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Directorate of Intelligence
18 July 1991

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Lebanon's Legislative Appointments: A Preliminary Assessment [REDACTED]

Summary

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The recent appointment of 40 mainly pro-Syrian deputies to the National Assembly brings the last political power center in Lebanon firmly under Syrian control. The majority of the new legislators are relatives of deceased deputies, senior Lebanese Government officials, or are closely affiliated with militias. The large number of Syrian supporters now in the National Assembly will allow Damascus to control important legislative matters, including the timing of nationwide elections and the selection of a president in 1995. The absence of an appointee from Hizballah among the new deputies suggests that despite the recent election of a new Hizballah leadership, opposition to official participation in the government remains strong. [REDACTED]

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Approved for Release
Date JUN 1999

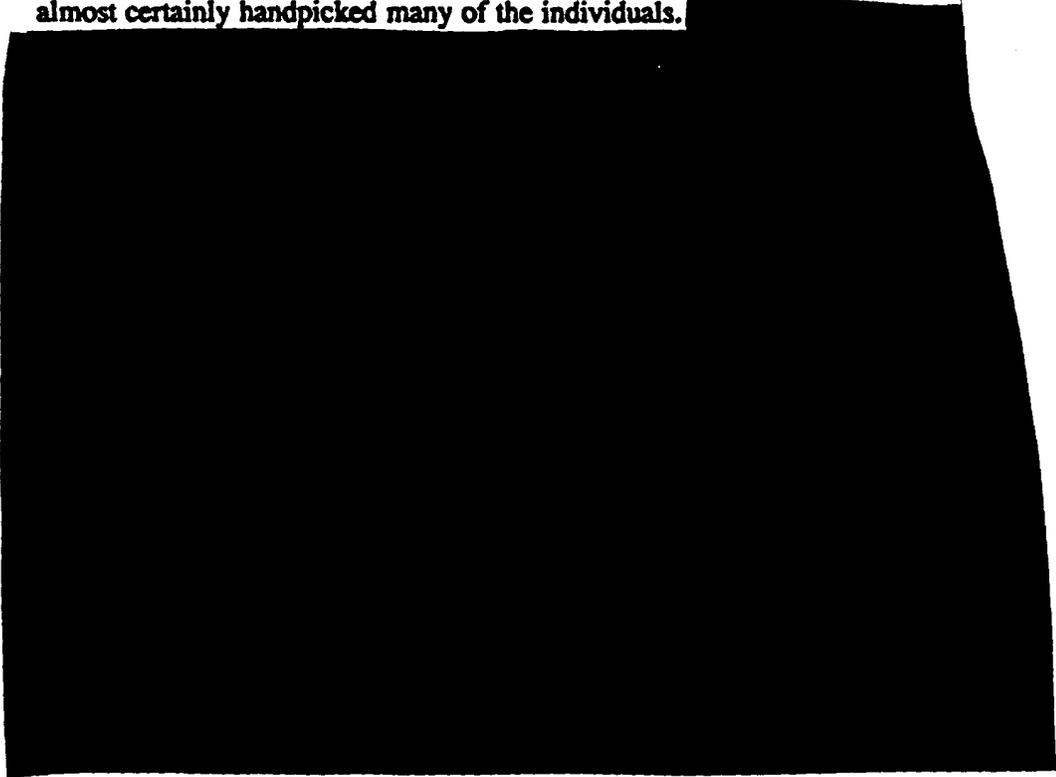
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Lebanon's Legislative Appointments: A
Preliminary Assessment [REDACTED] b (3)

On 7 June, the Lebanese Cabinet appointed 40 new deputies to the National Assembly. The legislative appointments fulfill one of the most important provisions of the Ta'if accord--reconstituting the National Assembly so that Muslims have equal representation with the once-predominant Christians. To achieve this, nine new seats have been created for Muslims. The accord also called for filling 31 seats that had become vacant due to death or resignation since the last parliamentary election, which occurred in 1972 before the civil war.¹ [REDACTED] b (3)

The Syrians were heavily involved in the selection of the new legislators and almost certainly handpicked many of the individuals.



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Syria's dominant role in the selection of the new legislators parallels its involvement in all major Lebanese political and security matters since the removal of Christian General Awn last October. The negotiations surrounding

¹One Christian seat in the 108-member National Assembly remains vacant due to the death of a deputy since the Ta'if accord was ratified.

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[REDACTED] Syria successfully pressed for small deployments of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) units to South Lebanon in February despite the opposition of LAF Commander Lahud. Damascus rammed through the Lebanese Cabinet and National Assembly the new bilateral "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination" in the course of only one month. [REDACTED]

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New Deputies at a Glance

Most of the new legislators are Lebanese politicians in the traditional mold. [REDACTED] 11 of the new deputies replaced family members, and 18 have some militia background. The Cabinet also took the opportunity to appoint 13 of its members to the legislature, bringing the total number of Cabinet ministers in the National Assembly to 24. The proportion of Cabinet ministers who also are deputies (four-fifths) is unprecedented in Lebanese history. We believe a majority—possibly as many as 30—of the new legislators are pro-Syrian. [REDACTED]

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All of the Shia appointees have strong ties to Syria. They have little credibility among their coreligionists, however, and lack independent power bases. Agriculture Minister Muhsin Dallul, for example, reportedly is more often thought of as a Druze by other Shias because of his past association with the Progressive Socialist Party. Other new Shia deputies lack credibility because of their association with Amal militia leader Nabih Barri, whose own standing has plummeted because of his perceived corruption and subservience to Syria. [REDACTED]

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The Maronite Christian appointments exclude representatives from the mainstream Maronite community. Almost all of them have close ties with Syria or the Lebanese Forces militia, which is disliked by much of Maronite populace. The selection of Jean Ubayd, [REDACTED] "carpetbagger" [REDACTED] and militia leader Ilie Hubuyqa are particularly objectionable to most Maronites. They were appointed to the symbolically important seats of former President Camille Chamoun and Phalange Party founder Pierre Gemayel, underscoring Syria's efforts to punish its former Maronite adversaries. [REDACTED]

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Other Lebanese Reactions

Despite the criticism about the large number of Syrian supporters among the new deputies and their lack of credibility, most Lebanese appear to have accepted the appointments with a sense of resignation or apathy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] most Lebanese, including many political

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leaders, anticipated that Damascus would use the deputy appointment process to reward its Lebanese allies and help foster the development of a new pro-Syrian leadership within the Muslim and Christian communities. [REDACTED] the appointments issue lacked the emotional impact of Lebanon's new bilateral treaty with Syria, which provoked strong protests from some prominent Christians. [REDACTED]

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The reaction from anti-Syrian Lebanese and those not represented by any of the new appointees has been generally predictable. Those deputies who were elected in the 1972 legislative races and were closely aligned with Iraq and General Awn criticize the appointment process, arguing that there should have been open democratic elections to fill the parliamentary vacancies. The Lebanese Communist Party maintains that its lack of representation will set back the march towards greater democracy in Lebanon. Some independent Shia figures have been critical of the Shia appointments because some of these deputies allegedly do not reside in the neighborhoods that they are supposed to represent. [REDACTED]

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The reaction of the major militias varies:

- Druze leader Junblatt said that although the appointments brought several prominent politicians into the National Assembly, representation for some districts is poor.
- Aḥḥal leader Barri lauded the process, saying it will speed implementation of the remaining provisions in Ta'if.
- Phalange Party leader Sa'adah stated that his party now has a legislative bloc of respectable size that will play a prominent role in the National Assembly, but he complained that traditional Phalange constituencies were not allocated seats.
- Hizballah radio called the process a charade. It characterized the appointments as another Ta'if catastrophe and described the deputies as people from "chic magazines, opium dens, and cabarets." [REDACTED]

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Outlook and Implications

The appointment of the new deputies brings the last major Lebanese political power center under Syrian control. [REDACTED] Syria can count on the support of at least a majority, possibly as many as two-thirds, of the members of the legislature. At least 12 of the new deputies have such strong ties with Syria that they almost certainly will side with Damascus on all issues of importance facing the legislature. There is little chance that many of

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the new deputies will stray from the Syrian line as long as the Syrian military and security services control much of the country. [REDACTED] b (3)

Syrian control of the Lebanese legislature will enable Damascus to strongly influence leadership developments in Lebanon. With its control of a majority of the deputies, Damascus probably will be able to manage the timing as well as the eventual outcome of presidential elections. In addition, because the Assembly has the responsibility under the Ta'if accord to draft a new parliamentary election law, Damascus may attempt to influence the process to further redistribute power in favor of its allies, particularly at the expense of the Maronites. [REDACTED] b (3)

The large number of Cabinet members now in the National Assembly probably will ensure that the legislature acts as a rubberstamp for Cabinet decisions, reinforcing the Cabinet's preeminent policymaking role in the government. We believe the Cabinet ministers will be particularly attentive to efforts by other legislators to challenge the authority of the new joint Lebanese-Syrian ministerial committees that are being set up as part of Lebanon's bilateral treaty with Syria. These committees are tasked with coordinating policy between the two nations on a wide range of issues that seemingly infringe on traditional prerogatives of the National Assembly in budgetary, trade, commercial, and agricultural matters. [REDACTED] b (3)

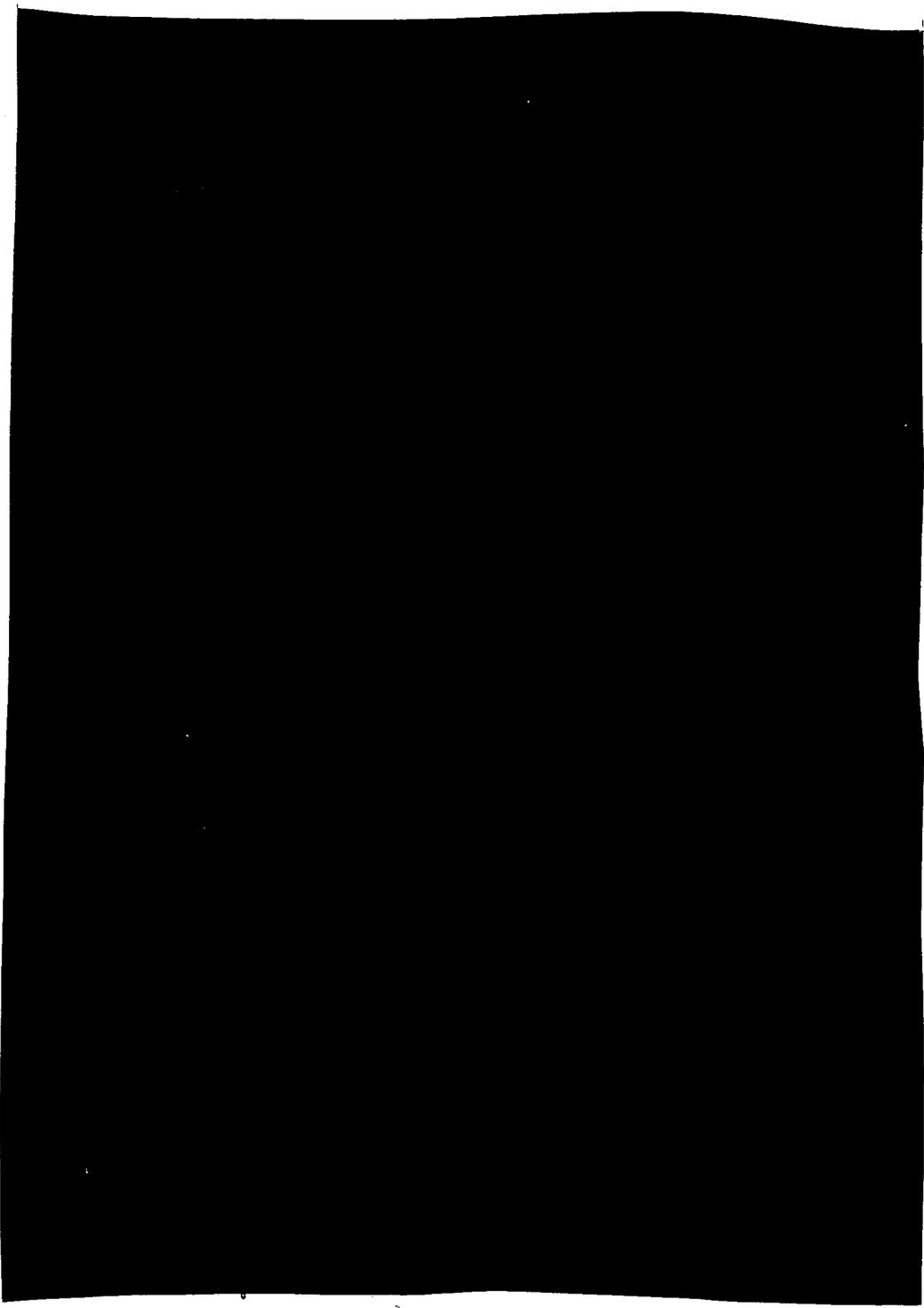
The absence of an appointee from Hizballah among the deputies indicates that Damascus and Beirut failed to convince the group to participate in the political process at least in the short term. Syria had unsuccessfully pressed Hizballah to accept a Cabinet portfolio last year. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Those Hizballah officials who at one time favored accepting appointments to the legislature were demoted or defeated in the group's Leadership Council elections in May. Hizballah's apparent decision to remain outside the government will reinforce Beirut's dependence on Syria to press Hizballah to accept the extension of the Lebanese Government's authority into areas of southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley that are under Hizballah's control. [REDACTED] b (1) b (3)

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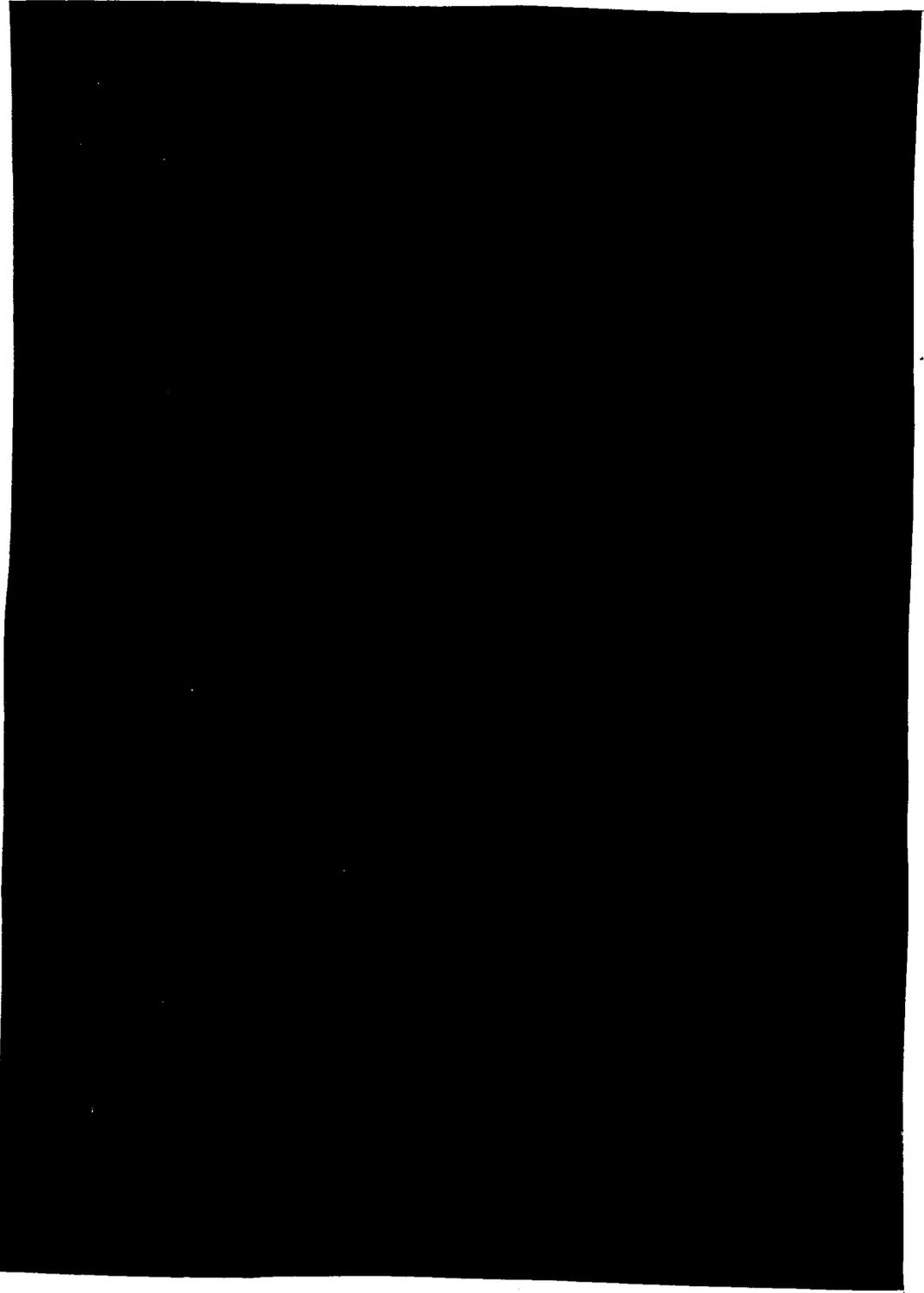
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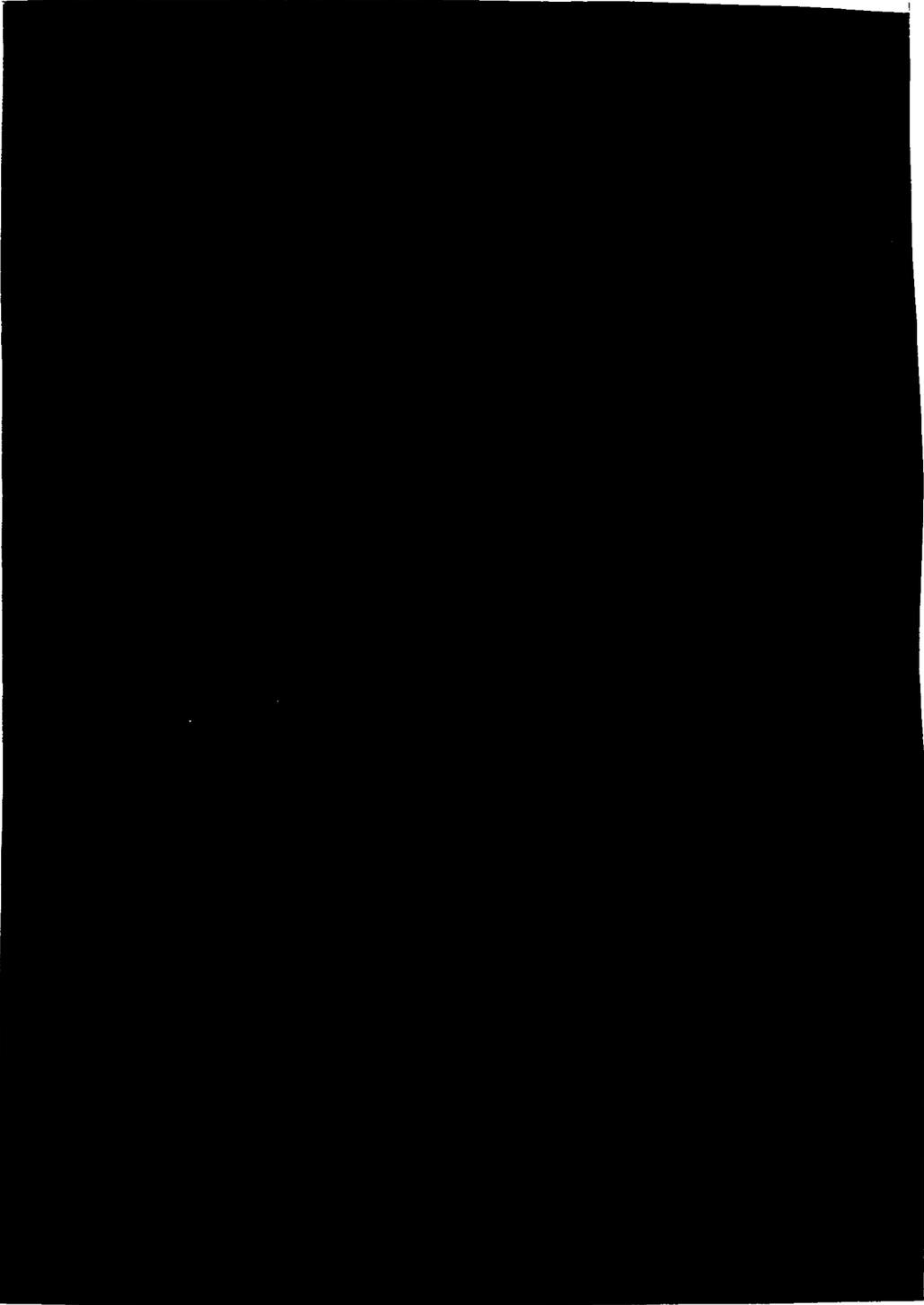
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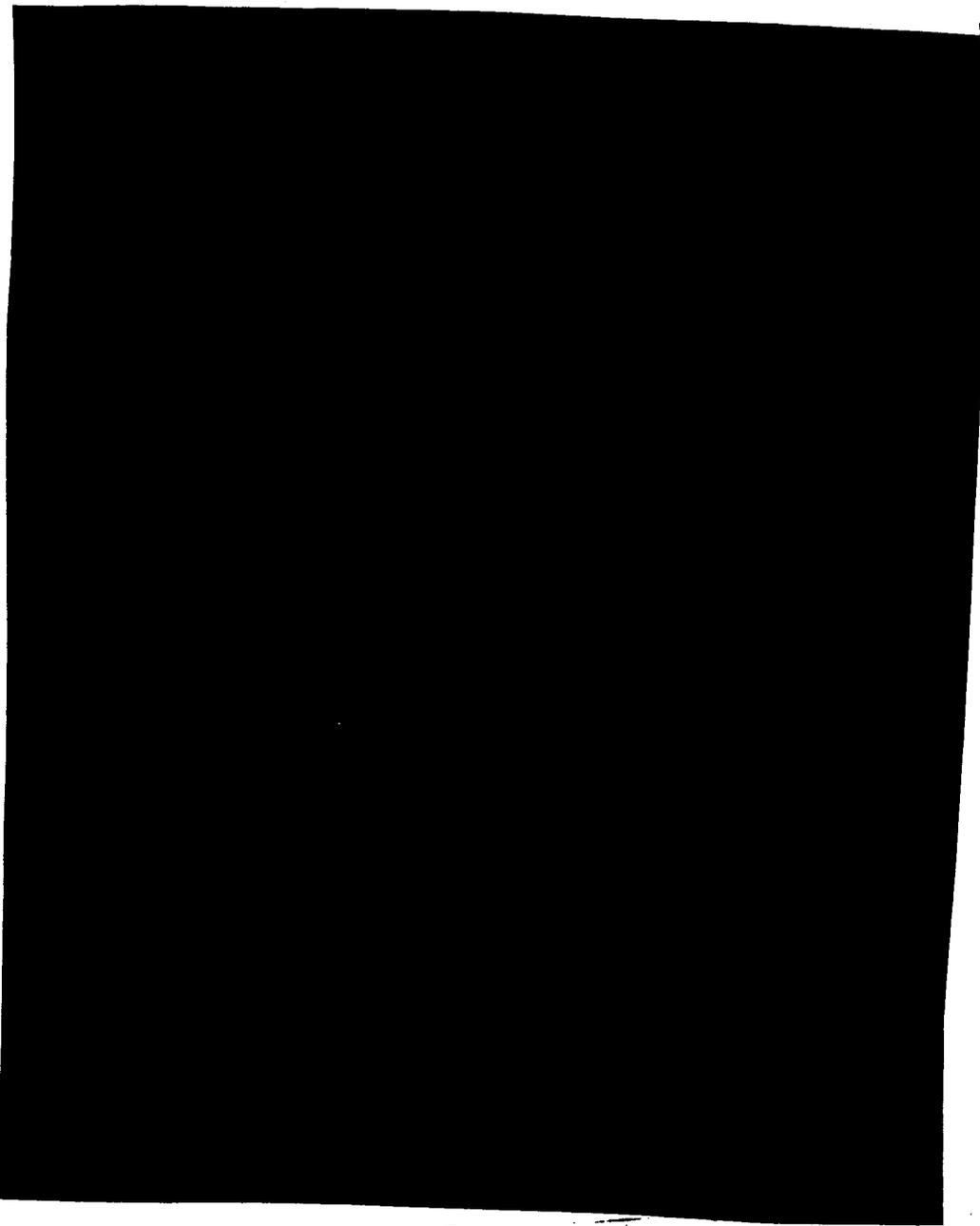


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