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### 'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934'

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#### About this record

This memorandum was prepared by John Gilbert Laithwaite in May 1934 and comments on the history of the concession of red oxide on Abu Musa [Abū Mūsá]. The concession was granted in April 1898 by Sheikh Salim bin Sultan [Sālim bin Sulṭān Āl Qāsimī] while acting as Regent. On his return the ruling Sheikh, Sagar bin Khalid [Ṣaqr bin Khālid Āl Qasimī], saw nothing objectionable in it. The concession was made to Hassan Samaiyah, his son Abdullah and Isa bin Adul Latif [ʿĪsá bin ʿAbd al-Laṭīf], son of the Residency Agent at Sharjah. The concessionaires were described as British subjects and the interest in the concession of Herr Wonckhaus [Robert Wonckhaus] and Frank Clarke Strick is detailed. The memorandum also describes the claim of the Persian Government to Abu Musa and notes that the concession granted for five years to Frank Clarke Strick in January 1923 expired at the beginning of 1928 but there is nothing to show that any application was made for a renewal.

'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [1r] (1/12)

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P.Z.2795/34.

Memo.No.B.433.

RED OXIDE ON ABU MUSA 1898-1934.

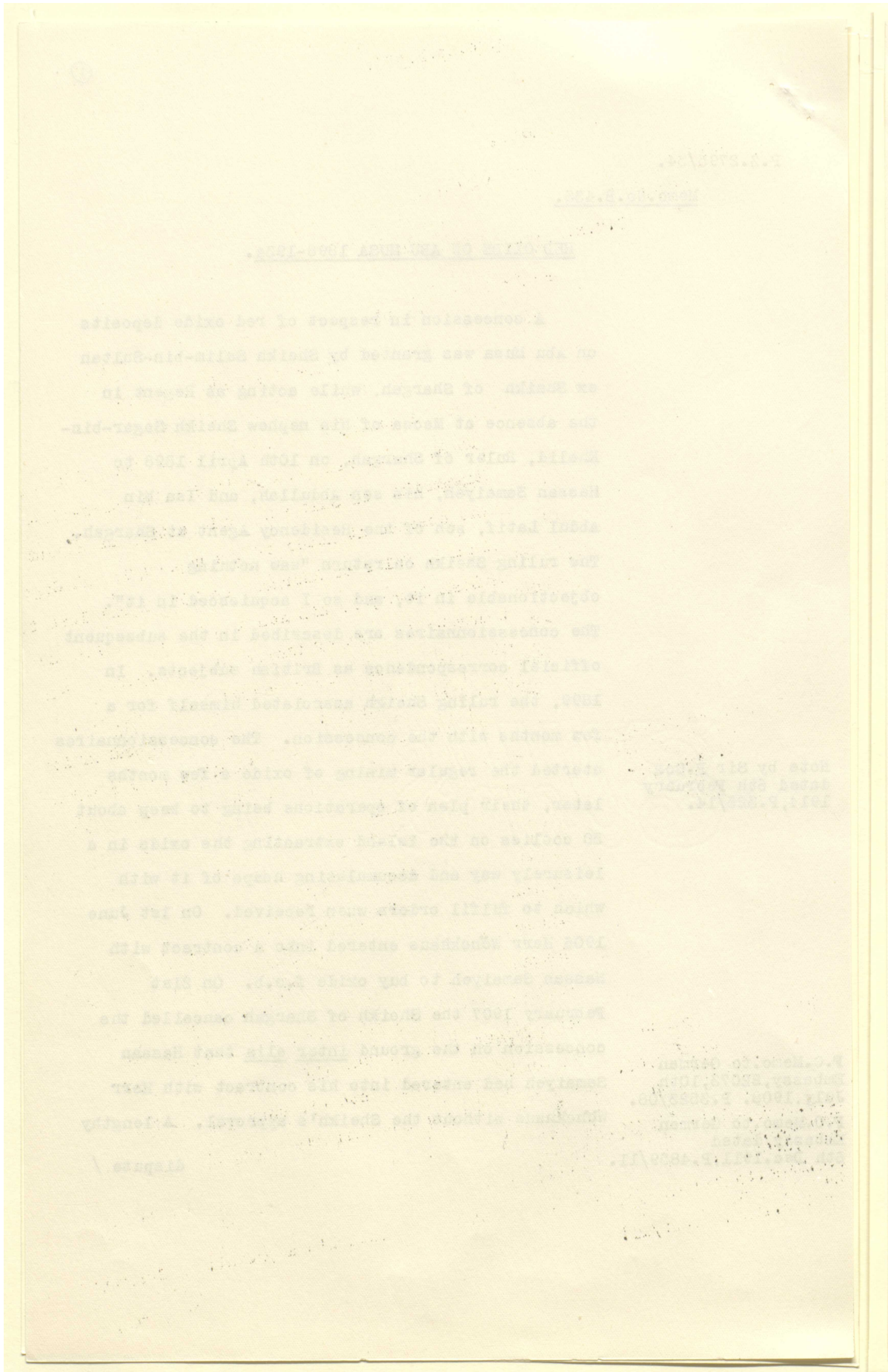
A concession in respect of red oxide deposits on Abu Musa was granted by Sheikh Salim-bin-Sultan ex Shaikh of Shargah, while acting as Regent in the absence at Mecca of his nephew Sheikh Sagar-bin-Khalid, Ruler of Shargah, on 10th April 1898 to Hassan Samaiyeh, his son Abdullah, and Isa bin Abdul Latif, son of the Residency Agent at Shargah. The ruling Sheikh on return "saw nothing objectionable in it, and so I acquiesced in it". The concessionnaires are described in the subsequent official correspondence as British subjects. In 1899, the ruling Sheikh associated himself for a few months with the concession. The concessionnaires started the regular mining of oxide a few months later, their plan of operations being to keep about 50 coolies on the island extracting the oxide in a leisurely way and accumulating heaps of it with which to fulfil orders when received. On 1st June 1906 Herr Wöckhaus entered into a contract with Hassan Samaiyeh to buy oxide f.o.b. On 21st February 1907 the Sheikh of Shargah cancelled the concession on the ground inter alia that Hassan Samaiyeh had entered into his contract with Herr Wöckhaus without the Sheikh's approval. A lengthy dispute. /

Note by Sir P.Cox dated 6th February 1914, P.325/14.

F.O.Memo.to German Embassy, 22073, 10th July, 1908. P.3523/08.

F.O.Memo.to German Embassy dated 6th Dec.1911, P.4859/11.

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'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [2r] (3/12)

2

2.

dispute, into the details of which it is unnecessary to enter, followed with the German Government, consequent on claims submitted by Messrs. Wönckhaus in respect of their losses owing to the non-fulfilment of the contract entered into by them on 1st June 1906. This discussion lapsed with the War, and the Foreign Office in November 1921 expressed their concurrence in the view that Messrs. Wönckhaus had no standing in regard to any new concession for mining or for exporting oxide mined under a new concession on Abu Musa, even though their pre-war claims remained unsettled.

F.O. to I.O. 11th  
Nov. 1921, P. 4990/21.

B. 2474/14.  
G. of I. despatch 135  
of 23rd July, 1908,  
P. 1503/08.  
Messrs. Strick to F.O.  
16th Nov. 1921,  
P. 5332/21.

I.O. to Messrs. Strick  
P. 61/22.

P. 374/22.

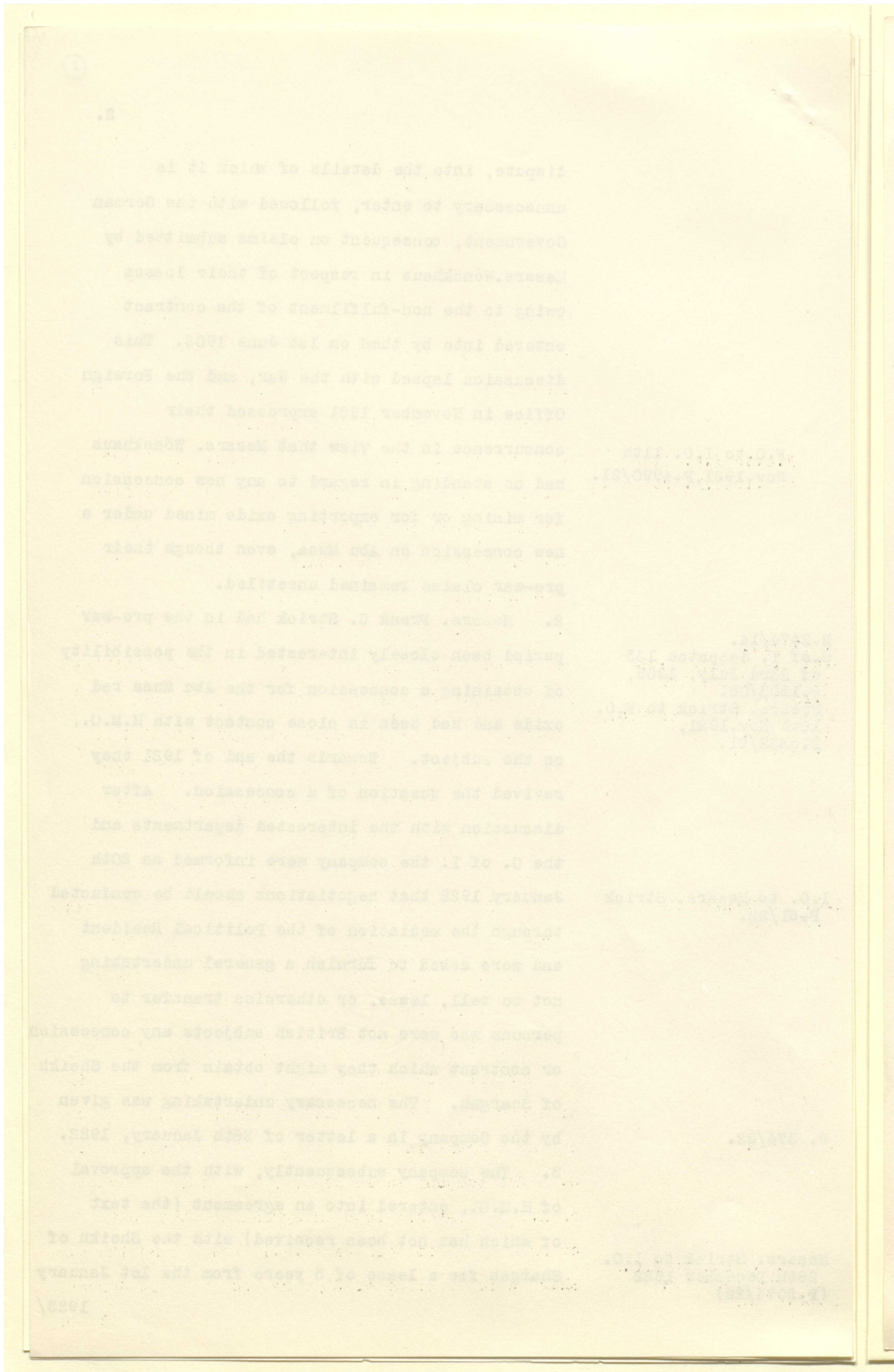
Messrs. Strick to I.O.  
28th December 1922  
(P. 5074/22)

2. Messrs. Frank C. Strick had in the pre-war period been closely interested in the possibility of obtaining a concession for the Abu Musa red oxide and had been in close contact with H.M.G., on the subject. Towards the end of 1921 they revived the question of a concession. After discussion with the interested departments and the G. of I. the company were informed on 20th January 1922 that negotiations should be conducted through the mediation of the Political Resident and were asked to furnish a general undertaking not to sell, lease, or otherwise transfer to persons who were not British subjects any concession or contract which they might obtain from the Sheikh of Shargah. The necessary undertaking was given by the Company in a letter of 26th January, 1922.

3. The company subsequently, with the approval of H.M.G., entered into an agreement (the text of which has not been received) with the Sheikh of Shargah for a lease of 5 years from the 1st January

1923/

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'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [3r] (5/12)

3

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1923 of the red oxide deposits in Abu Musa on the following conditions:

A single immediate payment of Rs.6000.

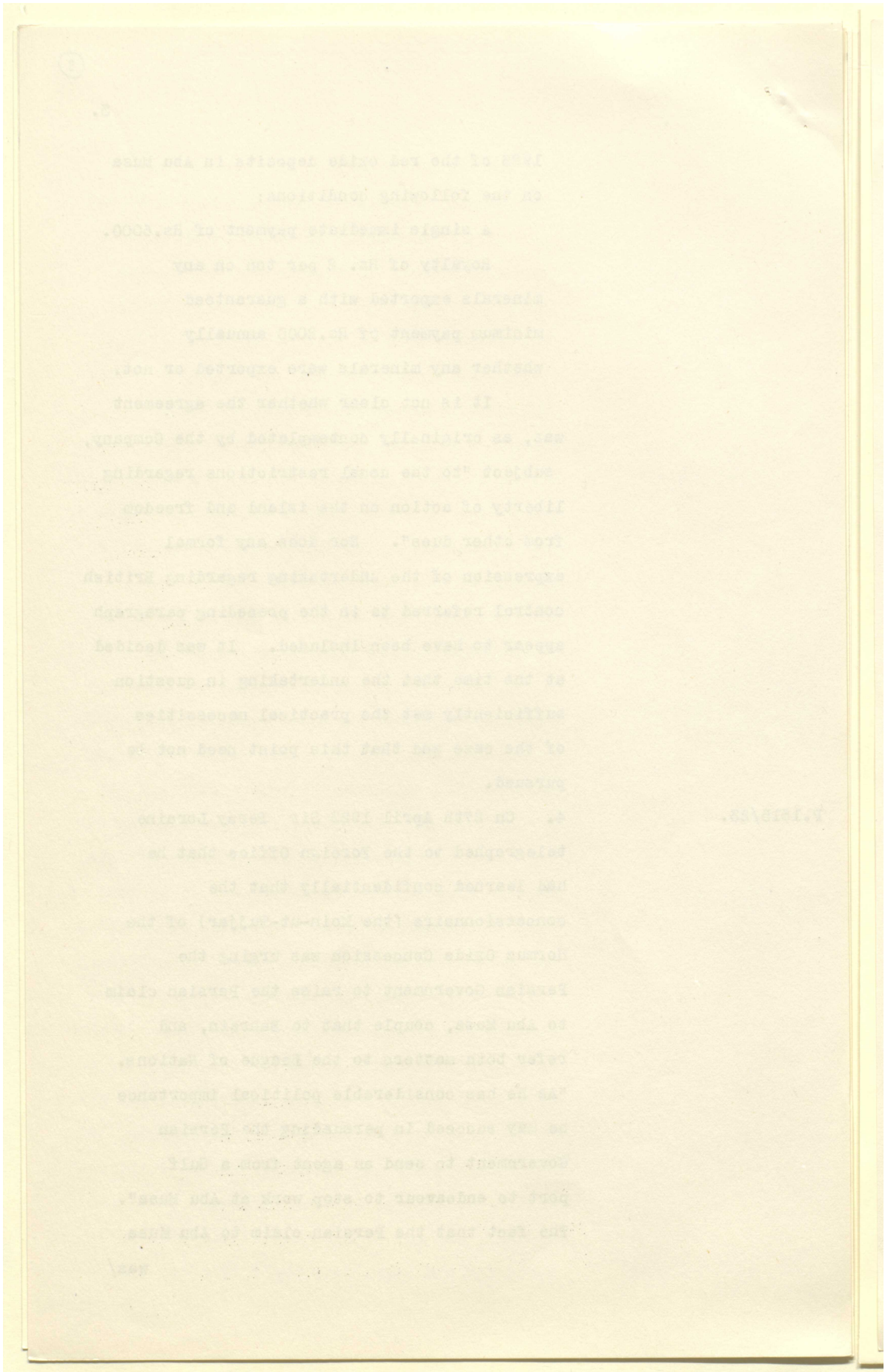
Royalty of Rs. 2 per ton on any minerals exported with a guaranteed minimum payment of Rs.2000 annually whether any minerals were exported or not.

It is not clear whether the agreement was, as originally contemplated by the Company, subject "to the usual restrictions regarding liberty of action on the island and freedom from other dues". Nor does any formal expression of the undertaking regarding British control referred to in the preceding paragraph appear to have been included. It was decided at the time that the undertaking in question sufficiently met the practical necessities of the case and that this point need not be pursued.

P.1515/23.

4. On 27th April 1923 Sir Percy Loraine telegraphed to the Foreign Office that he had learned confidentially that the concessionaire (the Moin-ut-Tujjar) of the Hormuz Oxide Concession was urging the Persian Government to raise the Persian claim to Abu Musa, couple that to Bahrein, and refer both matters to the League of Nations. "As he has considerable political importance he may succeed in persuading the Persian Government to send an agent from a Gulf port to endeavour to stop work at Abu Musa". The fact that the Persian claim to Abu Musa was/

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'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [4r] (7/12)

(4)

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P.1625/23.

was being revived was simultaneously confirmed by Messrs. Strick from information received by them from Tehran. The Foreign Office replied (No.88 of 1st May 1923) instructing the Minister to draw the attention of the Persian Prime Minister to the incident of 1904, when we were prepared to take naval action to remove the Persian Flag from the islands of Tamb and Abu Musa which we considered to belong to the Sheikh of Shargah, and to give him a friendly hint that it would be unwise for the Persian Government to follow the advice of the Moin-ut-Tujjar because H.M.G. would undoubtedly resent any such step and might take the measures contemplated in 1904 to counteract any Persian designs in this direction.

P.1784/23.

5. On 11th May 1923 Messrs. Strick reported that there was nothing fresh to advise in regard to oxide on Abu Musa.

P.1852/23.

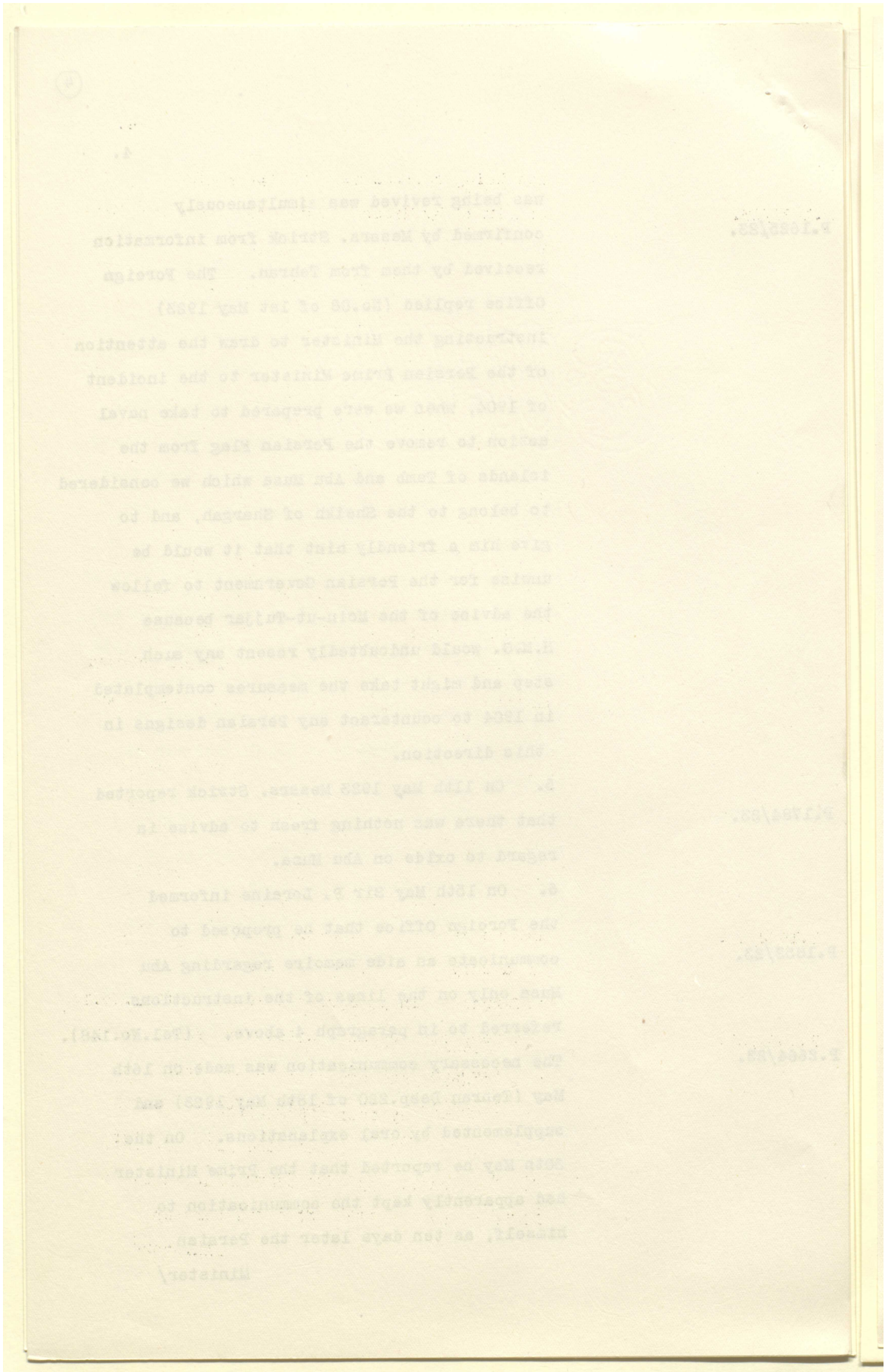
6. On 15th May Sir P. Loraine informed the Foreign Office that he proposed to communicate an aide memoire regarding Abu Musa only on the lines of the instructions referred to in paragraph 4 above. (Tel.No.148).

P.2664/23.

The necessary communication was made on 16th May (Tehran Desp.220 of 18th May 1923) and supplemented by oral explanations. On the 30th May he reported that the Prime Minister had apparently kept the communication to himself, as ten days later the Persian Minister/



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'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [5r] (9/12)

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5.

Minister for Foreign Affairs had sent in a note claiming Persian ownership of both Tamb and Abu Musa. The Note was returned by H.M. Minister to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs through the Oriental Secretary on 26th May. There were no further developments.

7. The Persian Gulf Administration Report for 1923 (page 66) reported that "A certain amount of work in mining oxide was done at Abu Musa by Messrs. Strick's representative on the island under the supervision of the company's agent at Bunder Abbas, but so far no oxide has been shipped to Europe."

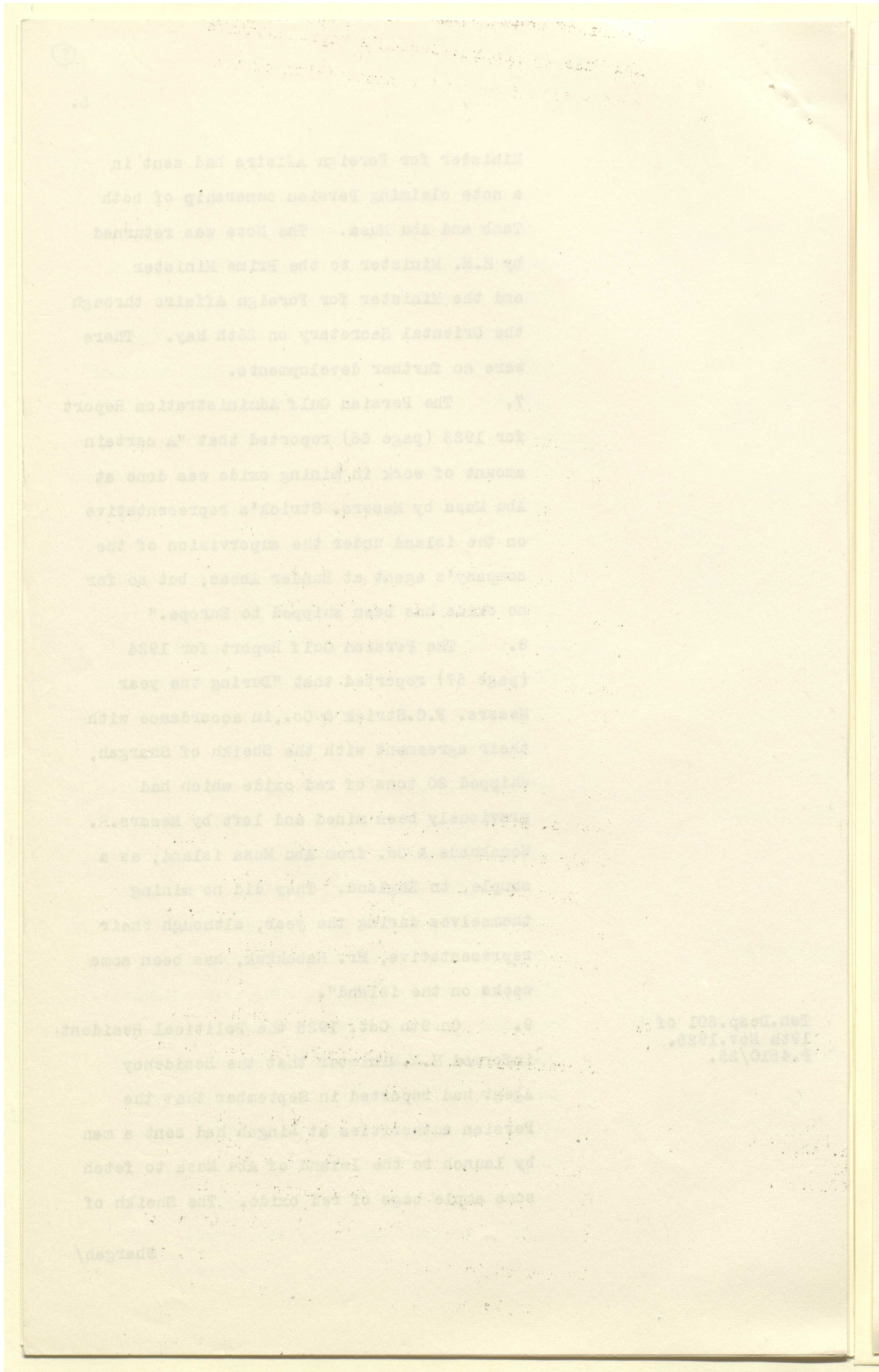
8. The Persian Gulf Report for 1924 (page 57) reported that "During the year Messrs. F.C.Strick & Co., in accordance with their agreement with the Sheikh of Shargah, shipped 20 tons of red oxide which had previously been mined and left by Messrs. R. Wonckhaus & Co. from Abu Musa island, as a sample, to England. They did no mining themselves during the year, although their representative, Mr. Habakkuk, has been some weeks on the island".

Teh.Desp.601 of  
19th Nov.1925.  
P.4510/25.

9. On 9th Oct. 1925 the Political Resident informed H.M.Minister that the Residency Agent had reported in September that the Persian authorities at Lingah had sent a man by launch to the Island of Abu Musa to fetch some ample bags of red oxide. The Sheikh of

Shargah/

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'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [6r] (11/12)

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6.

Teh.Desp.258 of 31st  
May 1926, P.2243/26.

Shargah had "strongly objected to this action of the Persian authorities". The Resident had addressed a complaint to the Persian customs authorities, pointing out that the island belonged to Shargah and protesting against the impropriety of the action taken. Diplomatic correspondence ensued in the course of which the Persian Government asserted that Abu Musa was Persian territory; while H.M.G. made it clear that no such claim could be admitted. The Administration Report for 1925 (page 70) remarked that "Messrs. Frank C.Strick & Co. have intimated that they see little chance of exporting any further quantity of red oxide from Abu Musa at present, as the quality has proved to be very inferior. In the meantime the Persian Government have laid claim to the island, but they have been informed that H.M.G. cannot recognise such a claim".

10. Nothing further has been heard of red oxide at Abu Musa since that date. The concession for five years granted to Messrs. Strick in January 1923 would have expired at the beginning of 1928, but there is nothing to show that any application was then made for a renewal.

J.G.LAITHWAITTE.

May 1934.

'Red oxide on Abu Musa, 1898-1934' [6v] (12/12)

