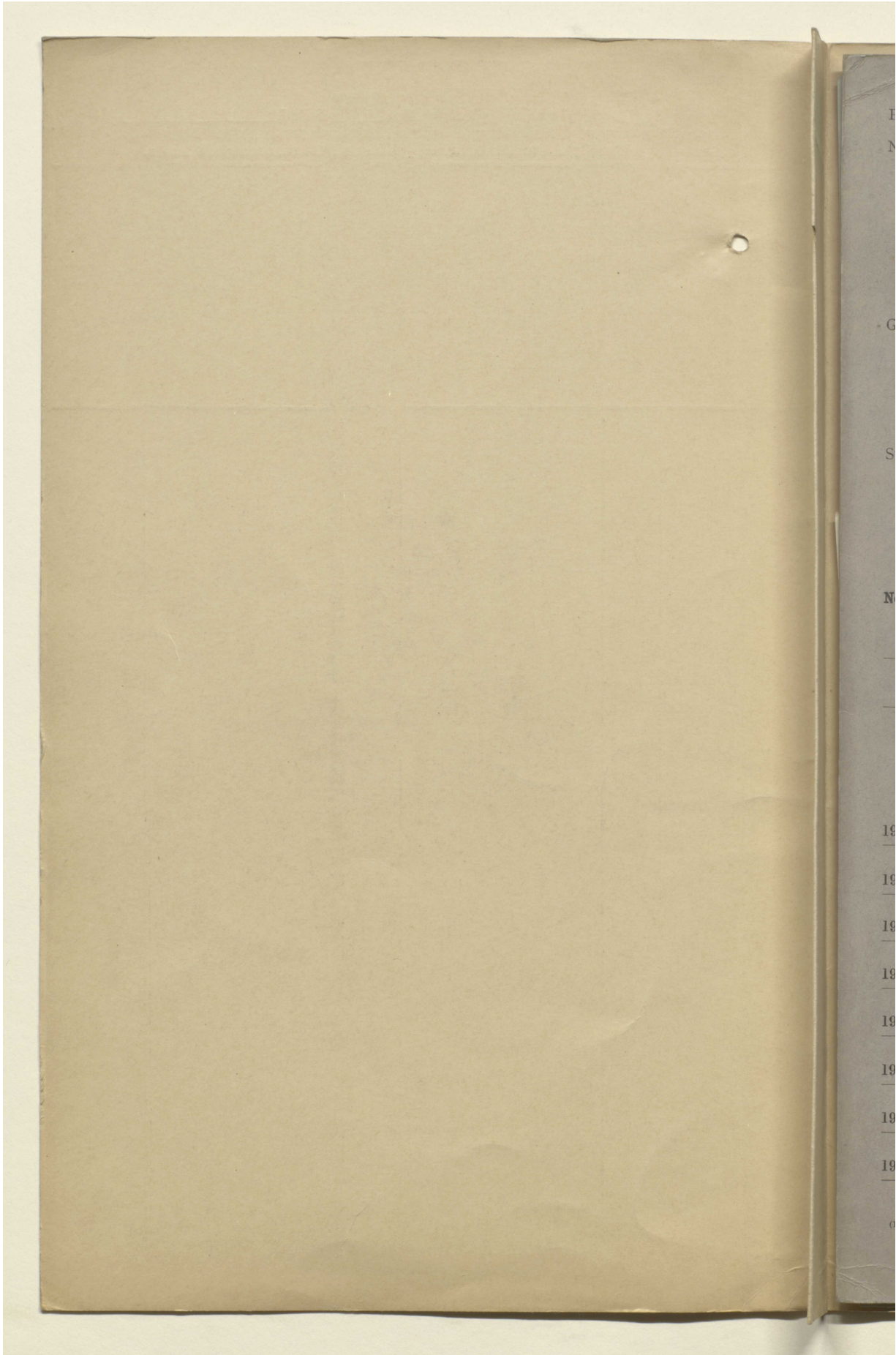
Papers regarding areas for the possible resettlement of Assyrians residing in Iraq and Syria following the Second World War (1939-1945). Consisting of correspondence between the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the Viceroy of India, regarding the possibility of resettlement in Northern Baluchistan or Abyssinia, and also discussing the value of Assyrian troops to the British armed forces.

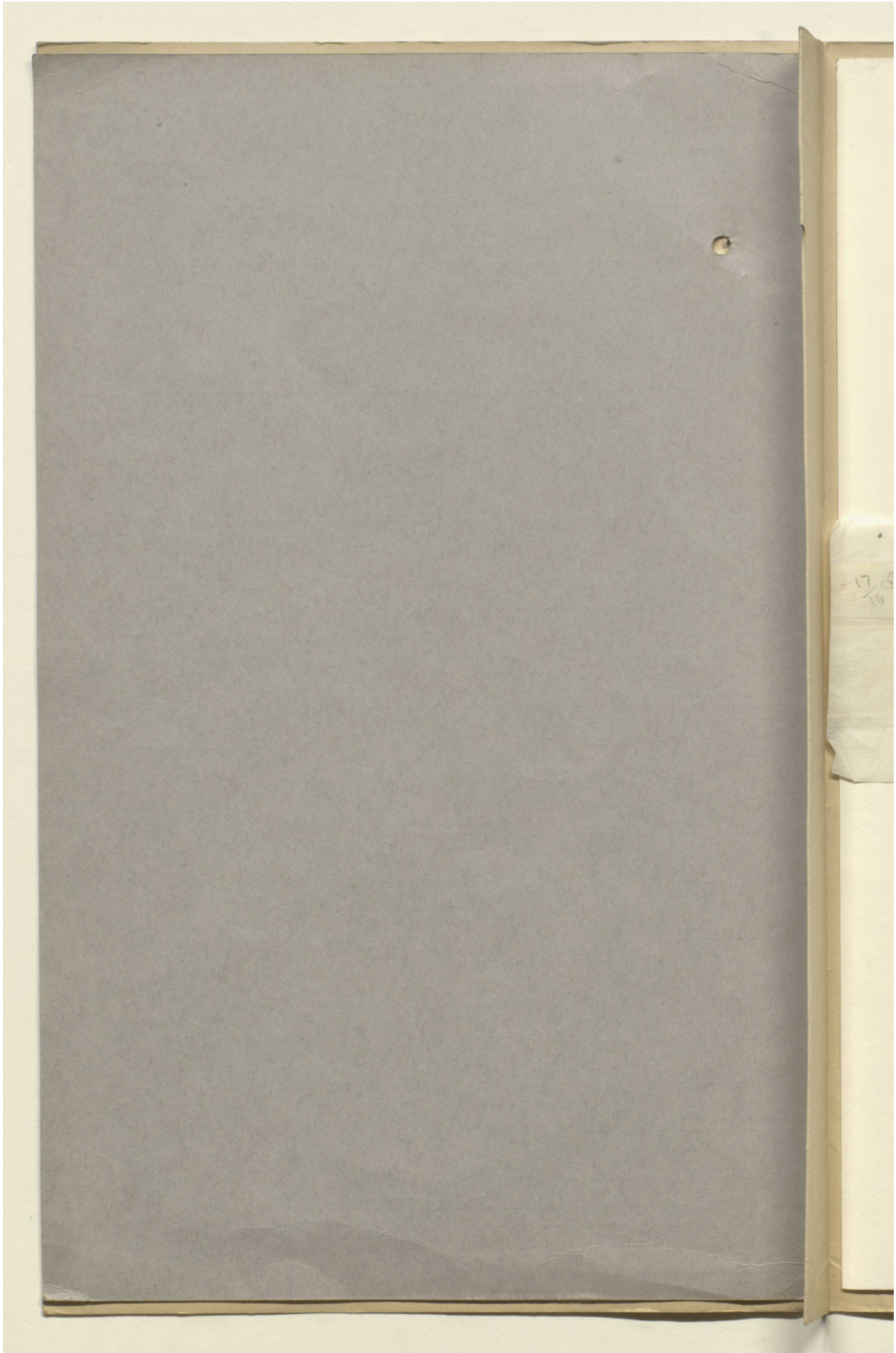
Coll 17/16(5)(S) 'Settlement of the Assyrians' [front] (1/30)

SECRET.

Cover for Enclosures in Weekly Letter No. dated
from Secretary, Political and Secret Department, India Office, to
Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India.

(66754) Wt. 5577—1244 14,000 7/23 H. St. G. 101/19B. (REGIBENT)

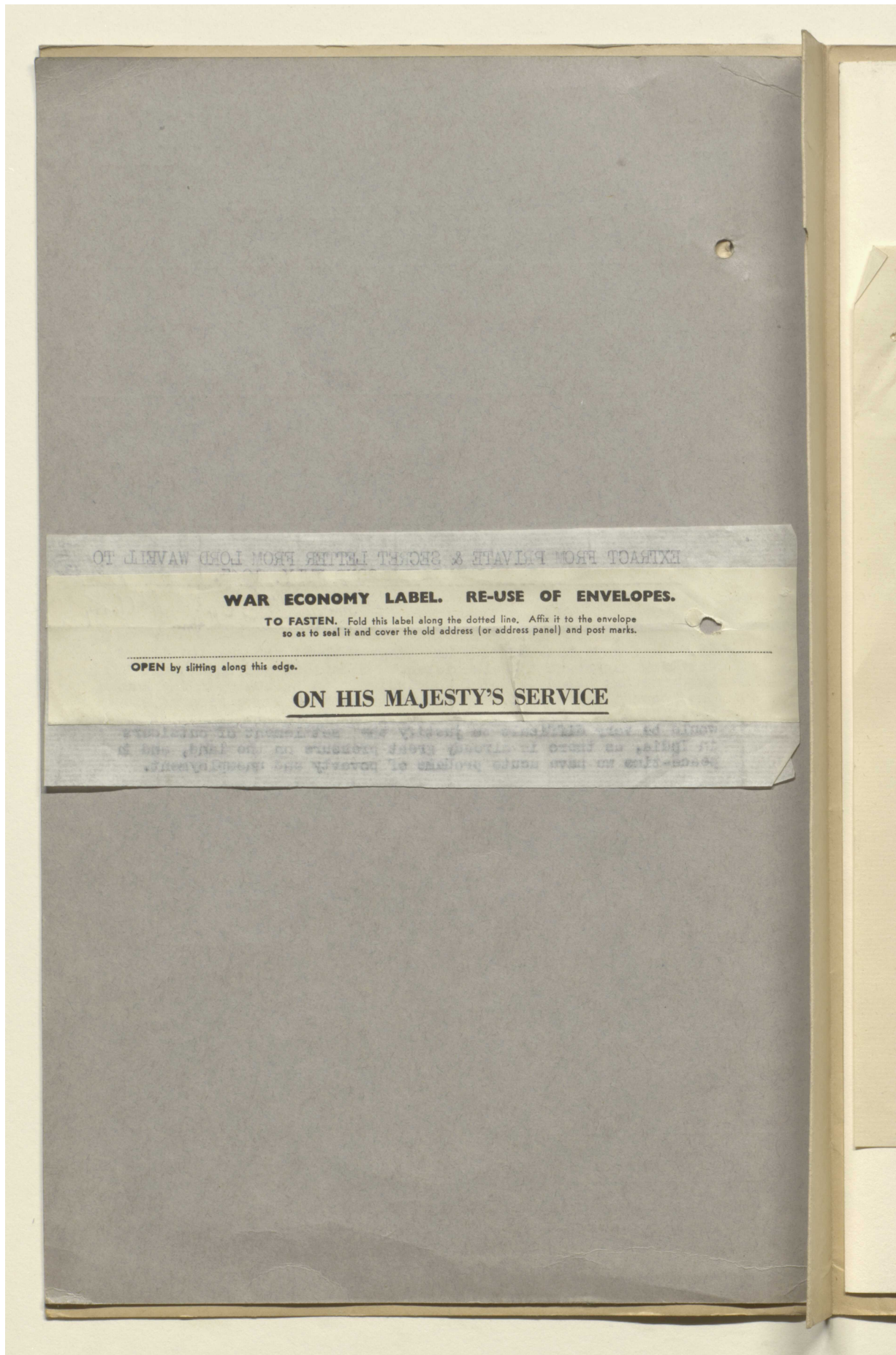


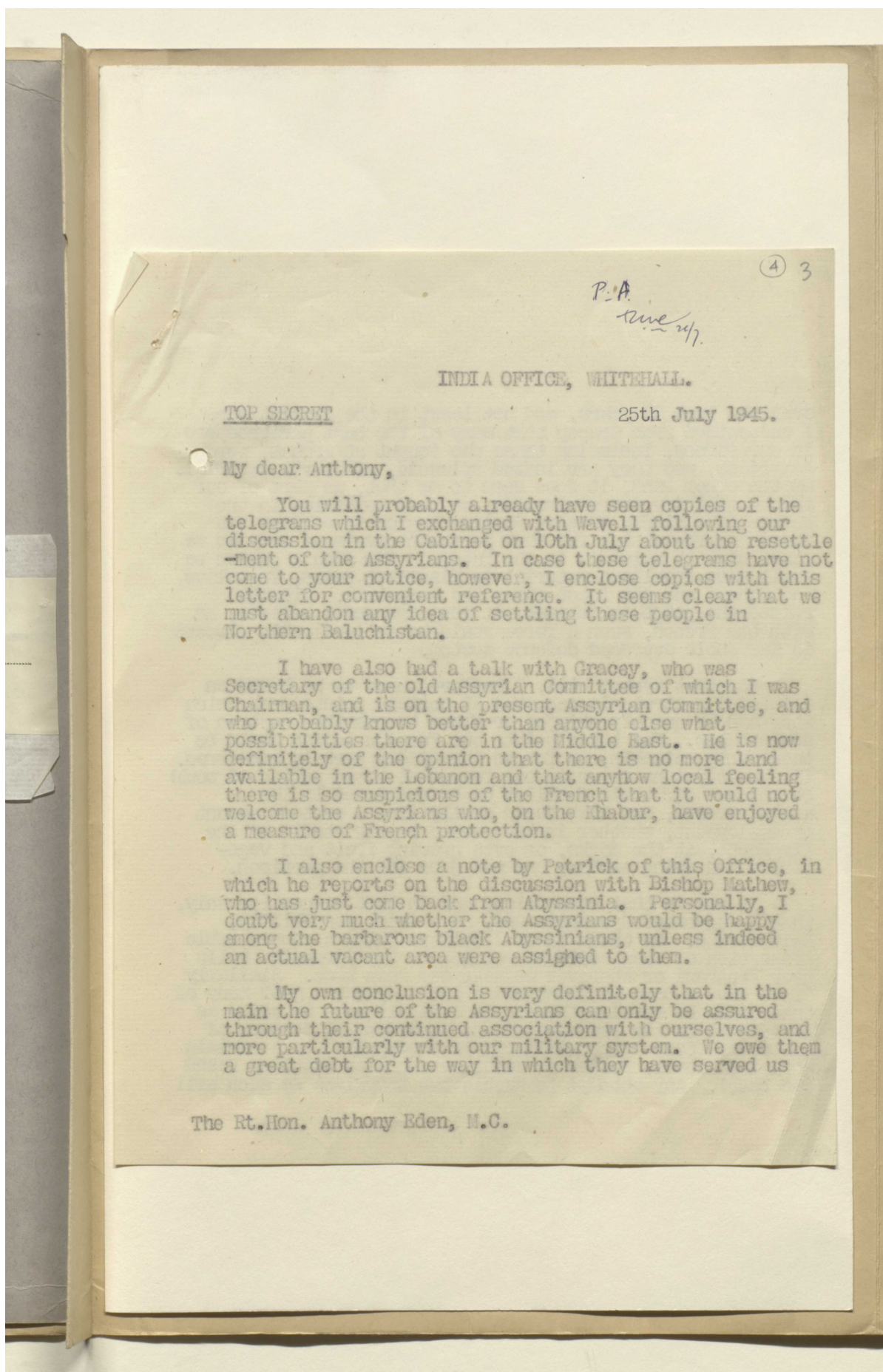


17/16
EXTRACT FROM PRIVATE & SECRET LETTER FROM LORD WAVELL TO
MR. AMERY DATED 22ND JULY, 1945. 2/3

17/16 *1/26 - 1/27 - 2/8 - How is the pop? 1/8* *MRCLary*

13. I have replied to your telegram about the possibility of settling Assyrians in Baluchistan. I decided not to consult Hay as Caroe has acted as Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan and knows the possibilities well. I do not think the suggestion at all practicable - apart from the special conditions in Baluchistan it would be very difficult to justify the settlement of outsiders in India, as there is already great pressure on the land, and in peace-time we have acute problems of poverty and unemployment.





④ 3

P.A.
true copy

INDIA OFFICE, WHITEHALL.

TOP SECRET

25th July 1945.

My dear Anthony,

You will probably already have seen copies of the telegrams which I exchanged with Wavell following our discussion in the Cabinet on 10th July about the resettlement of the Assyrians. In case these telegrams have not come to your notice, however, I enclose copies with this letter for convenient reference. It seems clear that we must abandon any idea of settling these people in Northern Baluchistan.

I have also had a talk with Gracey, who was Secretary of the old Assyrian Committee of which I was Chairman, and is on the present Assyrian Committee, and who probably knows better than anyone else what possibilities there are in the Middle East. He is now definitely of the opinion that there is no more land available in the Lebanon and that anyhow local feeling there is so suspicious of the French that it would not welcome the Assyrians who, on the Khabur, have enjoyed a measure of French protection.

I also enclose a note by Patrick of this Office, in which he reports on the discussion with Bishop Mathew, who has just come back from Abyssinia. Personally, I doubt very much whether the Assyrians would be happy among the barbarous black Abyssinians, unless indeed an actual vacant area were assigned to them.

My own conclusion is very definitely that in the main the future of the Assyrians can only be assured through their continued association with ourselves, and more particularly with our military system. We owe them a great debt for the way in which they have served us

The Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden, M.C.

over the last 25 years, and not least in the present war. I understand from Gracey that many of the best paratroopers in our forces, including those who fought at Arnhem, were Assyrians, and they are indeed splendid, soldierly material. On the other hand, it does seem to me that, as part of our future military reorganisation, we need something in the nature of a Middle Eastern Foreign Legion to relieve the strain on recruiting for such permanent overseas army as we shall have to maintain in the future. For such a Legion we shall have excellent material in dissident Poles, Yugoslavs, and others and not least among the Assyrians. Winston raised the point in Cabinet not long ago and I believe, as with the French, such a force would be an invaluable element in our whole overseas defence system.

Now that system will, I believe, have to be based on maintaining strategic reserves at certain points from which they can be quickly shipped or flown to possible centres of disturbance. For these points our Foreign Legion would be peculiarly suitable, so far as the Middle East is concerned. If the Assyrians serve in our forces at these points it would be natural for their families to be quartered in the neighbourhood, and they could easily find a certain amount of employment, whether in the ground repair staffs of the Air Force, at the docks, or even growing fruit and vegetables and doing washing and odd jobs for the garrison.

It was in that connection, and in that connection only, that I suggested Cyrenaica and, as a faint possibility, Baluchistan. On those lines I believe quite a considerable proportion of them could be settled in the Cyrenaica hills near Benghazi or wherever we make our main base. Similarly if we have a base in Transjordan or in Cyprus a good many of them could be settled there. It will all have to arise as incidental to the presence of the Assyrians as members of our forces (and might similarly be accompanied by a certain amount of local, Polish or Yugoslav families settling round the base). Any attempt to settle the Assyrians as such will

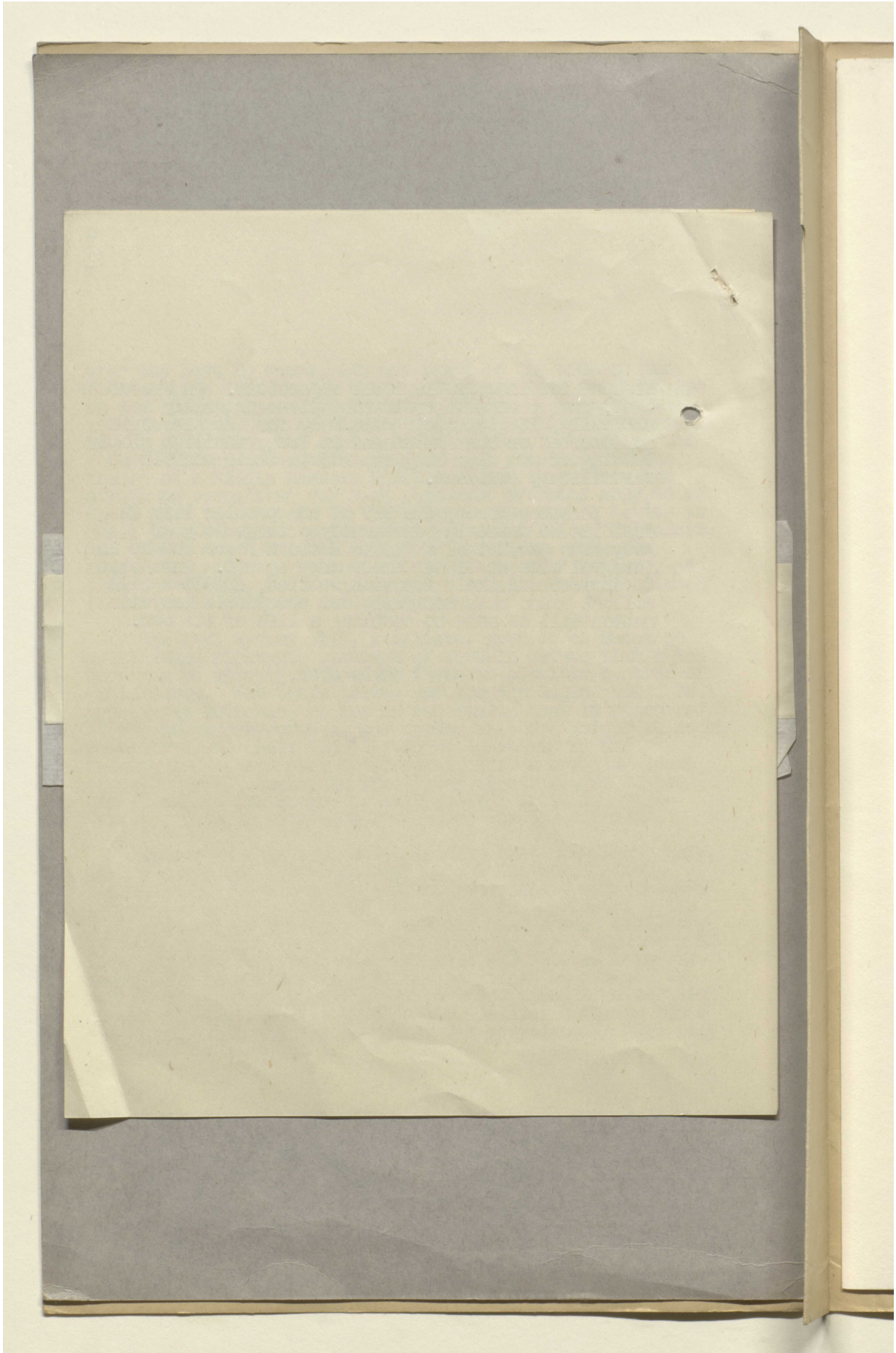
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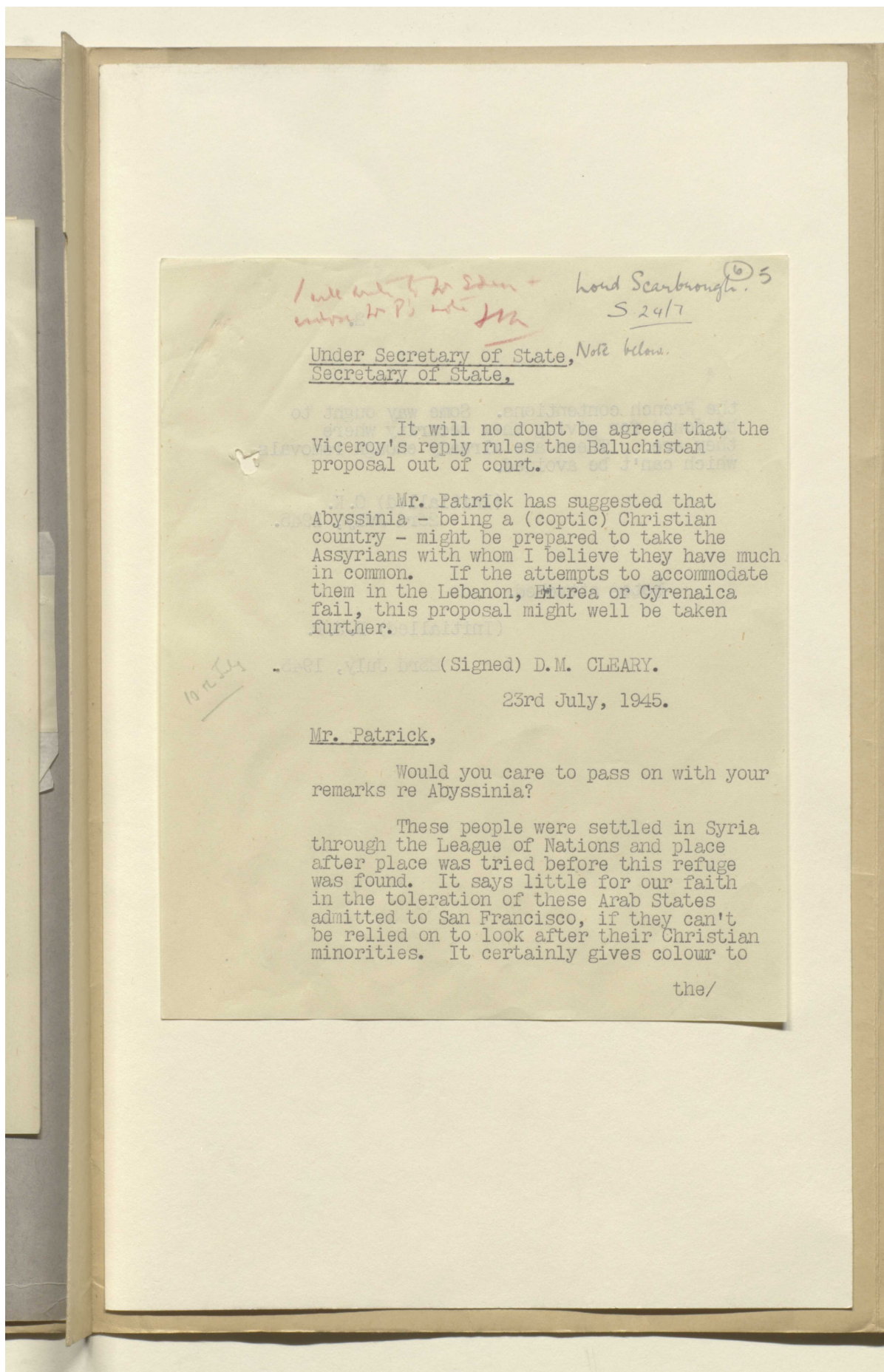
always find insuperable local objections. On the other hand, what I suggest could take place gradually and naturally, leaving their main body for the time being undisturbed on the Khabur and in Iraq, families simply leaving as and when they can rejoin their menfolk at our military stations.

In other words, the key of the problem lies in deciding to maintain permanently a large body of Assyrians as part of a Middle Eastern force and as an integral element of our whole army system. Once that is decided and their location settled, families will collect round them naturally and the little Assyrian nation will be able to continue a life of its own.

Yours over,

Signed L. S. AMERY,





*I will send to the Editor -
under the P's note J.M.* Lord Scarborough ⁽⁶⁾ 5
S 29/7

Under Secretary of State, Note below.
Secretary of State,

It will no doubt be agreed that the Viceroy's reply rules the Baluchistan proposal out of court.

Mr. Patrick has suggested that Abyssinia - being a (coptic) Christian country - might be prepared to take the Assyrians with whom I believe they have much in common. If the attempts to accommodate them in the Lebanon, Eritrea or Cyrenaica fail, this proposal might well be taken further.

(Signed) D.M. CLEARY.

23rd July, 1945.

Mr. Patrick,

Would you care to pass on with your remarks re Abyssinia?

These people were settled in Syria through the League of Nations and place after place was tried before this refuge was found. It says little for our faith in the toleration of these Arab States admitted to San Francisco, if they can't be relied on to look after their Christian minorities. It certainly gives colour to

the/

2.

the French contentions. Some way ought to
be found for giving them security where
they are. There are already enough removals
which can't be avoided.

(Initialed) C.K.
23rd July, 1945.

Noted attached.

(Initialed) P.J.P.
23rd July, 1945.

7

I was dining recently with Bishop Mathew, auxiliary to the Archbishop of Westminster, who has just come back from a mission on behalf of the Holy See to secure educational and religious facilities from the Ethiopian Government for Italians who have remained in Abyssinia. Bishop Mathew told me how co-operative he found the Emperor, though he admitted that conditions in the country were somewhat primitive for Europeans. Knowing his interest in the ancient Christian sects of the Middle East, I told him that the Assyrians, settled in Syria, were now something of a problem and asked what in his opinion were the prospects of settling them in Abyssinia. The Bishop thought that the idea was good in principle. He said that the Emperor and his Government are Asiatics with an interest and respect for Christians of the Asian continent. The country, he said, was sparsely populated and could without difficulty absorb new colonists. The Church is reasonably tolerant of other Christian bodies provided that they show its dignitaries and relics proper respect. In any case there is plenty of work for industrious people ready to live on a simple scale.

But the Emperor is at the moment
suspicious/

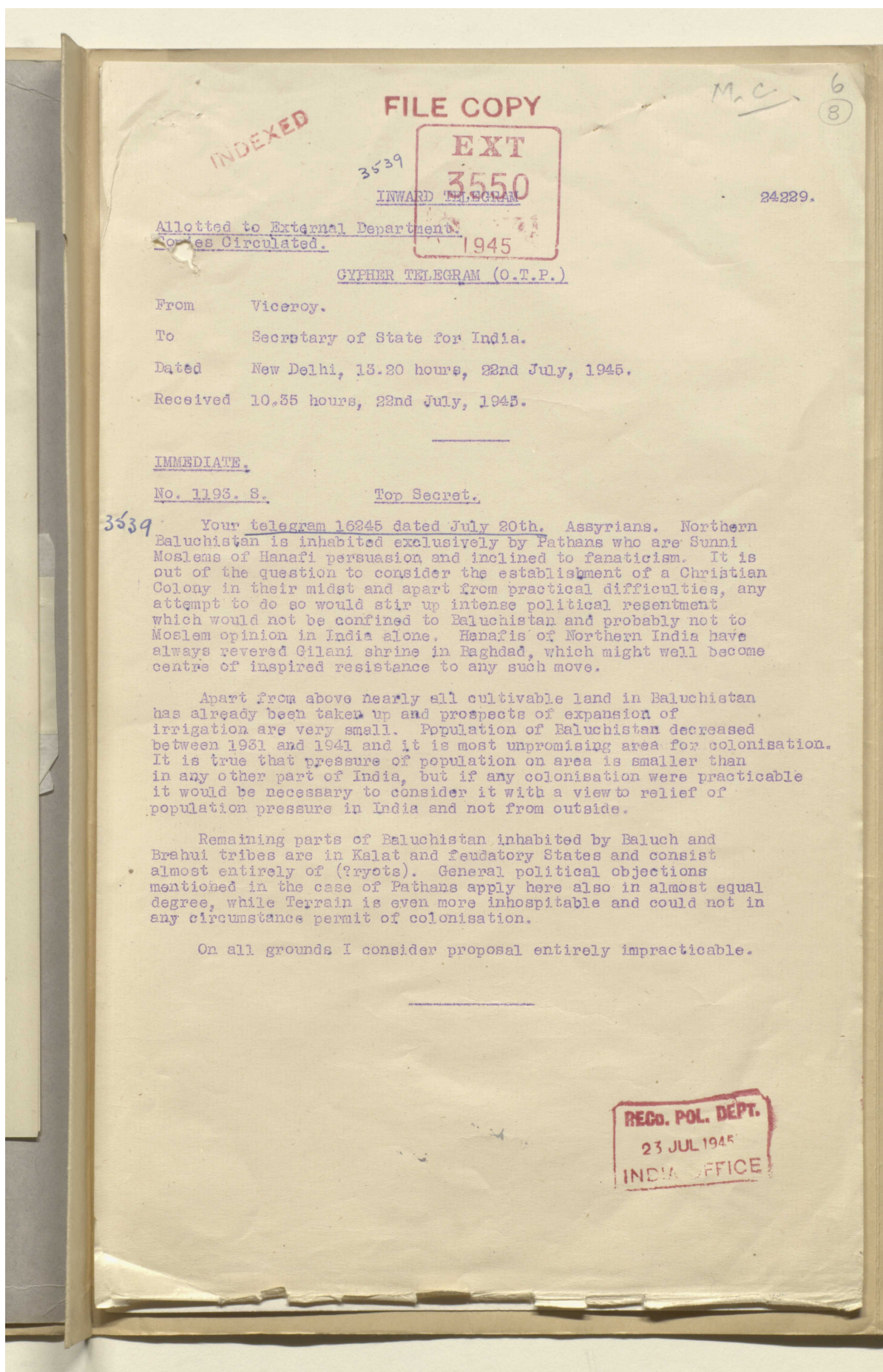
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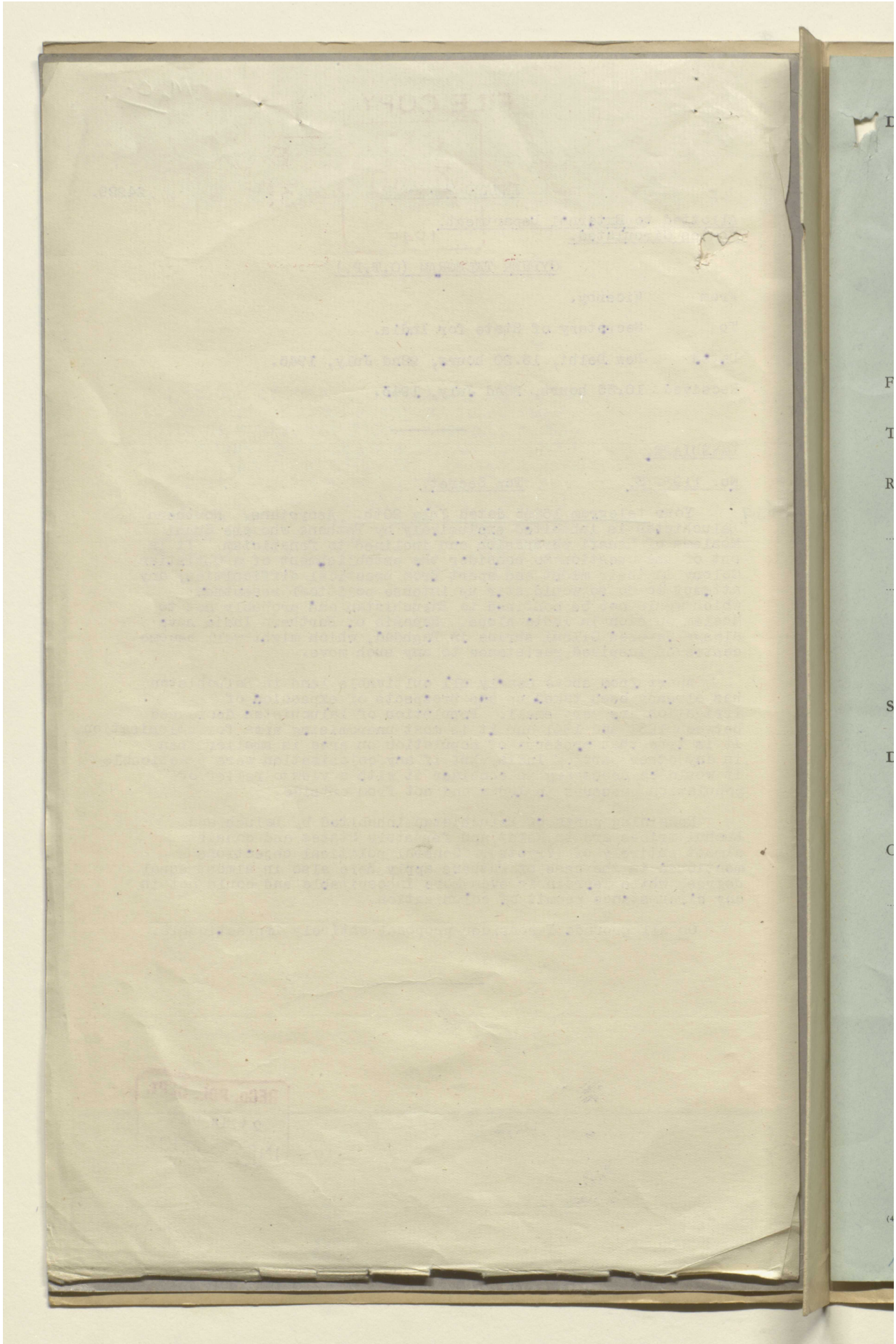
suspicious of British intentions and allergic to any hint of trusteeship or interference. While he would, the Bishop thought, perhaps not be unready to allow entry to and provide land for Assyrian colonists, he would have the strongest objection to admitting them as British protected persons, with a special claim to British protection. They would have to merge with the general population and become the Emperor's subjects, even if they were started off with a generous subvention from British revenues.

(INITIALED) P. J. P.

23rd July, 1945.

3539





7

DEPTL. No. *Ext.*

INDEXED

DRAFT TELEGRAM

CODE
CYPHER *XXX(OTP)*

IMMEDIATE
*4306-
44541/34* **EXT**
3539

No. *16245*
1945

TOP SECRET

From Secretary of State

To Viceroy

Repeated to

SEND *Appy S/S.
JH*

DESPATCHED *20.7.1945*
12.30

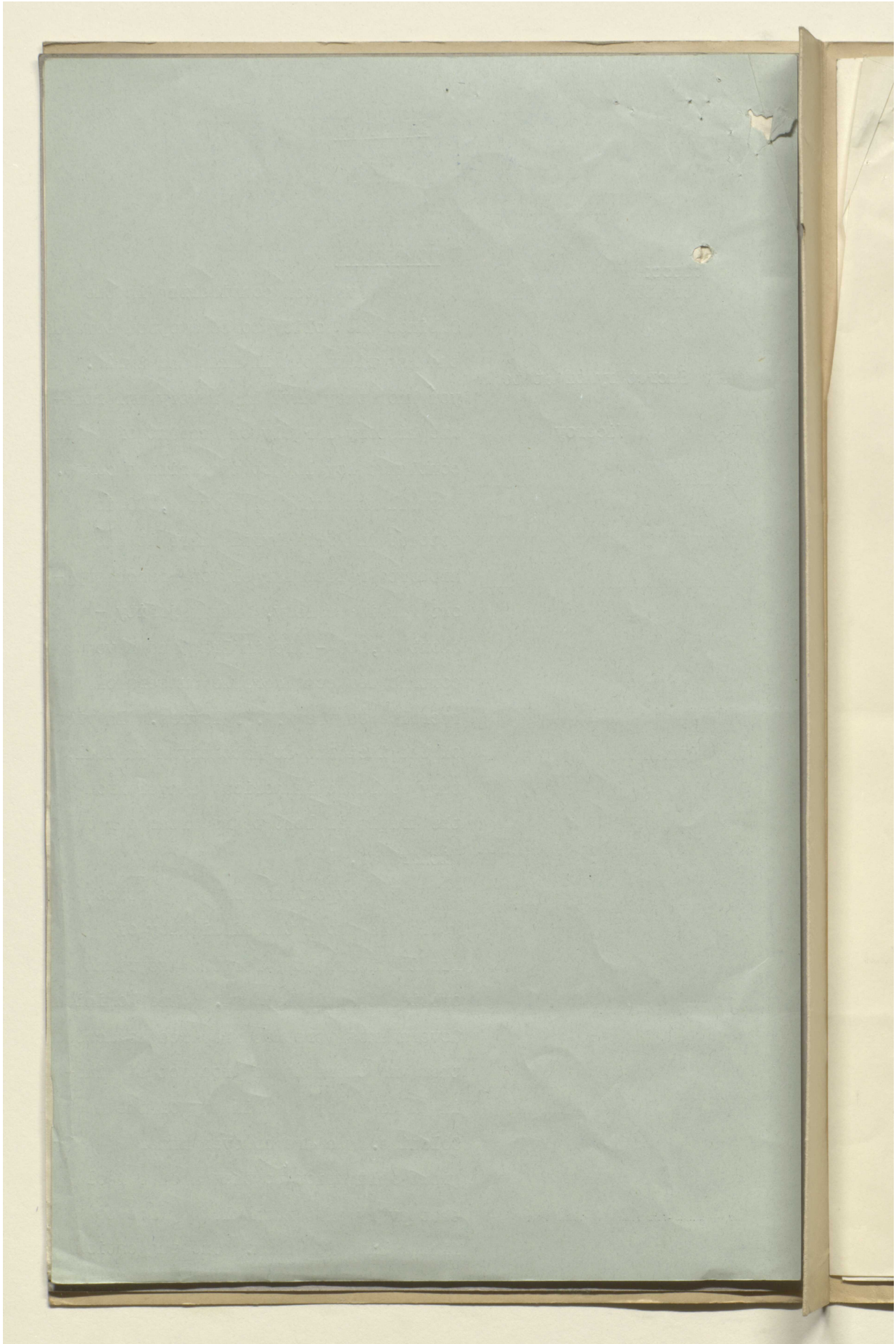
COPY TO *Circulate to S.S.
As circulated by
Tel. Room 25/7*

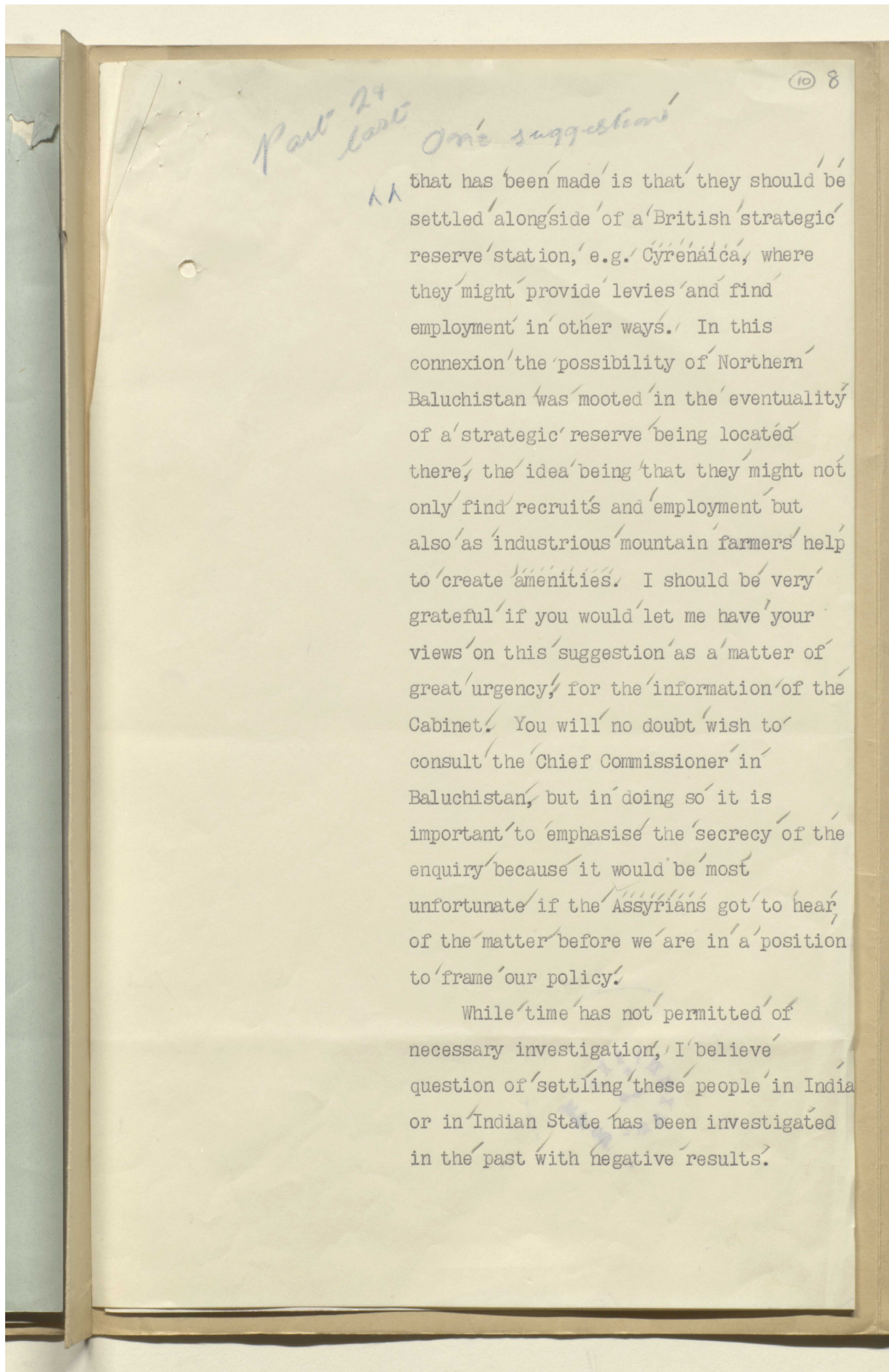
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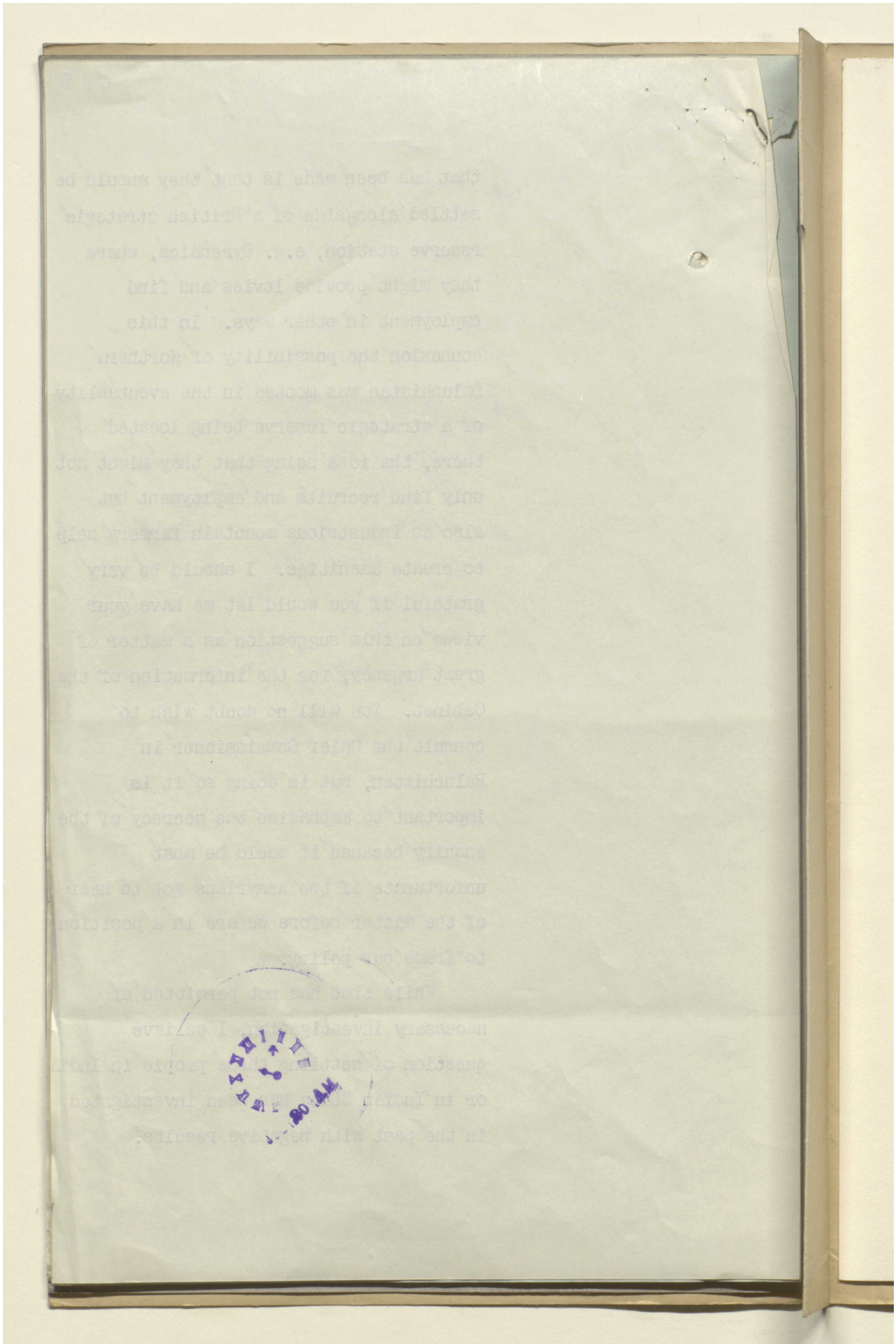
Part 29 cont

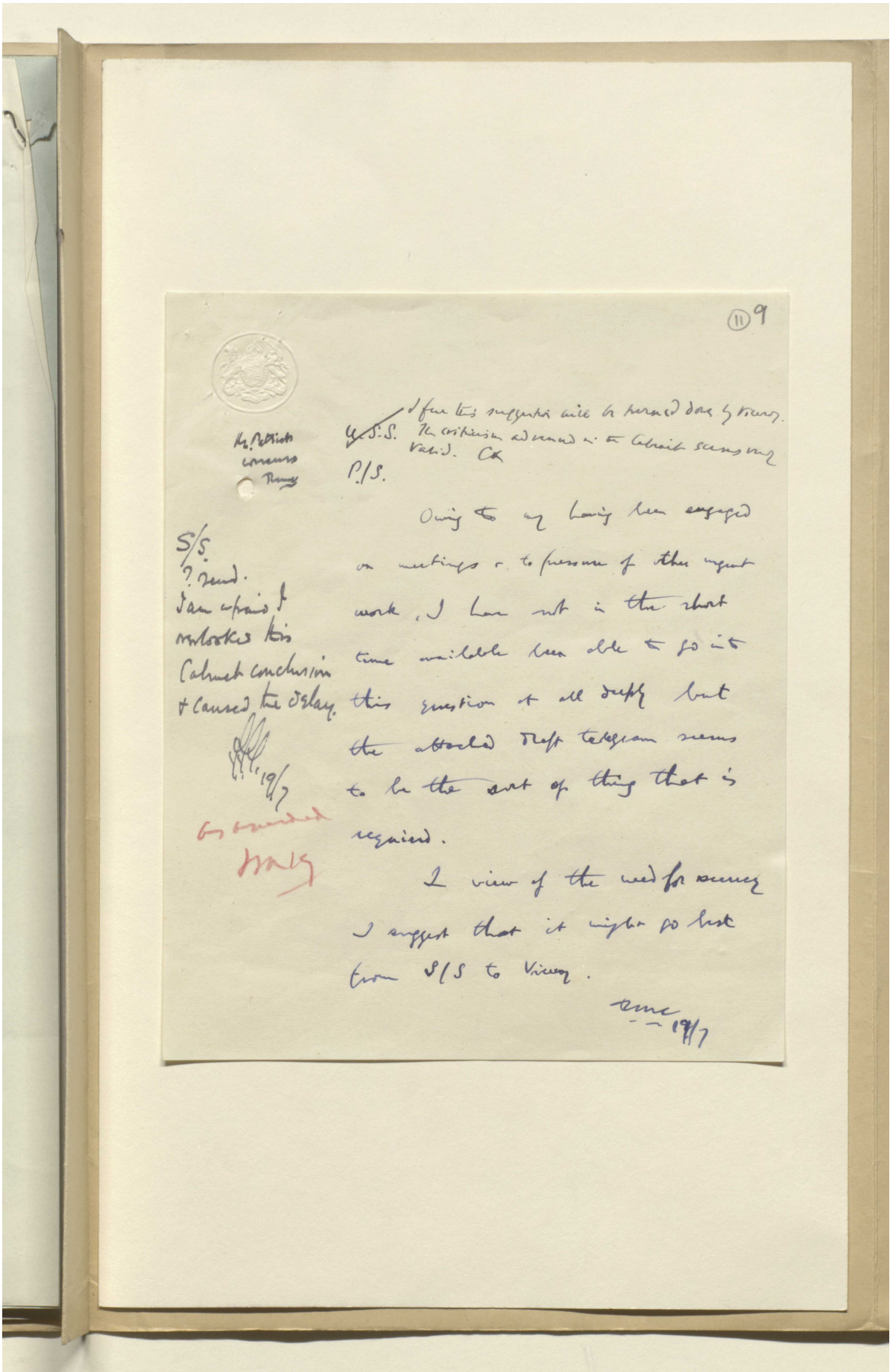
We have been considering in the Cabinet the policy to be adopted towards the Assyrians now in Iraq and Syria. As you know they have had a very unfortunate history largely on account of their continued loyalty to the British cause. A small community of about 9,000 is settled in North Syria where it has hitherto relied largely on French support for its safety. The majority - about 20,000 - are in Iraq and have contributed considerable numbers of recruits to the R.A.F. levies. In view of the incident at Habbaniyah in 1941, they would be in serious danger from the Iraqis if left there after our own withdrawal.

The experience of the past ten years has shown the difficulty of finding a new home for the Assyrians outside the Middle East. The Dominion Governments were not prepared to accept them and there is no prospect of finding a home for them in any of the Colonies. We are however under a great obligation to them and we feel that every effort should be made to find a home for them. One suggestion









119



Mr. British
Consul
Bombay

I fear this suggestion will be turned down by Viceroy.
Y.S.S. The criticism advanced as to Cabinet seems very
valid. Ck
P.S.

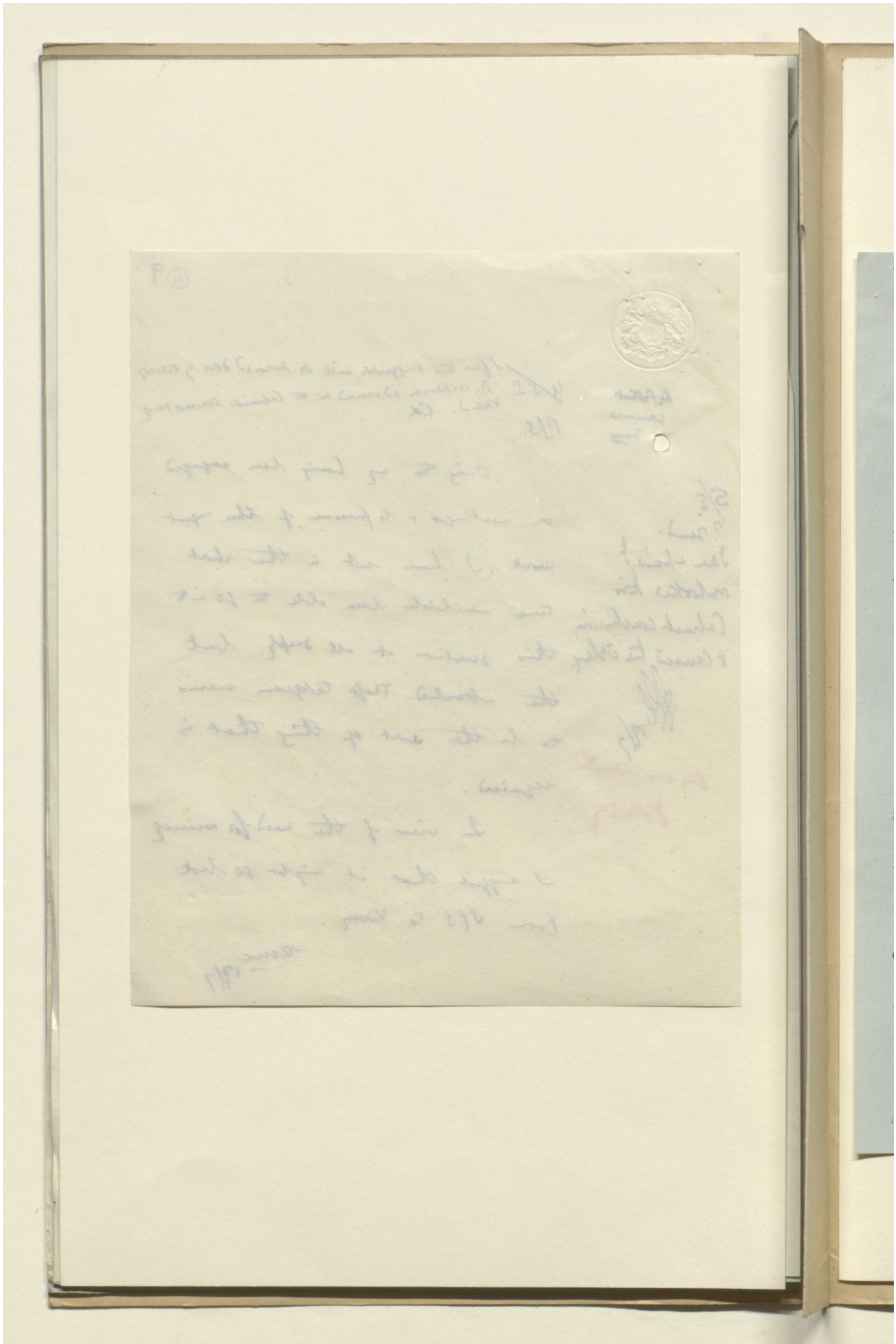
S/S
? send.
I am afraid I
mislooked his
Cabinet conclusion
& caused the delay.

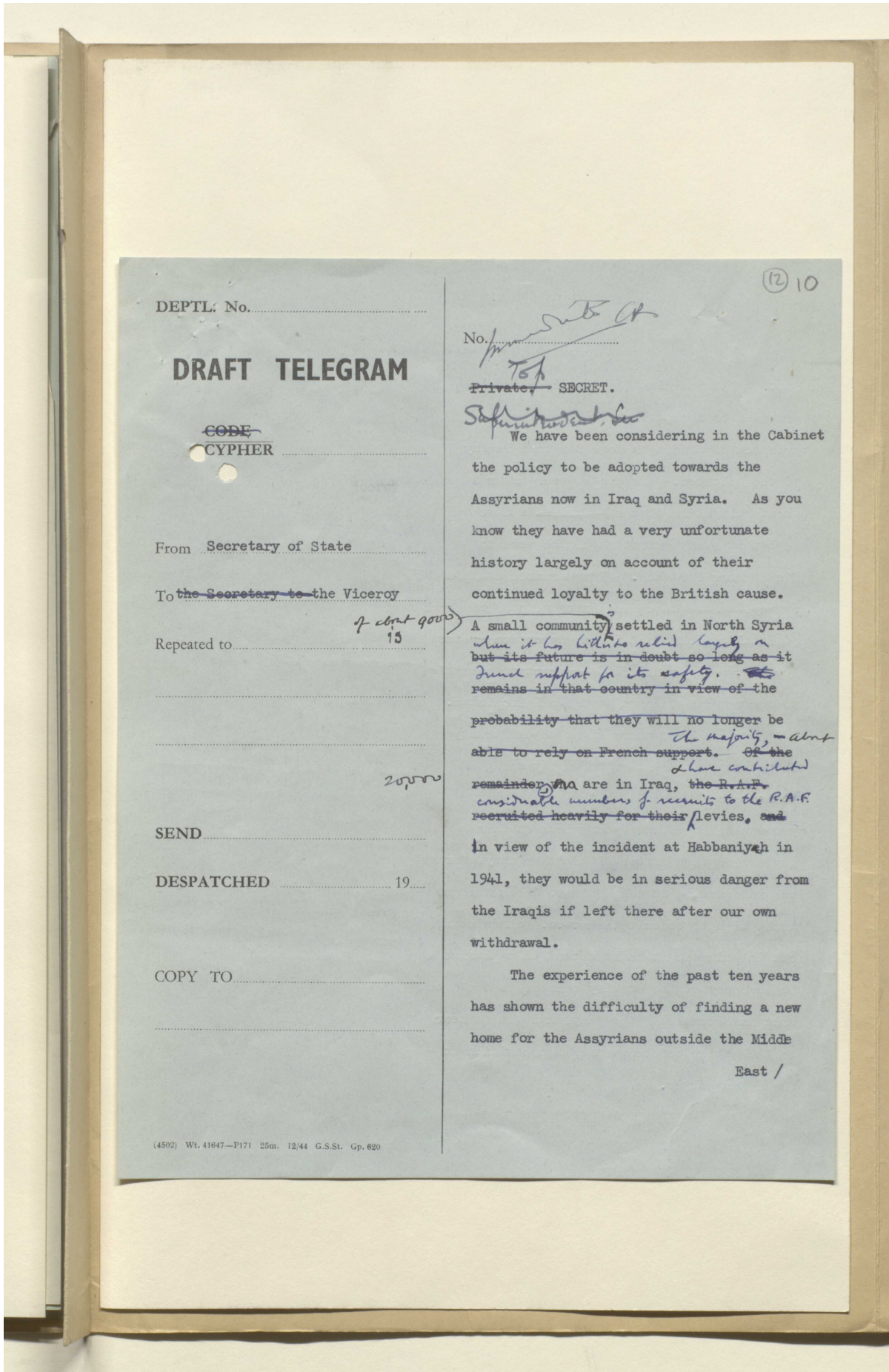
Owing to my having been engaged
on meetings & to pressure of other urgent
work, I have not in the short
time available been able to go into
this question & all deeply but
the attached Dept telegram seems
to be the sort of thing that is
required.

19/7
G. B. ...
M. G.

In view of the need for security
I suggest that it might go best
from S/S to Viceroy.

19/7





DEPTL. No.

DRAFT TELEGRAM

~~CODE~~
CYPHER

From Secretary of State

To ~~the Secretary to the Viceroy~~

Repeated to
f cont good
13

SEND

DESPATCHED 19....

COPY TO

(4502) Wt. 41647-P171 25m. 12/44 G.S.St. Gp. 620

(12) 10

No. *1000000000*

~~Private~~ SECRET.

Superintendent Sec

We have been considering in the Cabinet the policy to be adopted towards the Assyrians now in Iraq and Syria. As you know they have had a very unfortunate history largely on account of their continued loyalty to the British cause.

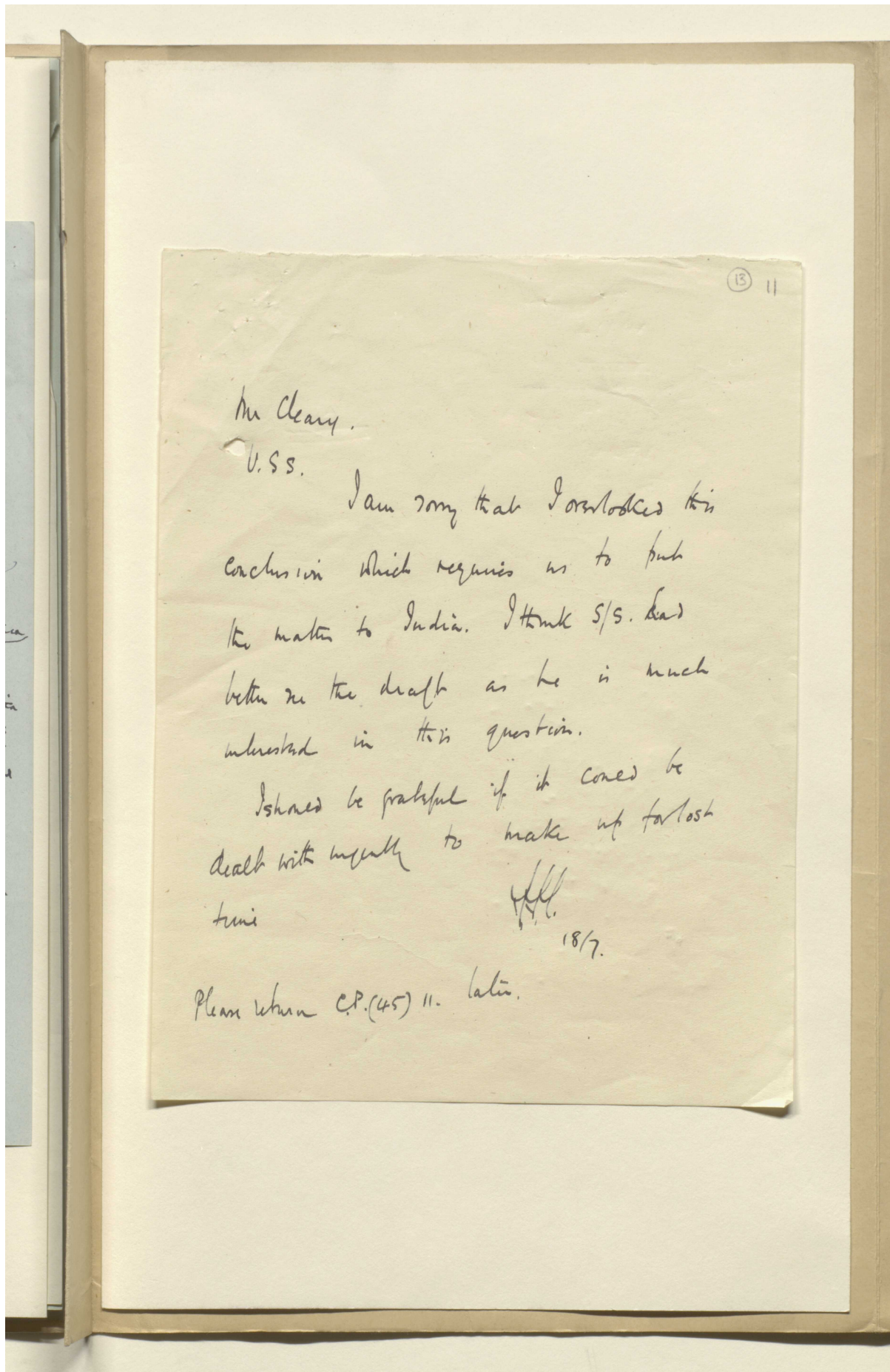
A small community settled in North Syria *where it has hitherto relied largely on French support for its safety.* but its future is in doubt so long as it remains in that country in view of the probability that they will no longer be able to rely on French support. *The majority, - about 20,000 - have contributed considerable numbers of recruits to the P.A.F. recruited heavily for their levies, and* in view of the incident at Habbaniyah in 1941, they would be in serious danger from the Iraqis if left there after our own withdrawal.

The experience of the past ten years has shown the difficulty of finding a new home for the Assyrians outside the Middle East /

East. The Dominion Governments were not prepared to accept them and there is no prospect of finding a home for them in any of the Colonies. We are however under a great obligation to the ^mAssyrians and we feel that every effort should be made to find a home for them. In pursuance of this policy, we are enquiring into the possibilities of settling them in Eritrea, Cyrenaica, or the Lebanon. Alternatively, it might be possible to accommodate them in Northern Baluchistan. I appreciate that there might be difficulty in settling a Christian community among Muslims, but I should be very grateful if you would let me have your views on this suggestion as a matter of great urgency, for the information of the Cabinet. You will no doubt wish to consult the ^{Chief Commissioner in} Baluchistan, but in doing so it is important to emphasise the secrecy of the enquiry because it would be most unfortunate if the Assyrians got to hear of the matter before we are in a position to frame our policy.

One suggestion that has been made is that they should be settled alongside of a British ~~in the best possible~~ ^{has been raised of} strategic reserve (where they might provide lives and find employment in the way of ~~operations~~ ^{operations} ~~in this connection~~ ^{the possibility} of Northern Baluchistan was looked in the eventuality of a strategic reserve being located there, the idea being that they might not only find employment - he also is ⁱⁿ individual mountain farming help to make themselves.

While time has not permitted of necessary investigation, I believe ^{perhaps} ~~possibly~~ that people in India or in Indian States has been investigated with first with negative results



Mr Cleary.

U.S.S.

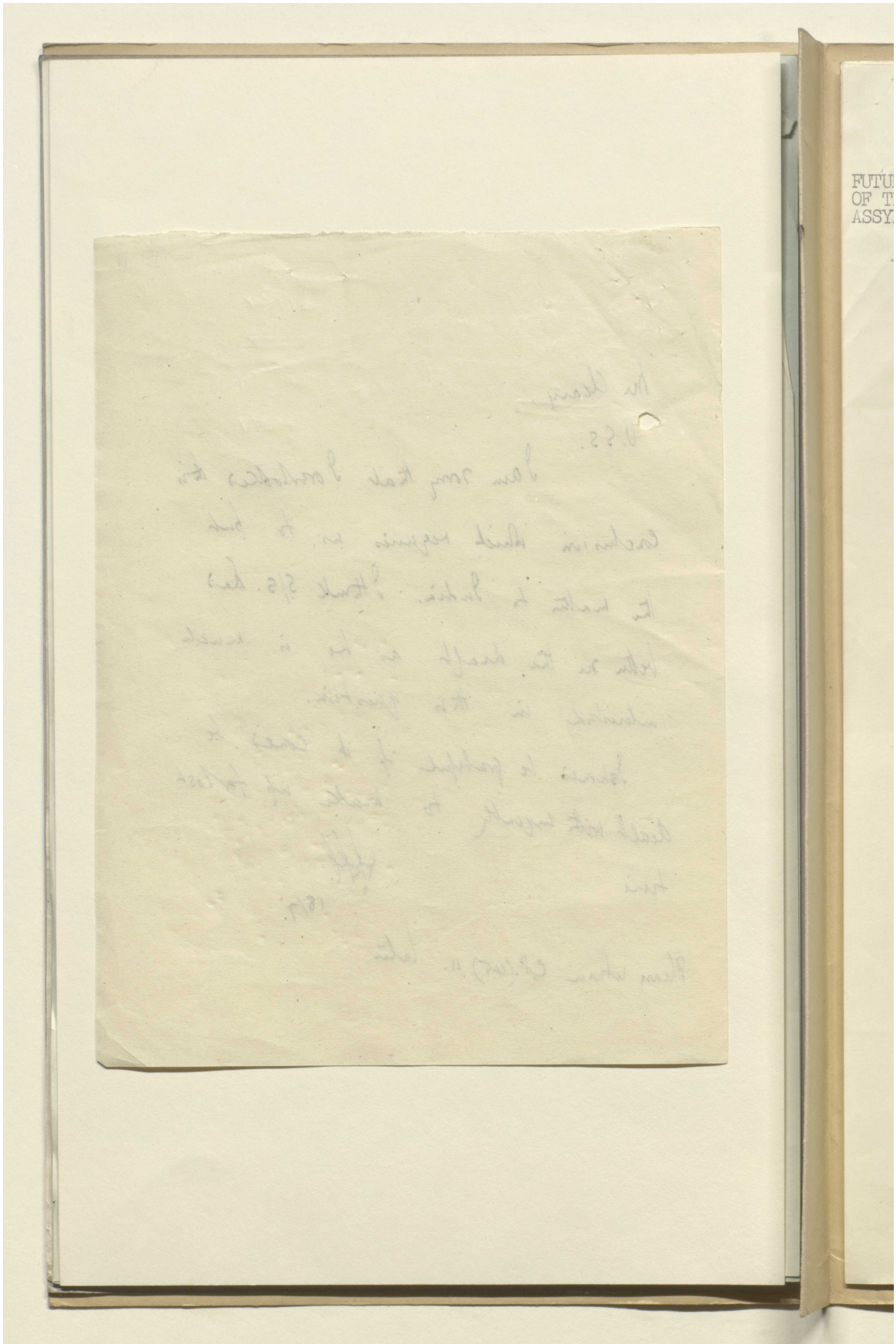
I am sorry that I overlooked this conclusion which requires us to push the matter to India. I think S/S. had better see the draft as he is much interested in this question.

I should be grateful if it could be dealt with urgently to make up for lost time

J.P.

18/7.

Please return C.P.(45) 11. later.



SECRET

12
(14)

EXTRACT FROM CABINET CONCLUSIONS 13(45) DATED 10.7.45.

FUTURE
OF THE
ASSYRIANS.

6. The Cabinet had before them a Memorandum (C.P.(45) 11) by the S/S for Foreign Affairs inviting the Cabinet to consider whether our future policy should be based on the assumption that the Assyrians now in Iraq and Syria would have to remain where they are or whether a determined attempt should now be made to settle them outside the Middle East.

THE S/S FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the first alternative - that the Assyrians in Iraq and Syria should remain where they were - was not a satisfactory solution, given the risk to which they would be exposed of future conflicts with the Muslims in Iraq. On the other hand, the experience of the past ten years had shown the difficulty of finding a new home for the Assyrians outside the Middle East. The Dominion Governments were not prepared to accept them, and the difficulties of settlement in the Colonial Empire would also be very grave. We were, however, under great obligation to the Assyrians and he felt that we should make a further effort to find a home for them.

In discussions the following points were made:-

(a) THE S/S FOR THE COLONIES confirmed that there was no prospect of finding a home for the Assyrians in any of the Colonies.

(b) THE S/S FOR INDIA suggested that it might be possible to accommodate them in Northern Baluchistan. It was suggested that there might be difficulty in settling a Christian community among the Muslims of Baluchistan.

(c) It was suggested that, despite the objection which Lord Moyne had previously seen to the settlement of the Assyrians in the conquered Italian colonies, further consideration might be given to the possibility of settling them in Eritrea or Cyrenaica. It was of particular importance that we should establish our influence in Cyrenaica; and it would be useful if the Assyrians could be employed there as guards for British airfields and allowed to found a settlement for their families in the neighbourhood of the airfields. They had proved their worth as levies; and their employment in this capacity might warrant their being given a neighbouring area in which to found a settlement. Such an arrangement might, however, cause trouble with the Sennusi; and this point would need to be watched.

(d) THE S/S FOR INDIA also suggested that the Assyrians might be settled in the Lebanon, where a Christian community would be more welcome. Such a settlement might well be politically attractive to the Lebanese, though possibly unwelcome to the Assyrians.

THE CABINET:

- (1) Invited the S/S for Foreign Affairs to ascertain the view of the Minister Resident, Middle East, and the Minister in the Levant States on the possibilities of settling the

