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'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers'

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	IOR/R/15/1/424
Date(s)	16 Mar 1933-15 Jan 1935 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 volume (24 folios)
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About this record

Correspondence mainly relating to the collection of finances. Non-payment by certain tribes on the Batinah Coast is identified as a threat to the revenue of the Muscat State and the visit of a sloop or flying boat to these regions is recommended. Correspondents include the Political Agent, Muscat; Captain Reginal George Alban, the Financial Adviser, Muscat State; the Political Resident, Persian Gulf. One letter describes the Sultan's tour of the Batinah coast.

①

35
101
VI

IOR/R/15/1/424

A49.

File No. :

Name of File :—
Muscat Miscellaneous.

NO MINUTES TO BE WRITTEN HERE

1-4-31
To
31-1-35

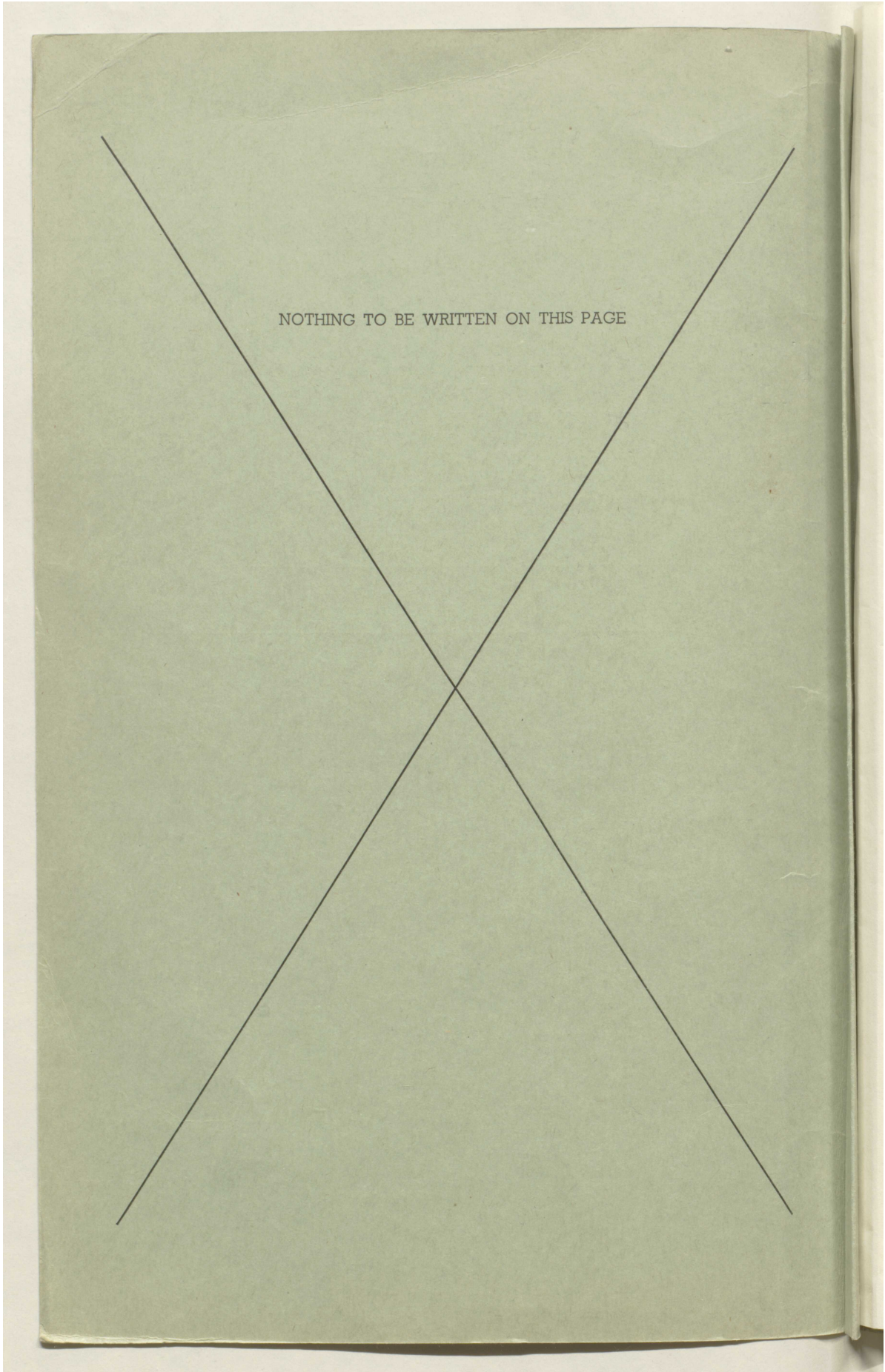
LAST Year's File No. :

NEXT Year's File No. :

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Wt. 11469, D667 5/52 A.M. & Co. Ltd. 51-8954

'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [front-i] (2/50)



35/101 No. C/78 of 1933. 57 (2)

The Political Agency & H.B.M's Consulate,
Muscat, 21st March 1933.

From
Major C. E. U. Bremner, .MC., I.A.,
Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul,
Muscat.

To
The Hon'ble the Political Resident
in the Persian Gulf,
Bushire.

Subject:- His Highness' the Sultan of Muscat's tour on
the Batineh Coast, February 1933.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward herewith a report received from Captain Alban, Financial Adviser, Muscat State, on the above subject.

2. The report, written in somewhat light hearted vein, is of considerable interest, and undoubtedly His Highness' personal visit to this part of his domains will be productive of good results.

3. There is little doubt that did finance but permit the subsidising of enterprising cultivators the narrow belts of rich cultivation, which extended along the coastal region, could be still further broadened by the sinking of deep wells ^{more} inland.

4. The consumption of this eutopian ideal is however too far beyond the realm of possibility to make its discussion, under existing circumstances, worthy of closer examination.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,

Chambers
Major,
Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul, Muscat.

BUSHIRE RESIDENCY.
No. 570
Date 27/3/33
CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS.

je 27/3

Office of the Financial Adviser,
Muscat State, Muscat.

Dated March 16, 1933.

To

The Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul,
Muscat.

Memorandum.

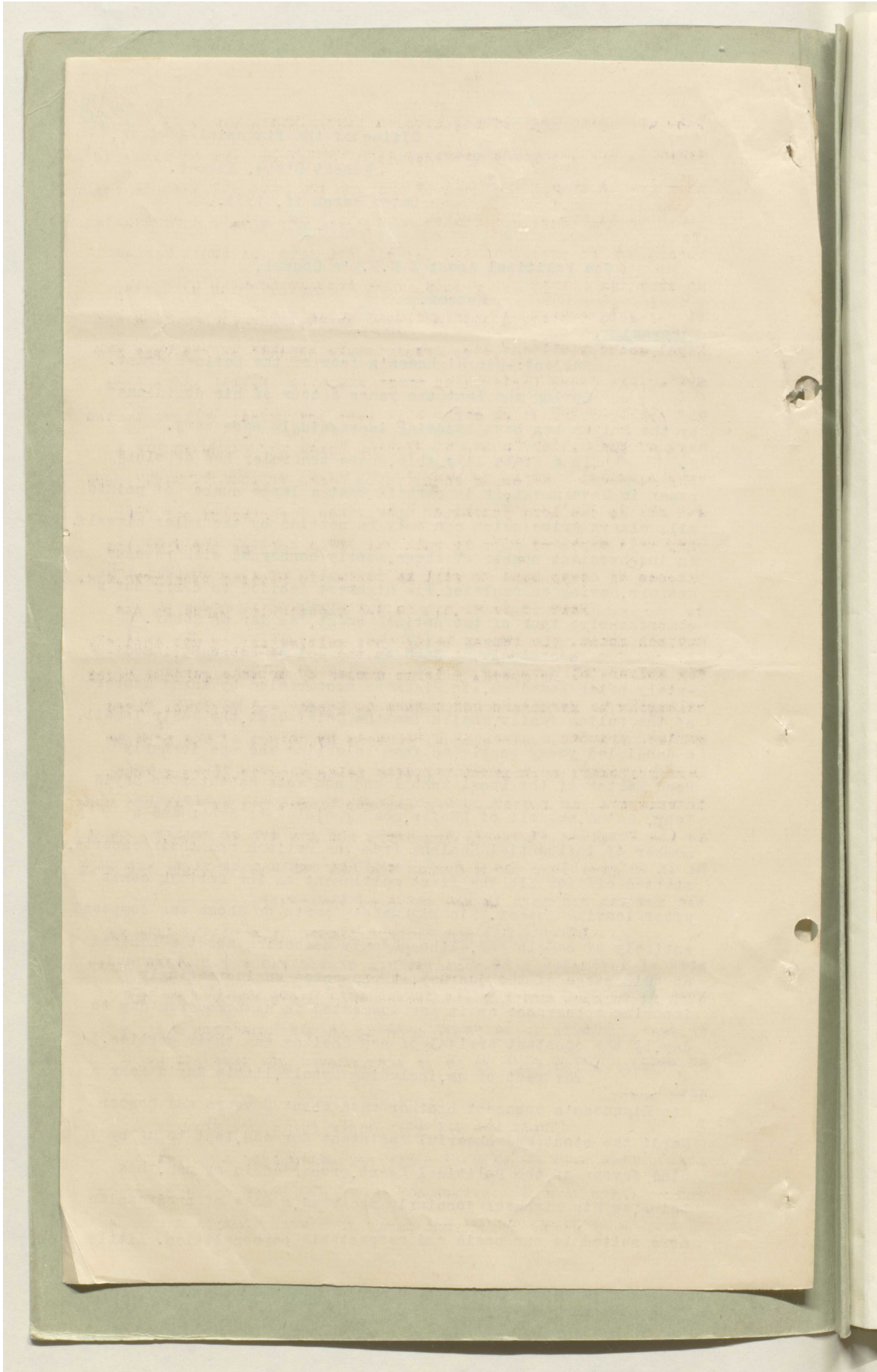
Subject:-His Highness's tour of the Batineh coast.

During the last two years a tour of his dominions
by the Sultan has been becoming increasingly necessary.

2. In a State like this, where the ruler has absolute
power in Government, it is certain that a large number of points
will always arise which can only be settled by the ruler himself.
An inconvenient number of these, mostly concerned with revenue
matters, having accumulated, His Highness decided to carry out a
comprehensive tour of the Batineh coast, as far as Sahar.

3. Accordingly, at dawn on the 2nd of February, immedi-
ately after Ramadhan, His Highness accompanied by three members
of the ruling family, Sheikh Isa the Chief Qazi, the Mudir Ismail,
a dandified young gentleman from Palestine who was formerly
Head Master of the Local School and now acts as tutor to Sayid
Fahr, Sa'ud, ex-Wali of Dhofer, now appointed to Sahar and a
number of influential Sheikhs from the Batineh and their escorts,
started off for Sib the first settlement on the Batineh coast
after leaving Muscat. His Highness's party or Shoma was composed
entirely of camels and, although only numbering about a hundred
at this stage of the journey, it presented an increasingly
imposing appearance as it was augmented in numbers from day to
day, by the constant arrival of new Sheikhs and their parties.

4. The rest of us, including myself, little Sayid Fahr
His Highness's youngest brother aged about 8 years and Doctor
Mardi the stout and cheerful Assistant Surgeon, lent to us by
kind favour of the Political Agent, proceeded in my car, this
being, as His Highness jocularly remarked, a mode of progression
more suited to our staid and respectable personalities. Little



2.

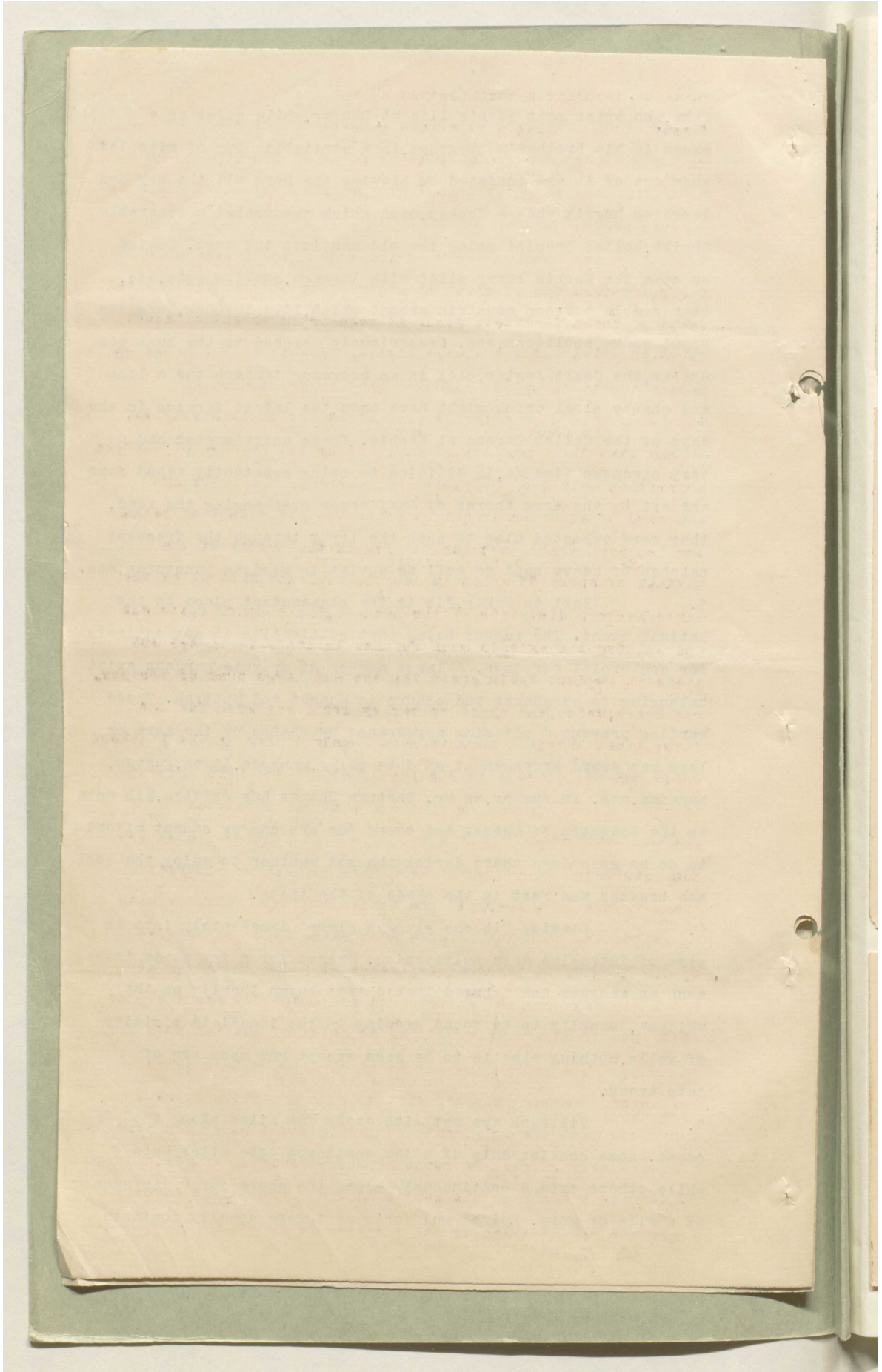
(4)

Fahr, who spent most of his life at Dhofar, while quiet as a mouse in his brother's presence, is a veritable Imp of mischief when out of it and insisted on blowing the horn all the way and laughing hugely when a donkey, upon which was seated a venerable Sheikh, bolted precipitating the old man into the dust. Behind us came the Morris lorry piled with luggage, cooking pots, etc, to resemble a steep mountain around which, like leeches, hung the Royal cooks, scullions, etc. Precariously perched at the back was She'ar, the Court Jester, clad in an enormous 'Amamah and a long and shabby cloak which might have been the latest fashion in the days of the Caliph Haroun al Rashid. These unfortunates had a very strenuous time as, in addition to being constantly raked fore and aft by the long thorns of Ghaf trees overhanging the road, they were expected also to push the lorry through the frequent patches of heavy sand as well as assist in mending punctures, etc.

5. Next to Sahar, Sib is the pleasantest place on the Batineh coast. The reason being that cultivation is not entirely for commercial purposes. A large number of private gardens exist belonging to merchants and others in Muscat and Muttrah. These gardens present a pleasing appearance by reason of the more or less haphazard arrangement of date palms, mangoes, limes, guavas, bananas, etc. In summer, as Mr. Bertram Thomas has written, Sib acts as the Brighton of Muscat and every one who can or cannot afford to do so goes down there during the hot weather to enjoy the cool sea breezes and rest in the shade of the trees.

6. Leaving Sib one plunges almost immediately into an area of intensive date cultivation. Except for a few shade trees such as mangoes and a broad leaved tree known locally as the "Bidam", usually to be found growing in the immediate vicinity of wells, nothing else is to be seen except row upon row of date trees.

7. Villages are met with every few miles along the coast. Some consist only of a few scattered date stick huts while others extend continuously along the shore for a distance of a mile or more. Ruined mud forts or towers usually dominate



3. 54 (5)
these settlements, a reminiscence of the power of Sheikhs in former times. Villages of a more permanent nature composed of mud or stone houses are also to be found at somewhat greater intervals on the landward side of the date belt which averages perhaps half a mile in width.

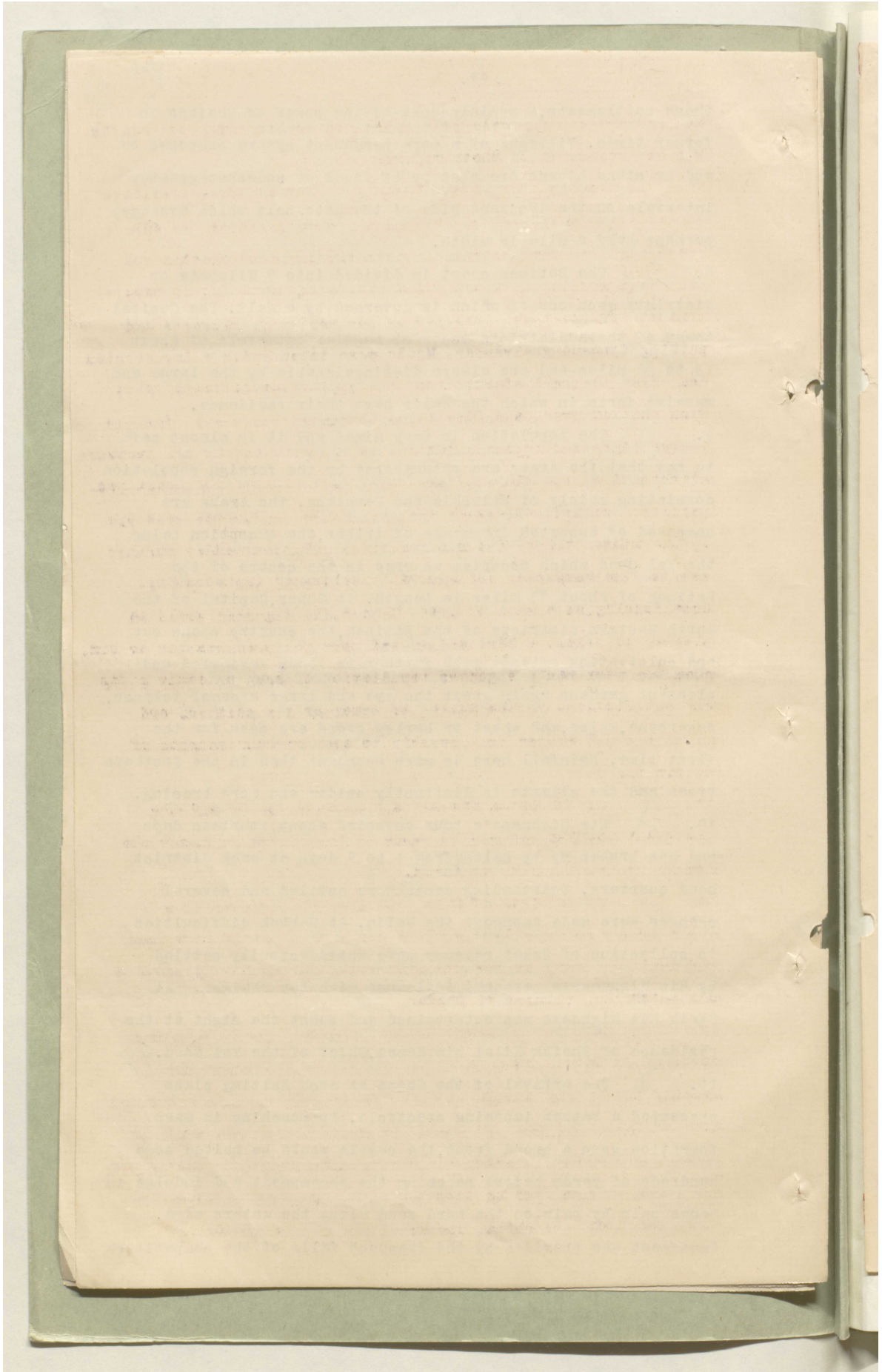
8. The Batineh coast is divided into 9 Wilayats or districts each one of which is governed by a Wali. The Capital towns of these districts occur at regular intervals of about 15 to 20 miles and are always distinguishable by the large and massive forts in which the Walis have their residence.

9. The population is very mixed and it is almost safe to say that the Arabs are outnumbered by the foreign population consisting mainly of Baluchis and Persians. The Arabs are composed of assorted fragments of tribes, the exception being the Yel Saad which occupies an area in the centre of the Batineh of about 35 miles in length. At Sahar, Capital of the North Western districts of the Batineh, the country opens out and cultivation extends much further in land. Variegated and pleasant gardens again greet the eye and large areas of tobacco, sugarcane, maize, and wheat or barley crops are seen for the first time. Rainfall here is more abundant than in the Southern areas and the climate is distinctly colder and more bracing.

10. X His Highness's tour occupied about fourteen days and was broken up by halts from 1 to 3 days at each district head quarters. Outstanding cases were settled and several changes were made amongst the Walis. At Barkah difficulties in collection of Zakat revenue were satisfactorily settled by His Highness's personal influence with the Sheikhs. At Swaik His Highness was entertained and spent the night at the residence of Sheikh Hilal bin Hamed, Chief of the Yel Saad. X

11. X The arrival of the Shoma at each halting place presented a rather imposing spectacle. Approaching in mass formation upon a broad front, the camels would be halted some hundreds of yards before reaching the encampment and indulge in races pair by pair on the hard sand along the waters edge. Amusement was provided by the frequent falls of the competitors

'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [5v] (10/50)



'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [6r] (11/50)

4.

55 (6)

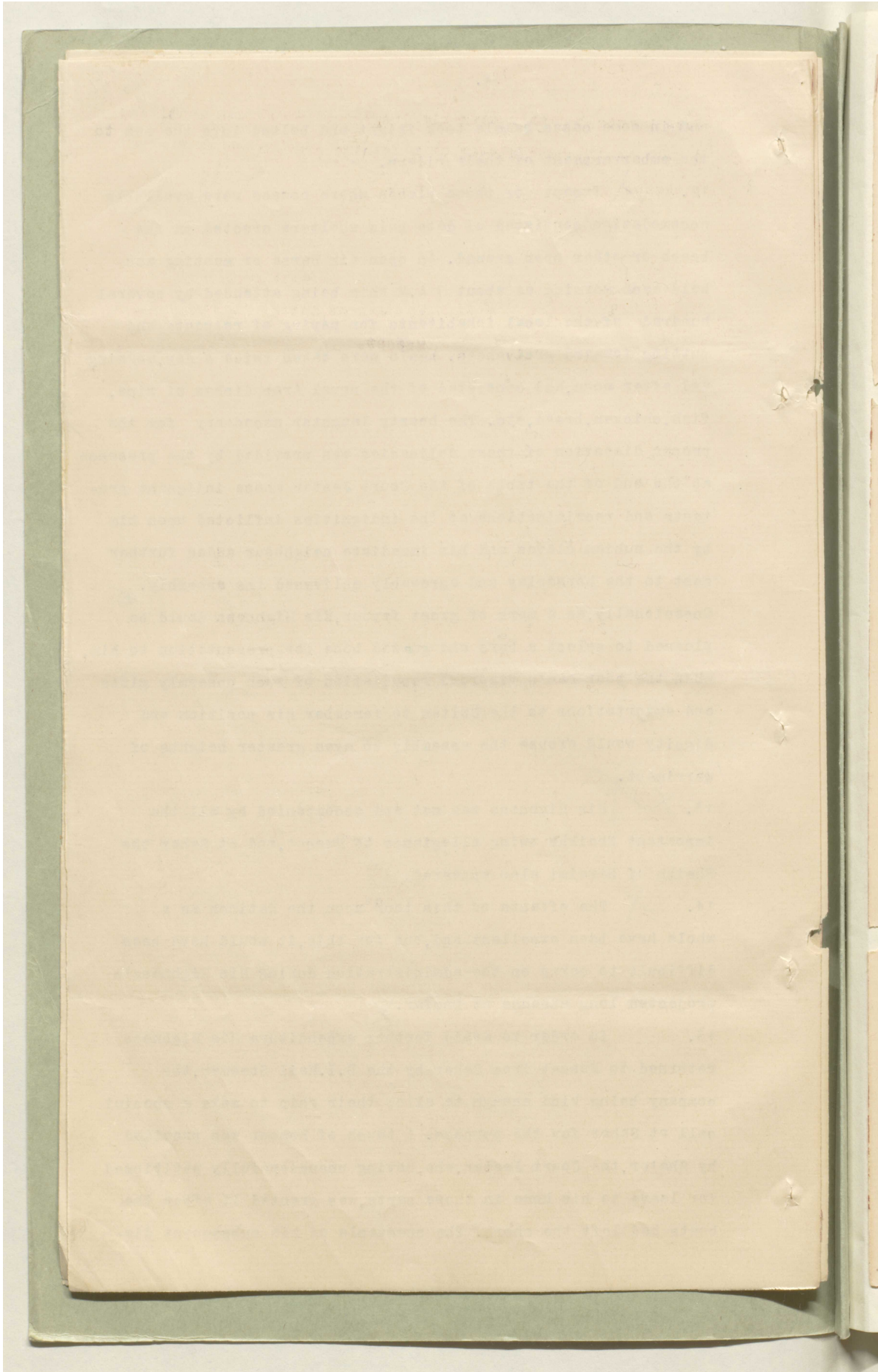
and in some cases camels took fright and bolted into the sea to the embarrassment of their riders. X

12. X Except for those places where houses were available accomodation consisted of date palm shelters erected on the beach or other open ground. An open air Barza or meeting was held each morning at about 7 A.M this being attended by several hundred of the local inhabitants for paying of respects and putting forward greivances. Meals were taken twice a day, morning and after noon, and consisted of the usual Arab dishes of rice, fish, chicken, bread, etc. The hearty laughter necessary for the proper digestion of these delicacies was provided by the presence at the end of the table of the Court Jester whose indignant protests and recriminations at the indignities inflicted upon him by the nubian slaves and his immediate neighbour added further zest to the horseplay and agreeably enlivened the assembly. X Occasionally, as a mark of great favour, His Highness would be pleased to select a bare and gnawed bone for presentation to him, when the poor man's vigorous repudiation of such unseemly gifts and exhortations to the Sultan to remember his position and dignity would arouse the assembly to even greater heights of merriment. X

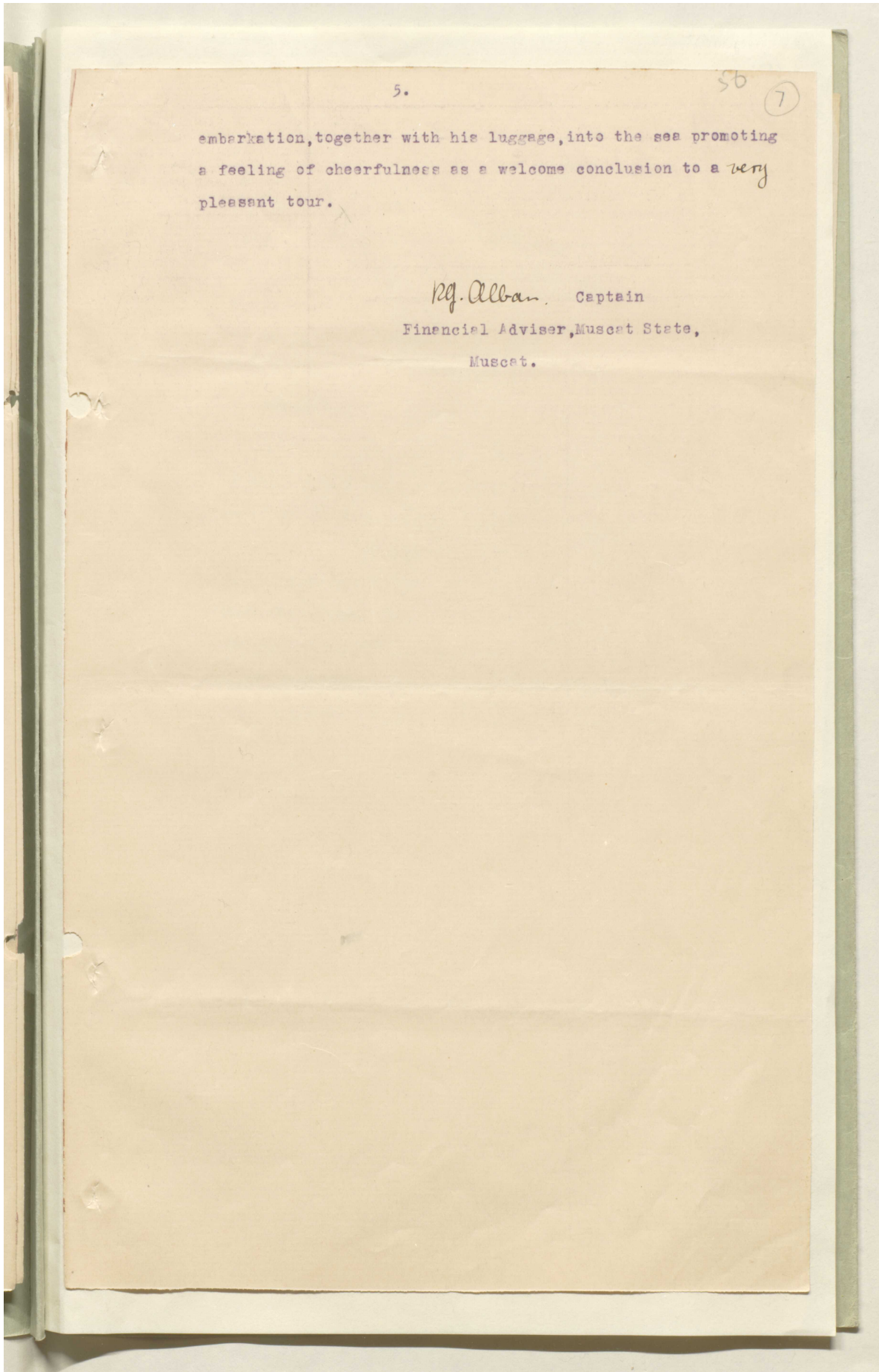
13. X His Highness was met and accompanied by all the important Sheikhs owing allegiance to Muscat, and at Sahar the Sheikh of Bereimi also appeared. X

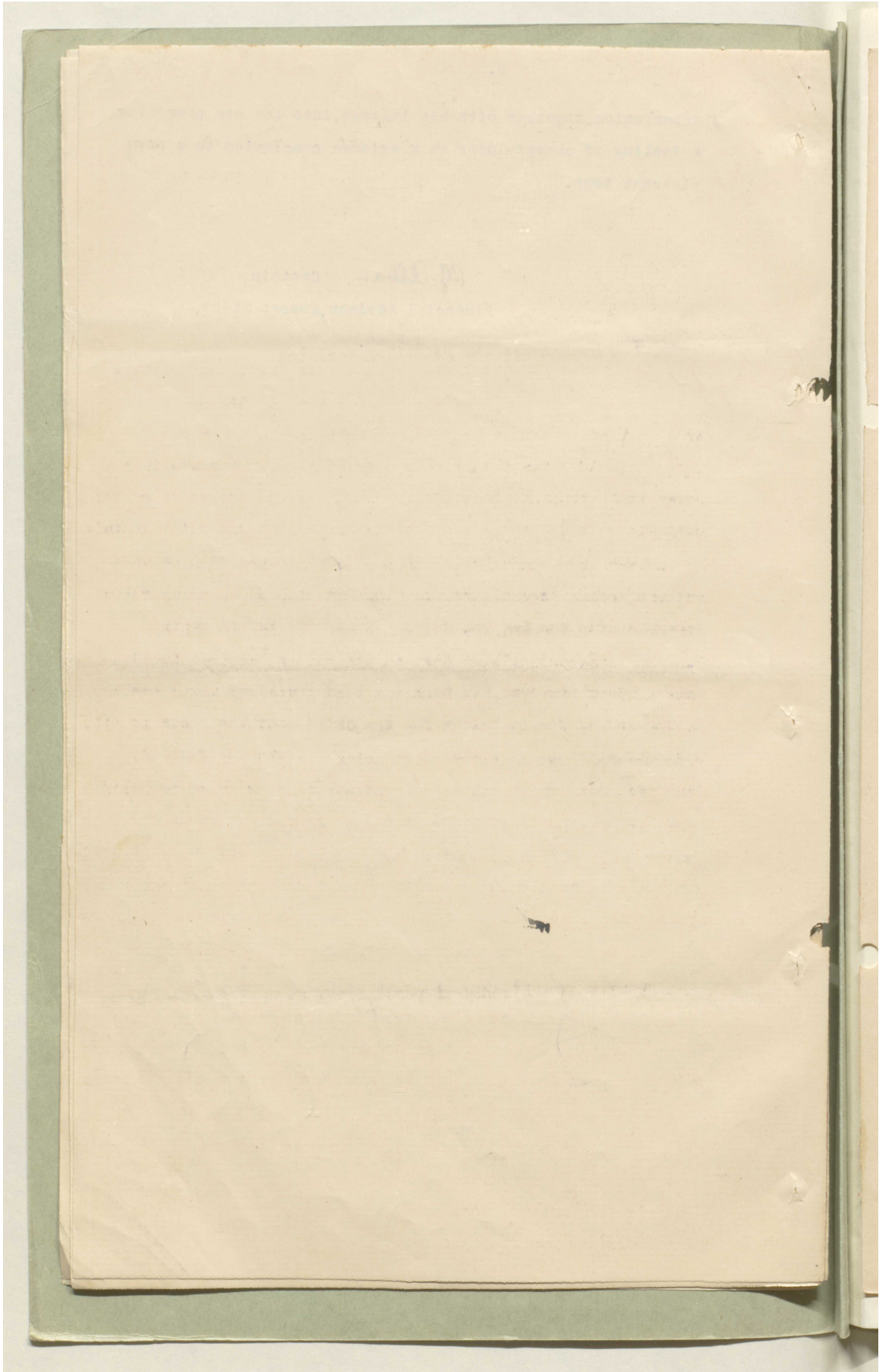
14. X The effects of this tour upon the Batineh as a whole have been excellent and, but for this, it would have been difficult to carry on the administration during His Highness's projected long absence at Dhofar. X

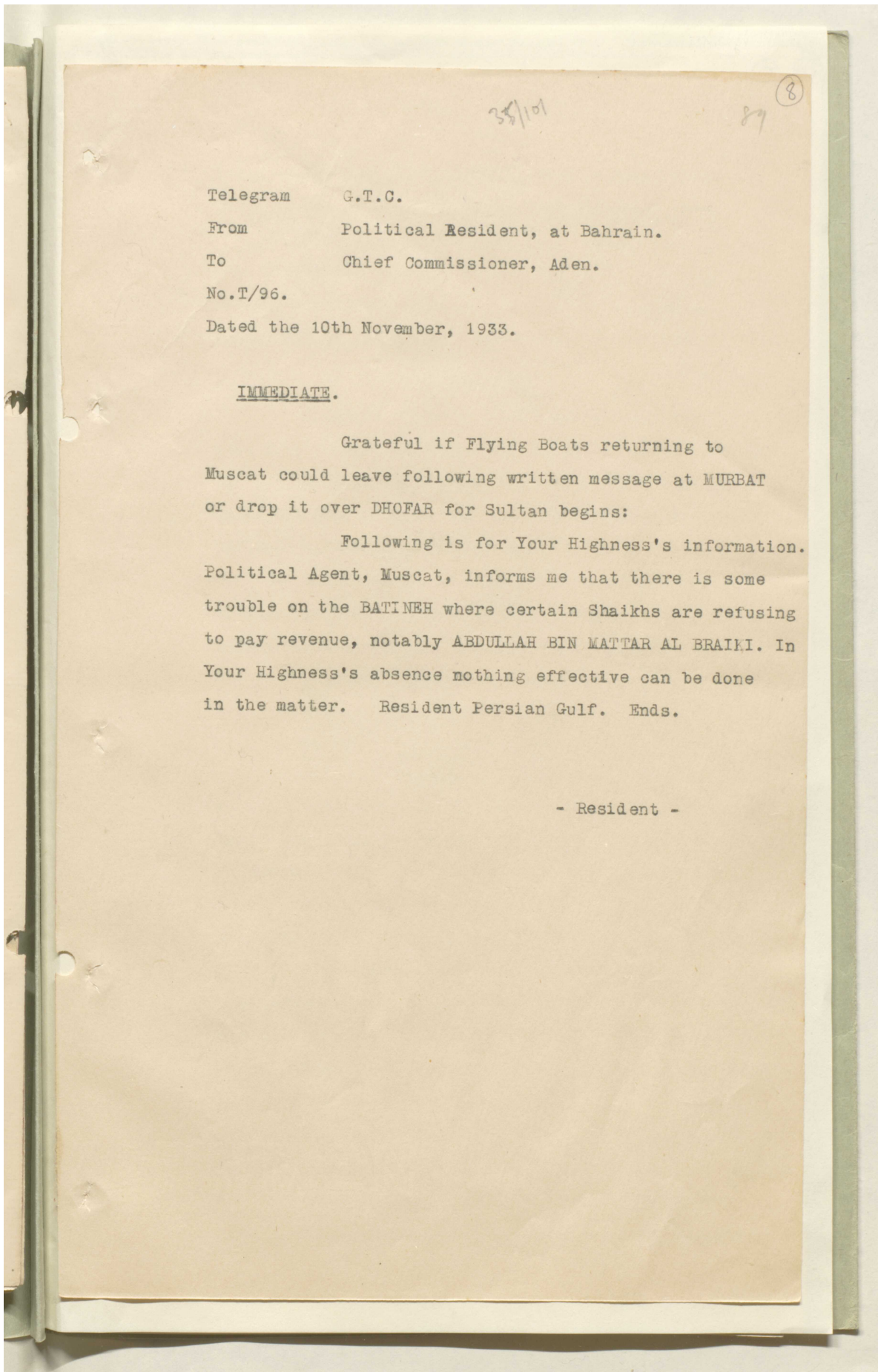
15. In order to avoid further expenditure His Highness returned to Muscat from Sahar by the B.I. Mail Steamer, the company being kind enough to allow their ship to make a special call at Sahar for the purpose. A touch of humour was provided by Sha'ar, the Court Jester, who, having unsuccessfully petitioned for leave to his home in those parts, was granted it after the boats had left the shore. The spectacle of his subsequent dis-



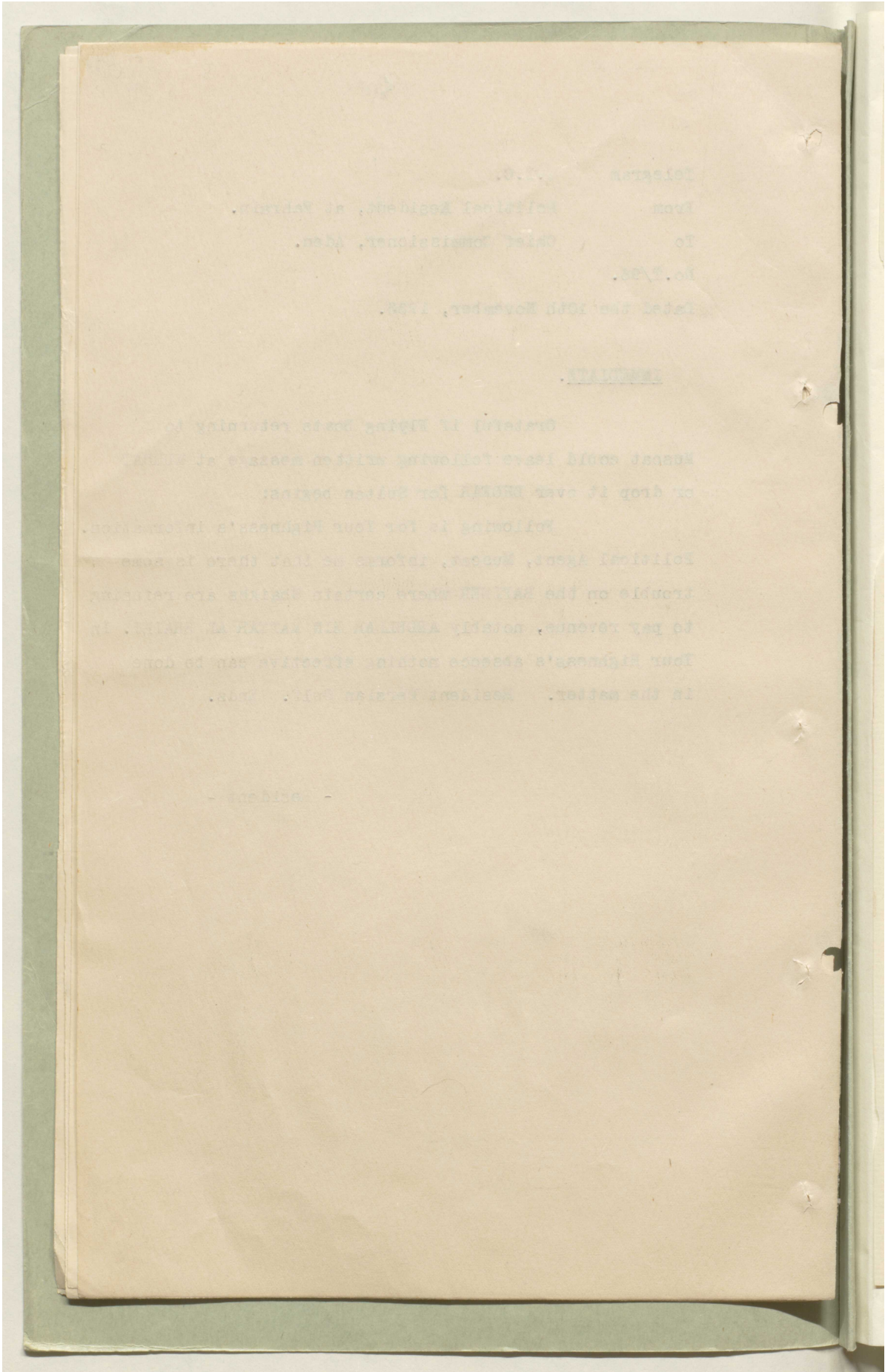
'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [7r] (13/50)

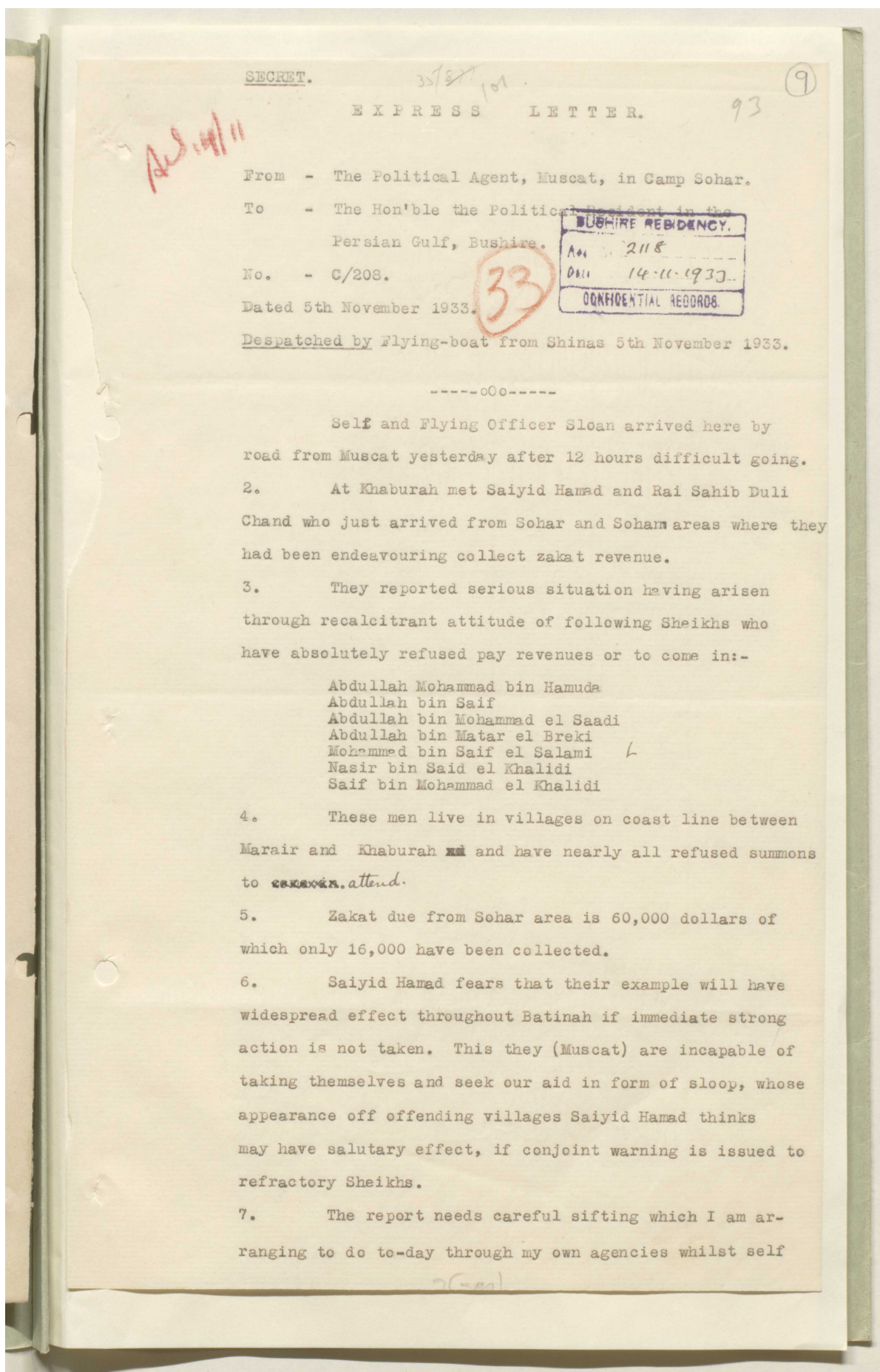


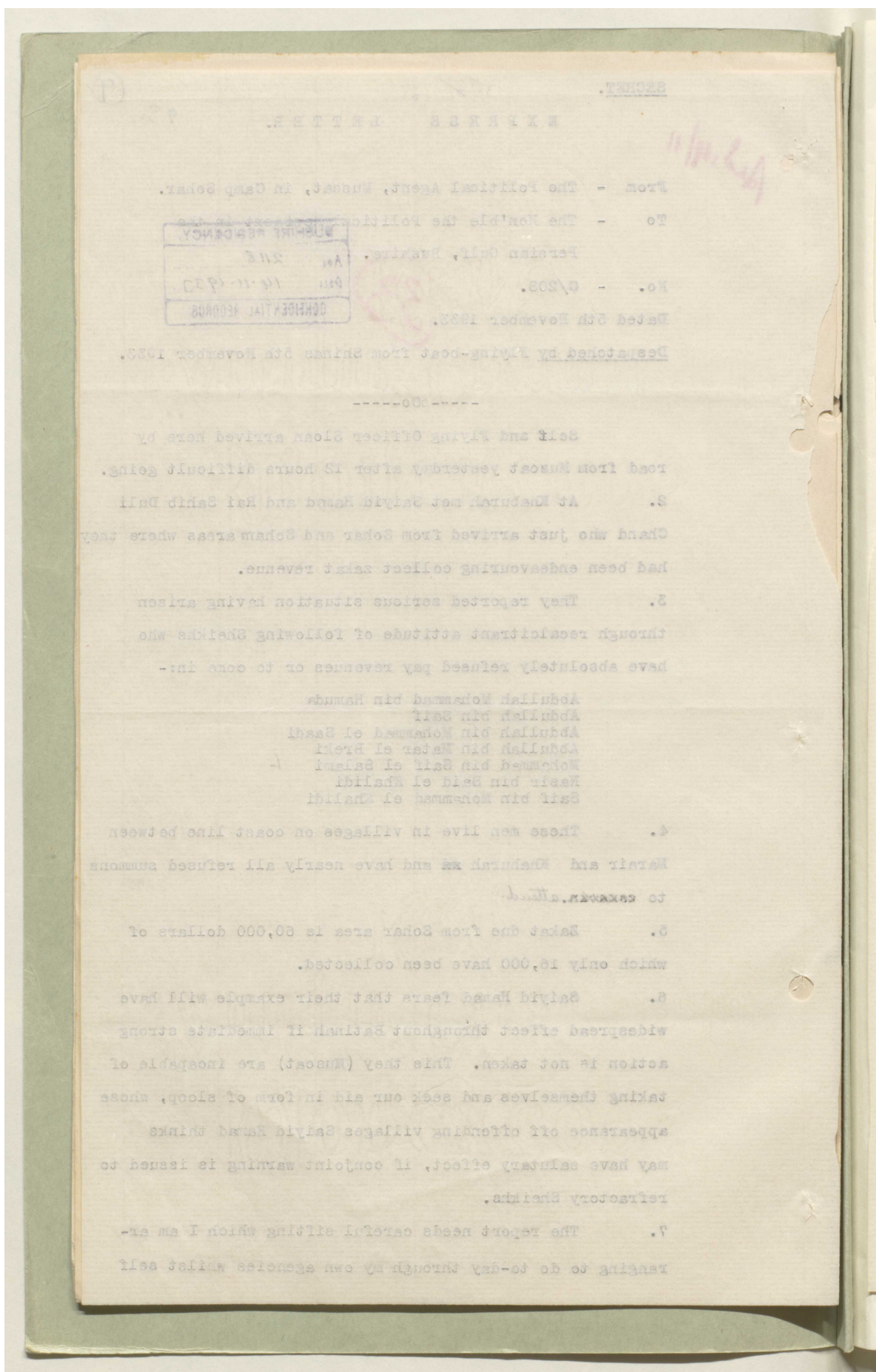




'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [8v] (16/50)







'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [10r] (19/50)

94 (10)
and Sloan are proceeding Shinas to reconnoitre and, if possible, mark out aerodome. This in itself and our opportune arrival in this area may have quieting effect but if the report is confirmed it is obvious that only firm action will restore situation which abounds with adverse possibilities.

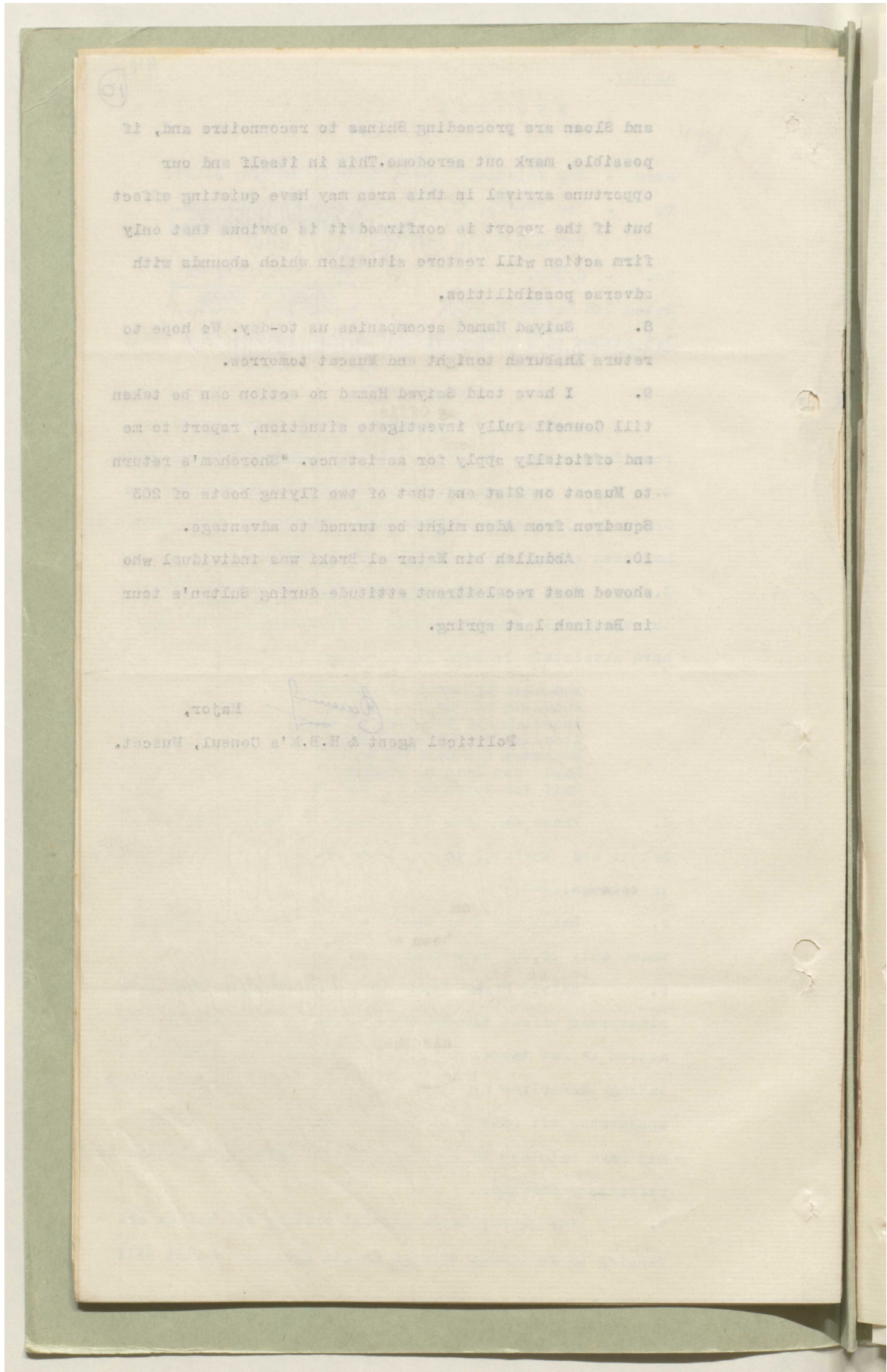
8. Saiyad Hamad accompanies us to-day. We hope to return Khaburah tonight and Muscat tomorrow.

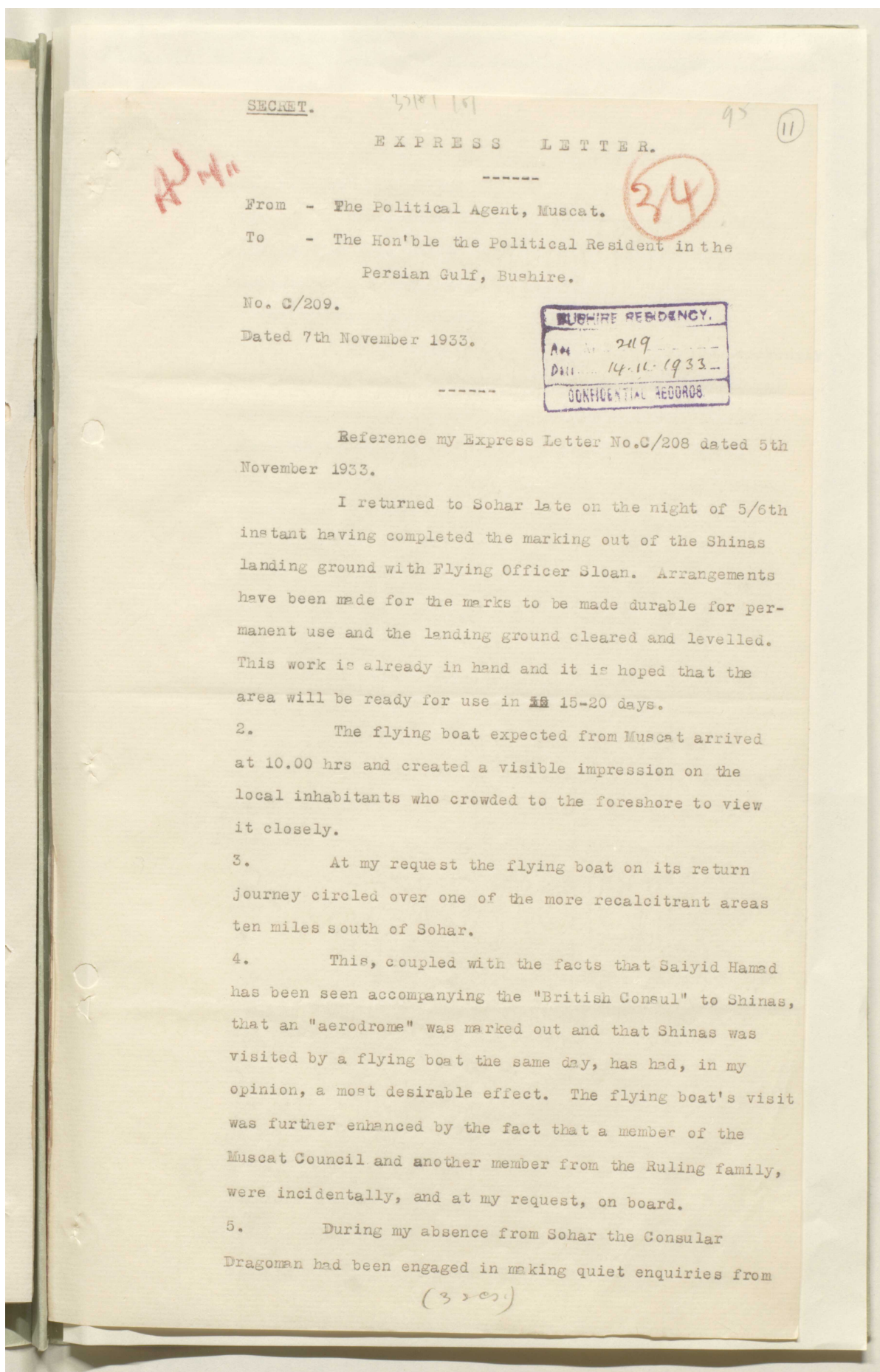
9. I have told Saiyad Hamad no action can be taken till Council fully investigate situation, report to me and officially apply for assistance. "Shoreham's return to Muscat on 21st and that of two flying boats of 203 Squadron from Aden might be turned to advantage.

10. Abdullah bin Matar el Breki was individual who showed most recalcitrant attitude during Sultan's tour in Batinah last spring.

Beaman Major,
Political Agent & H.B.M.'s Consul, Muscat.

'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [10v] (20/50)





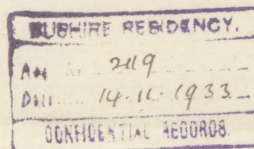
SECRET.

EXPRESS LETTER.

From - The Political Agent, Muscat.
To - The Hon'ble the Political Resident in the
Persian Gulf, Bushire.

No. C/209.

Dated 7th November 1933.



Reference my Express Letter No.C/208 dated 5th
November 1933.

I returned to Sohar late on the night of 5/6th
instant having completed the marking out of the Shinas
landing ground with Flying Officer Sloan. Arrangements
have been made for the marks to be made durable for per-
manent use and the landing ground cleared and levelled.
This work is already in hand and it is hoped that the
area will be ready for use in ~~10~~ 15-20 days.

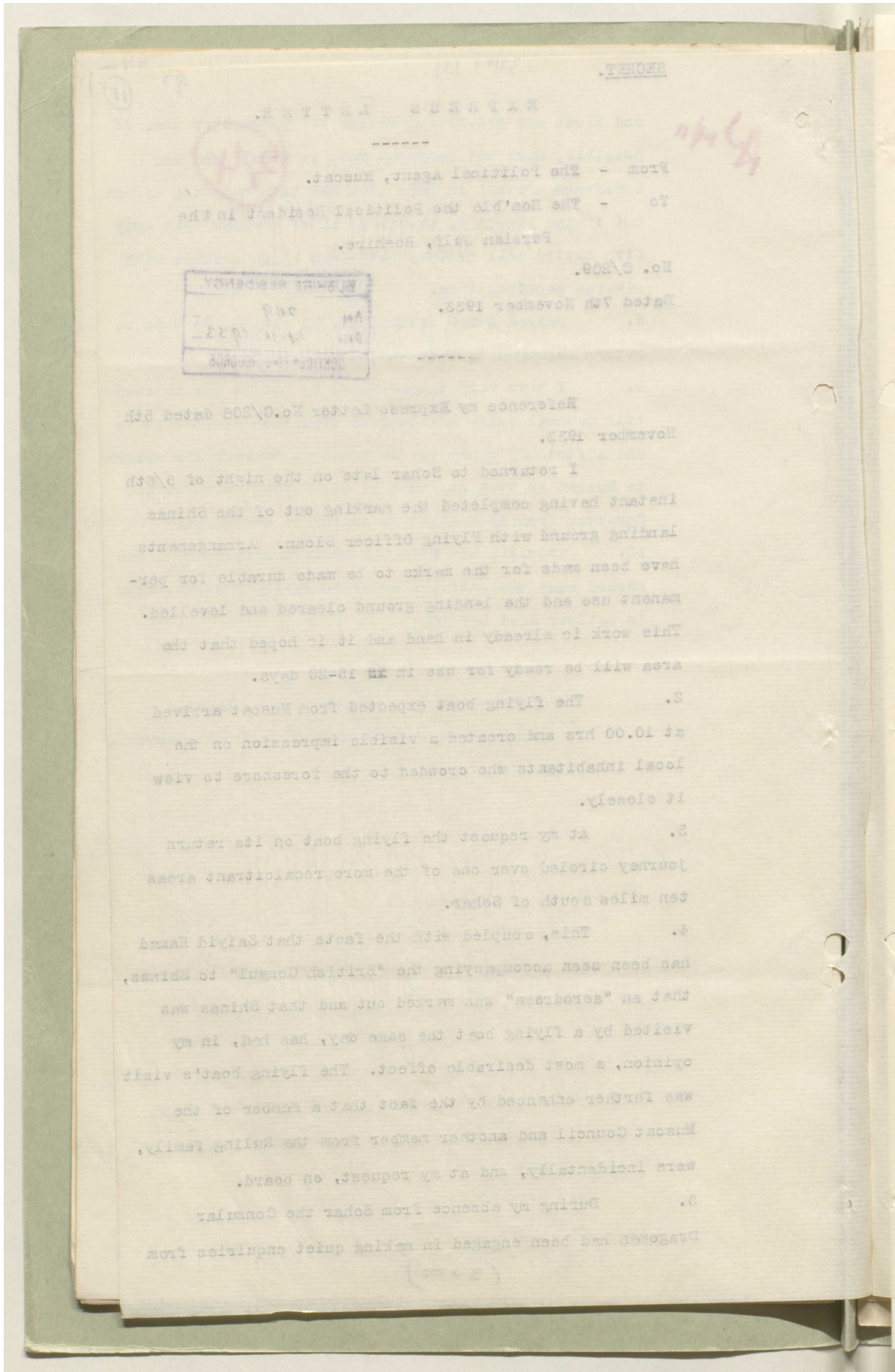
2. The flying boat expected from Muscat arrived
at 10.00 hrs and created a visible impression on the
local inhabitants who crowded to the foreshore to view
it closely.

3. At my request the flying boat on its return
journey circled over one of the more recalcitrant areas
ten miles south of Sohar.

4. This, coupled with the facts that Saiyid Hamad
has been seen accompanying the "British Consul" to Shinas,
that an "aerodrome" was marked out and that Shinas was
visited by a flying boat the same day, has had, in my
opinion, a most desirable effect. The flying boat's visit
was further enhanced by the fact that a member of the
Muscat Council and another member from the Ruling family,
were incidentally, and at my request, on board.

5. During my absence from Sohar the Consular
Dragoman had been engaged in making quiet enquiries from

(3 > 02)



96 (12)
various sources as to the amount of revenue that had actually been collected.

6. As a result of these enquiries it transpires that at any rate 20,000 dollars, if not more, have been collected. It remains to be seen if this amount is credited into the Treasury.

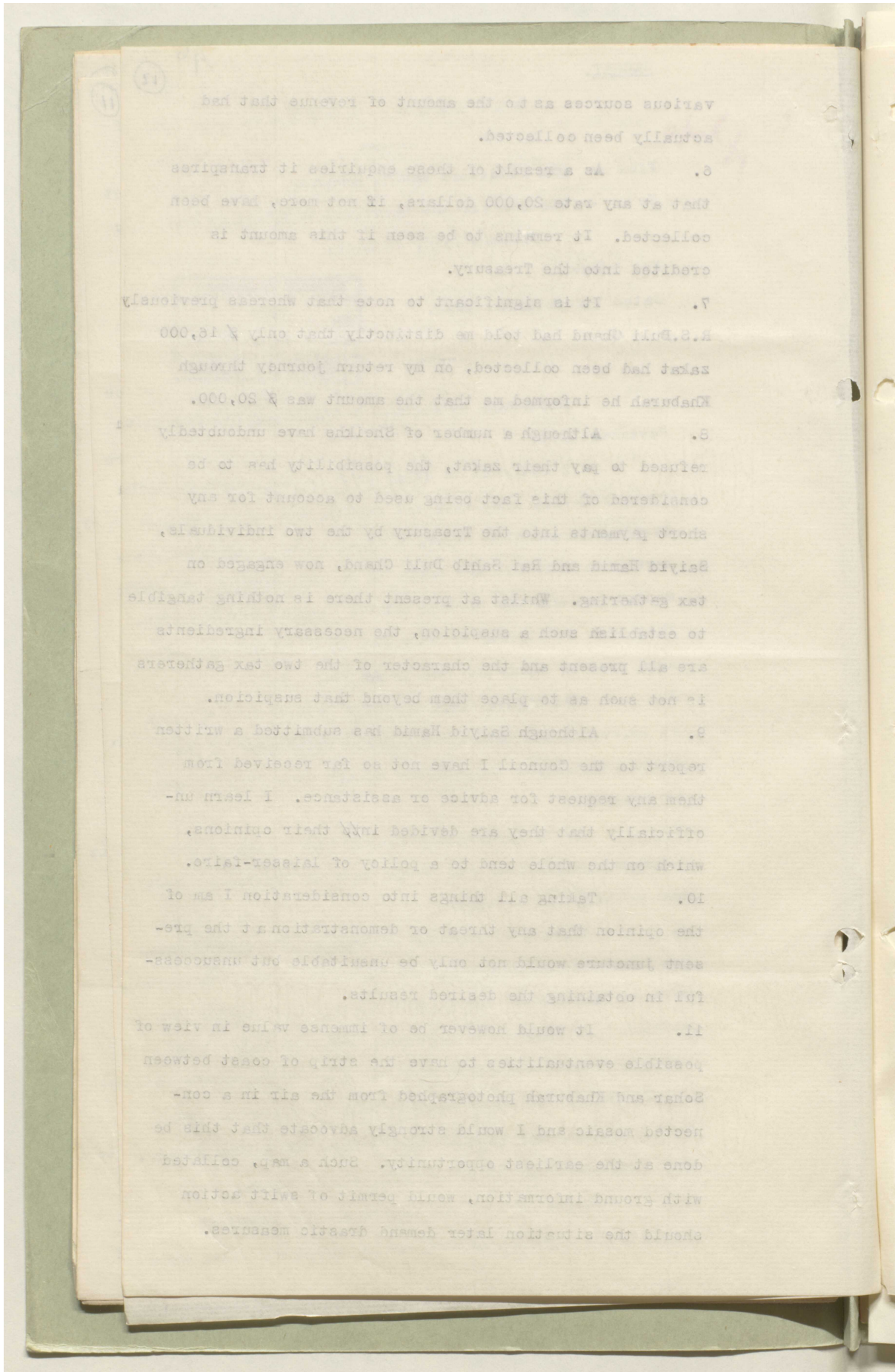
7. It is significant to note that whereas previously R.S.Duli Chand had told me distinctly that only ₹ 16,000 zakat had been collected, on my return journey through Khaburah he informed me that the amount was ₹ 20,000.

8. Although a number of Sheikhs have undoubtedly refused to pay their zakat, the possibility has to be considered of this fact being used to account for any short payments into the Treasury by the two individuals, Saiyid Hamid and Rai Sahib Duli Chand, now engaged on tax gathering. Whilst at present there is nothing tangible to establish such a suspicion, the necessary ingredients are all present and the character of the two tax gatherers is not such as to place them beyond that suspicion.

9. Although Saiyid Hamid has submitted a written report to the Council I have not so far received from them any request for advice or assistance. I learn unofficially that they are divided in~~ly~~ their opinions, which on the whole tend to a policy of laissez-faire.

10. Taking all things into consideration I am of the opinion that any threat or demonstration at the present juncture would not only be unsuitable but unsuccessful in obtaining the desired results.

11. It would however be of immense value in view of possible eventualities to have the strip of coast between Sohar and Khaburah photographed from the air in a connected mosaic and I would strongly advocate that this be done at the earliest opportunity. Such a map, collated with ground information, would permit of swift action should the situation later demand drastic measures.

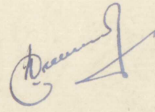


'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [13r] (25/50)

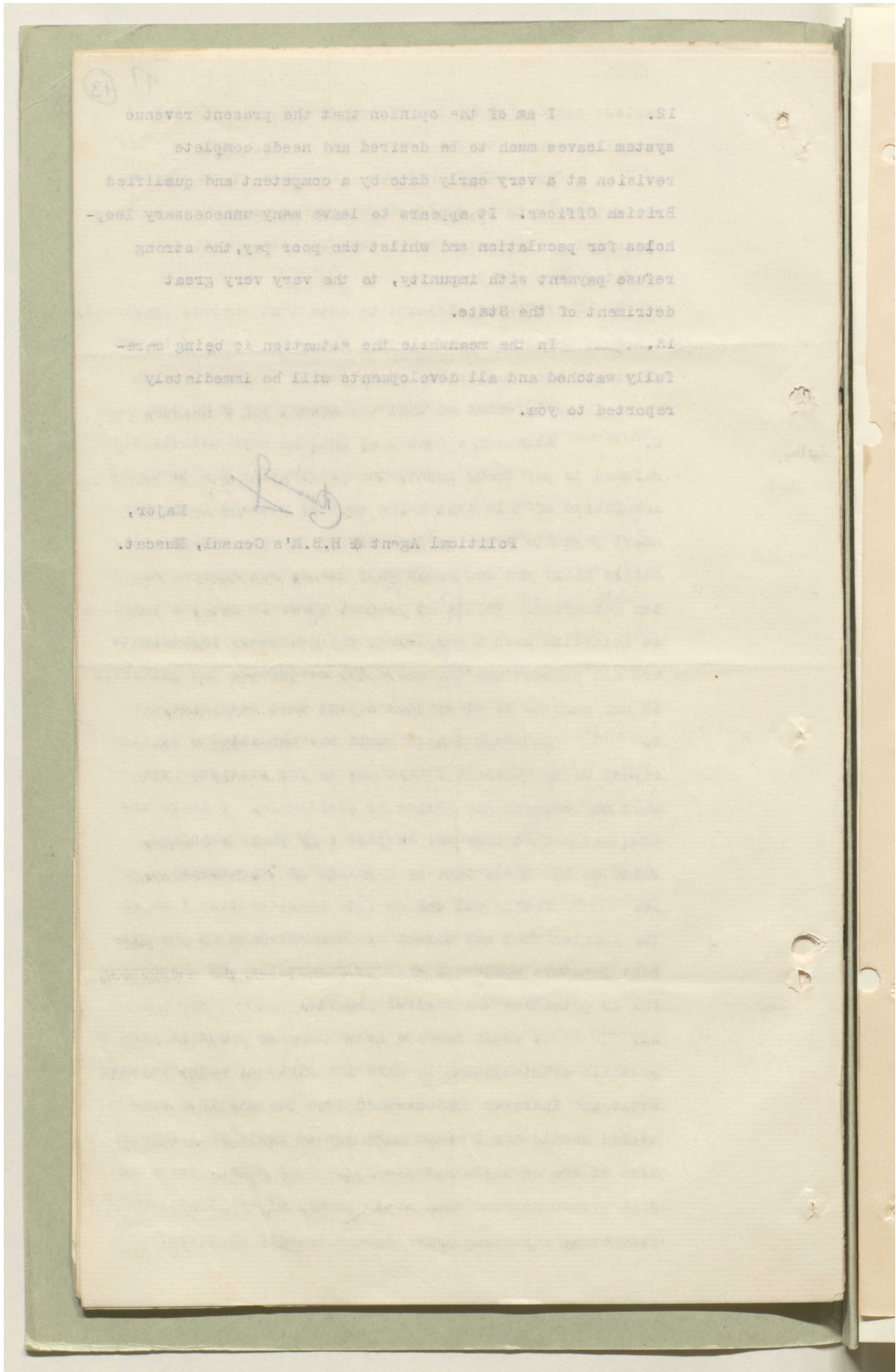
97 (13)

12. I am of the opinion that the present revenue system leaves much to be desired and needs complete revision at a very early date by a competent and qualified British Officer. It appears to leave many unnecessary loopholes for peculation and whilst the poor pay, the strong refuse payment with impunity, to the very very great detriment of the State.

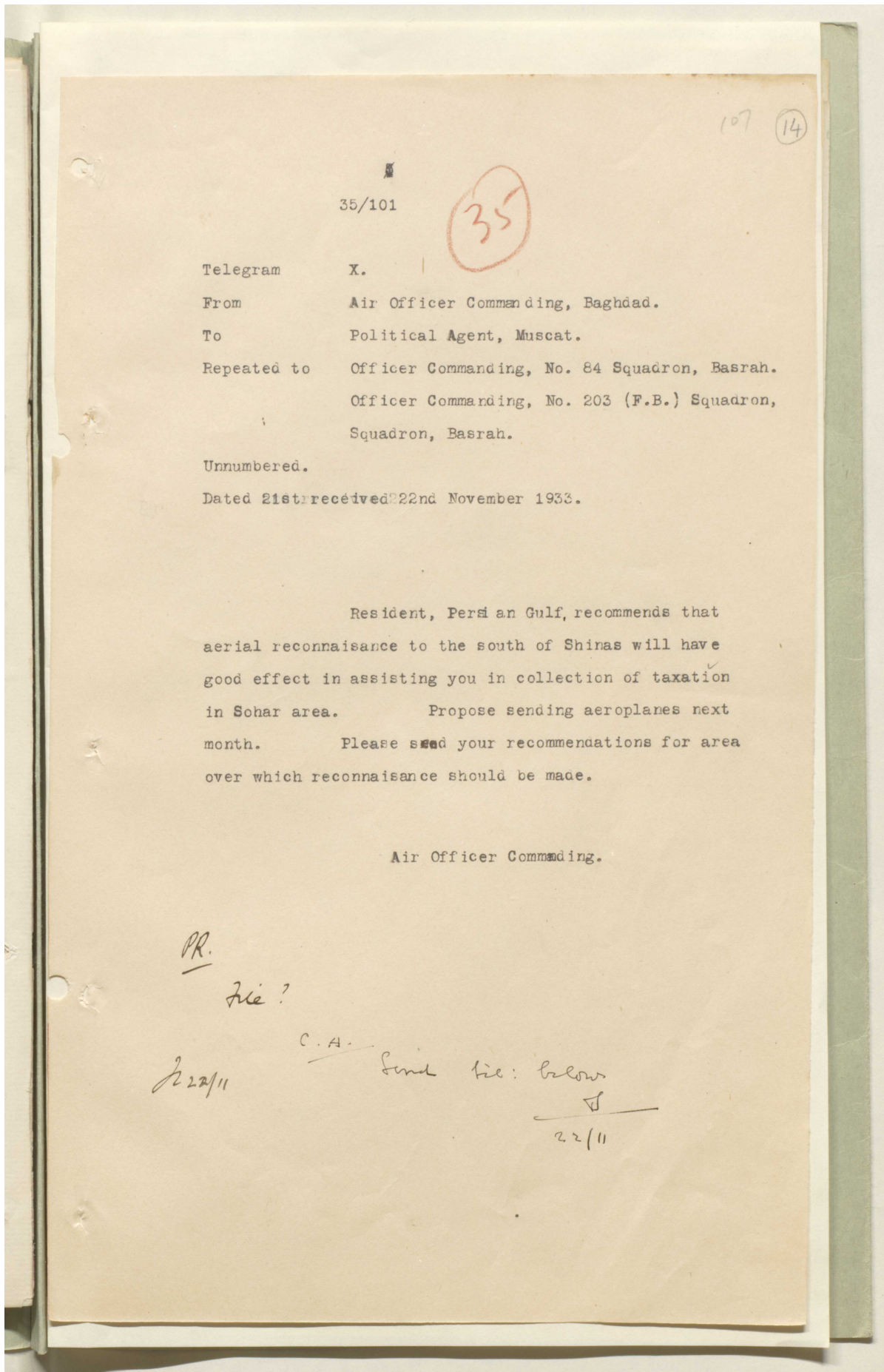
13. In the meanwhile the situation is being carefully watched and all developments will be immediately reported to you.



Major,
Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul, Muscat.



'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [14r] (27/50)



35/101

Telegram X.
From Air Officer Commanding, Baghdad.
To Political Agent, Muscat.
Repeated to Officer Commanding, No. 84 Squadron, Basrah.
Officer Commanding, No. 203 (F.B.) Squadron,
Squadron, Basrah.

Unnumbered.

Dated 21st received 22nd November 1933.

Resident, Persian Gulf, recommends that
aerial reconnaissance to the south of Shinas will have
good effect in assisting you in collection of taxation
in Sohar area. Propose sending aeroplanes next
month. Please send your recommendations for area
over which reconnaissance should be made.

Air Officer Commanding.

PR.

file?

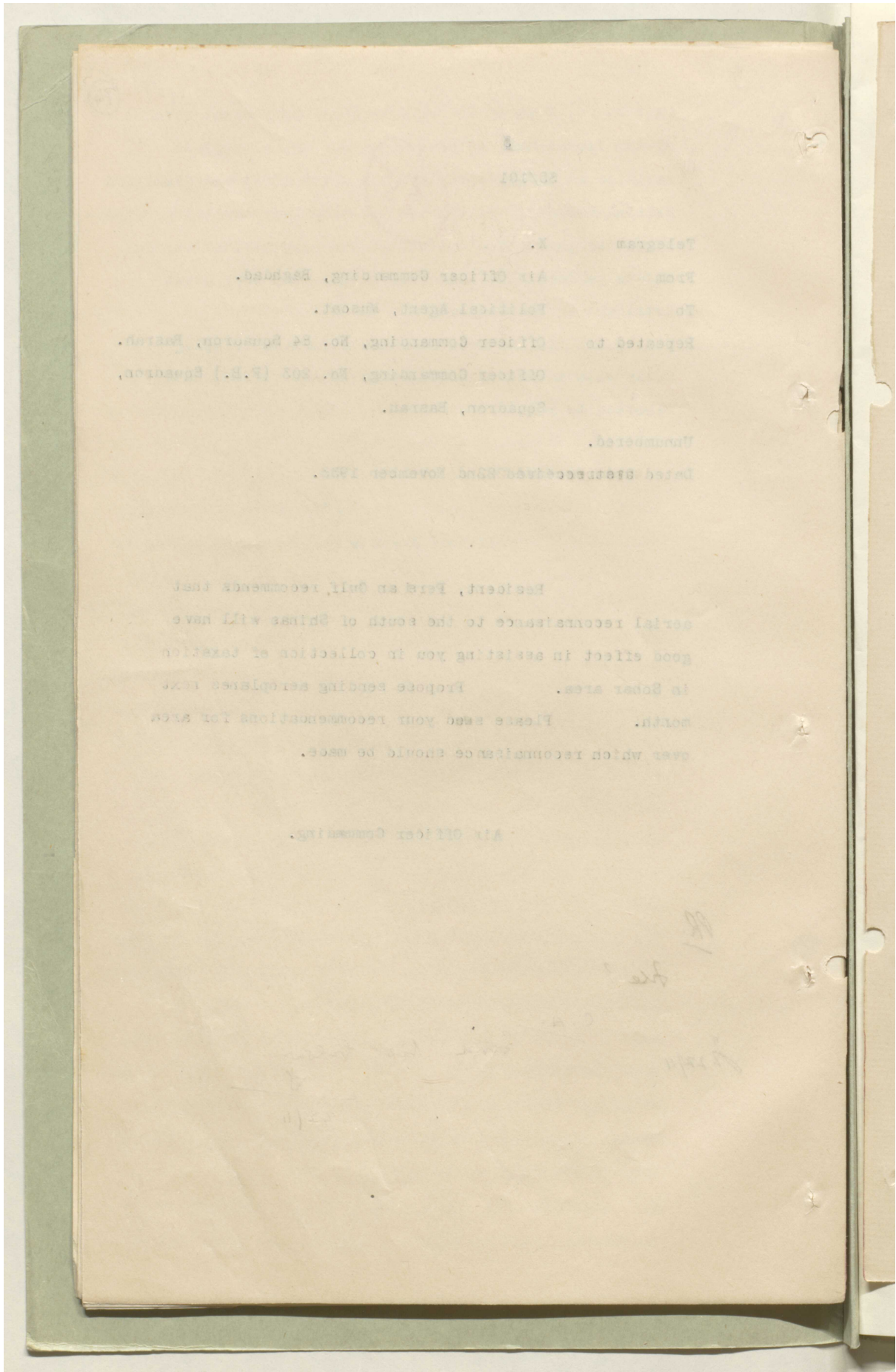
22/11

C.A.

Send file: below

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22/11

'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [14v] (28/50)



'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [15r] (29/50)

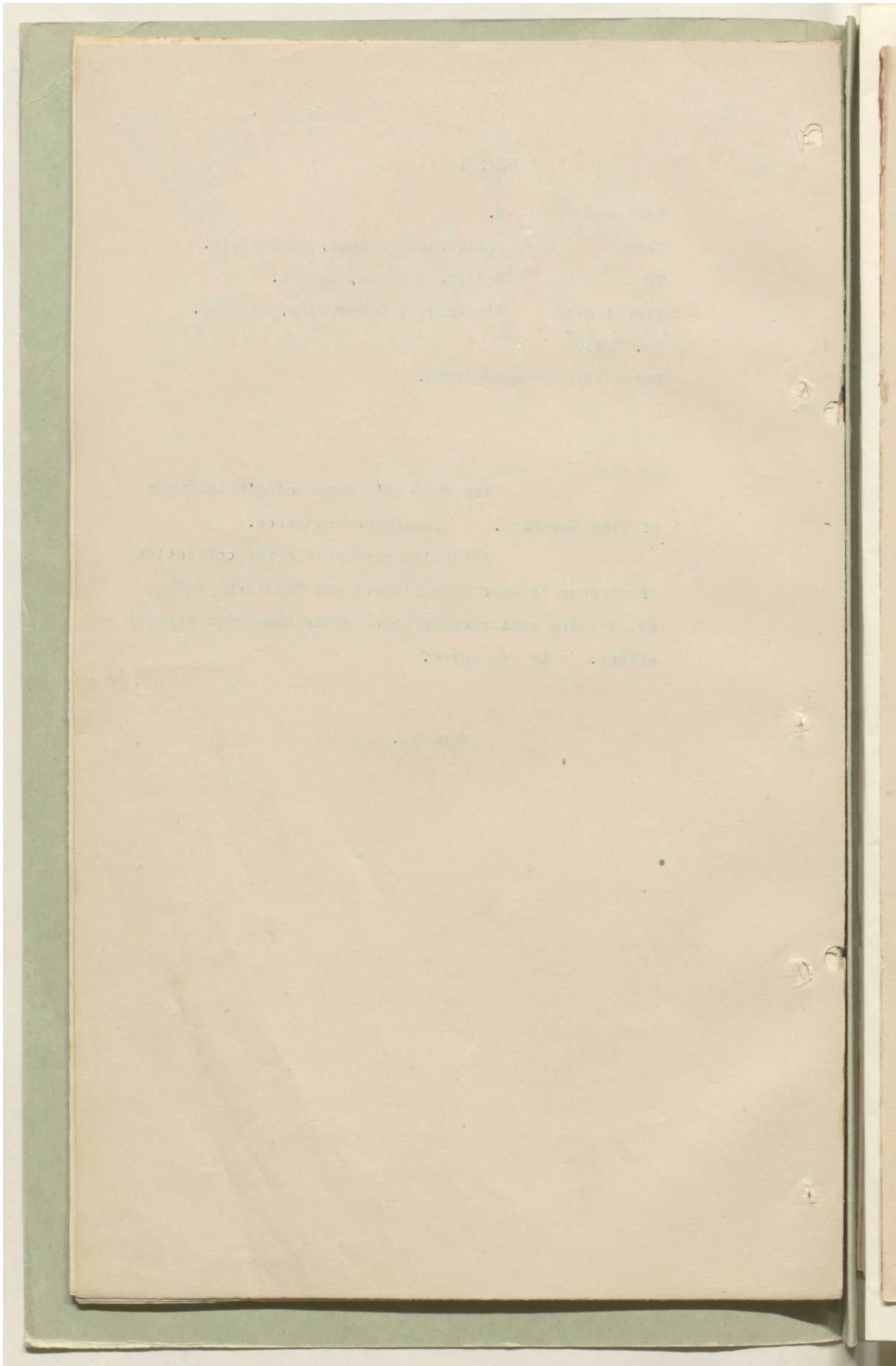
35/101

Telegram X.
From Political Resident, at Bahrain.
To Political Agent, Muscat.
Repeated to Air Officer Commanding, Baghdad.
No. T/119
Dated 22nd November 1933.

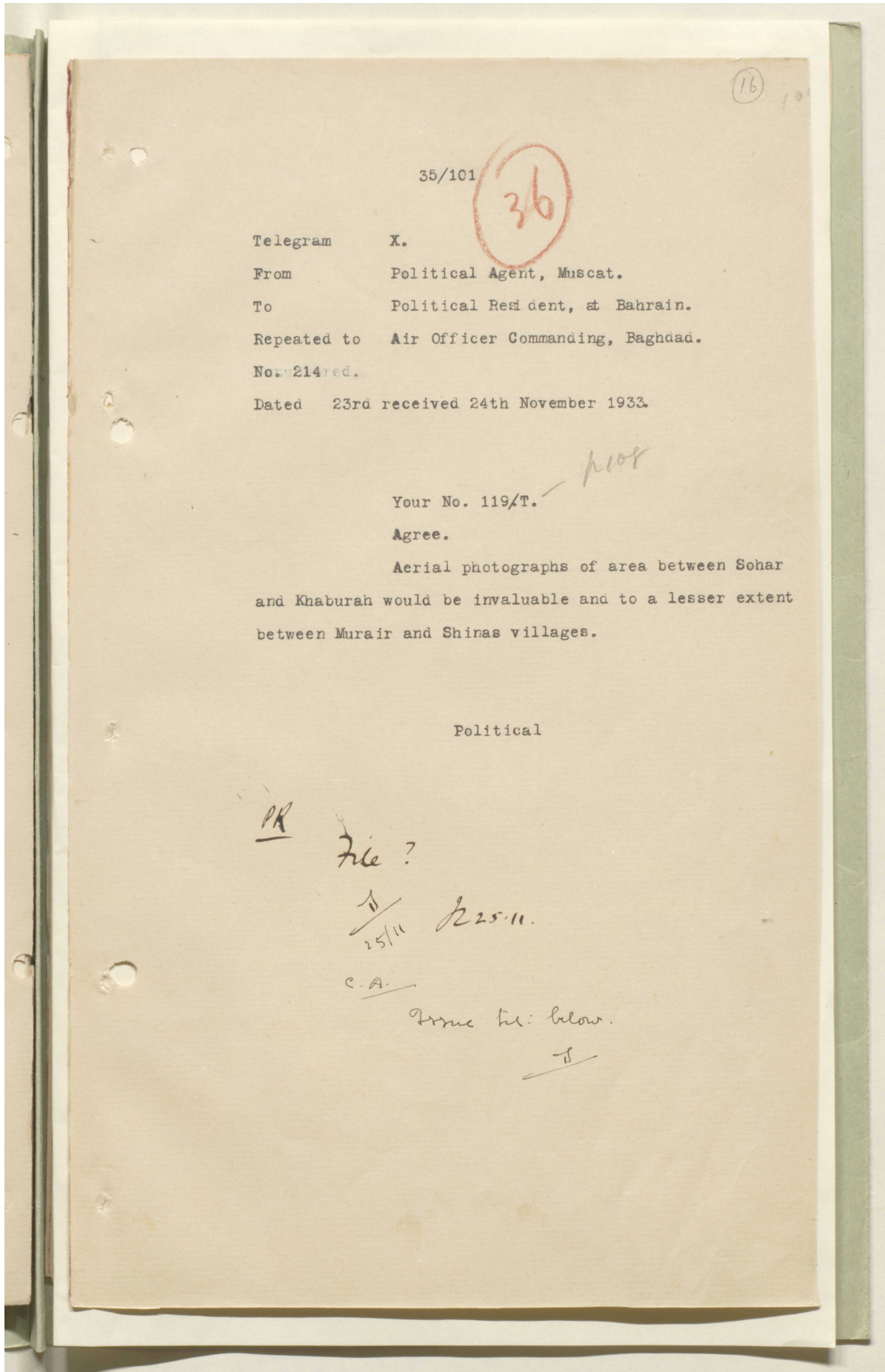
Air Officer's Commanding's telegram
of 21st November. Sohar Reconnaissance.

Authority responsible for collection
of revenue is Muscat Government not Political Agent
but I think that reconnaissance would have good general
effect. Do you agree?

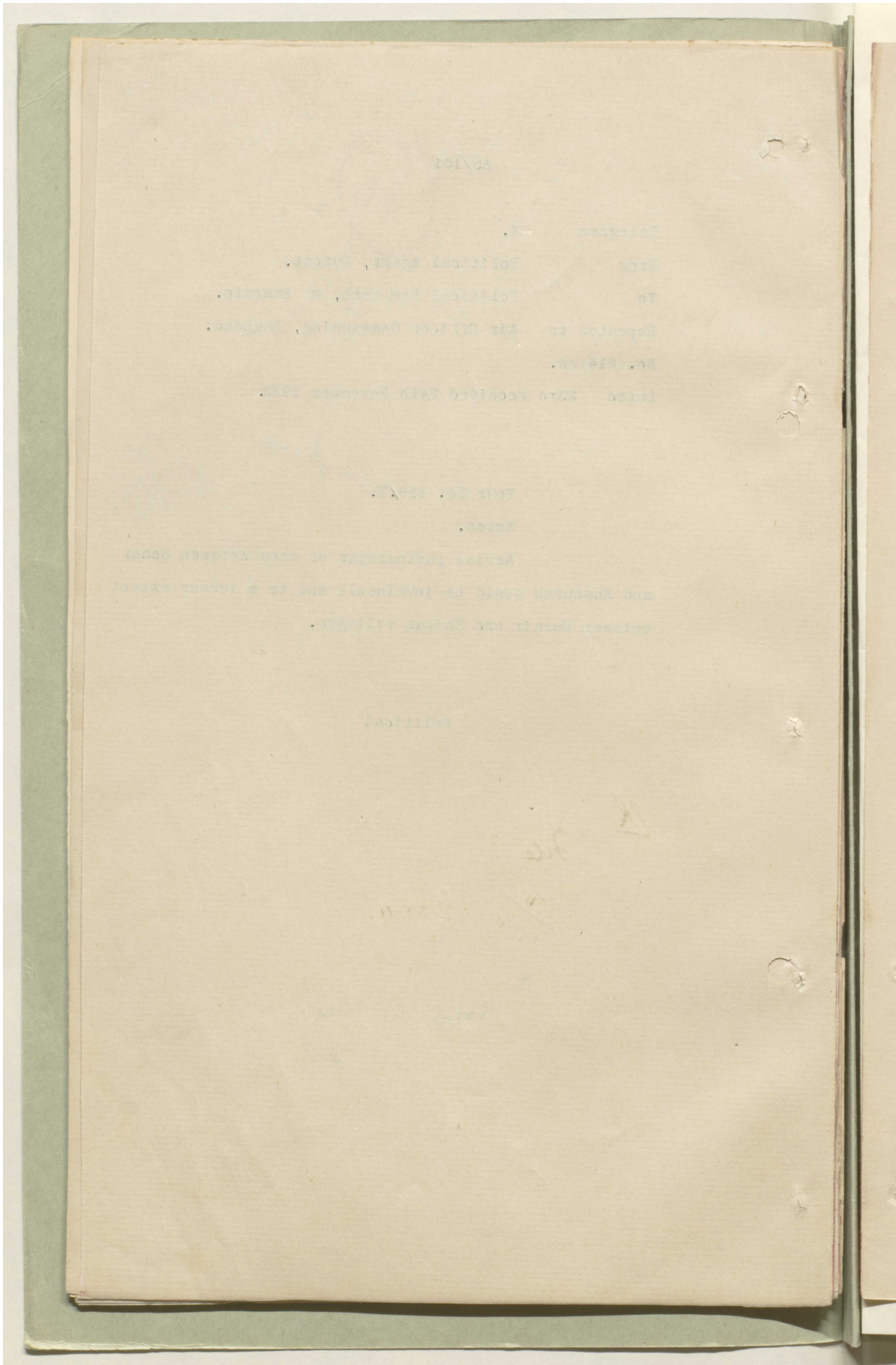
Resident.



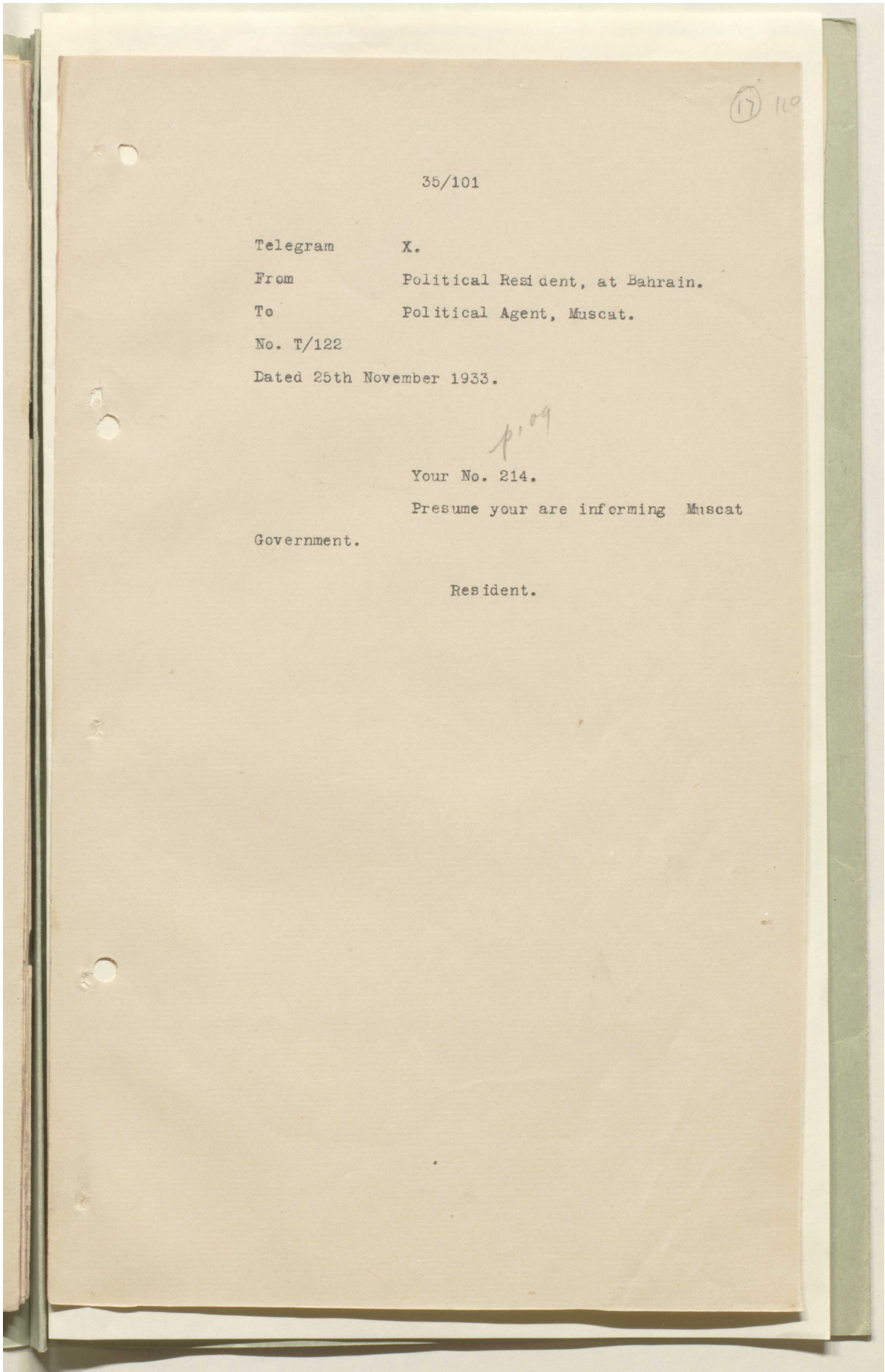
'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [16r] (31/50)

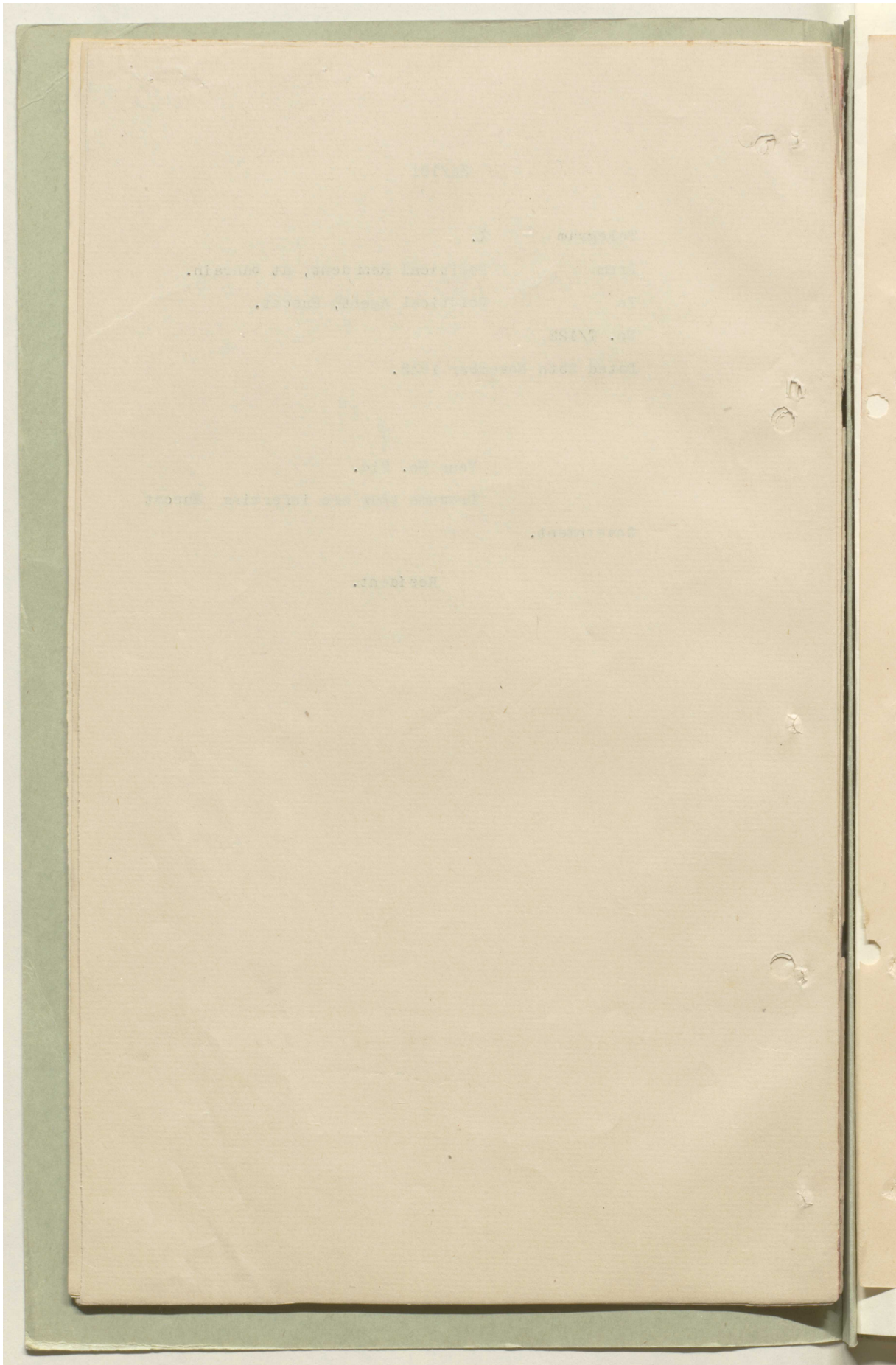


'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [16v] (32/50)

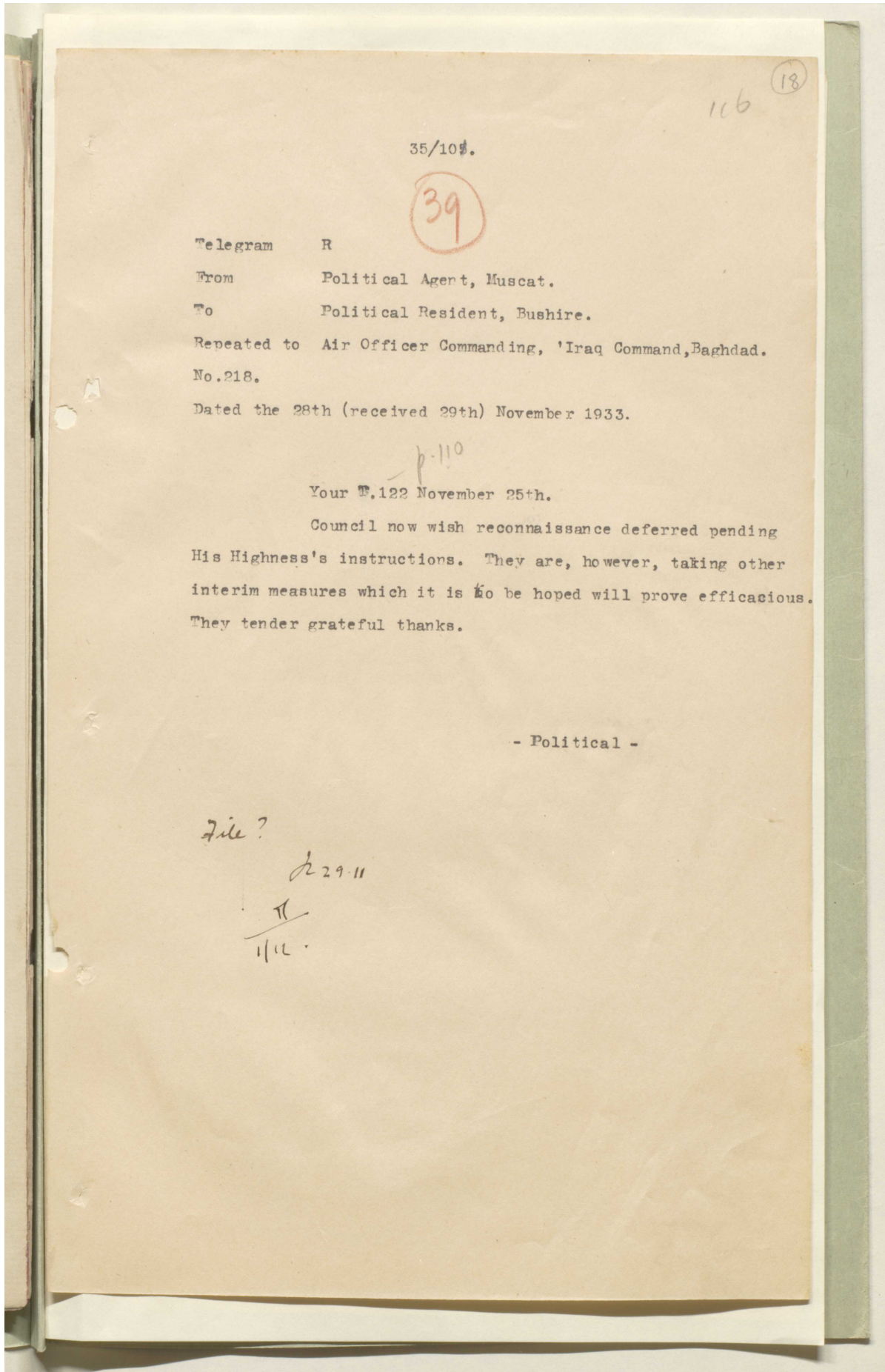


'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [17r] (33/50)





'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [18r] (35/50)



35/101.

(39)

Telegram R
From Political Agent, Muscat.
To Political Resident, Bushire.
Repeated to Air Officer Commanding, 'Iraq Command, Baghdad.
No. 218.

Dated the 28th (received 29th) November 1933.

p-110
Your T. 122 November 25th.

Council now wish reconnaissance deferred pending His Highness's instructions. They are, however, taking other interim measures which it is to be hoped will prove efficacious. They tender grateful thanks.

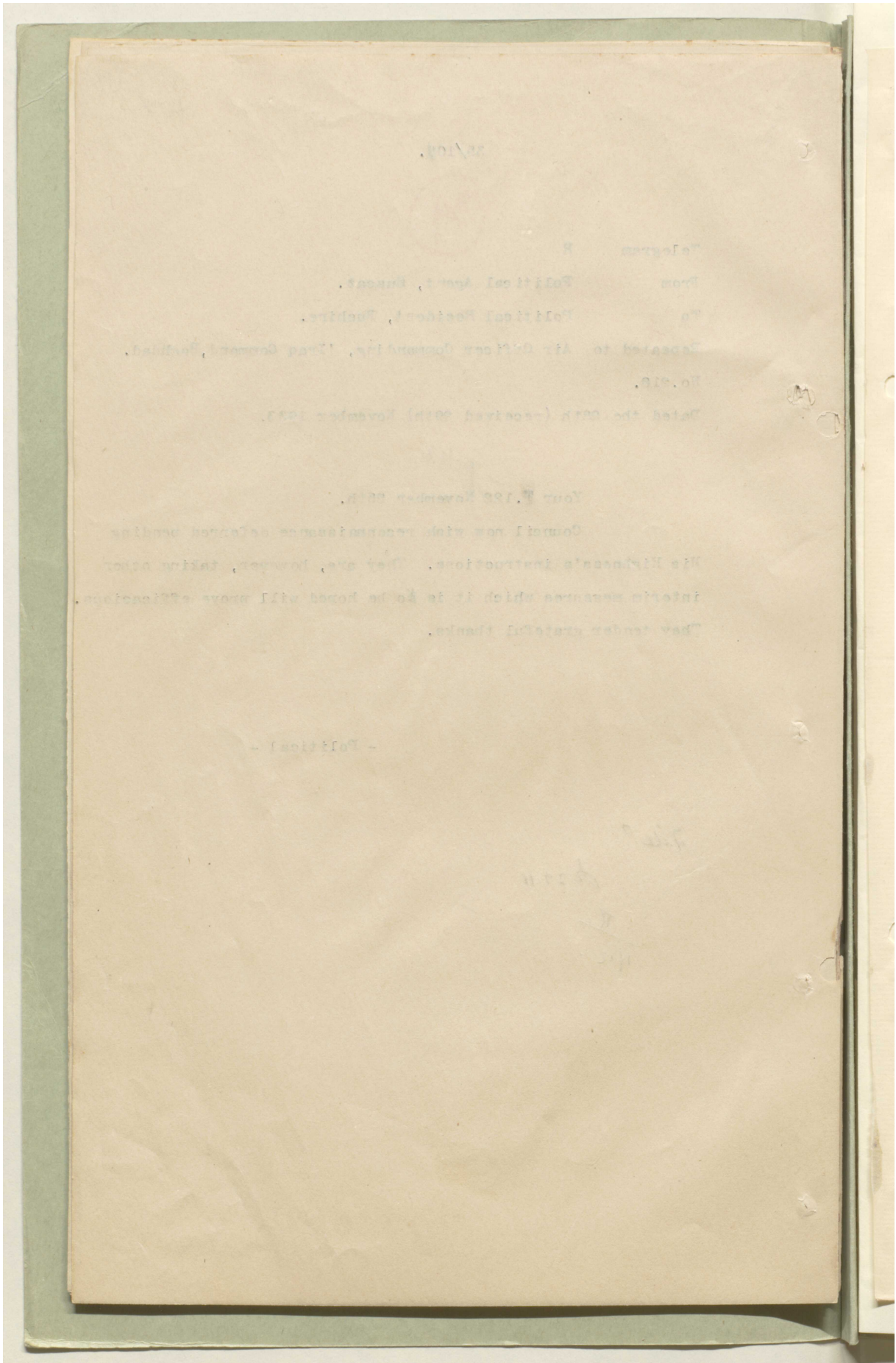
- Political -

file?

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'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [18v] (36/50)



35/101

Confidential.

No.C/298 of 1934. 172 (19)

Political Agency and H.B.M's Consulate.
Muscat, 17th December 1934.

33/107
26/12

From,
Major C.E.U.Bremner, M.C.,
Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul, Muscat.

BUSHIRE RESIDENCY.
Ans. 1933
Date 26.12.34.
CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS.

To,
The Hon'ble the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf,
Bushire.

(59)

Sir,

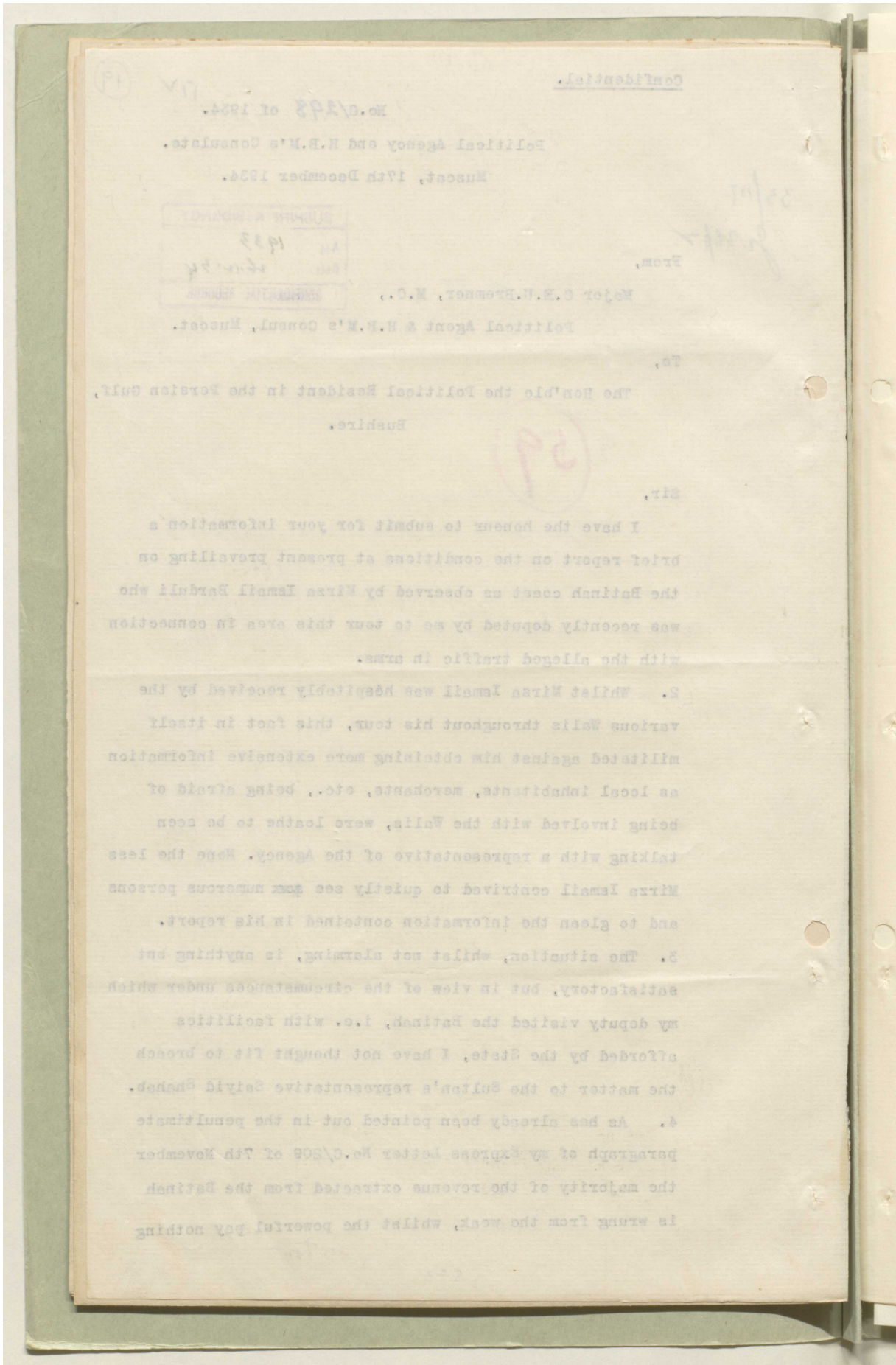
I have the honour to submit for your information a brief report on the conditions at present prevailing on the Batinah coast as observed by Mirza Ismail Barduli who was recently deputed by me to tour this area in connection with the alleged traffic in arms.

2. Whilst Mirza Ismail was hospitably received by the various Walis throughout his tour, this fact in itself militated against him obtaining more extensive information as local inhabitants, merchants, etc., being afraid of being involved with the Walis, were loathe to be seen talking with a representative of the Agency. None the less Mirza Ismail contrived to quietly see ~~xxx~~ numerous persons and to glean the information contained in his report.

3. The situation, whilst not alarming, is anything but satisfactory, but in view of the circumstances under which my deputy visited the Batinah, i.e. with facilities afforded by the State, I have not thought fit to broach the matter to the Sultan's representative Saiyid Shahab.

4. As has already been pointed out in the penultimate paragraph of my Express Letter No.C/209 of 7th November the majority of the revenue extracted from the Batinah is wrung from the weak, whilst the powerful pay nothing

250.
2 Tom



'File 35/101 VI A 64 Miscellaneous Muscat papers' [20r] (39/50)

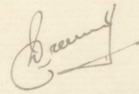
2.

173 (20)
or just whatever they wish to pay. It would seem to be merely a matter of time before the present policy of exactions will drive those that do pay ~~taxes~~ of revenue to cut their losses and emigrate elsewhere.

I have the honour to be,

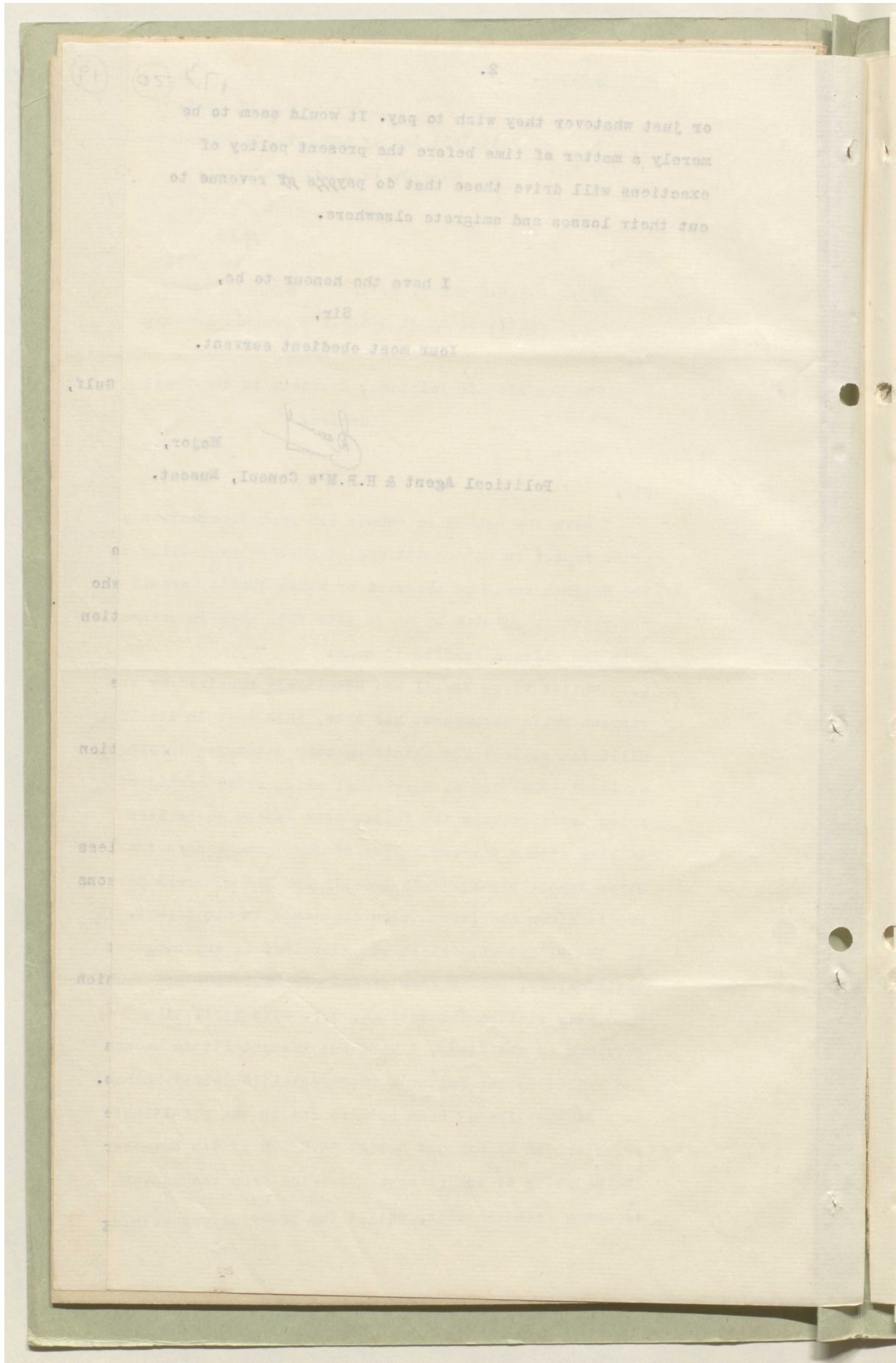
Sir,

Your most obedient servant.



Major,

Political Agent & H.B.M's Consul, Muscat.



Report on the condition of the Batinah. 174 (21)

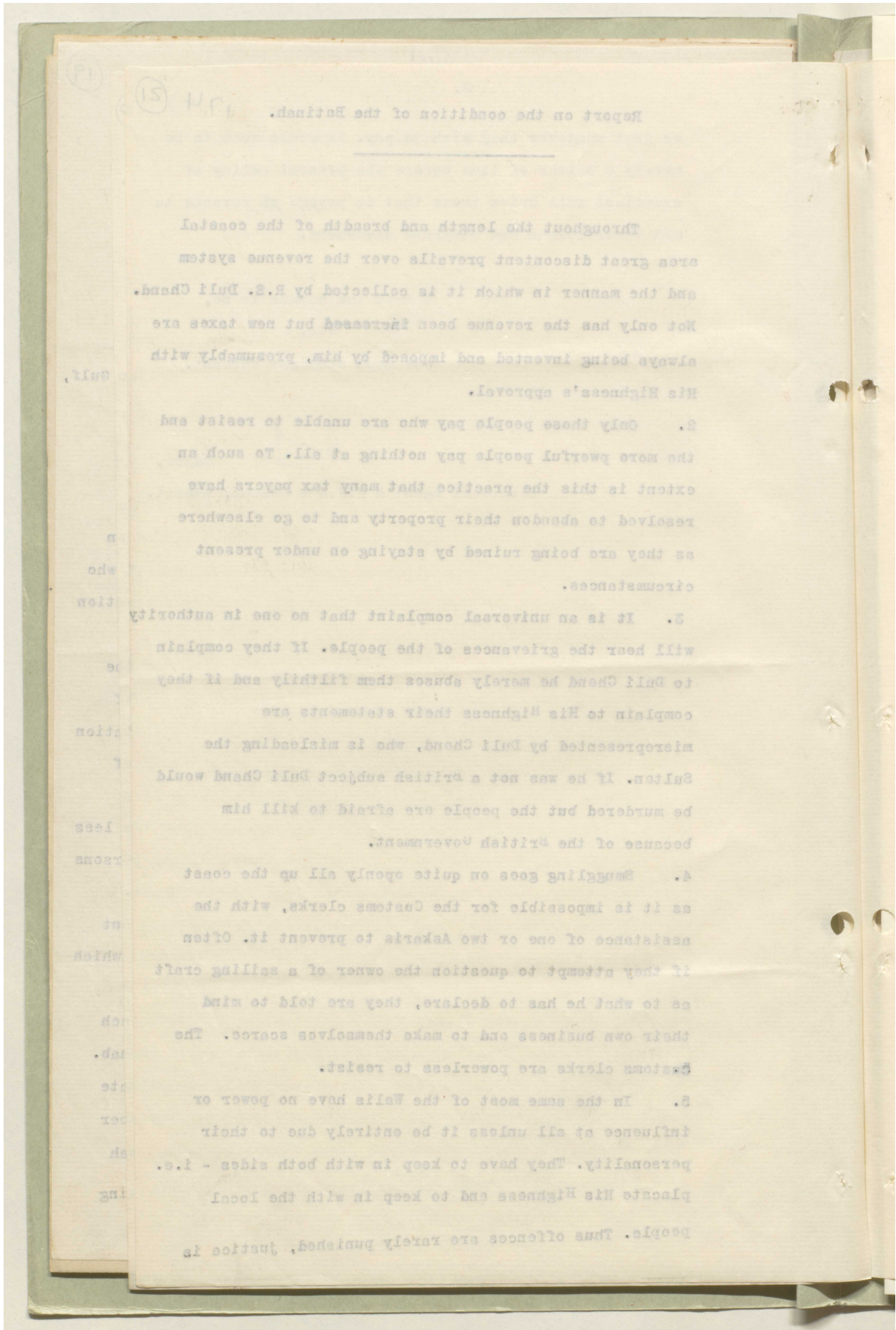
Throughout the length and breadth of the coastal area great discontent prevails over the revenue system and the manner in which it is collected by R.S. Duli Chand. Not only has the revenue been increased but new taxes are always being invented and imposed by him, presumably with His Highness's approval.

2. Only those people pay who are unable to resist and the more powerful people pay nothing at all. To such an extent is this the practice that many tax payers have resolved to abandon their property and to go elsewhere as they are being ruined by staying on under present circumstances.

3. It is an universal complaint that no one in authority will hear the grievances of the people. If they complain to Duli Chand he merely abuses them filthily and if they complain to His Highness their statements are misrepresented by Duli Chand, who is misleading the Sultan. If he was not a British subject Duli Chand would be murdered but the people are afraid to kill him because of the British Government.

4. Smuggling goes on quite openly all up the coast as it is impossible for the Customs clerks, with the assistance of one or two Askaris to prevent it. Often if they attempt to question the owner of a sailing craft as to what he has to declare, they are told to mind their own business and to make themselves scarce. The Customs clerks are powerless to resist.

5. In the same most of the Walis have no power or influence at all unless it be entirely due to their personality. They have to keep in with both sides - i.e. placate His Highness and to keep in with the local people. Thus offences are rarely punished, justice is



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seldom done and many prohibited practices are carried on with the knowledge of the Wali.

6. The following gives detail by Welayats:-

Abu Baqarah.

The Sultan attempted five months ago to instal a Naib Wali at Abu Baqarah (North of Shinas and South of Murair) but the local Sheikhs objected and this official had to go back. The Sultan has no influence in this area.

Shinas.

I was told here that the Bani Qatab and other tribes of the interior are continually raiding Shinas and carrying off cattle and sheep, etc. A Baluchi boy was kidnapped a month ago and nothing has been heard of him again. The local people are all terrified at a rumour that the Bani Qatab intend to attack Shinas in force.

Smuggling is rife here and cannot be prevented. Caravans come direct from Debai with merchandise and pay nothing.

Sohar.

Sohar Welayat is better than all the others. This is chiefly due to the tactful administration of Saiyid Saud bin Ali, the Wali who is shrewd and able. He is at present with the Sultan in India.

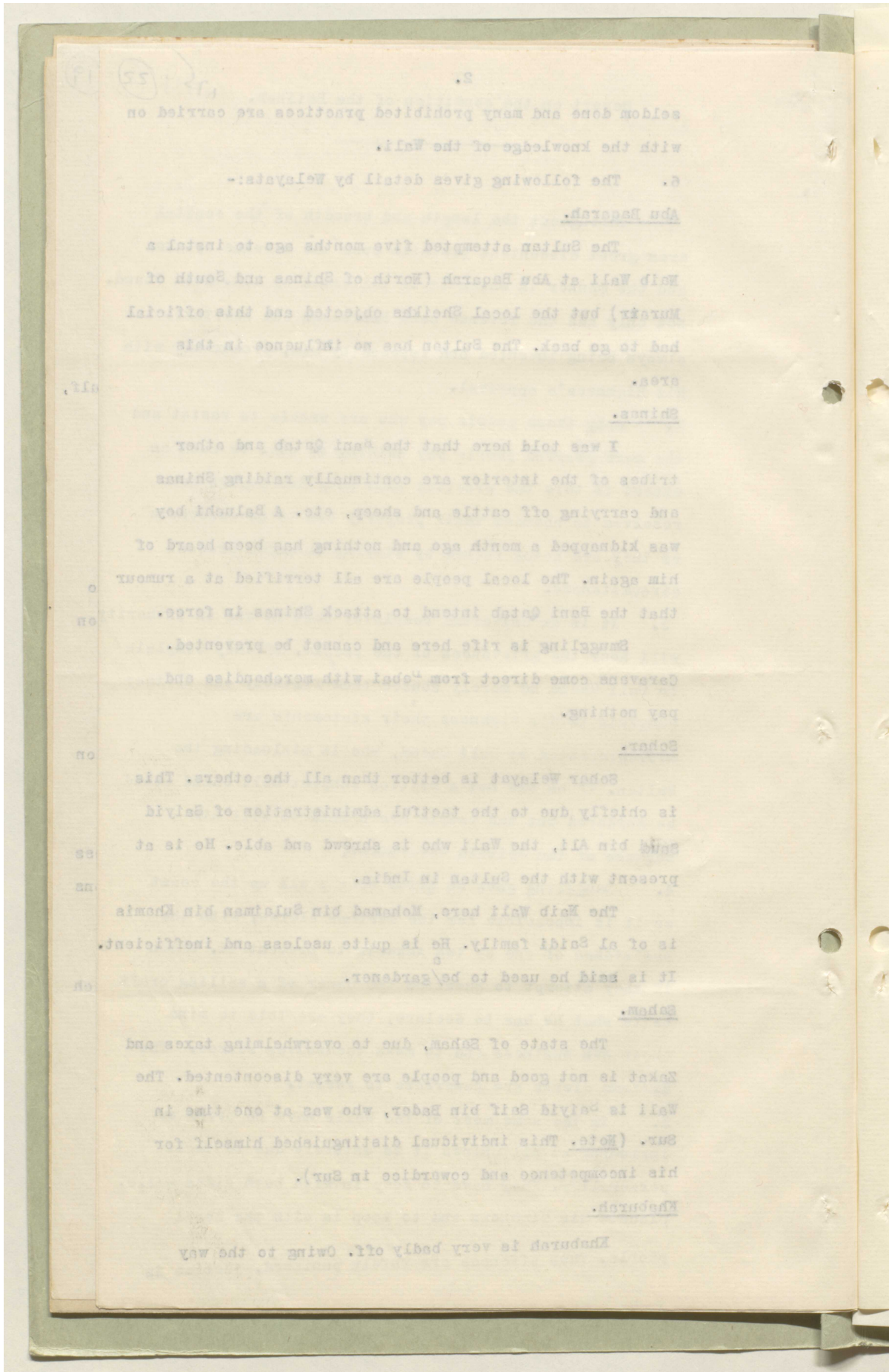
The Naib Wali here, Mohamed bin Sulaiman bin Khamis is of al Saidi family. He is quite useless and inefficient. It is said he used to be/gardener.

Saham.

The state of Saham, due to overwhelming taxes and Zakat is not good and people are very discontented. The Wali is Saiyid Saif bin Bader, who was at one time in Sur. (Note. This individual distinguished himself for his incompetence and cowardice in Sur).

Khaburah.

Khaburah is very badly off. Owing to the way



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Khaburah has been bled many people contemplate selling their property, if possible, and emigrating. Very high rates have been imposed on dates, limes, etc. by Duli Chand. As a consequence the Arabs of Dhahirah have ceased dealing with Khaburah merchants and have diverted their trade to Debai. Some Debai merchants have recently opened shop in Ibrī (Oman). The Bedouin realises that Debai is thus more accessible to him now and in future trade will be diverted there. Muscat State and merchants of Khaburah will thus both suffer heavily.

Owing to the cleapness of dates and heavy Zakat assessment on their gardens many owners propose abandoning their gardens and emigrating.

The Wali, Hamad bin Hilal al Sammar, is ^{absolutely} helpless and has no authority over the Sheikhs in his area.

Khaburah to Suwaiq.

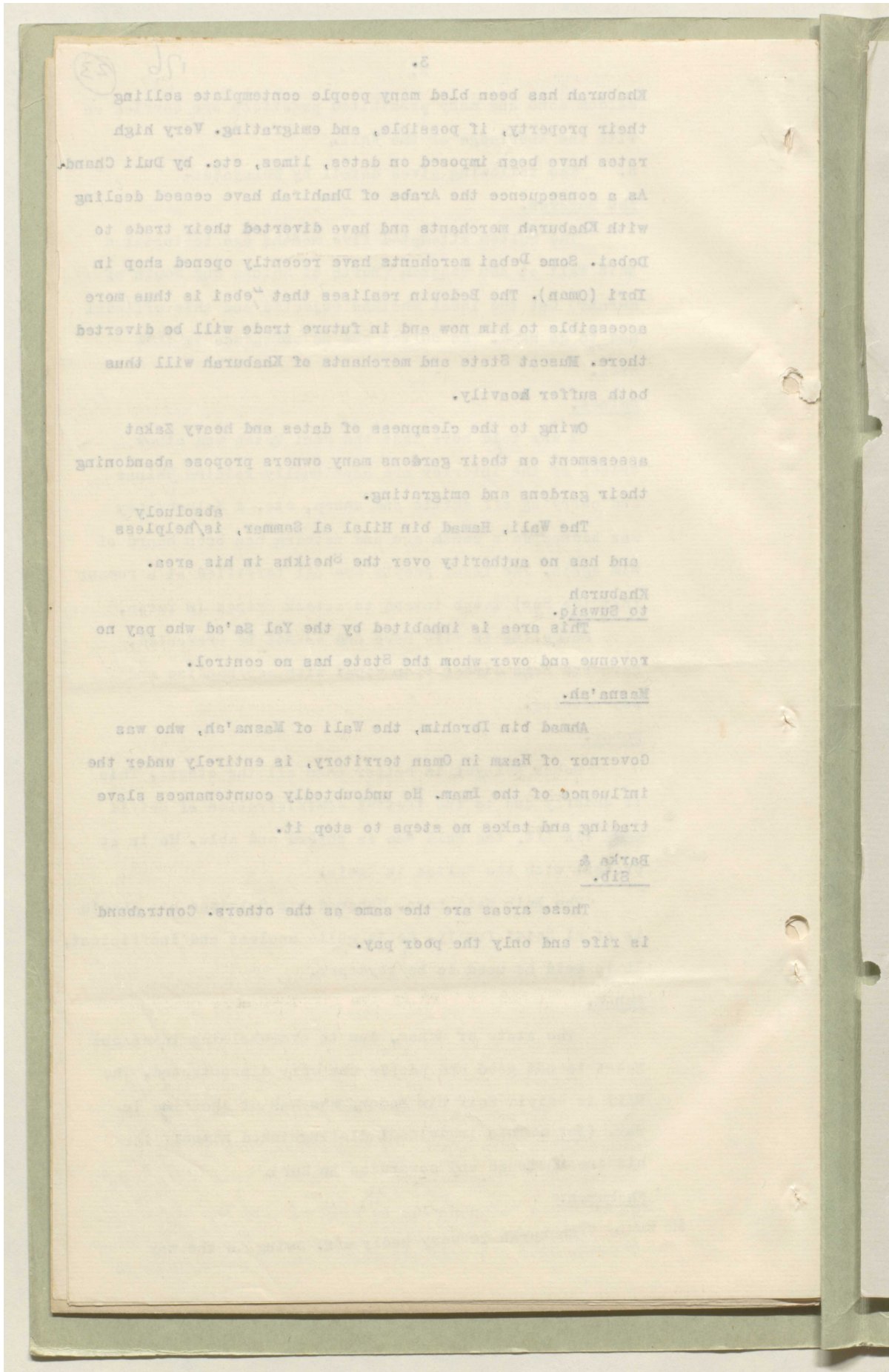
This area is inhabited by the Yal Sa'ad who pay no revenue and over whom the State has no control.

Masna'ah.

Ahmad bin Ibrahim, the Wali of Masna'ah, who was Governor of Hazm in Oman territory, is entirely under the influence of the Imam. He undoubtedly countenances slave trading and takes no steps to stop it.

Barka & Sib.

These areas are the same as the others. Contraband is rife and only the poor pay.



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Extract of paragraph 3 of Muscat Intelligence Summary from
the 1st to the 15th January 1935.

It is reported that at the beginning of January Amer,
whose father Saif of the Bani Ali is one of the advisers
of Saiyid Majid bin Faisal, half brother of His Highness
the Sultan and now acting Naib Wali of Barkah, collected
a force and with the help of Khalifah bin Hilal bin Ghusn
also of the Bani Ali attacked Yankul (a place in Dhahirah)
whose chief is Suleiman bin Sinan (Bani Ali). The attack
was abortive and Amer had to beat a hasty retreat with the
loss of 16 men.

For discussion at Muscat.

23/1/35

