**TNA FO 2/491/99-106**

**Casement to Lord Lansdowne**

**14 June 1901**

Most Confidential

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My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a letter I have just received from South Africa, and to most respectfully and most earnestly appeal for the exertion of your Lordship's influence on behalf of the writer whom I believe to be the object of baseless suspicions on the part of our military authorities at present acting in Lorenco Marques and Durban.

I am ignorant of the precise import or character of these suspicions, and I cannot therefore subject them to any scrutiny – but so apparently is the gentleman who is their victim. That is not the characteristic of my countrymen to arrest and treat harshly any man upon insufficient grounds I am well aware; but neither is it characteristic of Englishmen to withhold from an accused man the grounds of accusation against him.

But while I may not be able to uproot the charges against Mr. Pincus, since the very framework on which they rest is invisible, I feel it my duty to bear testimony to the honesty of that gentleman's character, and to do all in my power to help a friend of whose integrity I have no doubt.

I have known Mr. Pincus since the very first days of my stay on 1895 as Consul at Lorenco Marques, and I can most surely claim that no officer in His Majesty's service, whether military or civil has anything like an equal acquaintance with that gentleman. If then suspicions have formed in the minds of those who cannot know him nearly so well as I do, may not my trust of him, born of several years intimacy be held to outvalue those suspicions?

Of this I am confident that this distrust whatever it may be and whencesoever it may arise is, in Mr. Pincus' case without justification.

Of all the foreigners I met in Lorenco Marques during the years 1895-1897, while I had the honour to be her late Majesty's Consul there, no one was more well disposed to British interests, or more helpful to me in my duties than Mr. Pincus.

Much of the information I was then able to transmit to the Foreign Office I obtained from him. It is indeed a hard thing that this gentleman who, under no call to assist us – a German and a Jew in territory equally foreign to both Englishman and German – yet ever gave most willing assistance to Englishmen should now fall under suspicion, and be the object of the persecution of those whose interests he always sought to promote.

It may be objected that my knowledge of the man is incomplete – being of the past and that the Pincus I knew from 1895 to 1897 is not the Pincus of today when South Africa and with it Lorenco Marques has passed through a long period of bitter contention peculiarly liable to arouse animosities dormant till then, and of whose existence I could have had no suspicion in the peaceful days when I held that post.

But my Lord. my acquaintance with Lorenco Marques did not end with 1897. In December 1899 I had the honour to be again chosen for a mission of trust and confidence to that place.

During the months of January and February last that year I resided as Special commissioner in Lorenco Marques and during the greater part of that time I lived with this accused man Pincus.

Now either Lord Salisbury's confidence in me was misplaced and I was either a fool or a traitor to my country's interests, or else I have a special right outweighing that of those who now accuse him, to claim a full knowledge of Mr. Pincus' character and of the value of his professions of good will towards my country.

To me, therefore, the treatment now accorded this man has a very personal application.

I do not give my friendship by halves, and I make his case my own. As Mr. Pincus is found guilty or innocent, so shall I hold myself to have failed or done my duty.

But just as I am sure of myself, and of my faithful loyalty, so I am sure that this foreigner, who is under no obligation of loyalty to my country has never failed in loyal friendship to it.

I ask that there should be a full and impartial hearing into the seemingly secret charges upon which Mr. Pincus has incurred suspicion at Lorenco Marques and upon which he has been subjected to harsh treatment at Durban.

I have no fear of what the result of that impartial enquiry must be.

And yet, while claiming that enquiry, I would beg to be allowed to point out to your Lordship – if I may presume to point out what is so apparent – that as a German subject dwelling in Portuguese territory Mr. Pincus is under no obligation whatsoever to justify to any form of British authority on foreign soil his acts in foreign territory.

He was entirely free, I presume, to act as he pleased in Lorenco Marques towards individuals of either nationality at strife – subject to the control of the legitimate authority of the country he dwelt in – and which authority was itself bound by friendship obligations to both combatants.

The Portuguese Government would be entitled to ask an explanation of his acts from Mr. Pincus if it chose, but I cannot see how any British authority in Portuguese territory can assert such a claim – or can subject the object of its suspicions to a damaging environment.

Just prior to the battle of Colenso I heard it stated in camp at Frere by one highly placed in military rant – that we were not fighting the Boers only but – all Europe.

That view I believe was long maintained by many; I went on my mission to Lorenco Marque almost from the camp at Frere, perhaps largely imbued with that impression, but my investigations at Lorenco Marques led me to other conclusions, which I had the honour to report to Lord Salisbury in the face I think of all around me.

I stated, if I remember rightly, that although the situation of Lorenco Marques was such as to constitute it in my opinion a continuous source of danger to us during the active resistance of the enemy in the field, I did not think the proportion of aid, whether open or illicit, that had gone to the enemy through that port could, since the outbreak of the war, have affected even a minor engagement.

That opinion – unpopular at the time – has I think been since substantially justified. I observe today from a Parliamentary paper lately laid before the House of Commons that the total number of foreigners made prisoner of war by us in South Africa amounts to day to only four hundred and nineteen, of all nationalities. If this be the sum of open hostility, which a year and a half of strenuous effort reveals to us, of that Europe alleged to be in arms against us on the South African veld, may I not claim that my appreciation of what I observed at Lorenco Marques was, after all, perhaps better than that of our military authorities in natal. And if my Lord, the correctness of my judgment in that respect may be thus (again perhaps) admitted, may I not go further, and claim for it where Mr. Pincus is concerned, that my appreciation of him as a friend is a true one – and that his military critics are wrong in their suspicions of his enmity.

I can but earnestly beg that your Lordship will intervene to see that he obtains the fullest measure of justice, and of what I doubt not will follow justice – restitution.

I have the honour to be, My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble servant,

Roger Casement

The Right Honourable

His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs etc etc Foreign Office