**NLI 13087/3**

**PAC Secretary to Under Secretary of State, FO**

**8 March 1910**

**[Casement note:]** Mr. Gielgud

THE PERUVIAN AMAZON COMPANY, LIMITED

Salisbury House,

London Wall,

LONDON, E.C.

8th March 1910

No. 47301/09

Sir:

The Directors of the Peruvian Amazon Company desire me to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated February 8th.

My Directors note that, in referring to our letter of December 30th last, Sir E. Grey “does not find from it that you are in a position to prove that the employees of your Company neither took part in, nor were responsible for abuses in the Putumayo district.”

My Directors beg most respectfully to point out that they dissent entirely from the assumption, constituted by the above words quoted from your letter, as my Directors place absolute reliance on the statement made by their co-Director, Senor Julio C. Arana, in his letter to the Shareholders of the Peruvian Amazon Company, dated 28th December 1909.

**[underlined by Casement with note:]** Very important. See Tizon's appointment at earlier date. They claim credit for it.

Senor Arana's words were as follows - “The alleged atrocities related in “Truth” are entirely unfounded, our employees being incapable of committing such cruelties, which, if perpetrated, the Peruvian Authorities would certainly not allow to go unpunished.”

My Directors beg most respectfully, but with serious surprise and regret, to note that your letter continues the following words: “I am to express regret that your Board should not think it necessary to deal with the charges brought against your Company by Captain Whiffen and Mr. Hardenburg.”

My Directors, in their letter dated December 30th submitted to you, word for word, the translation of Captain Whiffen's letter to Mr. Arana, which ran as follows: “I have as you know information which I can give to the Government, as I have told you. Good. If I can receive £1,000 spent on the Putumayo etc. during the year 1908/09, I am going to say that I have not seen any irregularities. My expenses were £1,400, but I am agreeable and will receive £1,000 as compensation: nothing less.”

My Directors venture most respectfully to express the deepest surprise that after having read such a letter, you are directed to express regret that my Directors should decline absolutely to take any steps in any way whatever for or against such a person; for a person who can write such a letter cannot be accepted by my Directors as a person whose testimony can in any way be considered reliable. If, however, notwithstanding this further declaration on the part of my Directors that, for the reasons stated, they decline to have anything to do with such a man, and if, on the contrary, His Majesty's Foreign Office consider his testimony to be of value, my directors respectfully ask that Captain Whiffen, or any other persons making accusations against the Peruvian Amazon Company, shall produce such testimony and evidence as can, without hesitation, be accepted in support of their allegations, which allegations Senor Arana declares to be “entirely unfounded.”

My Directors have already quoted Mr. Arana's statement, as quoted above from his letter to the Shareholders: but on page 6 of your letter your words run as follows: “I would point out that in the absence of any other white population in the district, any such atrocities must necessarily be committed by the Company's employees or by the Peruvian troops.”

**[Casement note:]** They were, nevertheless, accepting Tizon's testimony knowing he had been appointed already.

My Directors most respectfully point out that your words contain a most serious indictment against the troops of the Peruvian Government, and one which cannot be replied to by my Directors, as it is not within their province to do so; and they venture to ask the permission of Secretary Sir E. Grey to forward a copy of your letter of February 8th and a copy of this letter to the Peruvian Minister in London for the information of the Peruvian Government. I am, however, to point out to you that the impression conveyed by the words in your letter, which implied that there is no white population in the Putumayo other than the Company's employees and the Peruvian troops, though substantially true at the present time, has not always been so, other traders and rubber workers having previously been engaged in exploiting the region, whose interests were purchased by the Company's predecessors. In support of this I may cite the fact that, so far as my meagre information as to the persons who have made the accusations against the company goes, these accusations are based in part, at any rate, on the statements of persons who had never been in the Company's employ, but who purported to have experience in the company's dealings, presumably as a result of residence in the district controlled by the Company.

**[Casement note:]** See Suarez, Gigante, letter.

With regard to your suggestion that the said troops are partly in the pay of the Peruvian Amazon Company, I have the honour to inform you that this is not the case.

**[Casement note:]** He admitted to me that they were transported & fed free. R.C.

Your letter goes on to suggest that the troops are certainly not under the orders of the Company. I beg to state that the troops are certainly not under the orders of the Peruvian Amazon Company, but under those of the Peruvian Government, by whom officers and men are changed at intervals. One such change, I may mention, was made during my own visit to the Putumayo last year.

With regard to the point of the accusation against the Peruvian Amazon Company, my Directors point out that Senor Arana's connection with the Putumayo dates from a time considerably before 1900; and from that time until the formation of the Company and up to the present date, not one word has ever been received by way of disapproval of the methods of the organization and control exercised by the Company or its predecessors from the Peruvian Government, which fact in itself must go far to prove that the allegations advanced are unfounded.

With regard to your words on page 3 of your letter: “You will doubtless realize that an undertaking on the part of your Company to enquire into the accuracy of these various accusations would have carried more weight with Sir E. Grey than the mere counter-accusations against the above mentioned gentleman and papers with which you have decided to parry their charges.”

My Directors must again repeat that the prefer to uphold and sustain and place reliance on the words of their co-Director, Senor Arana, rather than to place any credence whatever on the testimony brought forward by a person who can write such a letter as that written by Captain Whiffen; and further, my Directors note that Sir E. Grey takes it for granted, simply because they have not made any statement as to the operations of the Board, that my Directors have omitted to take immediate steps, the moment after the unfounded allegations were put forward by “Truth” to make the most rigorous and searching examination into the policy of organization and of control of the company in Peru.

Copies of the Minutes herewith enclosed (Annex “A”) will make it clear to you, Sir, that there is no necessity for the words contained in your letter: “after reconsidering the matter and realising their responsibility, your Board may take immediate steps to satisfy public opinion in this country, by instituting a thorough and impartial investigation into the state of affairs in the Putumayo” for the Minutes prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the formation of a Commission to visit the Company's properties in Peru and to make a report on the organization and control exercised there, has been the most deliberate determination on the part of my Directors since the 27th of October 1909.

My Directors desire me to point out that they take the most absolute and most serious exception to your words at the end of the phrase above-quoted, following the word “Putumayo” which run as follows: “with the object of devising a system of reforms in the administration which will put a stop to the present abuses and prevent their recurrence in future.”

These words appear to make it clear that His Majesty's Foreign Office accepts the evidence offered by Captain Whiffen, the man whose letter attempted blackmail on the Peruvian Amazon Company.

My Directors must once more emphatically repeat that they uphold absolute the written words of their Co-Director, Senor Arana, that: “the alleged atrocities related in “Truth” are “entirely unfounded.”

On page 4 of your letter occur the following words: “I am at the same time to call attention to the fact that you pass over in silence the statements made by “O Jornal do Commercio”, a Brazilian paper whose bona fides there is no reason to doubt, and that you likewise make no allusion to the various instances of atrocities in “Truth” of the 29th September.”

My Directors cannot help expressing surprise at this statement, inasmuch as we had the honour to forward to you, accompanying out letter dated December 30th, a copy of the letter addressed by Senor Arana to the Shareholders of the Peruvian Amazon Company; and Clause 2 on page 4 of Senor Arana's letter deals so complete and exhaustively with the leading public opinion of not only Peruvian papers but other leading newspapers in South America, that we felt that the subject matter of the necessary reply had been dealt with very fully and shows conclusively that in the opinion of the leading newspapers the allegations brought forward were unfounded.

The statements made by “O Jornal do Commercio” referred to in the above quotation from your letter, are described as based on materials supplied by a Colombian subject to the Colombian Consul in Manaos and communicated by the latter to the newspaper. This article appeared in the issue of 3rd June 1908. Two days later a second article appeared (Annex “B”), based on an interview with the Peruvian Consul in Manaos, who denied absolutely the truth of the allegations. **[Casement note: in the Coy's pay - £4000]** Neither of these articles was written editorially; but if the first is cited as in any way proving the truth of the allegations, the second must equally be cited as proving the opposite, particularly in view of the conclusion of the second article, which implies that with the publication of it the subject may be considered as disposed of.

Reference is also made in the same Clause of Senor Arana's letter to “the authorised statements of the Peruvian Legation in London” which we note are unfortunately ignored in your letter, but which my Directors naturally accept at their full value, coming as they do from the Peruvian Government. The statements referred to are contained in a letter from Mr. E. Lembecko, the Peruvian Charge d'Affaires in London, to the Editor of “Truth”, dated 25thSeptember 1909. This letter was printed in extenso in “Truth” on the 29th September 1909, and my Directors must respectfully beg to recall to your notice the following sentence: “This Legation categorically denies that the acts you describe, and which are severely punished by our own laws, could have taken place without the knowledge of my Government on the Putumayo river, where Peru has authorities appointed direct by Supreme Government and where a strong military garrison is likewise maintained.”

Further I am to bring to your notice the fact that in the sitting of the session of the Senate of Peru, Held on 22nd November 1909, Senator Ward brought up the question of the alleged atrocities in the Putumayo, and a resolution of the chamber was passed requiring the Minister concerned to inform himself on the matter and take any steps that might be necessary.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

(sd) H.L. Gielgud

Secretary & Manager

**[Casement note:]** Get a copy (& date) of the chairman's letter to the President of Peru.

**Annex A:** Extracts from PAC Board Minutes

17 February 1909: re Gielgud's comments suggesting a small Commission to go to Putumayo to report as to its suitability for various enterprises. No action.

27th October 1909: Suggestion of Arana through Alarco to send out Commission to study the possibilities and the best possible methods of carrying on business. No action.

3rd November 1909: No action on suggestions till Gielgud's return.

10th November 1909: No reply received from suggested members for Commission.

24th Nov. 1909: Suggested member of Comm to send board his views.

16th Feb. 1910: Suggested member of Comm accepted position with another company.

**Annex B.** In Portuguese Extract from Jornal do Commercio 5 June 1908.

**[Note Casement margin markings indicate his ability to read extract.]**

**[Casement note at end:]** This man appears in the books of the Manaos agency as a debtor to the Company for a fairly large sum - which Mr. Gielgud informed me (when I found the matter out for myself!) there was no expectation he would ever repay, or ever be asked to repay! So much for this impartial Peruvian authority!