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Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East

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About this record

The file contains correspondence, memoranda, notes, and a map concerning various aspects of the post-First World War settlement of the Near and Middle East. The file covers the discussion around the Sykes-Picot Agreement (also known as the Asia Minor Agreement; see folios 1-3) and the settlement of other Arab territories, the future of Constantinople, the need to protect the Trans-Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) from the Bolshevik advance, the peace settlement with Turkey, and Persian claims at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

Correspondence is between George Curzon and officials at the War Office, Foreign Office, League of Nations, and various political and diplomatic offices in the region concerned. The file also contains some pages of manuscript notes by Curzon himself.

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [1r] (1/70)

Mss. Eur. F.112/279

①

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Printed for the use of the Cabinet. February 1916.

CONFIDENTIAL.

ARAB QUESTION.

Sir E. Grey,

I SUBMIT for the consideration of His Majesty's Government the results of the informal discussions which have taken place with M. Picot and after consultation with the competent Government Departments.

It was found at the outset impossible to discuss the northern limits of the future Arab State or Arab Confederation unless the French desiderata in Syria were also examined, as M. Picot was unable to separate the two questions. I think, however, that the preamble to the proposals lays down with sufficient precision the fact that the proposals in regard to the Blue area, as well as to the Red area, are contingent on the fulfilment of certain essential conditions, and give full opportunity to the Allies, and especially to Russia, to have a voice in the final settlement of those parts of the whole problem.

The four towns of Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and Damascus will be included in the Arab State or Confederation, though in the area where the French will have priority of enterprise, &c. You will see from Sir H. McMahon's telegram No. 707 of the 20th November, 1915, annexed herewith, that it had been contemplated that this sphere would be reserved to the development of special French interests.

There is one point which doubtless requires explanation, and that is the reference to Cyprus. The French consider that in according to us the ports of Haifa and Acre they are giving away "acquired rights," which had been granted to them under the French loan to Turkey of 1914, and that they must have, therefore, an equivalent. It also appeared during conversation that they feared that the cession of Cyprus to Greece might be revived on some subsequent occasion, and that Greece might afterwards transfer the island to Italy. M. Picot, therefore, insisted on some guarantee against Cyprus being disposed of without the previous knowledge and concurrence of France. It is possible, as M. Picot has been informed, that His Majesty's Government may not view such an engagement with favour, though M. Picot asserts that his Government regard this question as an essential condition.

A. N.

Foreign Office, February 2, 1916.

Sir H. McMahon to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received November 21.)

(No. 707.)

(Telegraphic.)

Cairo, November 20, 1915.

FOLLOWING from Sir M. Sykes for D.M.O., No. 19:—

"Your private letter of 5th November just received. Previous to getting it I saw Faruki, and, anticipating French difficulty, discussed the situation with him with that in view. Following is best I could get, but seems to me to meet the situation both with regard to France and Great Britain. Arabs would agree to accept as approximate northern frontier Alexandretta-Aintab-Birjick-Urfa-Midiat-Zakho-Rowanduz. Arabs would agree to convention with France granting her monopoly of all concessionary enterprise in Syria and Palestine, Syria being defined as bounded by Euphrates as far south as Deir Zor, and from there to Deraa and along Hedjaz Railway to Maan.

"Hedjaz Railway as far south as Amman, could be sold to French concessionaire. Arabs would further agree to employment of none but Frenchmen as advisers and European employees in this area. Noted Arabs will not [undertake to] employ Europeans if they can do without them, but Faruki points out this stipulation is to avoid any shadow of control. Arabs would agree to all French educational establishments having special recognition in this area.

"Arabs would agree to identical convention with Great Britain with regard to remainder of Greater Arabia, viz., Irak and Jazirah and Northern Mesopotamia. Further, Arabs would agree to any territory north of Greater Arabian frontier being French possessions under French flag.

"Arabs would agree to Basra town and all cultivated lands to the south being British territory.

"Arabs would be prepared to make a treaty with *Entente* Powers—

"1. Undertaking on their part to have no dealings with Turkey, Germany, or Austria for period of fifteen years.

"2. On the part of *Entente* Powers to guarantee to protect independence of the Arabs.

[232]

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [1v] (2/70)

2

"Further, a treaty of alliance with *Entente* Powers giving them freedom of movement in Greater Arabia and use of railways in Arabian area for duration of the war. *Entente* troops in Arab territories to be on same footing as British troops in Flanders.

"*Entente* troops to evacuate territories on cessation of hostilities.

"Faruki insisted that this was dependent on *Entente* landing troops at a point between Mersina and Alexandretta, and making good Amanus Pass or Cilician Gates. He further stipulated that Shereef should not take action until this had been done. I agree that any other course is out of the question, and that to call on Shereef or Arabs to take action until we had made above-mentioned passes secure would be impossible. Faruki also urged necessity for immediate adequate action in the Gulf of Alexandretta, adding that if *Entente* did not take this opportunity Germans would forestall them, and once Turks or Germans got into Syria, Arabs would, in their own interests, be obliged to reconsider situation. For my own part, I am sure that there can be no doubt of Arabs merely troubling Turks in advances on the Canal. If we allow Turks into Syria, Arabs will side with them in order to obtain special consideration.

"Germans have already suggested idea of Turko-Arabia on the same lines as Austria-Hungary.

"I will give observations on less important aspects in further telegram. Meanwhile, I am convinced of necessity for efficient action at earliest possible moment, to enable Arabs to move."

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SECRET.

ON the hypothesis that France and Great Britain are desirous of assisting in the creation of an Arab State or Confederation of Arab States, the following proposals are submitted for the consideration of the British and French Governments, after conversations with M. Georges Picot and after consultations between the competent departments of His Majesty's Government.

It is understood that the putting into effect of these proposals is contingent on the successful assistance of the Arabs and their leaders in the establishment of an Arab State or Confederation of Arab States under the protection of France and Great Britain; and on their active co-operation with the Allies.

It is further understood that if the negotiations with the Arabs lead to a satisfactory result, the proposals respecting the special interests and desiderata of France and Great Britain respectively in the portions marked in blue and red on the accompanying map are contingent on the consent of the Russian Government, which Great Britain and France will endeavour to obtain, and dependent on the arrangements which may be made in the peace negotiations respecting the future of the Ottoman Empire.

1. That France and Great Britain are prepared to recognise and protect an independent Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States in the areas (a) and (b) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief. That in area (a) France, and in area (b) Great Britain, shall have priority of right of enterprise and local loans. That in area (a) France, and in area (b) Great Britain, shall alone supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

2. That in the Blue area France, and in the Red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

3. That in the Brown area there shall be established an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies, and the representatives of the Shereef of Mecca.

4. That Great Britain be accorded (1) the ports of Haifa and Acre, (2) guarantee of a given supply of water from the Tigris and Euphrates in area (a) for area (b). His Majesty's Government on their part undertake that they will at no time enter into negotiations for the cession of Cyprus to any third Power without the previous consent of the French Government.

5. That Alexandretta shall be a free port as regards the trade of the British Empire, and that there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards British shipping and British goods; that there shall be freedom of transit for British goods through Alexandretta and by railway through the Blue area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the Red area, or (B) area, or area (A); and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against British goods on any railway or against British goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

That Haifa shall be a free port as regards the trade of France, her dominions and protectorates, and there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards French shipping and French goods. There shall be freedom of transit for French goods through Haifa and by the British railway through the Brown area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the Blue area, area (a), or area (b), and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against French goods on any railway, or against French goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

6. That in area (A) the Bagdad Railway shall not be extended southwards beyond Mosul, and in area (B) northwards beyond Samarra, until a railway connecting Bagdad with Aleppo via the Euphrates Valley has been completed, and then only with the concurrence of the two Governments.

[232—1]

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [2v] (4/70)

2

7. That Great Britain has the right to build, administer, and be sole owner of a railway connecting Haifa with area (B), and that Great Britain shall have a perpetual right to transport troops along such a line at all times.

8. For a period of twenty years the existing Turkish customs tariff shall remain in force throughout the whole of the Blue and Red areas, as well as in areas (A) and (B), and no increase in the rates of duty or conversion from *ad valorem* to specific rates shall be made except by agreement between the two Powers.

There shall be no interior customs barriers between any of the above-mentioned areas. The customs duties leviable on goods destined for the interior shall be collected at the port of entry, and handed over to the administration of the area of destination.

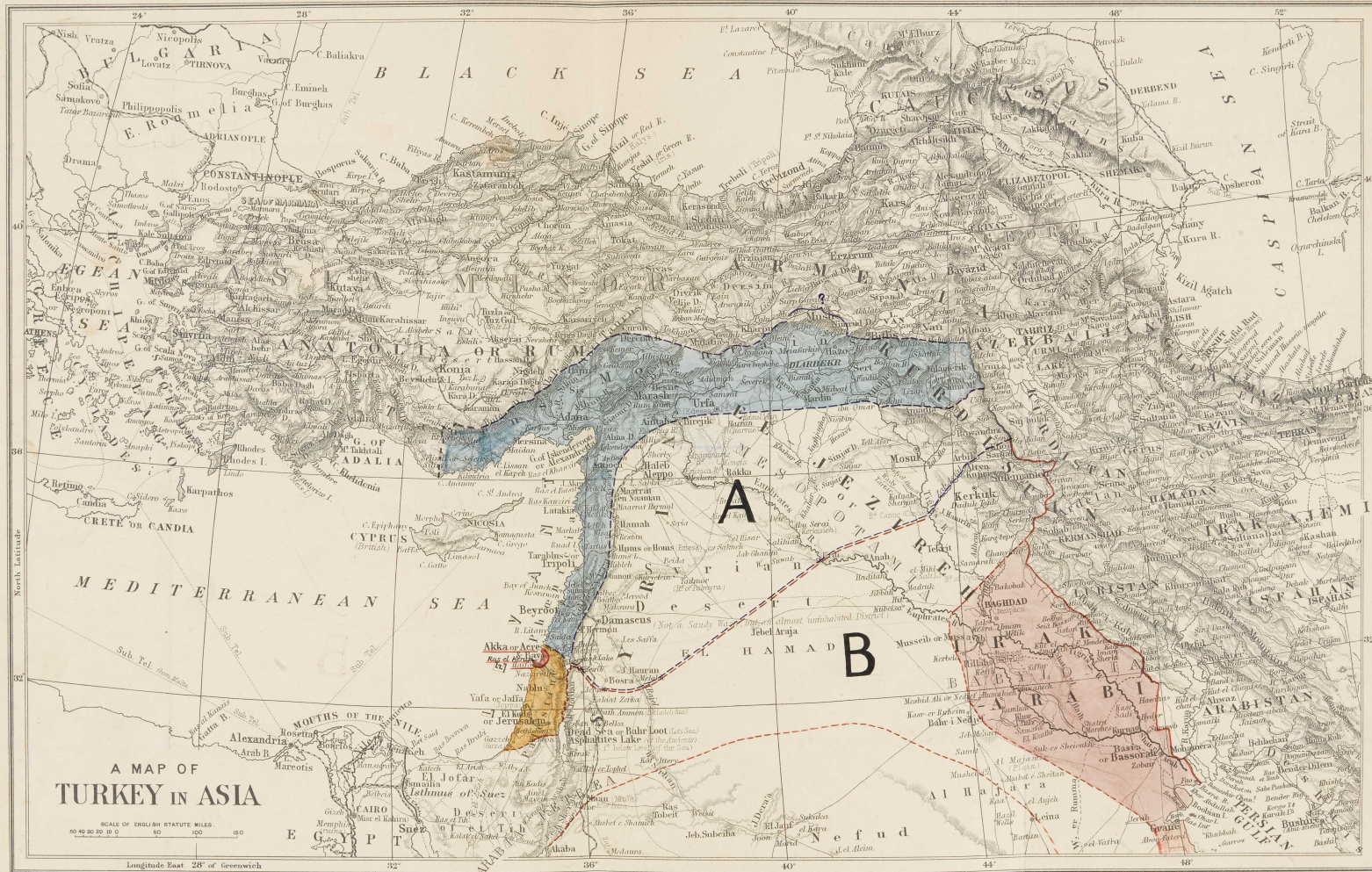
9. It shall be agreed that the French Government will at no time enter into any negotiations for the cession of their rights, and will not cede such rights in the Blue area to any third Power, except the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States, without the previous agreement of His Majesty's Government, who on their part will give a similar undertaking to the French Government regarding the Red area.

10. The British and French Governments, as the protectors of the Arab State, shall agree that they will not themselves acquire, and will not consent to a third Power acquiring territorial possessions in the Arabian peninsula, nor consent to a third Power constructing a naval base on the islands or the east coast of the Red Sea. This, however, shall not prevent such adjustment of the Aden frontier as may be necessary in consequence of recent Turkish aggression.

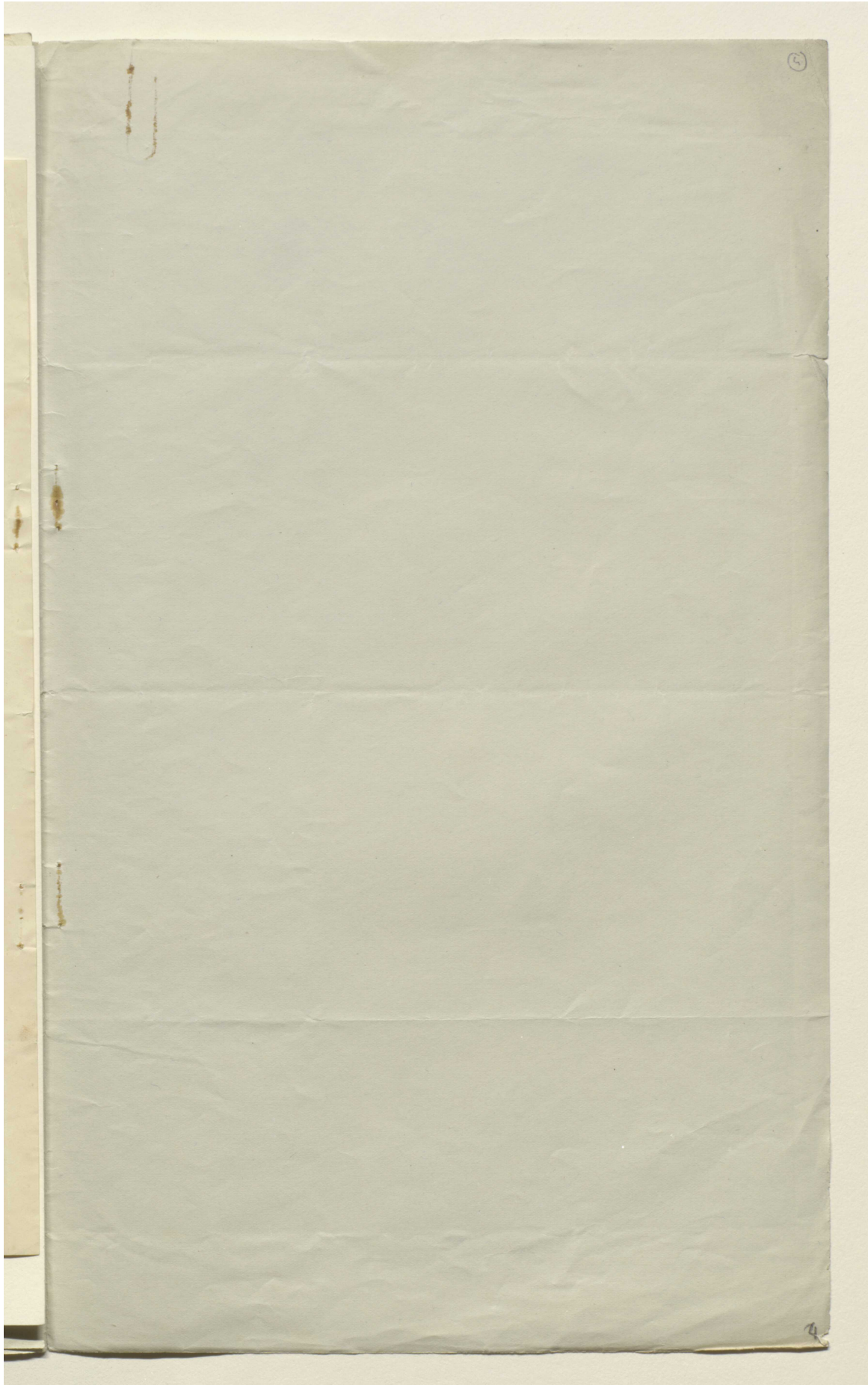
11. The negotiations with the Arabs as to the boundaries of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States shall be continued through the same channel as heretofore on behalf of the two Powers.

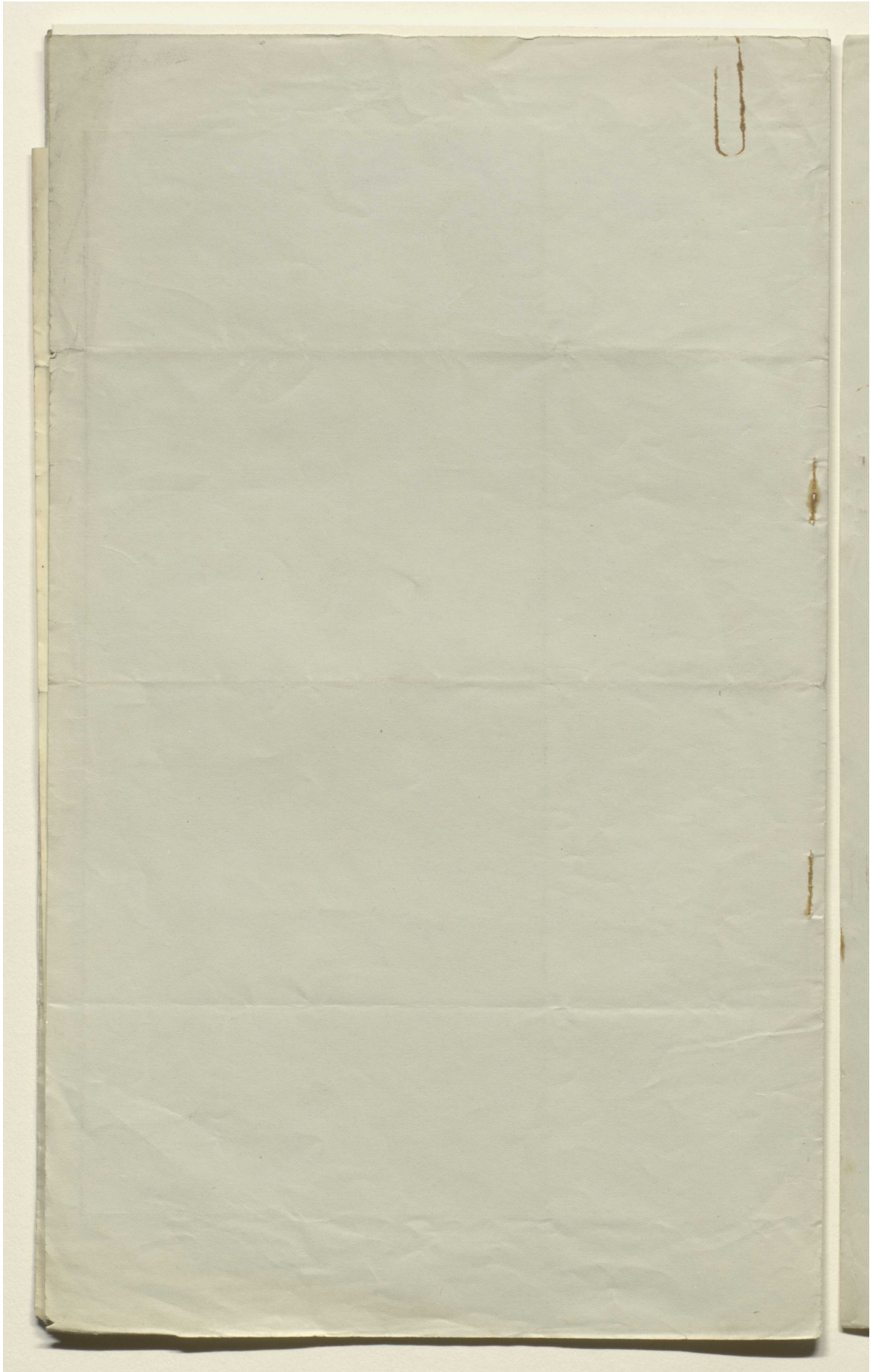
12. It is agreed that measures to control the importation of arms into the Arab territories will be considered by the two Governments.

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [3r] (5/70)









Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [5r] (9/70)

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CONFIDENTIAL.

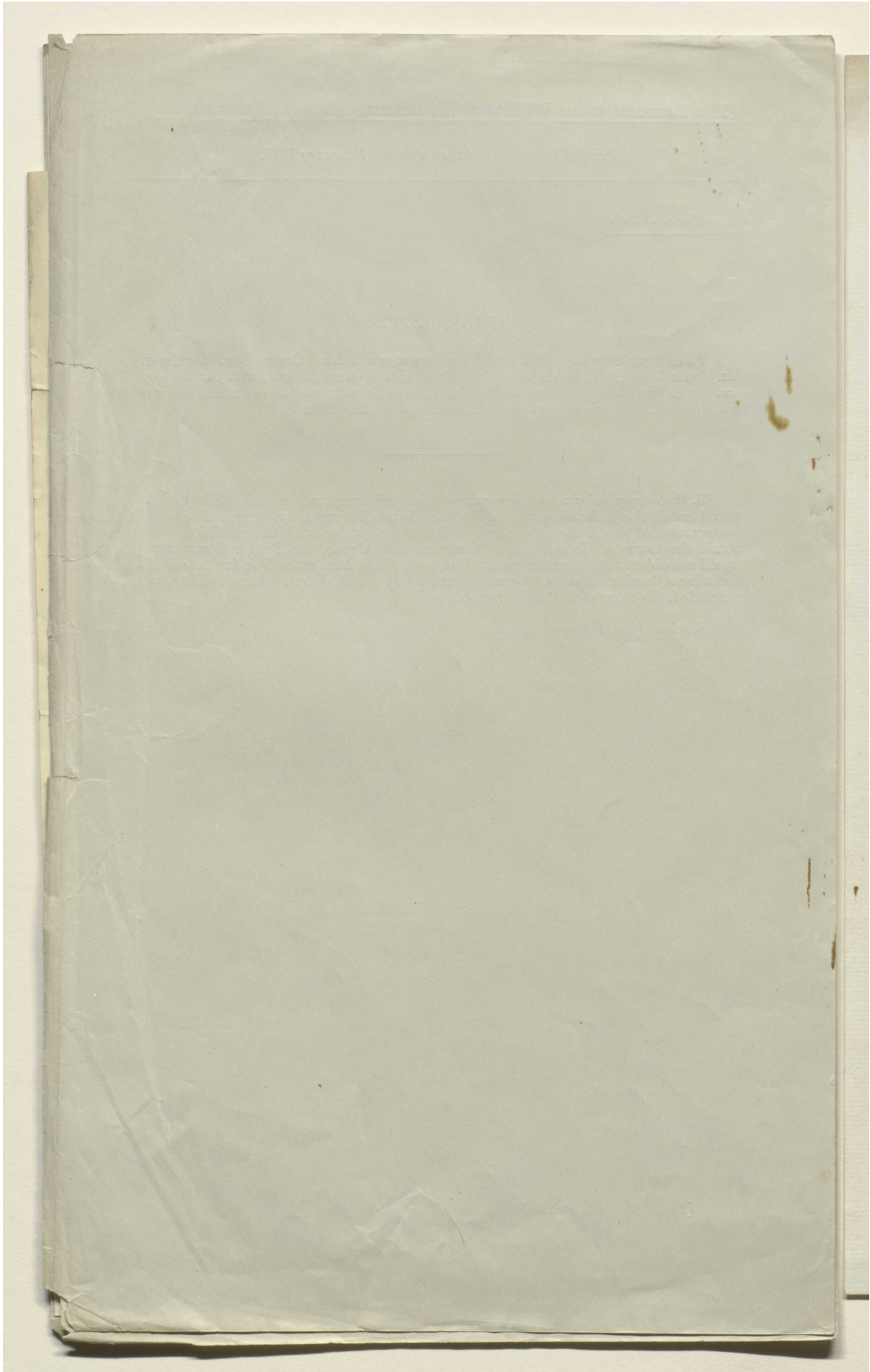
ARAB QUESTION.

THIS represents the result of a discussion at which Lord Crewe, Lord Kitchener, Mr. Bonar Law, Sir T. Holderness, and Sir A. Hirtzel were present, with Sir E. Grey and Sir A. Nicolson. A representative from the Admiralty was also present, but was not in a position to give an opinion on the merits of the scheme.

M. Picot may inform his Government that the acceptance of the whole project would entail the abdication of considerable British interests, but provided that the co-operation of the Arabs is secured, and that the Arabs fulfil the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus, and Aleppo, the British Government would not object to the arrangement. But, as the Blue Area extends so far eastwards, and affects Russian interests, it would be absolutely essential that, before anything was concluded, the consent of Russia was obtained.

Foreign Office, February 4, 1916.

[248]



DRAFT.

Sir G. Buchanan,
Petrograd.
No.

*Prime Minister
Lord Northampton
Lord Curzon
Mr. Chamberlain
Mr. Balfour
Lord Hume
Lord Amherst*

Foreign Office,
February 1916.

Sir:-

Colonel Sir Mark Sykes will hand you this despatch, with its accompanying enclosures, and will be ready to furnish Your Excellency with any details which you may desire. You know from my telegram No. 377 of the 9th instant the reasons which led to our entering upon discussions with the French Government in regard to the creation of a free Arab State or Confederation of Arab States, and also why it was found necessary to enlarge the scope of such discussions so as to examine French and British desiderata in the Asiatic dominions of Turkey.

I trust that the proposals, as well as the explanatory map which accompanies them, will place Your Excellency in full possession of all necessary information.

Monsieur Picot is, I understand, also proceeding to Petrograd to discuss the matter direct with the Russian Government in so far as concerns the French desiderata.

My telegram to you, No. 394 of the 11th instant, will have apprised Your Excellency of the views of His Majesty's Government respecting these desiderata, and I should also wish to add that we have

have no desire whatever to urge the Russian Government to make concessions in the districts which are of direct interest to them, if they have any objections to doing so. We are prepared to leave the negotiations in regard to what is marked on the Map as the Blue Area to be treated between the Russian and French Governments. Your Excellency should, however, request to be kept informed in regard to the course of such discussions.

You may also explain to Monsieur Sazonoff the scope and nature of the British desiderata in Mesopotamia. The exact status which the British Government may eventually possess in that region will, of course, have to be a matter for further arrangements with the future Arab State or Confederation of Arab States, and this you will see has been provided for in Article of the proposals.

Your Excellency will also observe, and Sir Mark Sykes will give you full explanations on the subject, that we have considered it desirable to secure an outlet on the sea in case it may be desirable at some period to construct a railway running to the ports of Haiffa or of Acre from the interior. The question of the Holy Land is also left over for further discussion between the Powers, and that region which is marked in Brown
on

2.

on the Map, would be under some form of international control and administration.

I should add that Monsieur Picot was requested on Fevruary 4th to inform his Government that the acceptance of the whole project would entail the abdication of considerable British interests, but provided that the co-operation of the Arabs is secured and that the Arabs fulfil the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus and Aleppo, the British Government would not object to the arrangement. He was also informed that he should acquaint his Government that as the Blue Area on the Map extends so far eastwards and affects Russian interests it would be absolutely essential that, before anything was concluded, the consent of Russia should be obtained. I trust, therefore, that Monsieur Sazonoff will clearly comprehend that the proposals to which the French Government have agreed in principle are dependent upon the consent of the Russian Government, and also upon the co-operation of the Arabs being secured. Moreover, it need hardly be said that the proposals as regards British and French desiderata must in addition depend upon the general arrangements which may be reached in regard to the Ottoman Empire in Asia at the conclusion of peace.

Should

7

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [7v] (14/70)

Should Your Excellency require any further information on what may appear to you doubtful points in the proposals, I should be glad if you would telegraph to me on the subject. I would wish that the discussions with Monsieur Sazonoff as to British desiderata should be conducted by Your Excellency, but I am sure that Sir Mark Sykes will always be ready to give you any explanations or information which you may require.

(initialled) E.g.

(8)

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RUSSIA

Not for sections.

DEPARTMENTAL

Cypher telegram to Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd).

Foreign Office. February 9th 1916. 5 p.m.

No. 377. (D).

Negotiations were some time ago opened by the Sherif of Mecca with His Majesty's Residency in Egypt in regard to Arab aspirations, and, with a view to detach, if possible, the Arabs from the side of the Turks, such overtures were encouraged.

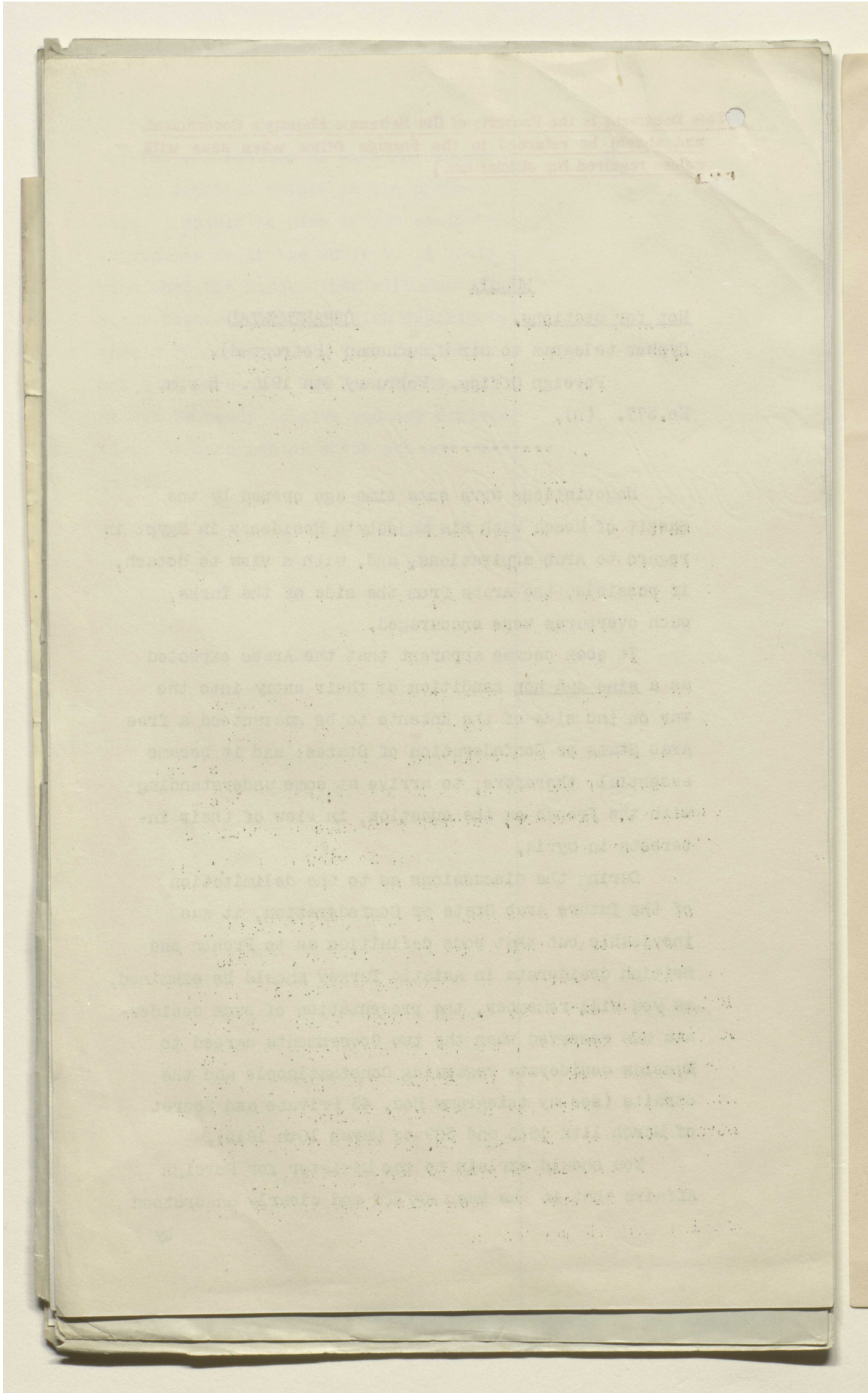
It soon became apparent that the Arabs expected as a sine qua non condition of their entry into the war on the side of the Entente to be guaranteed a free Arab State or Confederation of States: and it became essential, therefore, to arrive at some understanding with the French on the question, in view of their interests in Syria.

During the discussions as to the delimitation of the future Arab State or Confederation, it was inevitable but that some definition as to French and British desiderata in Asiatic Turkey should be examined. As you will remember, the presentation of such desiderata was reserved when the two Governments agreed to Russian desiderata regarding Constantinople and the Straits (see my telegrams Nos. 43 Private and Secret of March 11th 1915 and 329 of March 10th 1915).

You should explain to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that it has been agreed and clearly understood

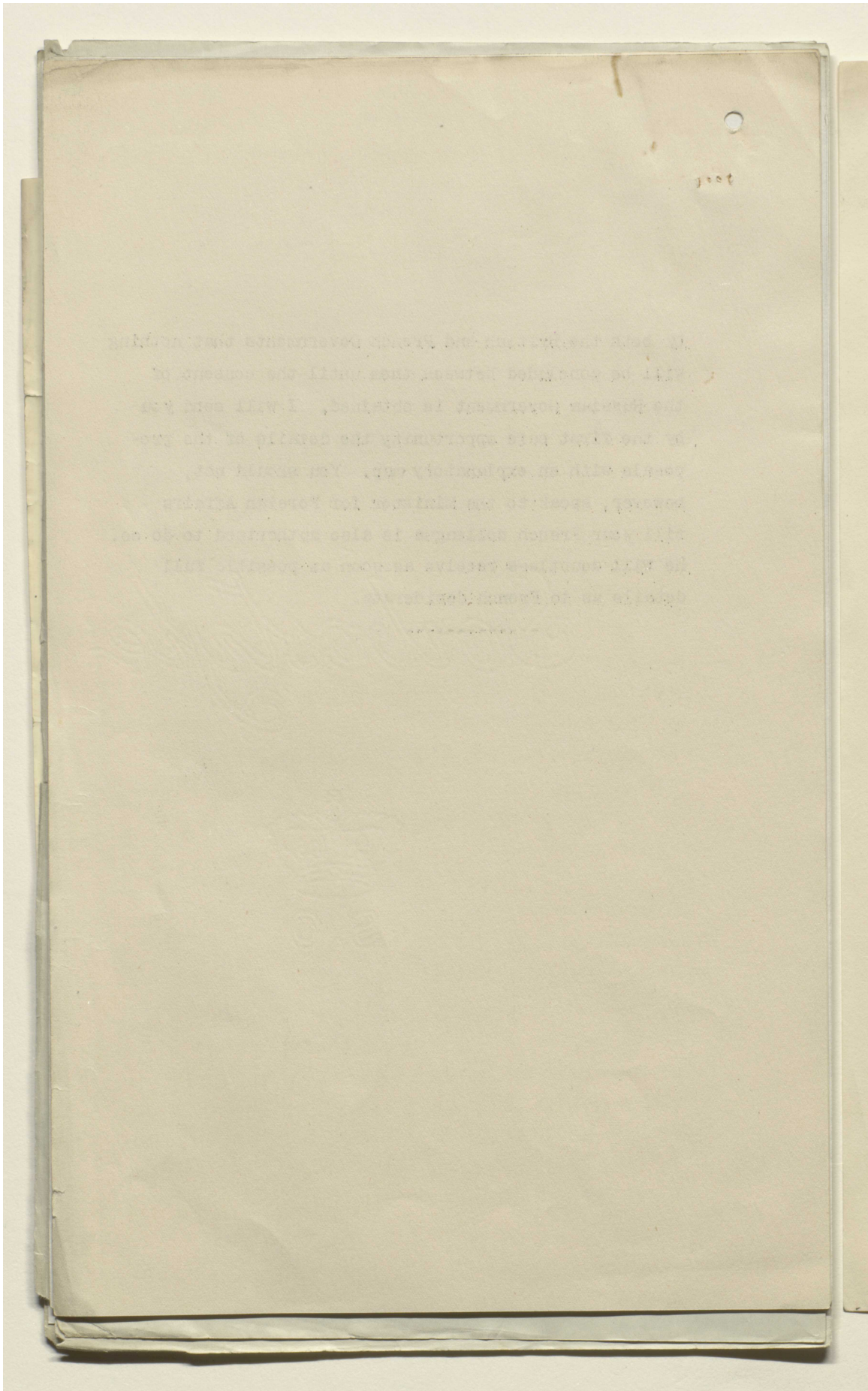
by

8



by both the British and French Governments that nothing will be concluded between them until the consent of the Russian Government is obtained. I will send you by the first safe opportunity the details of the proposals with an explanatory map. You should not, however, speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs till your French colleague is also authorised to do so. He will doubtless receive as soon as possible full details as to French desiderata.

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [9v] (18/70)



(10)

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RUSSIA

Not for sections.

DEPARTMENTAL

Cypher telegram to Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd).

Foreign Office. February 11th 1916. 3.15 p.m.

No.394.

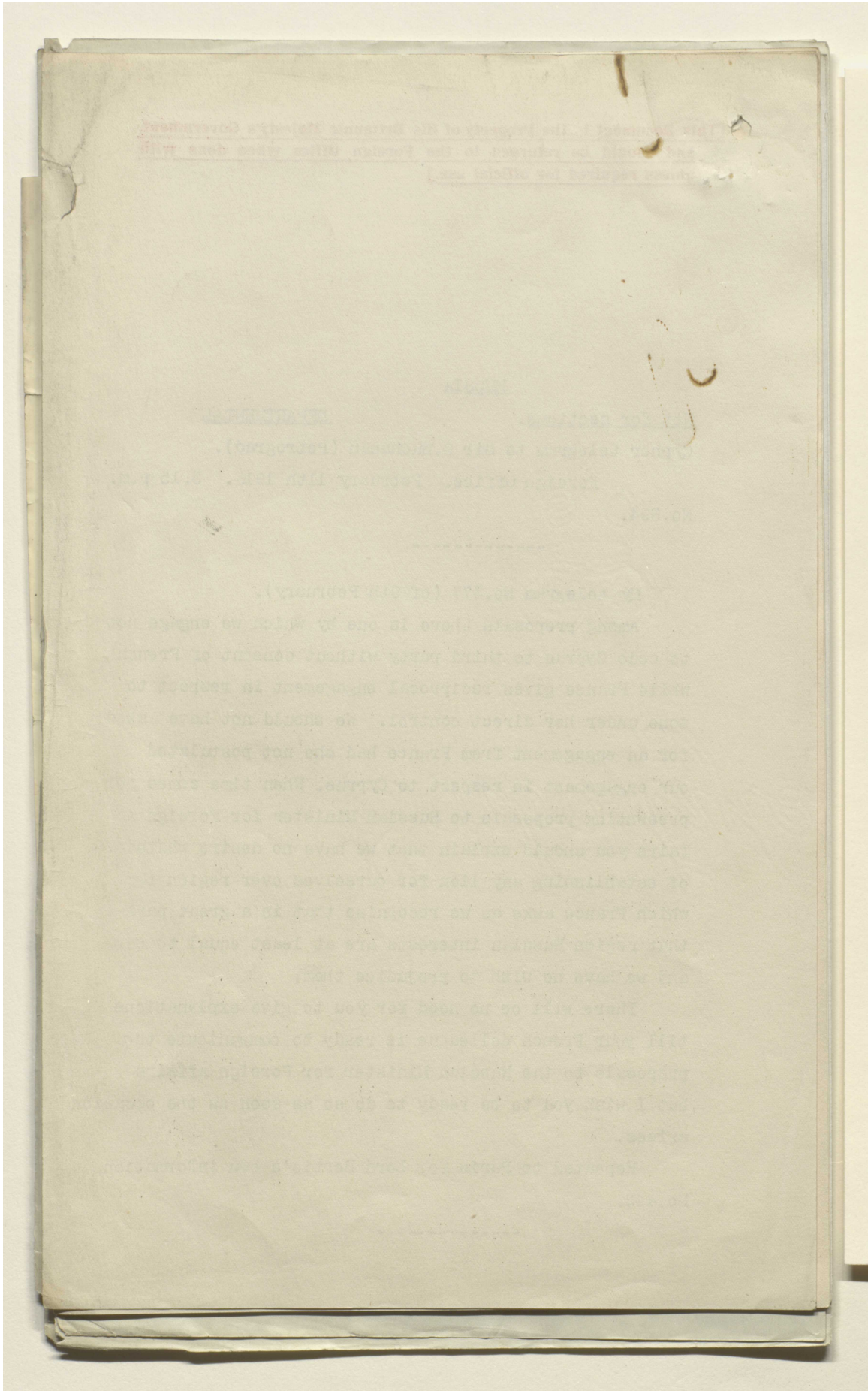
My telegram No.377 (of 9th February).

Among proposals there is one by which we engage not to cede Cyprus to third party without consent of French while France gives reciprocal engagement in respect to zone under her direct control. We should not have asked for an engagement from France had she not postulated our engagement in respect to Cyprus. When time comes for presenting proposals to Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs you should explain that we have no desire whatever of establishing any lien for ourselves over region for which France asks as we recognise that in a great part of that region Russian interests are at least equal to ours and we have no wish to prejudice them.

There will be no need for you to give explanations till your French colleague is ready to communicate the proposals to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs but I wish you to be ready to do so as soon as the occasion arises.

Repeated to Paris for Lord Bertie's own information
No.442.

10



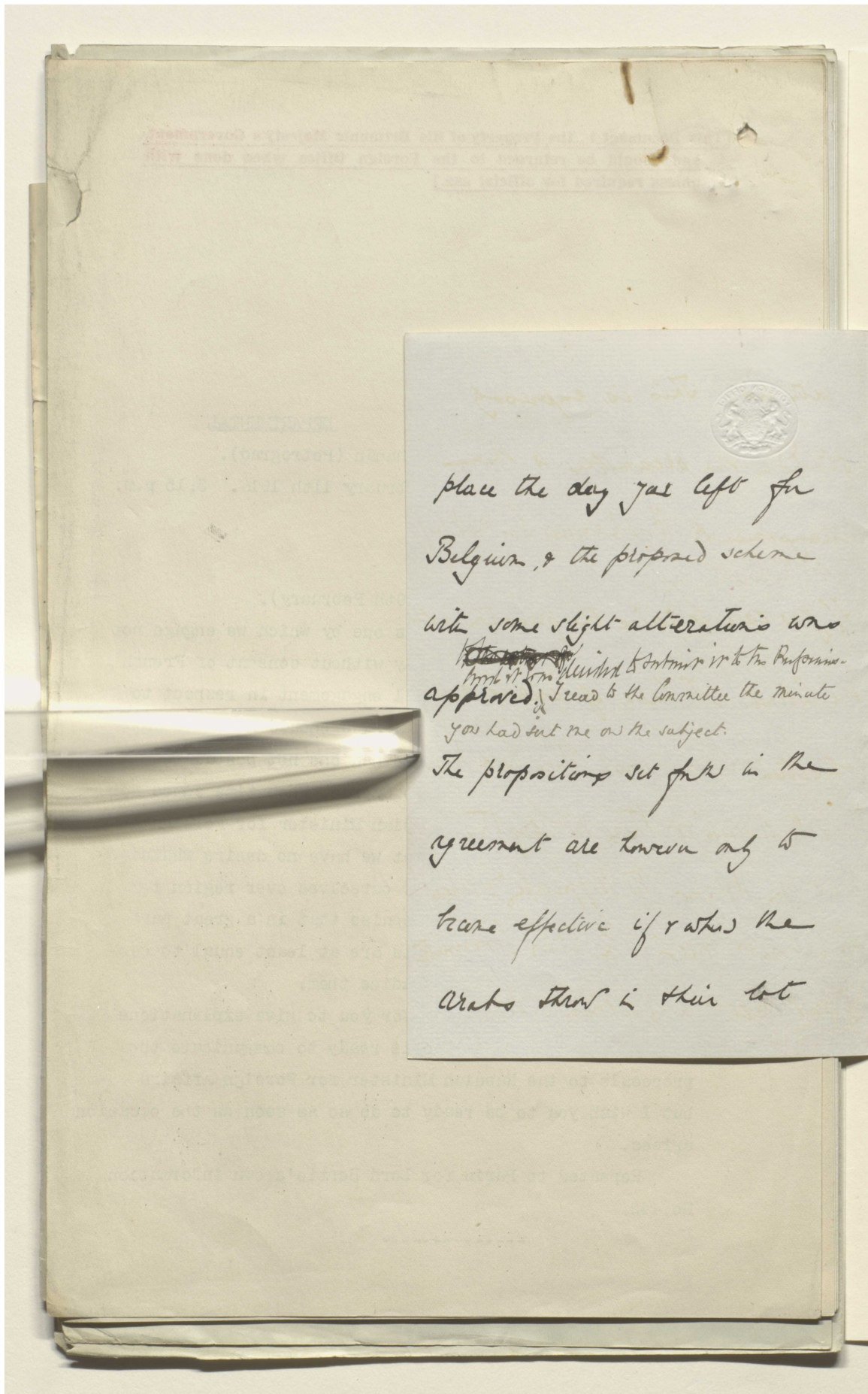


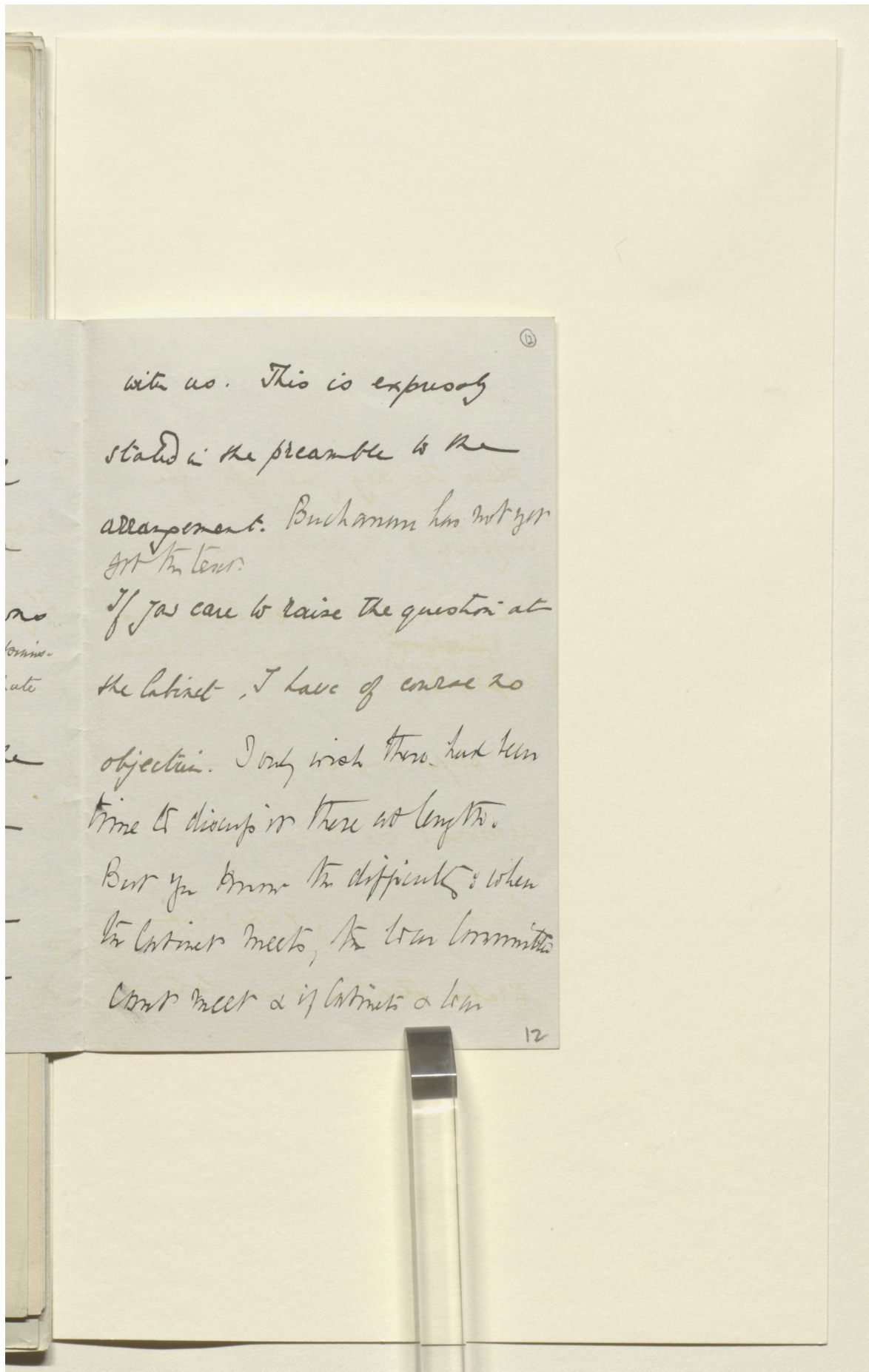
22 February 1916.

My dear Curzon

The papers about the
agreement were circulated to the
(I thought at a meeting of the ^{Committee} ~~Executive Committee~~
Cabinet, & it was decided that a
Small Committee should discuss &
settle the question.

The meeting of the Committee took





with us. This is expressly
stated in the preamble to the
arrangement. Buchanan has not yet
got the text.
If you care to raise the question at
the Cabinet, I have of course no
objection. I only wish there had been
time to discuss it there at length.
But you know the difficulty: when
the Cabinet meets, the Loan Committee
cannot meet & if Cabinet & Loan

Committees must constantly the
Departmental work cannot be
done.

John Quincy

8 July

I am sending ^{you} a copy of a
dispatch to Buchanan in the
Enquirer

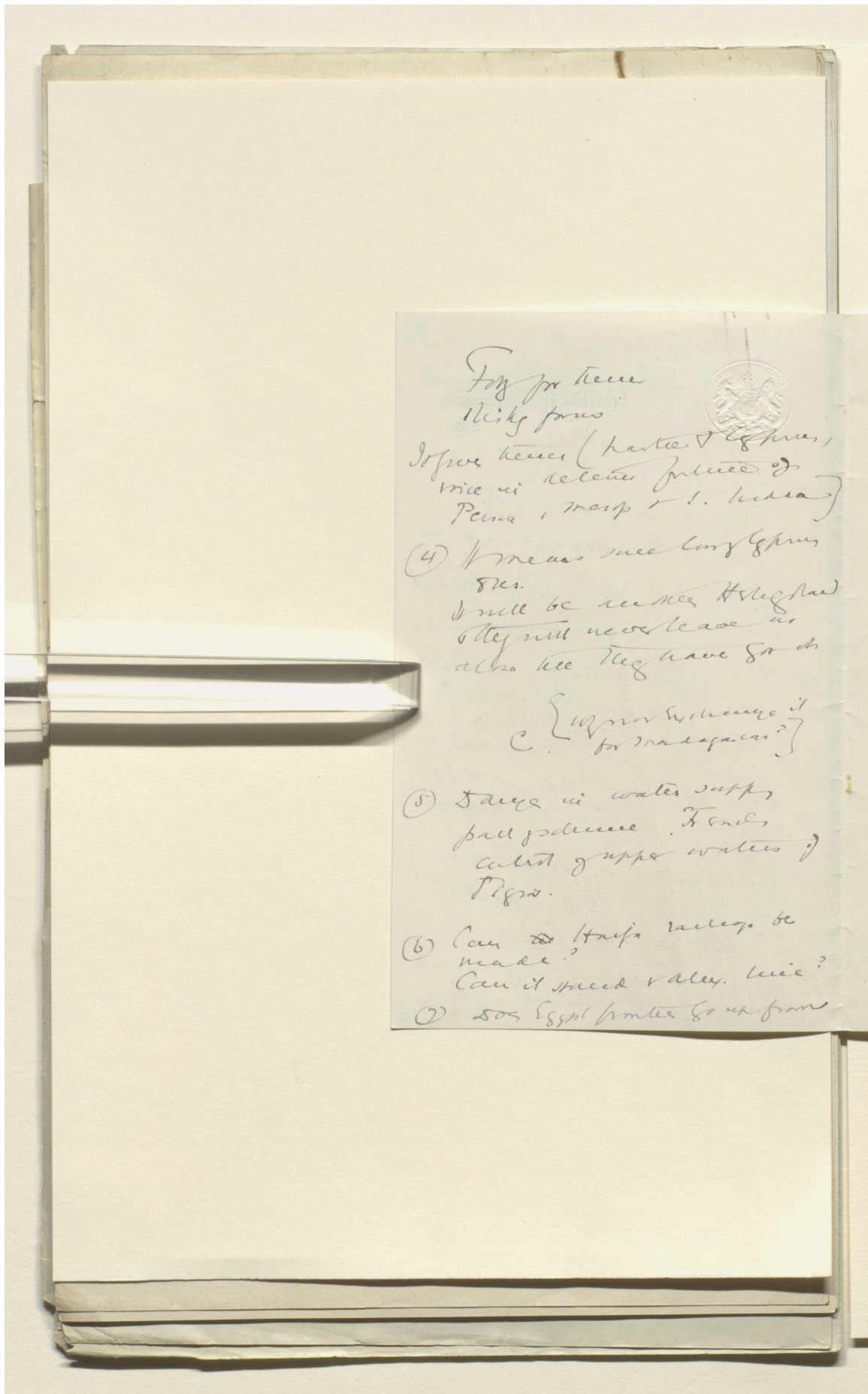
S.J.

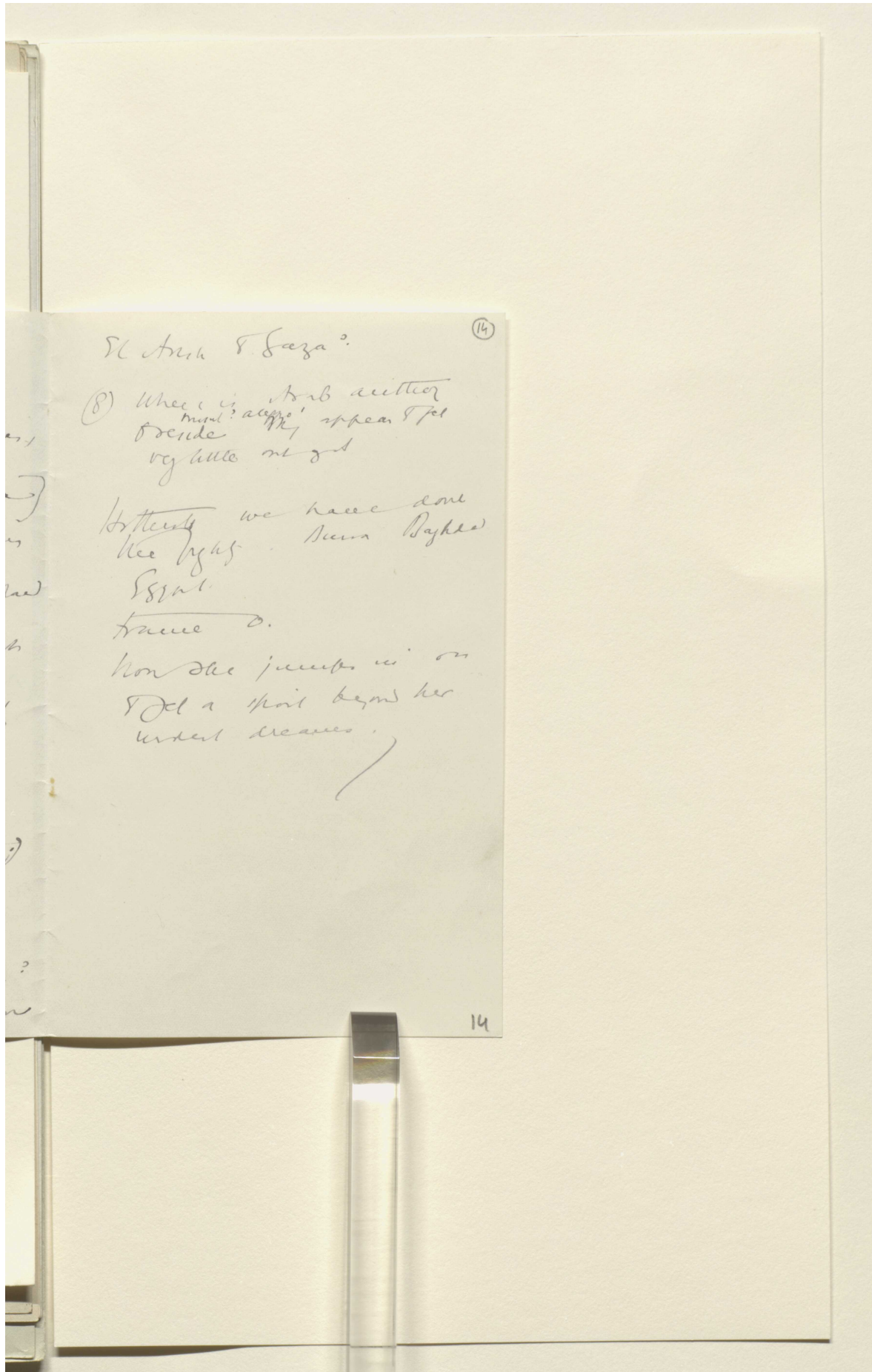
13
Sir H. Grey
Sykes-Picot Agreement
1, Carlton House Terrace,
S.W.
1916
Print made for me
about proposed
Arab agreement as
letter of Sir H. Grey Feb 3. 16

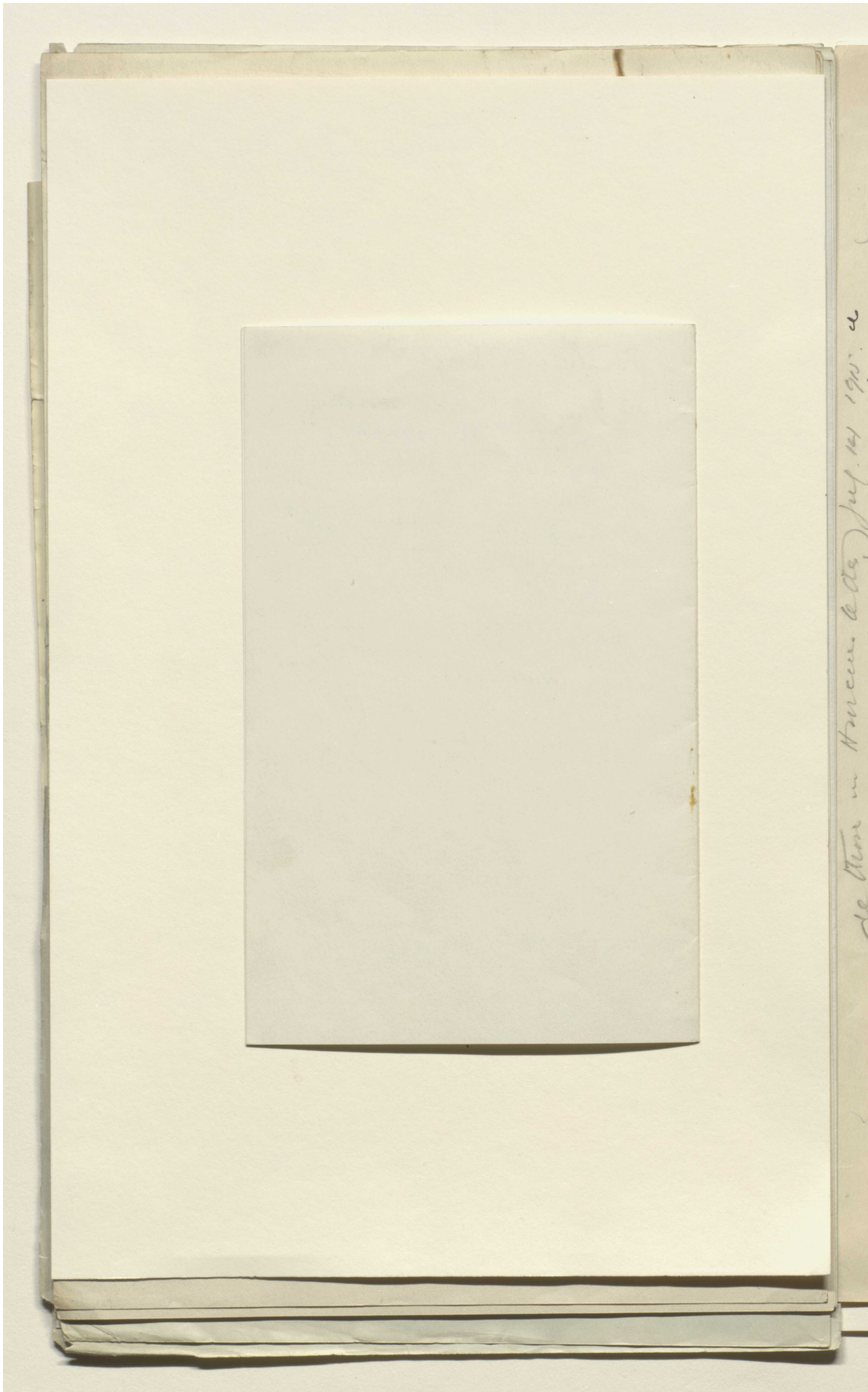
① I appear from the
text that the
will take any action
the doc have caused a
force as a gas bag & cut
commission of force at various
dates


② no chance of this now
(but will be done if it is
the policy?)

③ to make some use of
the G. & S. Taubert & Peir
contracts









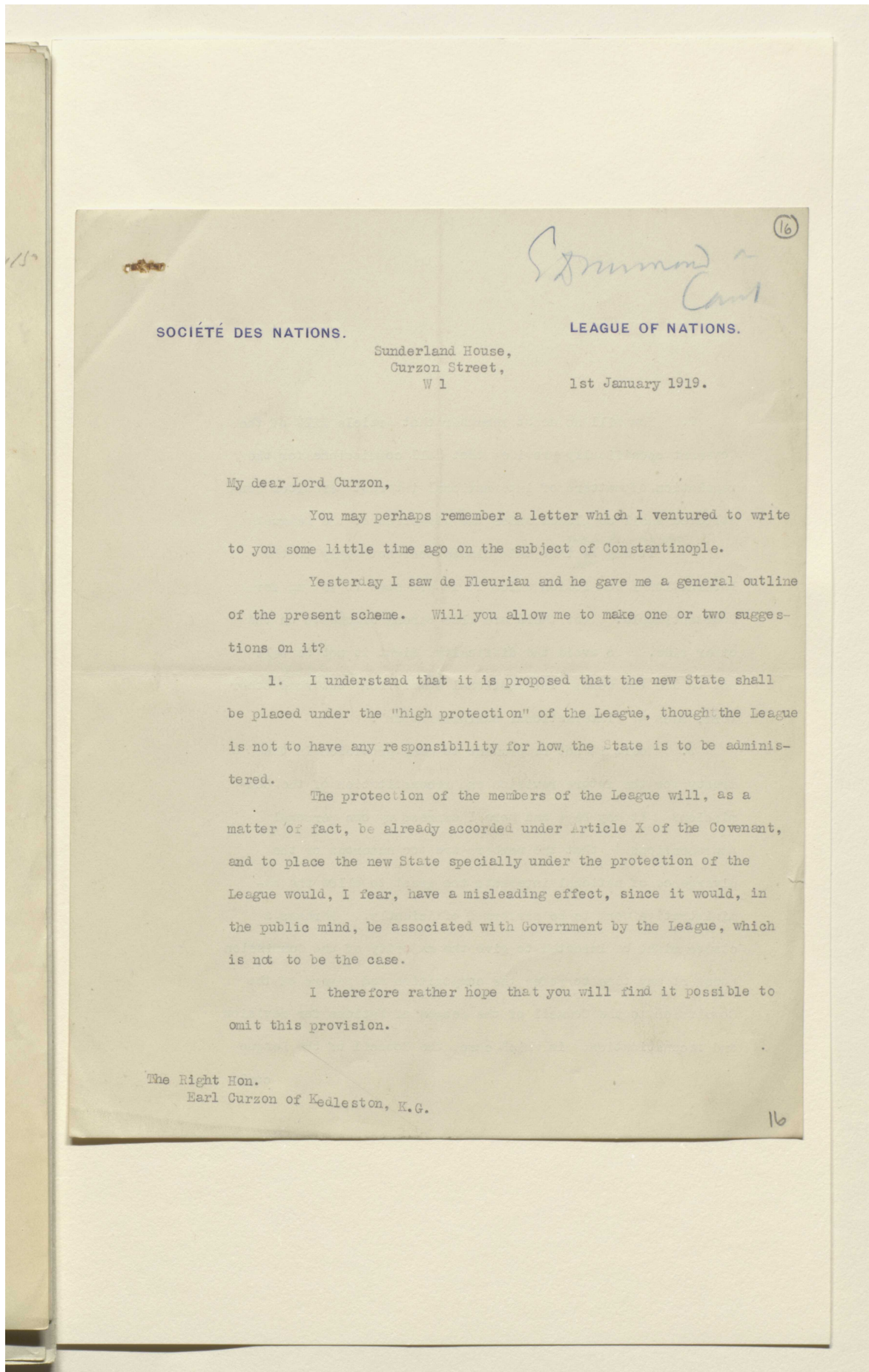
With receipt demanded no ^{and} reference for
the use. His ^{mem. use of} intercept
Khase Arab Kingdom in letter 20/13/1915.

Nov 9 1918.

Nov 7 1918 is
complete & definite inbound
of reference papers of the estab of national
sub radom rest times written on
with of the char of national papers

to the leaf of encor and estab
of national papers in Syria and Mes
no use of reference written to these

and



LEAGUE OF NATIONS

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

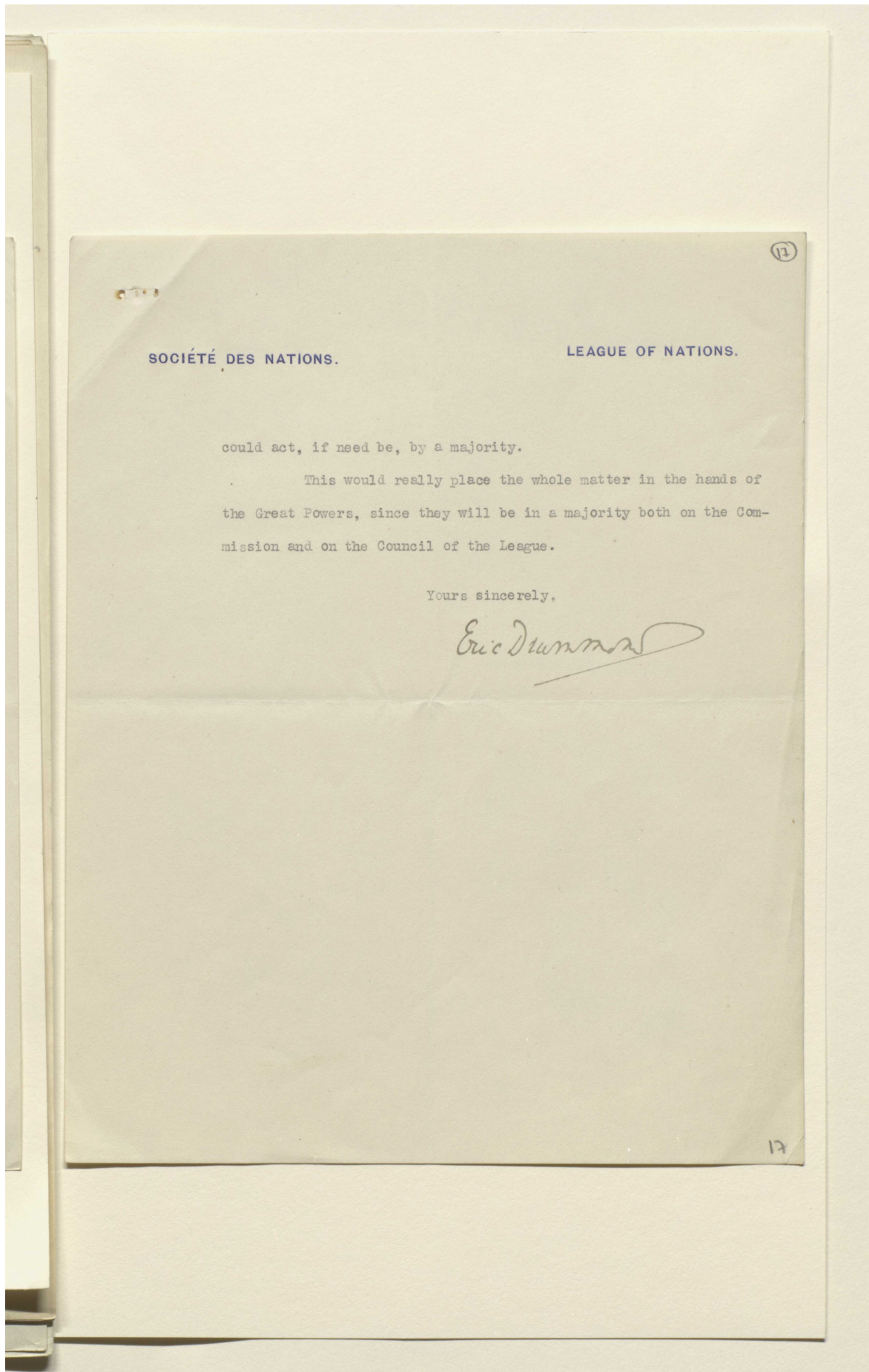
2. You will no doubt remember that Article XXIV of the Covenant specifically provides that "all commissions for the regulation of matters of international interest hereafter constituted shall be placed under the direction of the League!"

possibly to hold

It may ~~be~~ that this clause does not apply to the International Commission which it is proposed to set up for Constantinople. But there are also strong arguments on the other side. To avoid the difficulty, might it not be well not to use the words "international Commission" but some other term, such as "international administration"?

3. Would it not be prudent to make provision in the Treaty for the future revision and reconstitution of the Commission? It may be (and here I express my own personal apprehensions) that the members are too numerous or the divergence of national interests too great to allow the administrative work to be performed efficiently. Perhaps a clause might be inserted to give the majority of the Commission power at any time to refer the composition and powers of the Commission to the Council of the League of Nations for revision and reconstitution; in which case, the Council of the League

could



SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS.

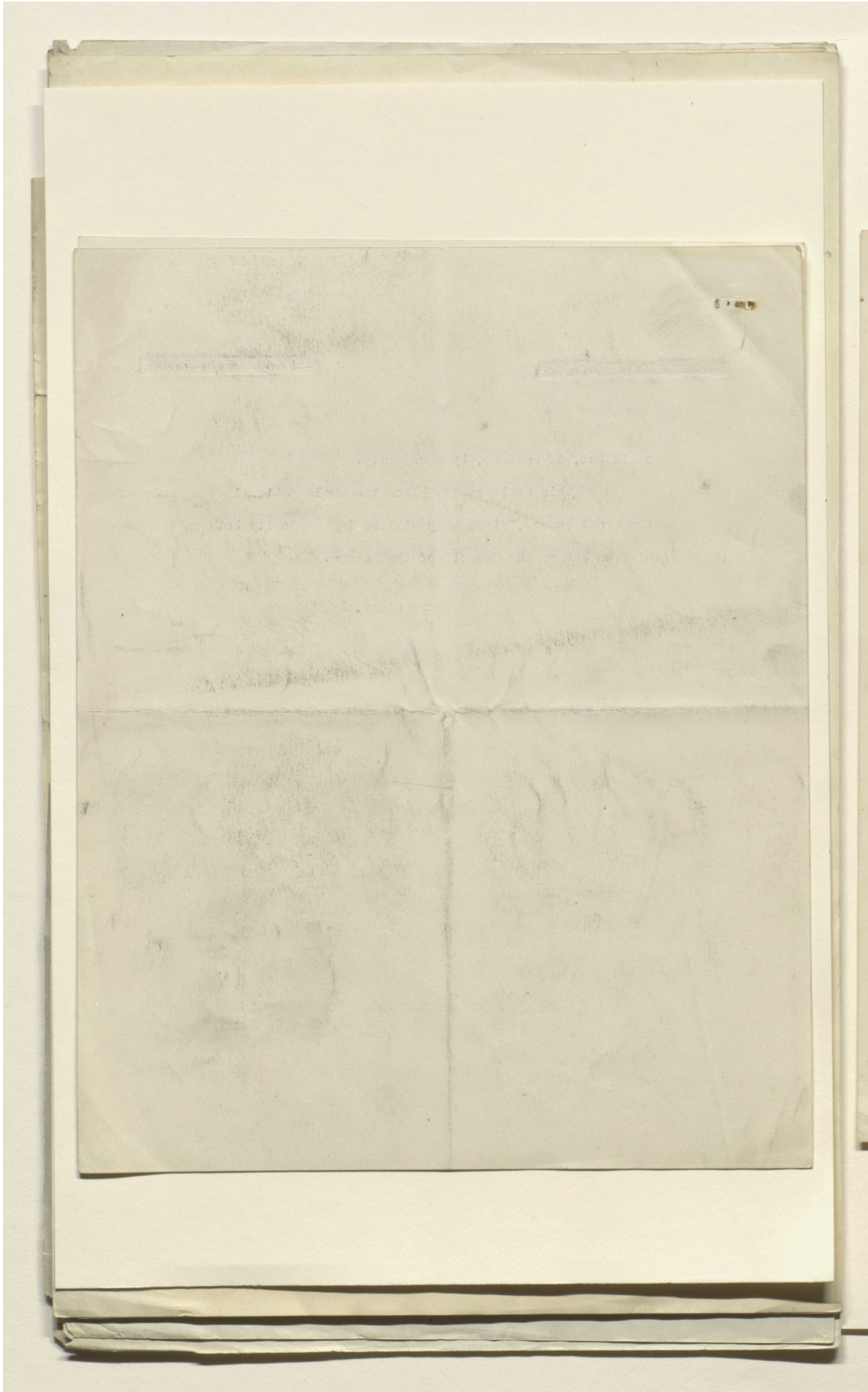
LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

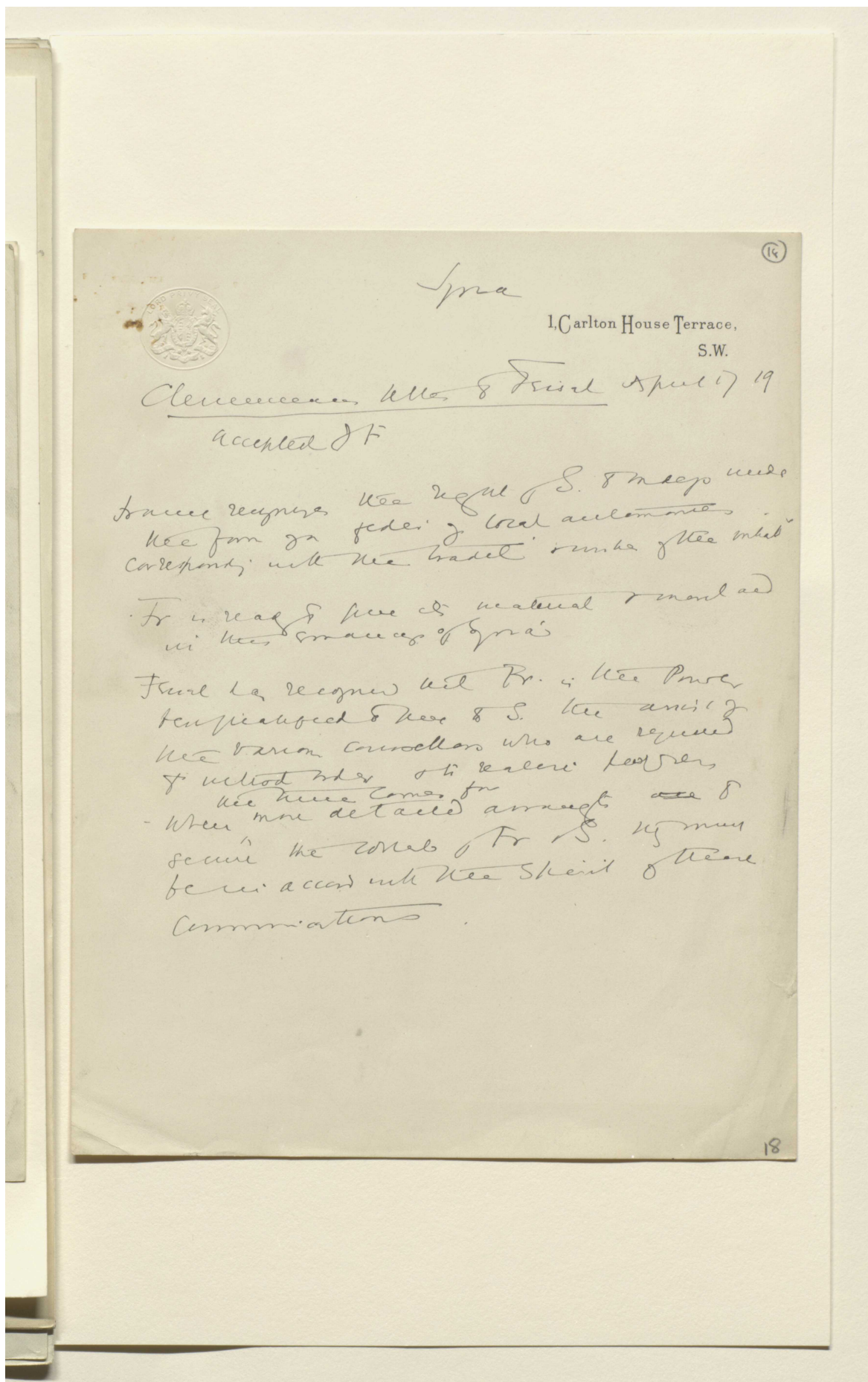
could act, if need be, by a majority.

This would really place the whole matter in the hands of the Great Powers, since they will be in a majority both on the Commission and on the Council of the League.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Drummond





(14)

Mrs

1, Carlton House Terrace,
S.W.

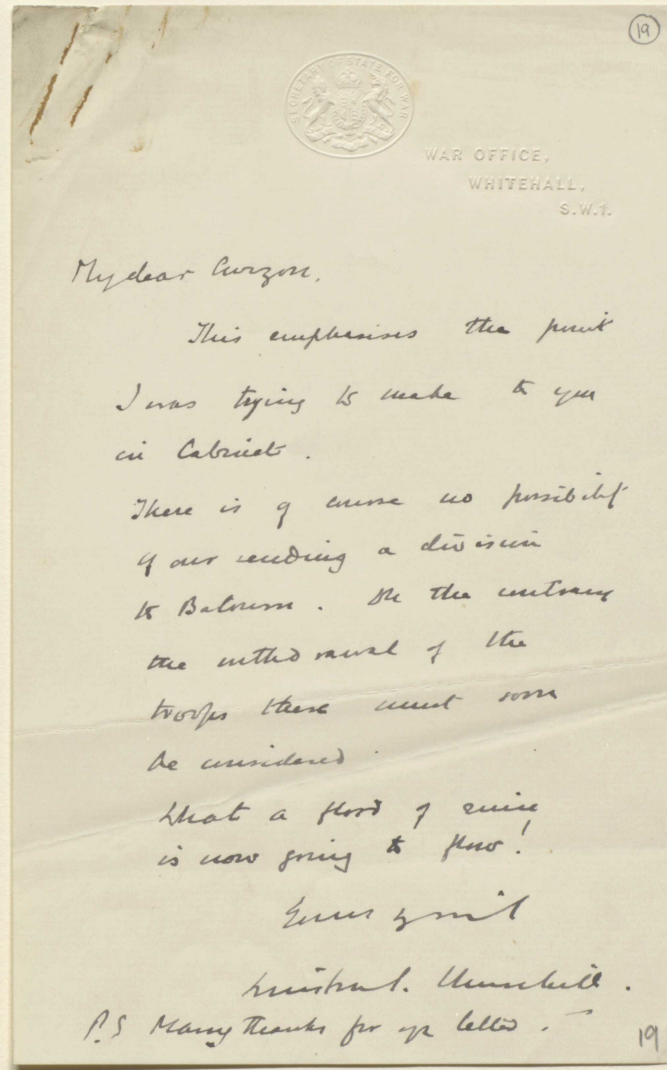
~~Clerenceaux~~ Mrs & Friend April 17 19
accepted & F

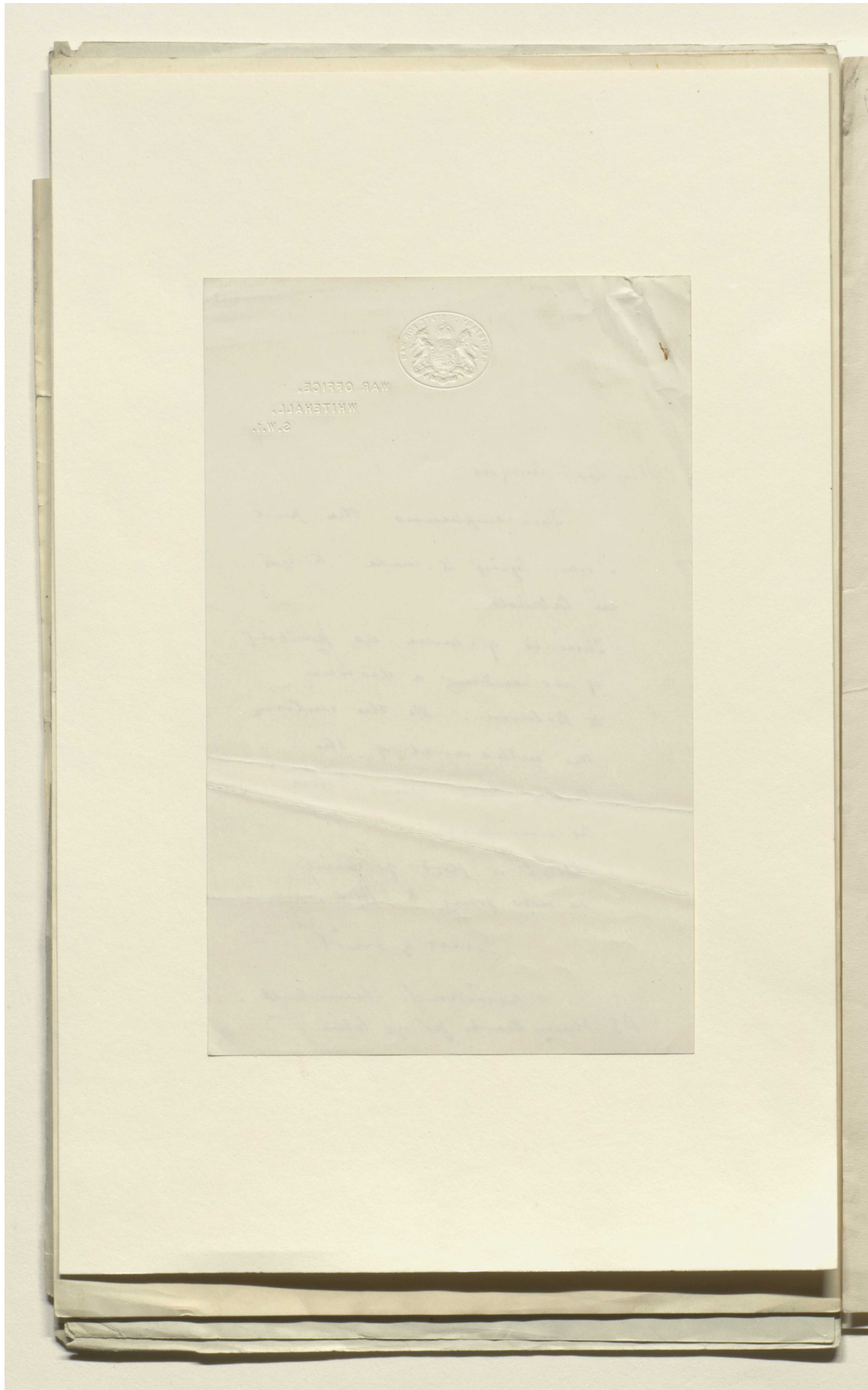
France requires the right of S. & keep under
the form of feder. of local authorities
corresponding with the local ranks of the intel
Fr is ready to give its material & moral aid
in the emergency of Syria

France has recognized that Pr. is the power
responsible to her & S. the aim of
the various Councils who are required
of which they are the real leaders
the time comes for
- When more detailed arrangements are &
secure the cables of Fr & S. it must
be in accord with the spirit of these
communications

18







(20)
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RUSSIA

MILITARY

Decypher. Mr. Wardrop. (Tiflis). January 3rd, 1920.

D. 4.0.p.m. January 3rd, 1920.

R. 8.27.a.m. January 6th, 1920.

No. 3. Very Urgent.

It would be prudent to consider possibility of complete collapse of Denikin at an early date.

This would immediately be followed by vigorous Bolshevik attack on Trans-Caucasus.

I suggest following action to protect our communications with Persia.

We should endeavour to raise strong barrier in Trans-Caucasus.

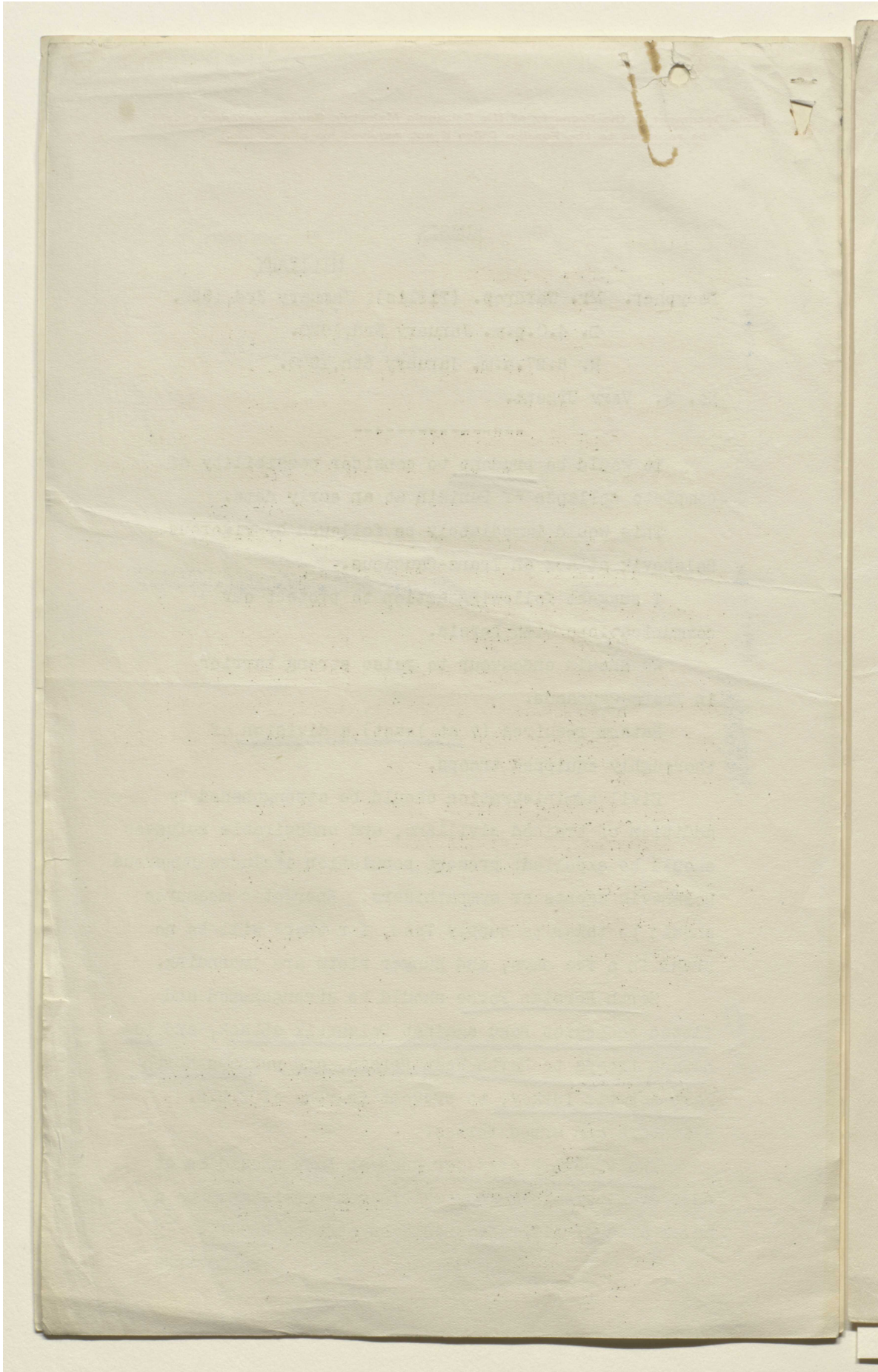
Batoum requires (? at least) a division of thoroughly equipped troops.

Civil administration should be strengthened by addition of trained civilians, and undesirable refugees should be expelled: present population includes numerous Bolshevik agents or sympathisers. Energetic measures should be taken to supply food, for there will be no bread in a few days, and hunger riots are impending.

North Persian Force should be strengthened and fitted to assist Baku against Bolshevik attack, and to detach troops to North-West Persia, and perhaps North East Asiatic Turkey, to prevent ingress of C.U.P. agitators and armed forces.

Two breech blocks for guns at Baku should be at once available to make possible some resistance to a naval attack. Aircraft should be sent to Enzeli.

Submarines



Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [21r] (41/70)

- 2 -

Submarines could be sent in sections, and put together in Baku. Trans-Caucasian railway needs material long ago indented for. Some at least of Caspian flotilla should be taken over by our (? Naval) authorities.

Georgia and Azerbaija with encouragement from us would make a good fight, but they need material and financial, and moral support. Daghestan also could be induced to expel Nuri, and Turks who have made themselves very unpopular.

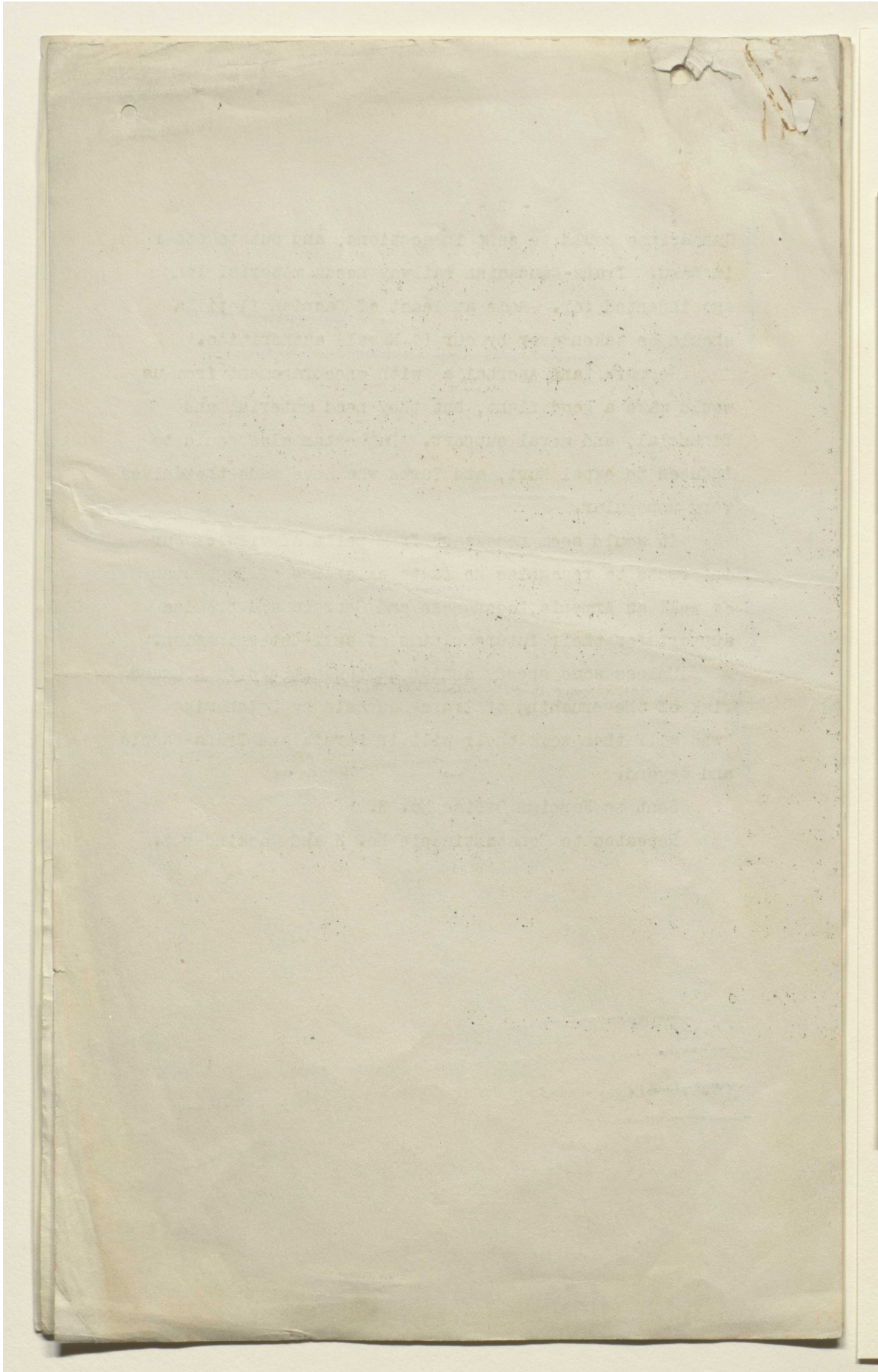
It would seem necessary from point of view of our interests to recognise de facto existence of Daghestan as well as Armenia, Dodecanese and Georgia and promise support for their future claims of self-determination.

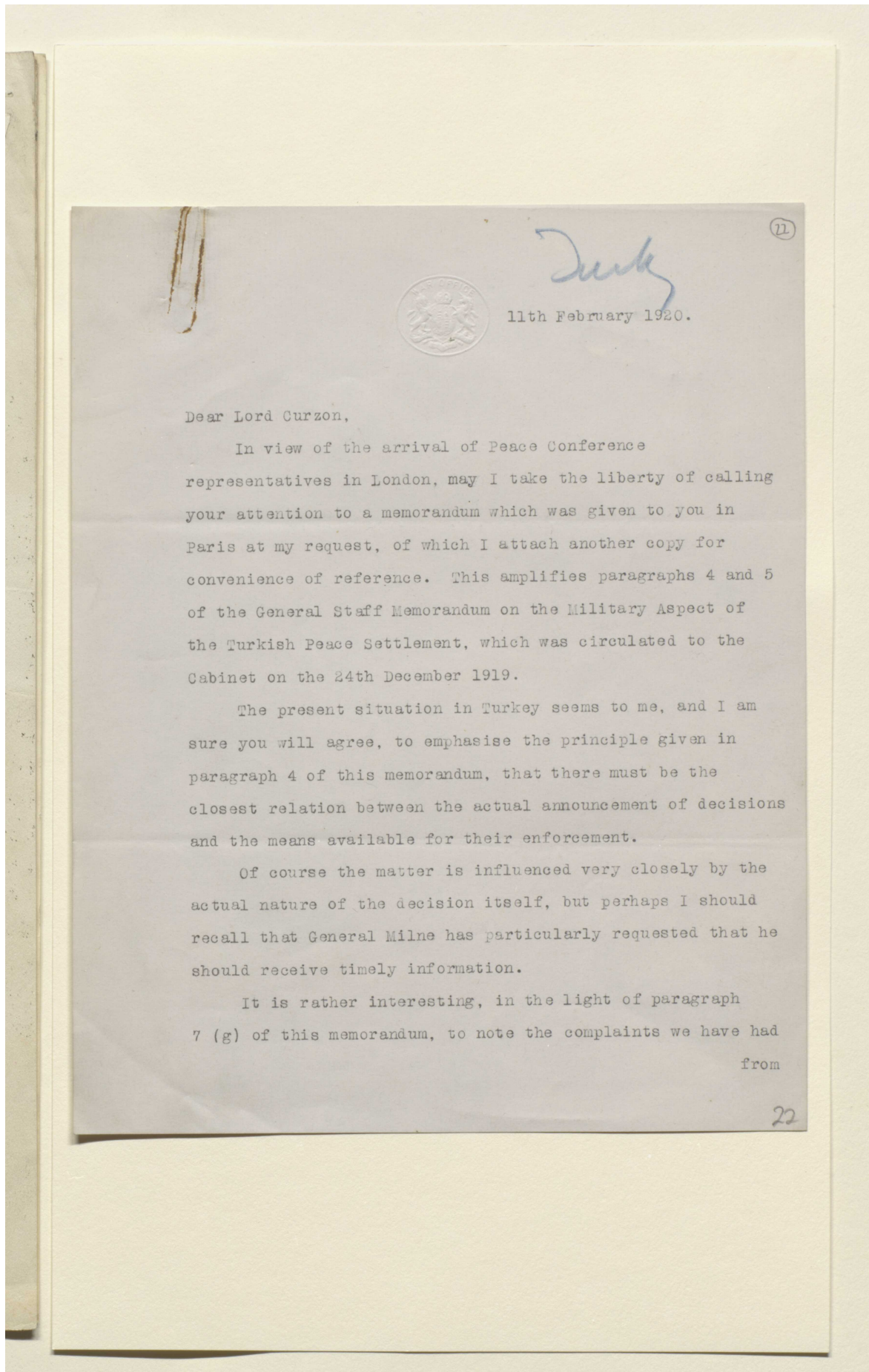
Unless some speedy action is taken there is a grave risk of the crushing of Trans-Caucasia by Bolsheviks who will then work their will in Persia and Trans-Caspia and beyond.

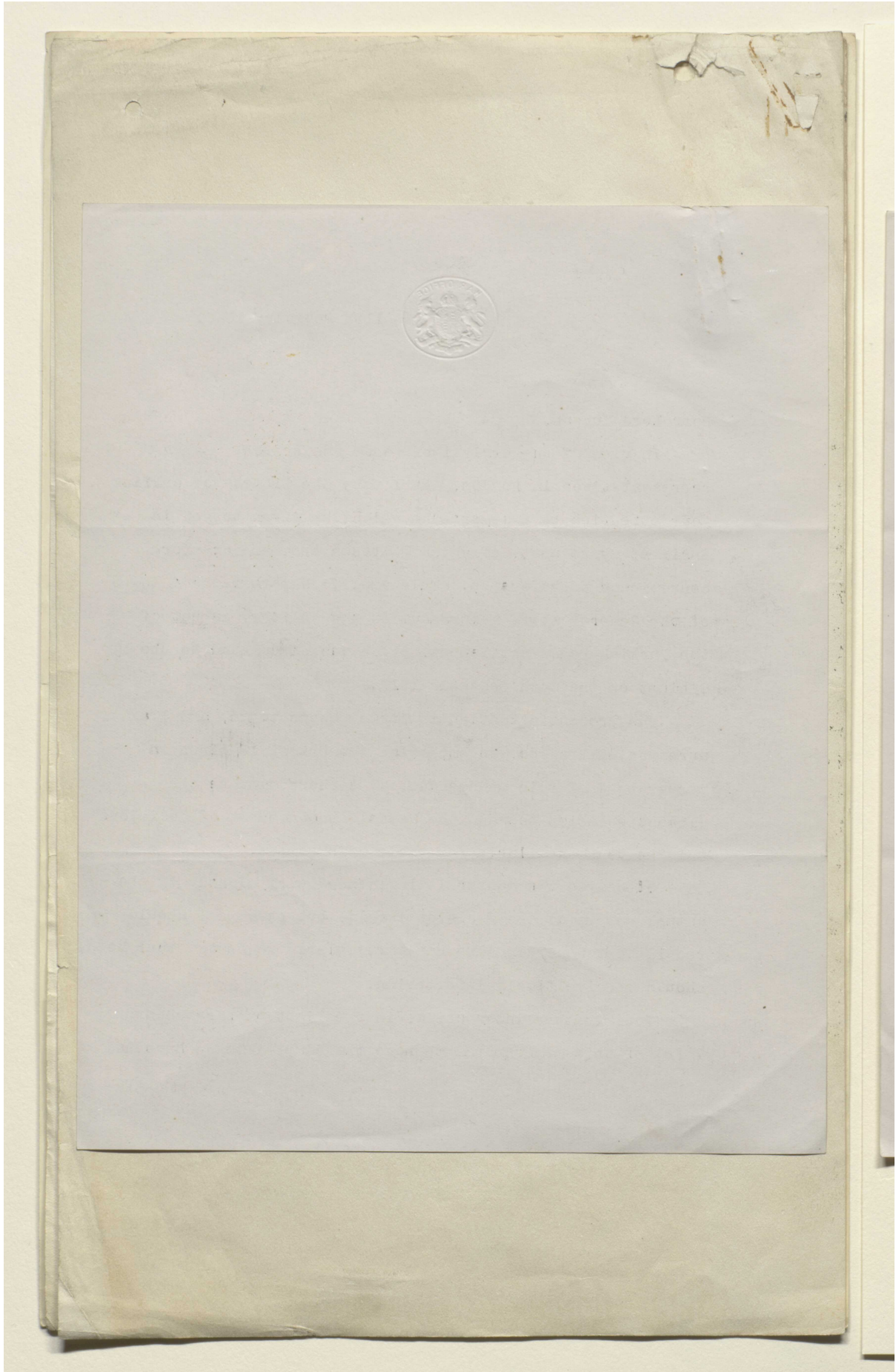
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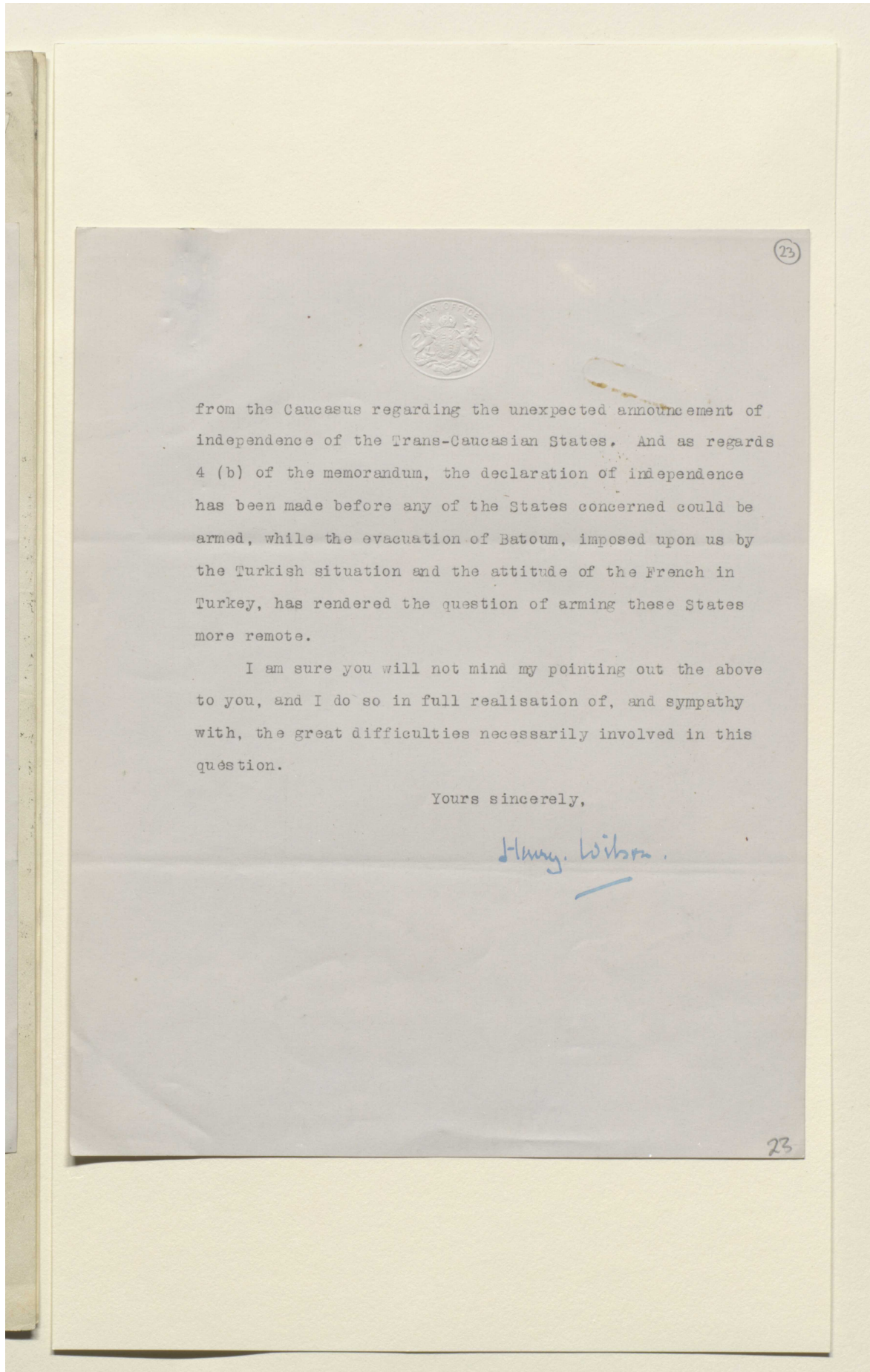
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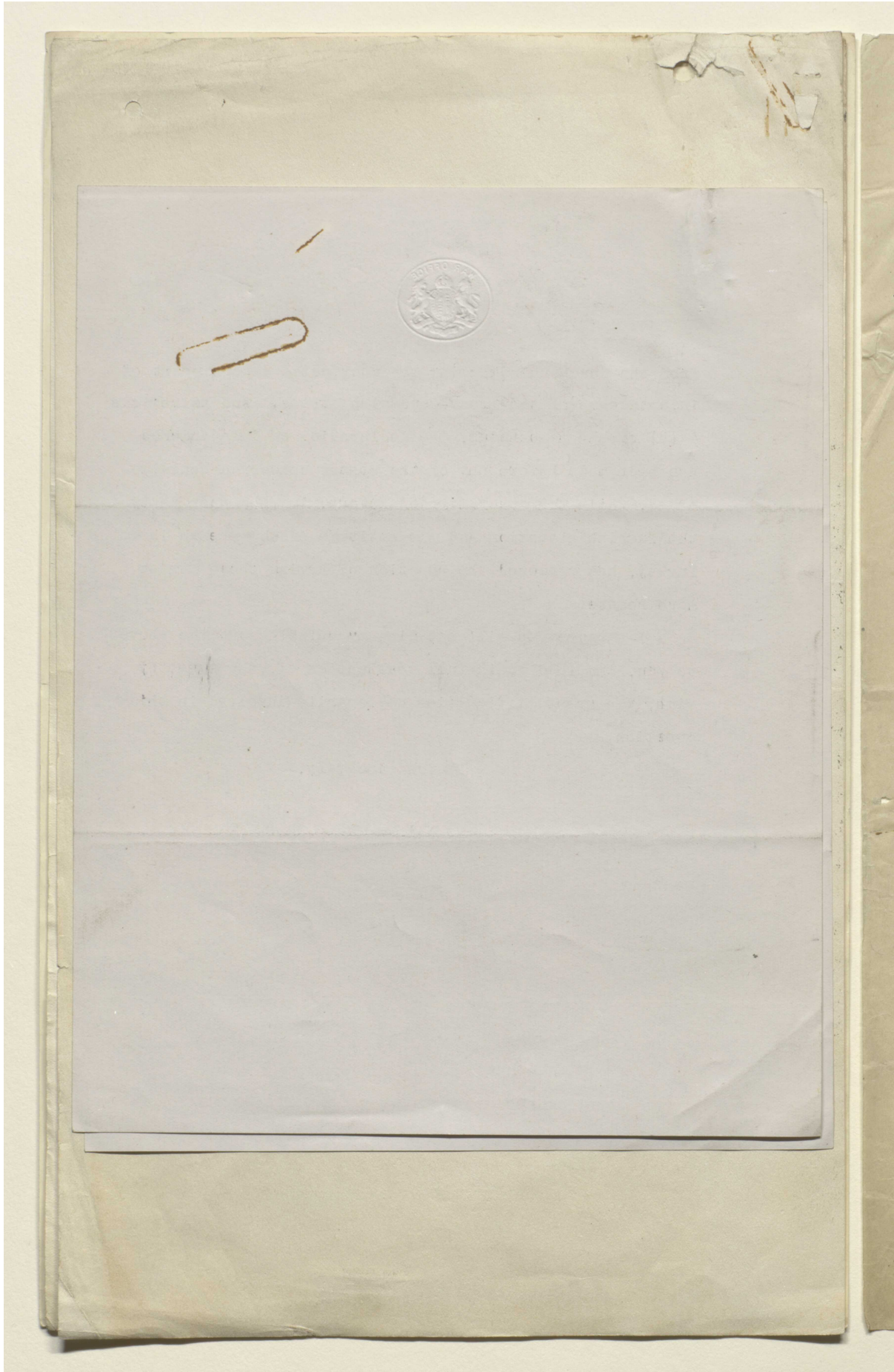
(6.1.8-4).











(24)

Memorandum amplifying Paras. 4 & 5 of General Staff Memorandum
"The Military aspect of the Turkish Peace Settlement"
circulated to the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for War on the
24th December 1919.

1. Owing to the impotence and unrepresentative character of the Turkish Government it is obvious that the mere acceptance by it of peace terms will carry little weight in itself, except in the unlikely contingency that the terms will be acceptable to the Nationalist Party.

2. This means that there must be very close consideration of the relation between the actual decision which it may be desired to enforce and the means of securing their effective execution. Realization of the geographical features of the problem from the point of view of time and space is thus involved.

3. It will then be apparent that a declaration of intention, except with reference to areas immediately accessible such as Thrace, Constantinople, Smyrna or Batoum, may have the worst possible result if made before such time as some method is ready to give effect to it.

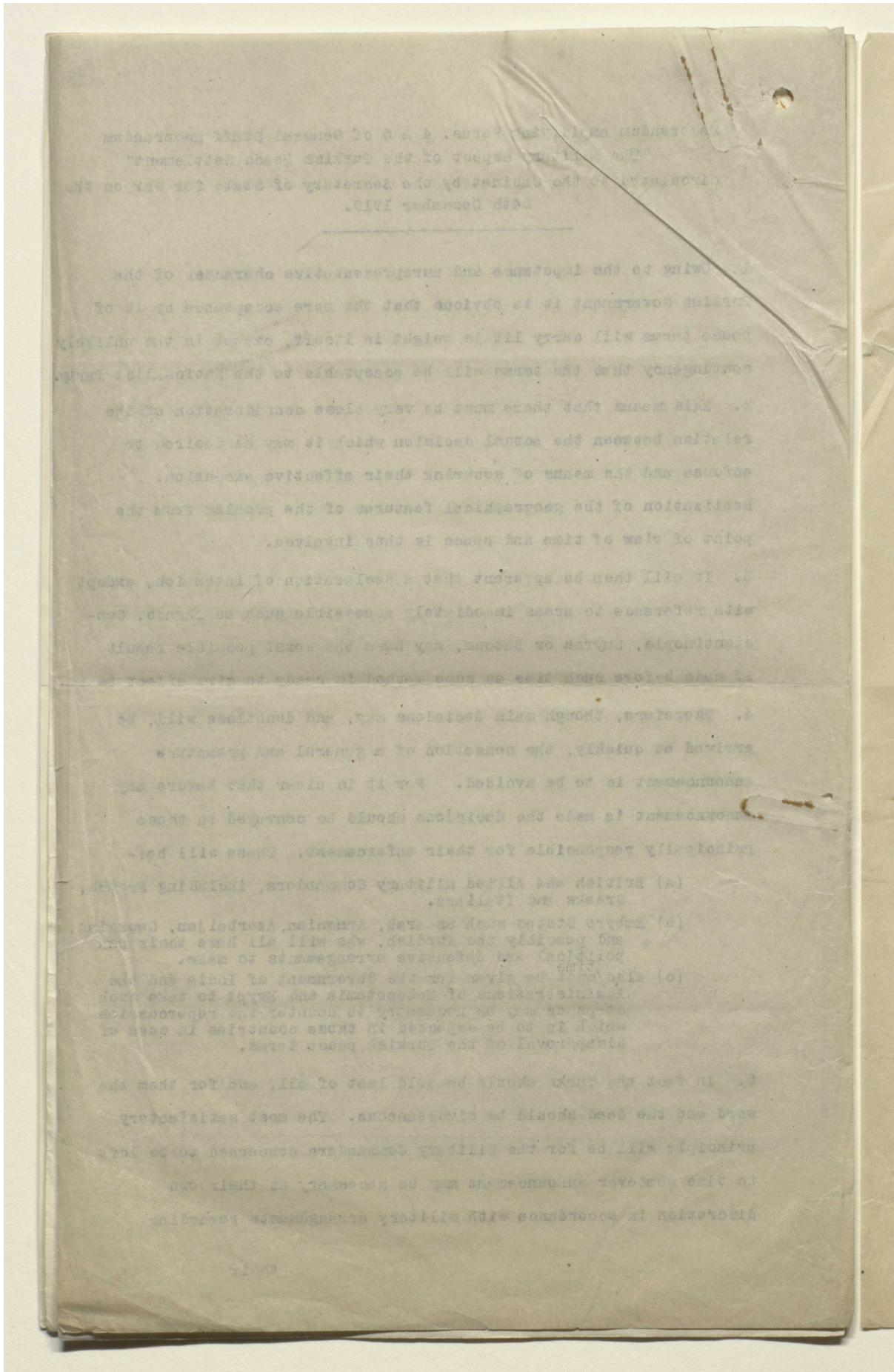
4. Therefore, though main decisions may, and doubtless will, be arrived at quickly, the sensation of a general and premature announcement is to be avoided. For it is clear that before any announcement is made the decisions should be conveyed to those principally responsible for their enforcement. These will be:-

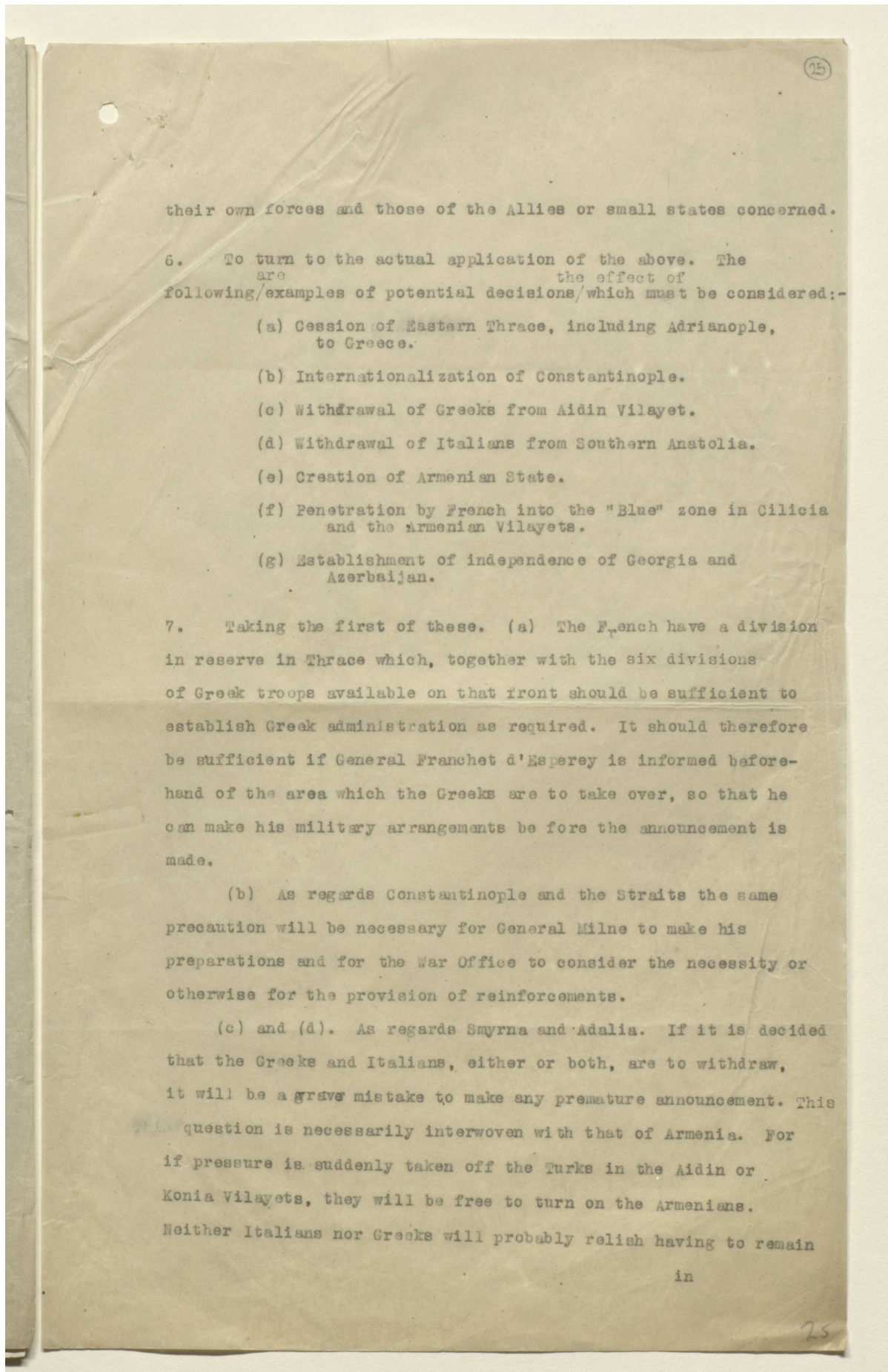
- (a) British and Allied Military Commanders, including French, Greeks and Italians.
- (b) Embryo States such as Arab, Armenian, Azerbaijan, Georgian, and possibly the Kurdish, who will all have their own political and defensive arrangements to make.
- (c) Also ^{time} must be given for the Government of India and the Administrations of Mesopotamia and Egypt to take such steps as may be necessary to counter the repercussion which is to be expected in those countries in case of disapproval of the Turkish peace terms.

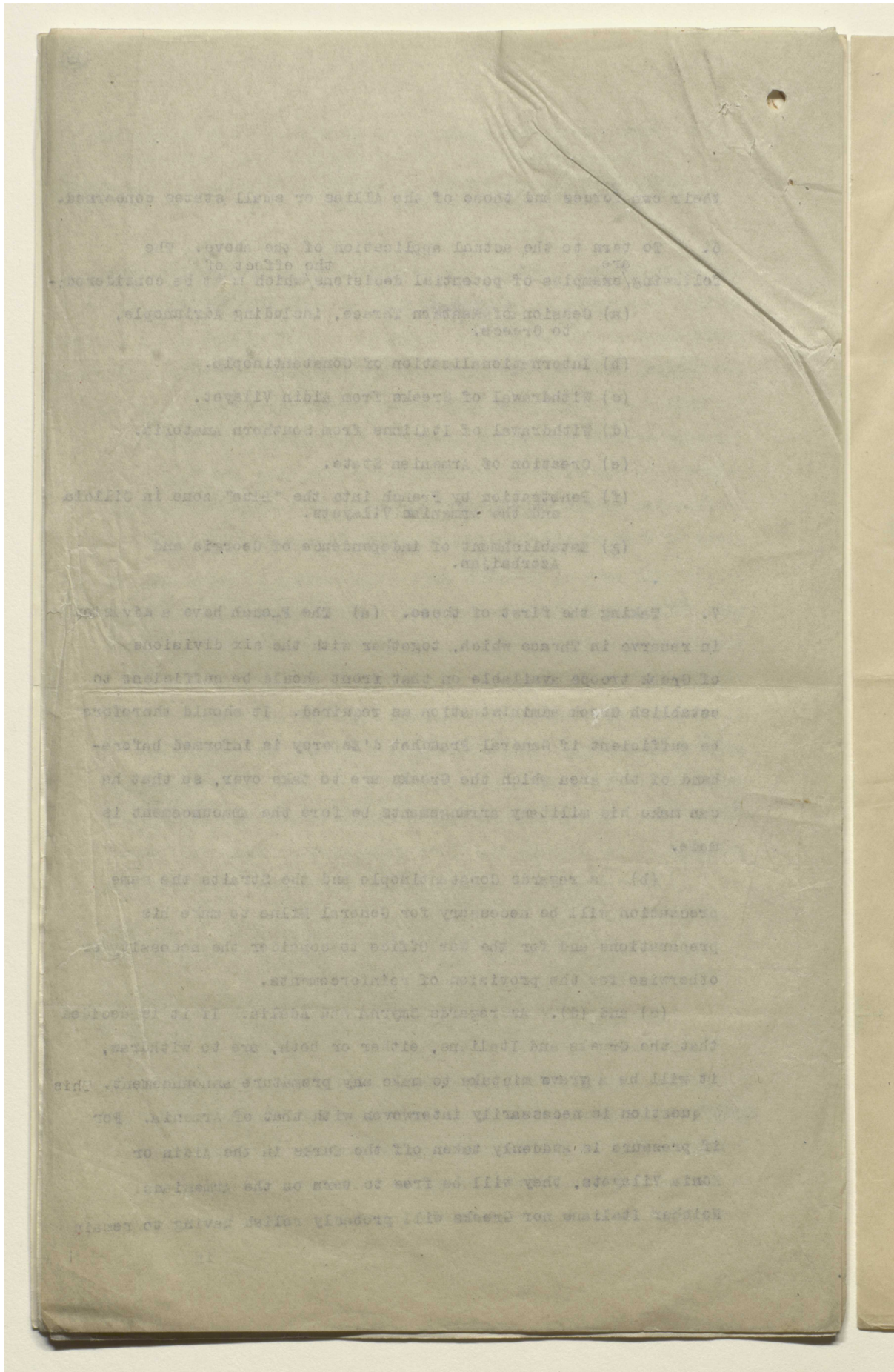
5. In fact the Turks should be told last of all, and for them the word and the deed should be simultaneous. The most satisfactory principle will be for the Military Commanders concerned to be left to time whatever announcement may be necessary at their own discretion in accordance with military arrangements regarding

their

24







in the Smyrna area when once it has been decided that they are not to annex the country. But they have brought this on themselves by going, or consenting to go to Anatolia and they should be given a fixed date, which should be communicated to the Armenian Government, before which they must not withdraw.

As regards (c). If His Majesty's Government subscribe to a Peace Conference policy of creating an Armenian State time must be allowed for the necessary practical measures to be taken.

The relation between this and the Smyrna situation has been touched on in the previous para. As things stand it may be accepted that the Armenians can look after themselves during the present winter, i.e.:-

They can hold their own for the time being against Azerbaijan. Their refugees are provided for by American relief measures, and their situation vis a vis Georgia is sufficiently satisfactory.

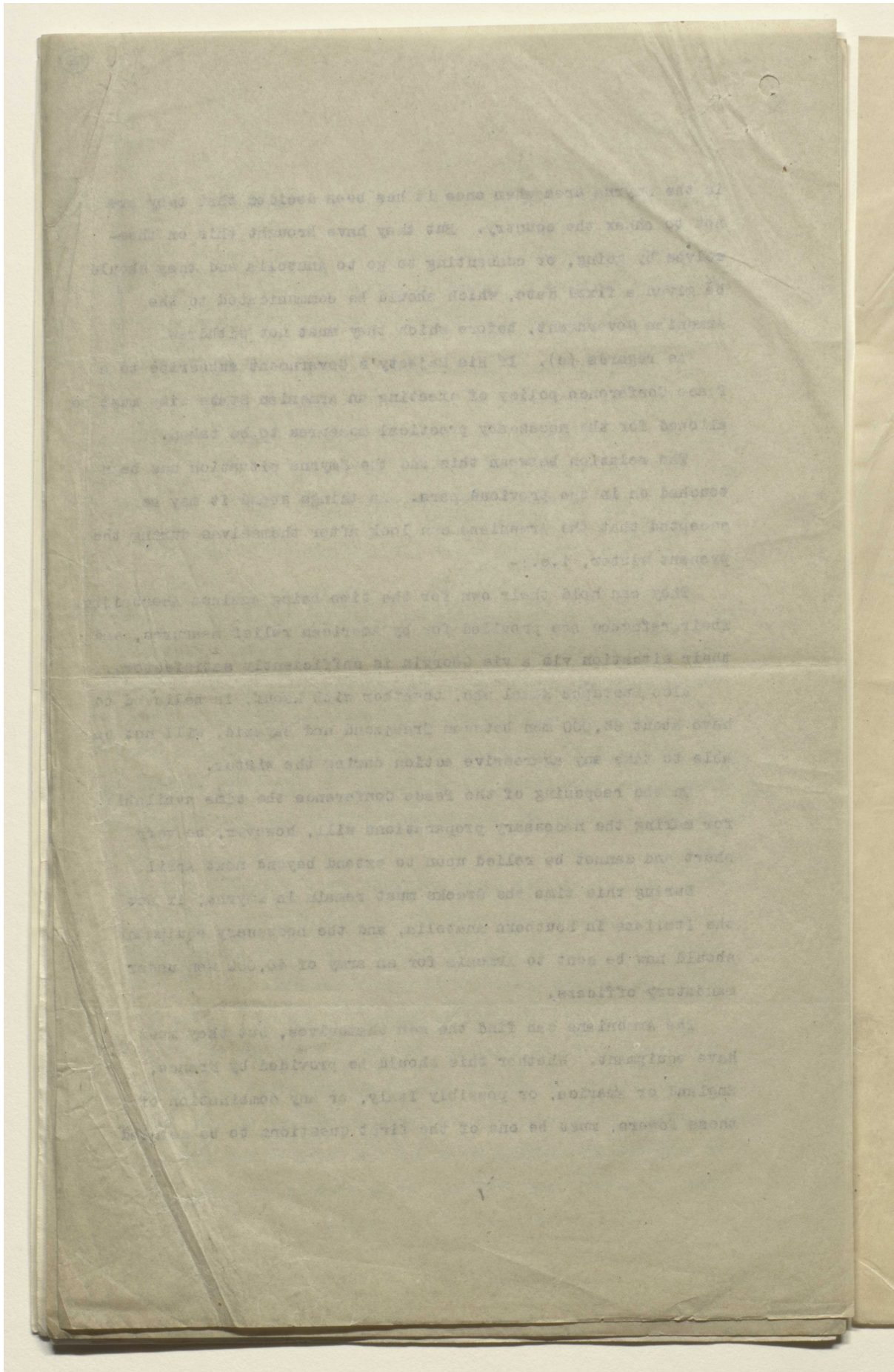
Also Mustapha Kemal who, together with Raouf, is believed to have about 25,000 men between Trebizond and Bayazid, will not be able to take any aggressive action during the winter.

On the reopening of the Peace Conference the time available for making the necessary preparations will, however, be very short and cannot be relied upon to extend beyond next April.

During this time the Greeks must remain in Smyrna, if not the Italians in Southern Anatolia, and the necessary equipment should now be sent to Armenia for an army of 40,000 men under mandatory officers.

The Armenians can find the men themselves, but they must have equipment. Whether this should be provided by France, England or America, or possibly Italy, or any combination of these Powers, must be one of the first questions to be settled

at



at the forthcoming Conference.

Here it may be said that previous objections to arming the Armenians appear untenable if Armenia is to be formed into an independent State, and, incidentally, this question is affected by the Bolshevic menace in Trans-Caspia, which makes the arming of the Armenians more desirable than heretofore.

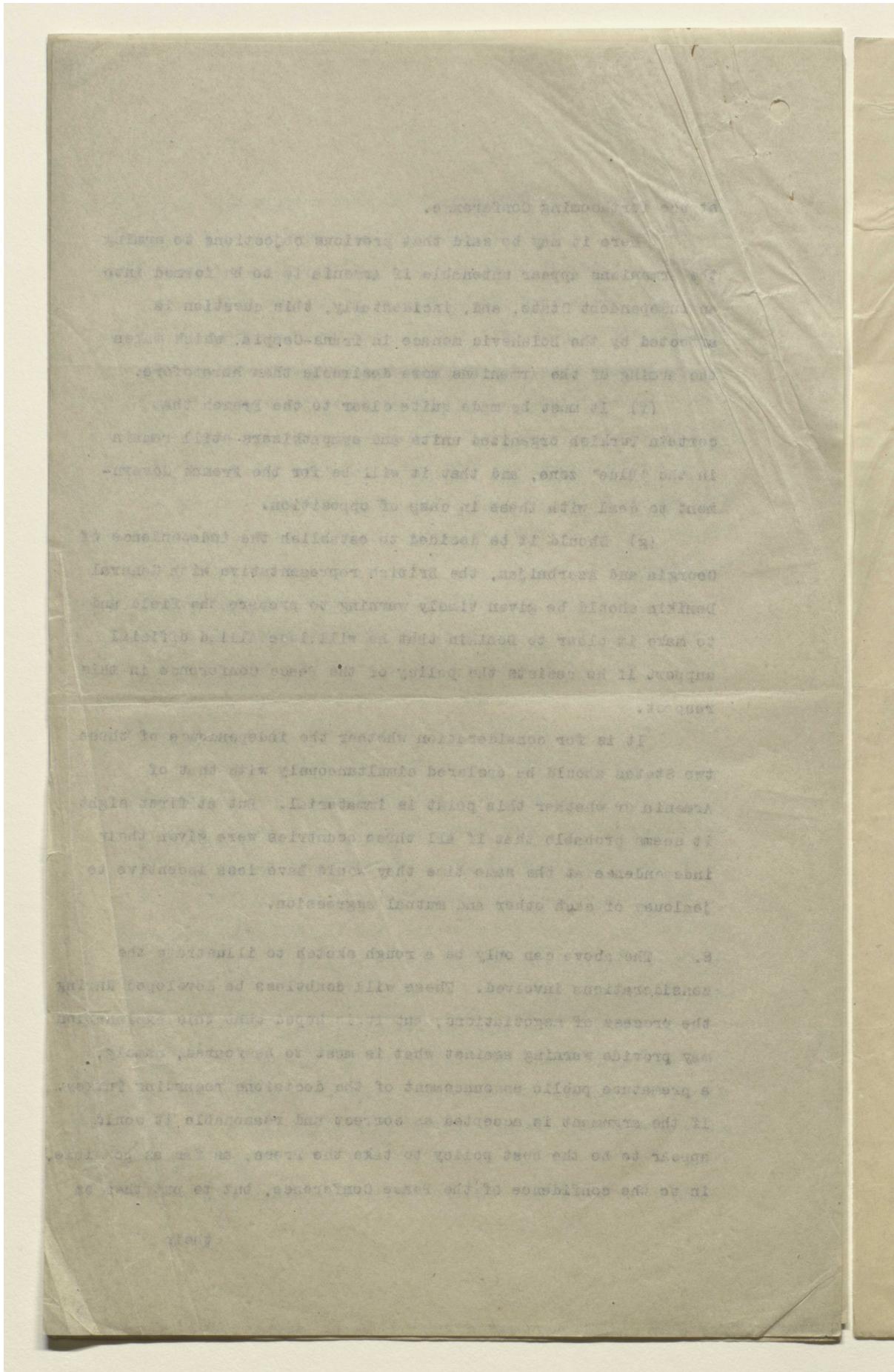
(f) It must be made quite clear to the French that certain Turkish organized units and sympathisers still remain in the "Blue" zone, and that it will be for the French Government to deal with these in case of opposition.

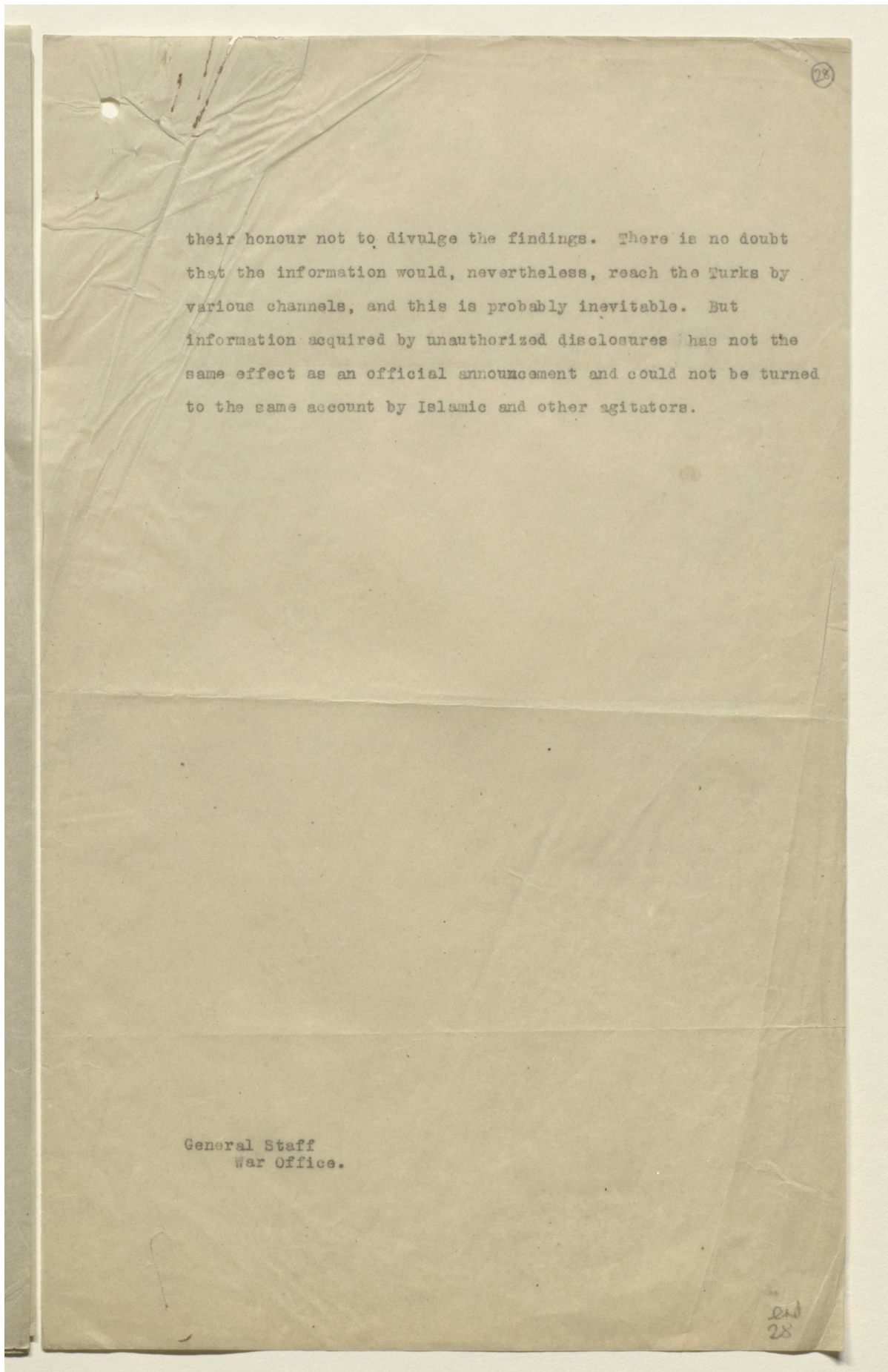
(g) Should it be decided to establish the independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan, the British representative with General Denikin should be given timely warning to prepare the field and to make it clear to Denikin that he will lose Allied official support if he resists the policy of the Peace Conference in this respect.

It is for consideration whether the independence of these two States should be declared simultaneously with that of Armenia or whether this point is immaterial. But at first sight it seems probable that if all three countries were given their independence at the same time they would have less incentive to jealousy of each other and mutual aggression.

8. The above can only be a rough sketch to illustrate the considerations involved. These will doubtless be developed during the process of negotiations, but it is hoped that this explanation may provide warning against what is most to be feared, namely, a premature public announcement of the decisions regarding Turkey. If the argument is accepted as correct and reasonable it would appear to be the best policy to take the Press, as far as possible, in to the confidence of the Peace Conference, but to put them on

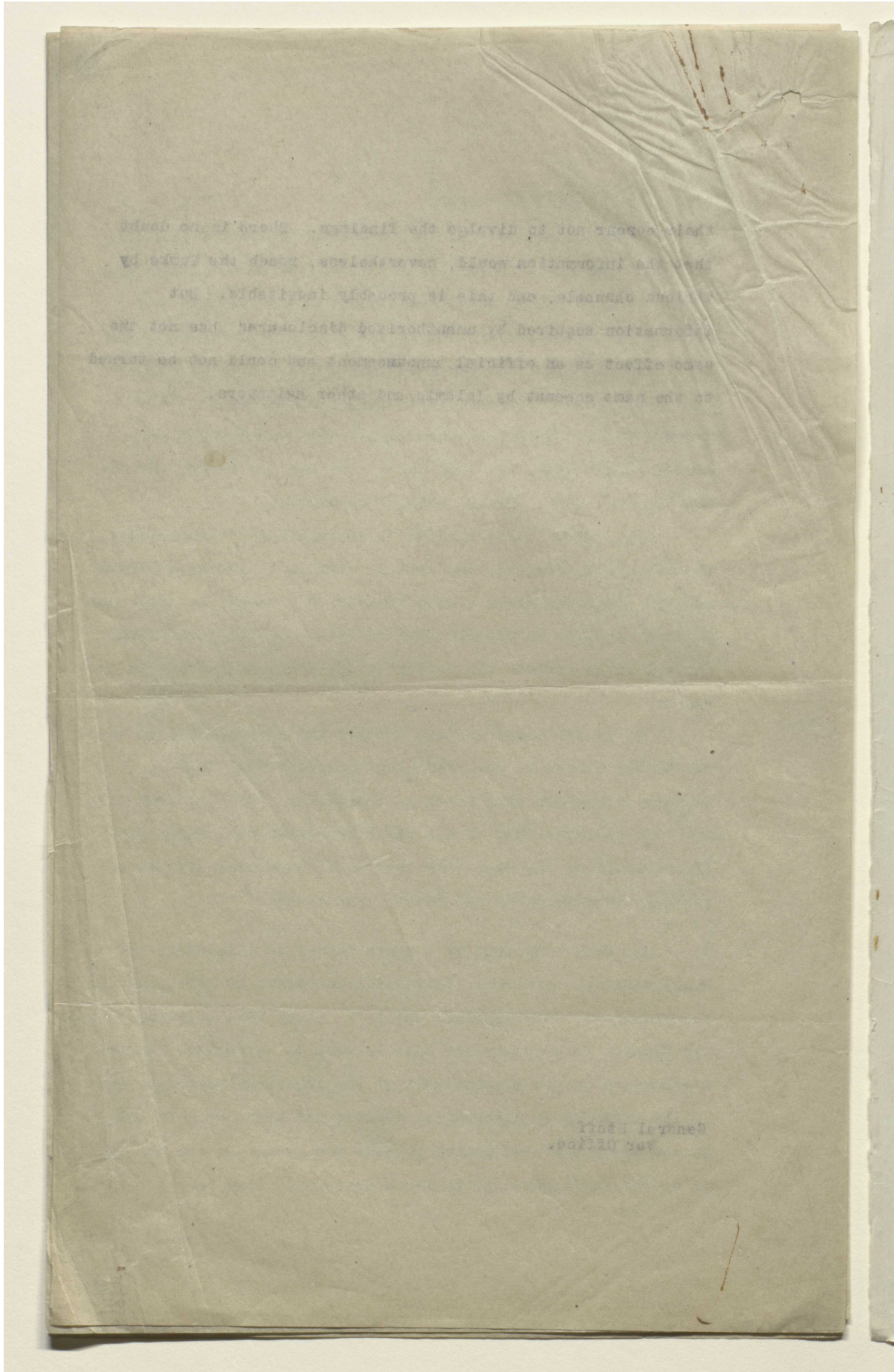
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their honour not to divulge the findings. There is no doubt that the information would, nevertheless, reach the Turks by various channels, and this is probably inevitable. But information acquired by unauthorized disclosures has not the same effect as an official announcement and could not be turned to the same account by Islamic and other agitators.

General Staff
War Office.



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PERSIA:

[March 12.]

CONFIDENTIAL

SECTION I.

[41028]

No. 1.

Earl Curzon to Sir P. Cox.

(No. 29.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 12, 1919.

THE Persian Minister asked particularly for an interview with me this afternoon. He was much concerned at my disinclination to meet Mushaver-ul-Mamalek, the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs and chief member of the Persian Delegation in Paris, who had volunteered to come to England in order to have a talk with me on the situation. The Persian Minister had been summoned to Paris to explain this position, which had somewhat disconcerted the Persian representatives there, and he asked to see me in order to enquire into its meaning.

He commenced the conversation by saying that he was almost entirely in the dark as to what had happened in Paris, and that few communications reached him from his own Government. He was therefore quite uncertain as to how affairs really stood, and was in a quandary as to the advice which he should give to his chief in Paris. He asked me accordingly to give him some idea of the line which he should take.

I said that my disinclination to meet the Persian envoy resulted from no unwillingness to discuss the Persian question, either now or in the future. On the contrary, I welcomed the opportunity of expressing myself frankly to the Persian Minister here; but I did not think that it was possible to have a discussion with any advantage with the Persian envoy to Paris so long as the latter was still pursuing independent negotiations there and seeking admission to the Conference, which I understood had so far been refused.

The Minister tried to pin me to a statement that the Persian Government had been encouraged by our representative in Tehran to send an envoy to Paris and had received promises of our assistance.

Having the text of our declaration on the subject with me, I was able to correct the Minister upon this point. I reminded him that the representation of Persia at the Peace Conference had been over and over again stated by us as a point to be settled by the Conference itself, and that all we had said was that, if a Persian representative were sent and he were admitted to the Conference, we should be glad to discuss with him in a friendly way points of common interest to both of us. As a matter of fact, the Persian envoy had gone to the Conference and had issued a statement of the Persian case, with parts of which we were in close agreement, but parts of which covered a much wider field, that had no relation to the Conference at all; and, even while the Minister for Foreign Affairs was seeking an interview with me, and exhibiting anxiety to come to an arrangement with us, his Government, if I was credibly informed, were making overtures to other foreign Powers with a view to interesting them in the finances and administration of Persia. It did not seem to me possible for the Persian Government to ride two horses in this fashion. They could not simultaneously go to the Peace Conference and to other Powers with a programme with parts of which we had no sympathy, and come to me to know exactly what we were prepared to do and how far they might rely upon us.

I went on to say that it was for the Persian Government to settle which policy they desired to pursue. There seemed to me to be three alternatives before them. They might endeavour to interest other Powers in their fate and fortune: a perfectly legitimate policy, which they had often endeavoured with complete failure to carry out in the past, and which would of course be followed by a cessation of that assistance, financial and otherwise, which Persia now received from us, and by which alone she was able to stand upright. Or she might go to the Peace Conference and ask that some external Power should be appointed her mandatory: a solution which I doubted whether her own pride would render her very eager to accept, and which any Power to whom the charge was offered would be far from willing to adopt as soon as the financial responsibilities entailed were understood. Neither of these solutions seemed very likely of attainment in view of what was passing in Paris. There appeared to be no inclination to admit the Persian representatives to the Conference at all, and it was more than likely that they would return without their case being heard. The third alternative was that the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs should, assuming that the Paris efforts

[2865 m--1]

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [29v] (58/70)

2

had had no result, come to His Majesty's Government and have with them a full, frank, and friendly conversation on the whole situation as to the future relation of our two countries. In so far as it rested with me I should at any time be pleased to embark on such a conversation, and I thought that the Persian Envoy would find in me as warm a friend of his country and as staunch a supporter of Persian independence as any Minister of a foreign nation whom he was likely to meet. But I could not do this except under the conditions that I had named, and until the situation in Paris was cleared up.

The Persian Minister thanked me warmly for the candour with which I had expressed myself to him; stated that he had all along held the view that the only solution of the troubles of his country was by a firm and clear understanding between our two Governments, and added that he would communicate to Mushaver-ul-Mamalek in Paris what had passed between us.

I have, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

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PERSIA.

[March 12.]

CONFIDENTIAL

CIRCULATED TO THE CABINET.

SECTION 1.

[41028]

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(No. 29.)

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[2865 m-1]

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [30v] (60/70)

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I have, &c.
CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

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PERSIA.

[March 26.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION I.

[48160]

No. 1.

Earl Curzon to Sir P. Cox.

(No. 38.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 26, 1919.

THE Persian Minister called upon me this afternoon to report the results of his visit to Paris.

As regards the remark that I had made at our previous interview, to the effect that the Persian Government at the same time that they were seeking advice from us were making overtures to other Governments, the Minister assured me that no such negotiations had taken place with the French Government, and that, if any suggestions as to the appointment of a French Financial Adviser had been made, they must have emanated from Tehran. He went on to give me similar assurances as regards Persian overtures to the American Government, which he declared had not gone beyond the exchange of civilities at a dinner table.

I said that I was sorry to have to tell him that I had the best reasons for believing that the reverse was the case, and that a direct attempt to interest the United States in the financial and administrative future of Persia had been made.

The Minister was somewhat staggered at this information, and could attribute it only, as he said, to the machinations of one of his countrymen named Ali Kuli Khan. This individual, after an adventurous career, in the course of which he had been a Babi preacher, a dealer in America, Chargé d'Affaires in the Persian Legation in Washington, and the husband of an American wife, had turned up in Paris and attached himself in some capacity or other to the Persian delegation there.

The Persian Minister relieved me from the duty of informing him that this individual was an adventurer of the worst description by himself describing him as a charlatan: a confession on his part which rendered it easy for me to point out that the sooner the connection of this gentleman with the Persian delegates in Paris was suspended the better for every party concerned.

The Minister then went on to say that Mushaver-ul-Mamalek, to whom he had explained my views, would be quite ready to come here and ascertain whatever I had to tell him with regard to British policy or intentions in Persia, after which he would go back to Paris and discuss the matter with Mr. Balfour, or place my opinions, together with his own policy founded upon them, before the Peace Conference.

I had to inform the Minister that he was under a grave misapprehension if he thought that I could accept either alternative. Mr. Balfour had, I said, remitted the matter to the Foreign Office here, and he would, I felt sure, object to a two-fold discussion going on at the same time in London and in Paris. As regards the Peace Conference, I was not in the least prepared to make proposals of any description which should be discussed by that body.

The Minister then asked me what advice I was prepared to offer as regards the admission of the Persian representatives to the Conference.

I declined to give any at all. I pointed out that the Persians had sent a delegation to Paris, unasked by anyone, on their own responsibility; that their admission rested with the leading members of the Conference and not with me; and that, if they were heard there, I had not the slightest ground of complaint, although I personally could not give any encouragement to the suggestion. On the other hand, in the press of work with which the Conference was overwhelmed, it seemed to me extremely unlikely that any time would be found for Persia, who had not been a belligerent and whose case for being heard was the reverse of strong.

The Minister again pressed me to see Mushaver-ul-Mamalek before the hearing at the Peace Conference took place, and said that the *amour-propre* of Persia would be deeply wounded if she were not admitted.

I replied that I should be very sorry that anything should take place which would injure the pride or lower the self-esteem of his country or Government, but the responsibility was that of others, and not mine. My position, I repeated, was perfectly clear, and I had taken steps to make it known to his Government in Tehran. I was quite prepared to see Mushaver-ul-Mamalek and to have the frankest and most friendly

[2865 cc-1]

Miscellaneous papers on the Near and Middle East [31v] (62/70)

2

conversation with him under either of two conditions: the first was that, if the Persian case was stated to the Peace Conference and little or no satisfaction was derived from that body, the Minister for Foreign Affairs should then come here and ask me what advice I was prepared to tender; the second condition was that he should come here as soon as he pleased for the suggested conversation, but in that case I said it must be clearly understood that the Persian delegates abandoned their desire to appeal to the Conference and regarded the matter as one for settlement between Persia and Great Britain.

I once more told the Minister that the Persian Government could not expect to ride two horses with success, whether they were London and Paris or the British Government and foreign Governments. I think that this time he fully understood what I meant, and he went away with the avowed intention of passing on the information to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Paris.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

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ARCHIVES.

PERSIA.

[May 1.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

[60025]

No. 1.

Earl Curzon to Mr. Balfour.

(No. 2681.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 1, 1919.

THE enclosures contained in your despatch No. 505 of the 15th ultimo, relating to Persia's claims as communicated to you by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs in his letter of the 26th March, have been carefully examined in this Department, and in accordance with your wishes I now submit some observations thereon.

2. The Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in the two documents under examination, purports to make a statement of Persia's "case"; he enumerates Russia's alleged acts of aggression, in which Great Britain is given a share; and he finally submits a list of demands for reparation, rectification of treaties and concessions, and concludes by advancing certain territorial claims.

3. The Persian "case," as set forth in these documents, is in several respects wholly misleading and inaccurate, many essential facts being suppressed and others distorted, while the demands advanced are, in the main, lacking in any justification.

4. The object of the Persian spokesman appears to be to make an appeal to the world in general, and to the United States in particular, against the policy pursued prior to 1907 by Russia and Great Britain separately, and, since the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention of that year, jointly by those two Powers in respect to Persia.

5. The whole spirit of the 1907 Convention is misrepresented. This instrument was framed with the object of putting an end to the long-standing Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia, which was admittedly detrimental to that country's best interests. The Convention did not divide the country into two "spheres of influence" as alleged by the Persians, but determined certain areas within which each of the two contracting Powers undertook, *vis-à-vis* the other, not to seek for concessions or to support commercial enterprises by its own subjects. In this respect the Convention was undoubtedly beneficial to Persia, in spite of the fact that Persian policy had been based, until the period of its conclusion, on a skilful plan of playing off the one Power against the other in order to obtain the maximum of advantage from both. Unfortunately the benefits obtained by the Persians by the pursuance of this policy were not of advantage to the country as a whole, however much it may have profited the ruling classes.

6. When the war broke out these tactics were resumed on a wider field, and successive Persian Governments, finding that Great Britain and Russia were now firmly united, sought to play off the Central Powers against the Allies, just as they are now seeking to contrive a new combination at the Peace Conference, by a statement of their grievances which is evidently meant to arouse American interest in their affairs and, if possible, to provoke American intervention.

7. The statement affirms Persia's neutrality throughout the war, and declared that she continued "loyal and faithful to that policy to the very end." It seems necessary to examine this statement, and the explanations given of the causes leading up to the "violation of her neutrality," for which reason "Persia became a theatre of the war and suffered all the consequences, horrors, and losses of a terrible conflict."

8. The circumstances in which Russian troops were sent to various parts of Northern Persia in 1909, in order to put an end to civil strife resulting from the conflict between the so-called Liberal and reactionary parties in the country, need not be recapitulated here, but it is misleading to state that these forces were sent for the purpose of "weakening and annihilating Persia."

9. Without passing any judgment on the policy pursued in Persia by the late Imperial Russian Government, it should be borne in mind that, when the war broke out in 1914, these Russian forces were actually in occupation of certain northern parts of the country. Persia had no effective military force at her disposal, and was quite unable to maintain order within her own territory. In these circumstances it was obviously impossible for her to do anything but declare her neutrality. The Persian statesmen, however, took advantage of the situation to demand the immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops in the north, and stated that, if Persian neutrality was

[2890 a-1]

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not respected by Russia, the Central Powers could not be expected to respect it. It was pointed out that the Russian troops occupied strategic frontier posts, and, seeing that Persia had no effective forces of her own with which to defend her neutrality, their withdrawal would inevitably lead to the occupation by the Turks of the places evacuated. But it was impossible to make the Persians realise the force of this argument. On the contrary, they did their utmost to bring every possible pressure to bear upon Russia and her ally, Great Britain, in order to achieve their end. Persian public opinion was easily inflamed against us, and the next step was secretly to encourage the Turks and Germans to enter Persia and to send armed bands of German emissaries and eventually a considerable number of Turkish troops into the country to eject the Russian forces and to make it impossible for our diplomatic and consular missions to remain. These were not only unfriendly proceedings, but, viewed from the standpoint of Persia's own interests, they constituted a blunder of the first magnitude.

10. The history of our embarrassments in Persia, firstly in consort with our Russian Allies, and later by ourselves, covers the whole period of the European War, during which time every effort was made by our enemies, with the help of these so-called "honest but misguided" Persian statesmen, some of whom are now in Paris endeavouring the place Persia's "case" before the Peace Conference, to break off relations with us and to join our enemies in a "Holy War" against the infidel, the aggressor, and the enemy of Islam.

11. With regard to Persia's present demands, based apparently on the claim that "she has acquired rights which cannot be denied," and her hope to be placed "by right" in a position more favoured than "certain belligerent countries who have suffered no losses from the war," I would make the following observations:—

(a.) *Abrogation of 1907 Convention.*—His Majesty's Government have already publicly declared that, so far as they are concerned, the Anglo-Russian Convention is no longer in force.

(b, c, d, e, and f.) Though deploring the effects brought about by the misguided policy pursued by certain Persian statesmen, His Majesty's Government have repeatedly declared, and have shown by their action their willingness to treat Persia's national aspirations with every sympathy and goodwill. They are even now engaged in an exchange of views with the Persian Government as to their future relations. They could not, however, consent to the abrogation or modification of treaties, conventions, agreements, or concessions already in force, until new arrangements have been devised to take their place.

(g.) As long as the conditions of Persian administration remain as they now are, and until the Persian Government are able to satisfy us as regards the safety of our diplomatic and consular representatives in that country, His Majesty's Government could not abandon the existing right to protect them with military escorts and guards.

12. The experience of the past does not bear out the contention that "foreign consulates" have always enjoyed perfect "security in Persia," as stated in paragraph (h) of the Persian "case." Reference need only be made to the arrest in Shiraz of His Majesty's consul and the leading members of the British colony and their deportation to Ahram, where they were detained as prisoners for nine months, and later to the arrest of Mr. Maclaren, His Majesty's vice-consul, Captain Noel, and the bank manager at Resht, and to the exceptionally brutal treatment of Captain Noel by his captors, the Jangalis.

(h, i, j.) These paragraphs again refer to treaties actually in force, and the remarks above made apply equally to them.

13. As to claims for territorial restitution, it can only be supposed that the pretensions of the Persian Foreign Minister are made on the principle that by putting forward exaggerated claims he may secure agreement to some small fraction of them. At any rate, it is difficult to see how a country which is unable to maintain effectively the authority of the Central Government within its own borders can justify a claim to an enormous increase of territory comprising populations, many of which have enjoyed a more stable form of government than they would be likely to obtain for many years to come if they were included in the dominions of the Shah of Persia.

14. The first is a claim to Russian Transcaspia as far as the Sea of Aral and the Amon Daria on the east, and includes the towns of Khiva, Merv, Alexandrovsk, Krasnovodsk, and Ashkabad. The vast majority of the population in this extensive

district is Turkish in origin and of the Sunni sect of Islam in faith. The Persian Government have already the utmost difficulty in maintaining authority over the Turcoman tribes within their own borders south of the Atrek river, and would find the Turcomans on the other side of their present frontier quite unmanageable. The whole district, including Bokhara and Samarcand, was, before the Russian conquest of Central Asia, a hotbed of Sunni fanaticism, and it took the Russian Government twenty years to subjugate this territory and reach the provinces beyond it. The Persian Shiah would find it impossible to govern such a district, even if the necessary forces were available for the purpose. Should such an experiment be undertaken, it is much to be feared that the resulting conflicts and general disturbances would react most unfavourably on the North-West Provinces of India. Sir P. Cox, however, states that Persia's great ambition is to get back Russian Sarakhs, and this might possibly be conceded, should the inhabitants so desire, on the basis of self-determination.

15. The second claim is to a vast district to the north of Persia's present border on the Aras river, extending as far as Darband on the north-east, passing close to Tiflis, Kars, and Erzerum, and including Erivan and Elisabetpol. Here there is a mixed population of Turks, Armenians, Georgians, Tartars, and Kurds, a combination utterly out of touch with Shiah sympathies. It would be difficult to imagine anything more incongruous than the placing of such a town as Baku, with its important oil industry and unruly population, under Persian rule. It is true that a small proportion of Persian Shiah is to be found at Baku and the surrounding district, but these have mainly emigrated from Persia in order to better their condition and to free themselves from Persian misrule. The whole proposal seems, in fact, to be of so fantastic a nature as not to merit serious consideration.

16. The above remarks apply with even greater force to the third claim, namely, to Kurdistan in the west. This claim includes a very large proportion of Asia Minor as far as the line of the upper reaches of the Euphrates on the west and to Mush on the north, including Mosul on the south, and coming to within about 100 miles of Bagdad.

17. Though the Kurds are an Iranian people, speaking dialects of Persian, and their original home was in the mountain ranges which separate the plateau of Persia from the basin of Mesopotamia, they have not, and never had, a vestige of Persian national feeling. During the war the partisanship of the Kurds varied with the military situation; they were sometimes with the Turks and at other times with the Russians, but at no time have they shown anything but hostility to the Persians.

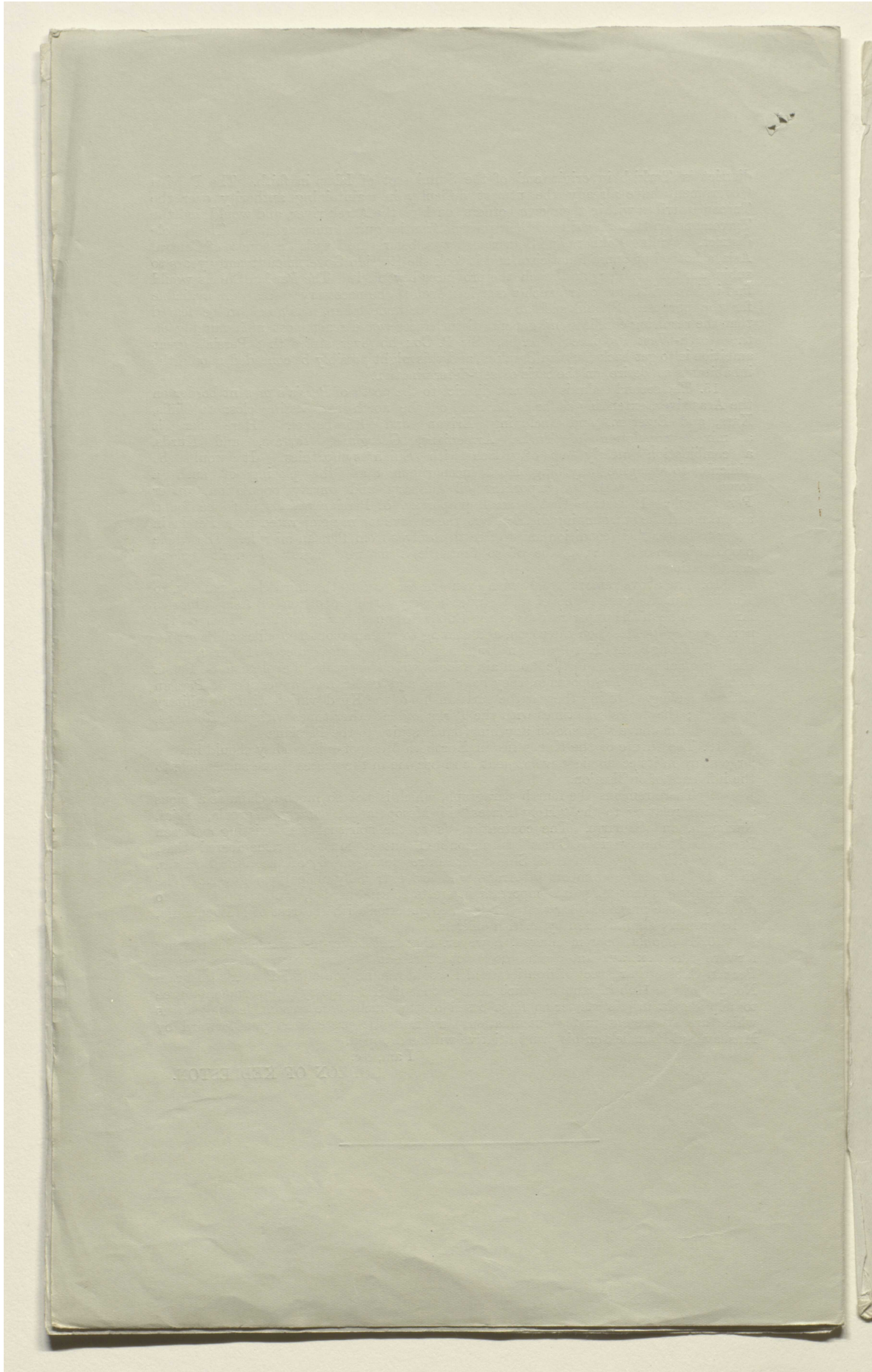
18. The future of the Kurds lies in Northern Mesopotamia. They should have a large share in its economic development, and become in the process more susceptible to the influence of civilisation.

19. There remains the fourth paragraph, which is not so much a claim as a pious aspiration, relating to the "Holy Places" in Mesopotamia, namely, Karbala, Najaf, Kazimain, and Samarra. The contention as to the spiritual ties existing between Persia and these "Holy Cities" is undoubted, but it must be remembered that, together with a large number of Shiah Persian residents, chiefly of the clerical classes, there are also large numbers of Arabs who are extremely difficult to govern. The Persian hope is that "Persia's important interests be safeguarded," and the best way to do this, for the present, is for these cities, in conjunction with the rest of Mesopotamia, to be properly administered by British officials.

20. It should be remembered, however, that Mushaver-ul-Mamalek, in putting forward these extravagant claims, does not represent the aspirations of the present Persian Cabinet in respect of frontiers, and I would remind you of Sir P. Cox's telegram No. 261 of the 10th instant, in which he says that if His Majesty's Government agree to help Persia in this matter on lines based on the much more reasonable suggestions which are at present under examination, any fantastic pretensions put forward by Mushaver-ul-Mamalek on his own initiative will be dropped.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.



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CIRCULATED TO THE CABINET

PERSIA

[August 13.]

CONFIDENTIAL

SECTION 1.

[116385]

No. 1.

Earl Curzon to Sir G. Grahame.

(No. 1061.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 13, 1919.

I ASKED M. de Fleuriau to call upon me this afternoon in order to draw his attention to an announcement which had appeared in the French newspapers of the impending despatch of a French judicial mission to Tehran. I recapitulated to the French Minister the previous history of this question, and read to him *verbatim* my notes of the last conversation which I had on the subject with M. Cambon when the latter visited me in the Foreign Office on the 4th July.

I had explained to M. Cambon on that occasion that, while I had no reason to object to the deputation to Tehran of French professors skilled in medicine, surgery, and mathematics, I was at a loss to understand why the institution of a Law School or the sending of French Professors of Law should be required. I had pointed out that, the frontier between law and politics being admittedly thin, there was some reason to fear that the French lawyers, in the absence of any serious occupation, might feel tempted to take a hand in the local political game. I had also put to the French Ambassador the hypothetical case of what his Government would have thought and said had the British attempted a similar move in some sphere of clearly French influence. In reply, M. Cambon had said that, upon his approaching visit to Paris, he would discuss the question of the French legal professors; and he had left upon my mind the impression that it would not be necessary to persevere with that part of the French programme.

In these circumstances, I had been considerably surprised at reading in the "Temps" only a few days ago an announcement to the effect that a French Judicial Mission had been formed by the French Minister of Justice, with the consent of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and was to leave for Persia next month to found a School of Law in Tehran. The names of the members of the mission were given, and it had been added in the "Temps" that the mission itself could not fail to benefit French influence in the East.

The ground which I had taken in my conversation with M. Cambon was, I now told M. de Fleuriau, greatly strengthened by what had passed in the interval. The British Government had for some time been engaged in negotiations with the Persian Government, culminating in an agreement which I had just concluded and which was about to be published in both countries. I gave the French Minister a general sketch of the contents of this agreement, and I said that it seemed to me singularly inappropriate that—at a time when the Persian Government had themselves recognised the predominant political interest of Great Britain by inviting her assistance in the manner provided for in the agreement—the French Government should think it fit to appear upon the scene almost in the guise of rival competitors, suggesting to Persia and to the world that the old competition between European nations (in former times usually Russia and Great Britain) was about to be revived, and that France regarded with some jealousy the occupation of the field by England.

M. de Fleuriau undertook to verify what I had said to M. Cambon, and to communicate to Paris the substance of our conversation to-day.

I went on to say to the French Minister that indications had reached me lately from more than one quarter of an inclination on the part, not, I hoped, of the French Government, of whose loyalty I was convinced, but of certain advanced sections of French colonial and public opinion, to pick causes of quarrel with this country, and to adopt an attitude towards Great Britain that was scarcely consistent with the close and cordial alliance between us, which was still in being. One day it was Syria, another day it was Tangier, again it was some other part of the Eastern world. I told him that I thought we had said good-bye to the policy of pin-pricks, which had done so much to exacerbate relations between our two countries in the past; and, when on the part of the two Governments there was still the firmest intention in the public interest to pursue a policy of close co-operation, it seemed to me little short of scandalous that any encouragement should be given to those who sought to poison the wells. I reminded M. de Fleuriau that, upon my instructions, Sir Ronald Graham had spoken

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to him with great frankness last week on the question of Syria, pointing out to him that, while we desired no mandate for that region, and would certainly refuse it if offered, the only reason for which a military occupation of Syria by the French had not been encouraged by our military authorities was that such an occupation would be absolutely certain to lead to collisions between the French and the native populations.

Upon the French Minister doubting whether this was the case, I informed him—and this he had not previously heard—that on a recent occasion a French official of the highest rank had actually been fired upon and wounded by the population of a district of the Lebanon in which the French claimed a long-standing political predominance.

Further, I asked whether a stronger evidence of our disinterestedness could be forthcoming than the fact that, though France had no legitimate claim to Cilicia, had not received a mandate for that part of the Turkish Empire, and might indeed in the future not receive one at all, yet we had voluntarily invited French troops to occupy that country, of which they were now in possession. Not a word of recognition was given to this fact; while, on the other hand, inspired writers in the leading French newspapers endeavoured to make mischief as regards Syria by bringing wholly unfounded charges against this country.

M. de Fleuryau disputed the inspiration under which these writers penned their articles; but I said that I could not doubt seriously that such had been the case.

I urged him to help to keep the relations between our two countries free from this atmosphere of suspicion and insinuation, of which there appeared to be too many propagators in the French press.

I am, &c.
CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

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PERSIA.

[August 18]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

[118250.]

No. 1.

Earl Curzon to Mr. Lindsay.

(No. 477.)

Foreign Office, August 18, 1919.

Sir,

I ASKED the American Ambassador to come and see me this afternoon, in order to acquaint him, as I had previously omitted to do, with the recent conclusion of the agreement between His Majesty's Government and Persia. I told him, however, that his Government had not been kept in entire ignorance of the matter, because, when I was in Paris some months ago, I had called upon Colonel House, specially to mention to him the nature of the negotiations in which I was engaged, and I had asked him to inform President Wilson on the matter, so that the President might be guided in his attitude towards the Persian Delegation in Paris, should their claim to be heard at the Peace Conference be entertained. Colonel House had subsequently told me that he had informed the President. I had no reason, therefore, to suppose that what had since passed would meet with anything but American approval.

I went on to tell Mr. Davis that our information was to the effect that the French were somewhat incensed at our having, as they alleged, stolen a march upon them in respect of Persia, and that they regarded with a certain amount of wounded pride our success in Tehran as compared with the failure which had so far attended their efforts in Syria. The French Minister in Tehran, M. Bonin, was, I had been informed, doing his best to disparage and belittle the agreement; and it was not unlikely, I thought, that he might endeavour to enlist the co-operation of his American colleague in pursuing that policy. In these circumstances, and assuming that the American Government would be, generally speaking, in favour of the agreement now concluded, I asked the Ambassador whether he could see his way to suggest that the American Minister in Tehran should be advised to facilitate the acceptance of the agreement and to give it his blessing.

Mr. Davis remarked at once that he saw no objection to doing this: that he thought the agreement an excellent one (much better, indeed, for the Persians than it was for ourselves); and that he would gladly act upon my suggestion.

Having barely recovered from a conversation lasting an hour and a half with Mr. Walter Smith, an American gentleman officially interested in the American effort in Armenia, and deeply concerned at the risk to the Armenian people involved by our intended evacuation, I mentioned to Mr. Davis, in supplement to our recent conversations on that subject, two points which I thought ought to be borne in mind.

The first was this. In reality the Powers in Paris and we in London were waiting for the American people to make up their minds whether they would take a mandate for Armenia or not. Mr. Davis had himself told me that he thought the chances were much against their taking it, and this information had been borne out by what I had heard from America. Were we then to reverse our evacuation policy, and to incur very heavy expenditure on the chance of America making up her mind in three months from now; and, if she did so in favour of taking a mandate, what, I asked, was the Armenia for which she would make herself responsible? Did it include or exclude the Caucasus? Was America aware that Armenia could not be kept alive by dollars only, but would have to be sustained by men, and was she prepared to mobilise and send to the Black Sea the very considerable army that would be required for the purpose?

The second point was that, if American public opinion was as deeply aroused as he represented it to be—and I did not deny that this might be the case—I was surprised that these representations should come from private individuals rather than from the American Government; and, if charges were to be made against the British Government of deserting the Armenians or imperilling their future, it seemed to me that they ought more properly to come from Government to Government, in which case those who were really responsible for the delay might be able to explain and justify it.

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Mr. Davis then asked me whether I thought that a direct appeal from the American Government would induce His Majesty's Government to reverse their policy?

This I said I had no right to forecast or assume. There were strong influences at work in this country in favour of liquidating our commitments in distant parts of the world and withdrawing our troops. We were doing all that lay in our power to tranquillise the situation and to mitigate the consequences of evacuation; but, if we were to be asked to wait till America made up her mind, that request ought to come from responsible quarters, and some indication should be given to us of what the result of such a postponement would be.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.