**Casement to Gerald Spicer (F.O.)**

**TNA FO 371/1201**

**[See diary entry for 11 January 1911]**

The Savoy

Denham

June 22nd 1911

My dear Spicer,

**[first paragraph crossed out]**

Thanks very much for your congratulations and good wishes – altho' if you ever attempt to “Sir Roger” me I'll enter into an alliance with the Aranas and Pablo Zumaeta to cut you off someday, in the woods of St. James Park, and convert you into a rubber worker to our joint profit.

Since I wrote you about Boisragon I have heard more of him and of the Company – not so hopeful as it ought to be. My informant is Barnes the chief member of the Commission, who is by no means content at the attitude of the Chairman (Gubbins) and the other Directors. I give you Barnes' views in confidence – but I fear they are well founded. He says there is but little ability to reform things on the Putumayo and but little real desire on the part of the Directors – that they only want to wriggle out with assurances to us that will keep you quiet until the matter is forgotten, or overlaid, when they will wind up the Company and leave the Putumayo to its fate.

He has no confidence in Tizon beyond a certain point – that is to say Tizon is Peruvian first and all the time and is only seeking to keep my report from publicity by assurances that will lull us to do nothing – Barnes believes that none of the Peruvians care a scrap about the fate of the Indians – beyond getting rubber out of them – and that the Directors here only want to get time for the matter to be lost sight of, so that the Peruvian Amazon Company may be buried – he thinks Boisragon will merely be a tool in the hands of Tizon – that all Tizon wants is to “save the face” of the Peruvian Government and under a show of sacking the criminals to get rid of them so that there shall be no trial or public exposure or punishment of any kind. As to the Govt. at Lima it doesn't care a rap about the Indians – only “for form's sake” (as the French Consul at Iquitos said to me) and nothing will be done. Such are Barnes' private views which he gave me very frankly. I shall be better able to judge of the attitude of the Coy. after the forthcoming meeting. Barnes saw the chairman on Monday and he (Gubbins) then said nothing about the proposed meeting that Lister Kaye wrote me about fixed probably for the last week of June. On the contrary Gubbins gave Barnes the distinct impression that he was only hedging for time – counting on the absence of any public feeling on the matter and the certainty that you (the F.O.) would under no circumstances give any publicity to the charges against the Company beyond the answers made in the House. “Truth” I fancy, had told him or someone connected with the Coy – that they were satisfied and that they were not going to tilt any further against the Coy.

It is not a satisfactory feeling to encounter. Boisragon, I find, behaved with great weakness at Shanghai when in command of the police and was compelled to resign. I have suggested in a note to Lister Kaye that I should like to meet Boisragon at the proposed meeting and I will then be able to say how he now impresses one. It is 16 years since I saw him on the Niger. He was told off to accompany me at the head of troops on a journey I made against refractory natives in Oboto which I settled without bloodshed or firing a hut – in Feb – March 1895 – and without calling into action a single rifle – to Boisragon's disgust at the time. I liked him then – as a man – and I am sure he is quite incapable of any dirty act or connivance in wrongdoing – but he is a weakling I fear – and the Coy. wants a strong man on the Putumayo to think for himself and insist on his views being put into execution.

You should choose a good man for Consul at Iquitos – a young man (not too young of course, but one who can stand the climate and the heat) - a man like Hambloch with brains, intelligence and a good honest nature who can put two and two together is what you want.

I'll invade you all next week with my Indian slaves – you will like them I know, poisoned arrows and all!

Yours ever,

Roger Casement.

P.S.

A propos the dispatch from Jerome of 4 May just received which I am communicating on officially I got last night a letter from Mrs Cazes, the wife of our Consul at Iquitos in which she says her husband is absent up the Javary river in a business (trading) journey I presume. She says that 3500 soldiers with officers arrived at Iquitos from Lima on about 18th May - so that Iquitos is full of military. They have brought a band of 150 performers! (To charm the Columbian and Ecuadorian snakes!) She says the river gunboat the “America” is still looking for the Colombians in the Igaraparana and that a second Govt. war launch was due to go to the same region with more troops on the day she wrote – viz 27 May.

Personally I have no faith at all in the assurances the Lima Govt. give you. They want to keep you quiet – but they have no intention of punishing criminals on the Amazon – because all their Magnates there, with very few exceptions, are criminals and slave owners – and it is a farce to talk of “administration” in these regions. They have ample means to govern and do right if they wish to – plenty of soldiers who will obey to the death, and very faithful executants of the will of their officers – but there is no desire to govern the Indians at all – they simply look at them as beasts of burden at the best – and deny them all civilised rights.

Tizon said to me once, when I told him fairly plainly what I thought of the administration his country had established over the Indian populations – “It is quite true, Peru has many people, but very few citizens.” That sums it up. The “Republic” is a name only – a gang of bandits of certain blood and social standing who oppress and enslave the vast bulk of the people they pretend are their fellow countrymen. When it comes to wild tribes like the Putumayo Campos, Yaguas, etc, still living “the life of pre-Inca times in their primeval forests there is no pretence at anything at all – it is simply every man for himself to enslave and capture as many wild Indians as he can – to sell, or use as rubber workers or peons & as concubines or harlots – or anything else he pleases. The history of slavery was written too soon – it took account of the over-seas slave trade from Africa, but there is an internal South American slave trade that is more revolting still – because the victims of it are simpler, men defenceless and of quieter disposition than the native Africans.