**TNA FO 371/1201**

**27 April 1911**

**Casement to Sir Edward Grey at F.O. on Putumayo criminals (many pages)**

**[Cashbook 27 April 1911: Wrote long dispatch to F.O. on Putumayo. To Miss O... to dinner and late to Millar, both tired so turned in alone]**

Belfast.

27 April 1911.

Confidential.

 Sir,

 With further reference to Mr. Cazes' dispatch of 17 March and my remarks upon Dr. Romulo Paredes, I have the honour to transmit herewith three copies of the Iquitos newspaper “El Oriente” which I was informed at Iquitos was the property of Dr. Paredes and edited by himself.

 From a glance through the citations and other publications of the Superior Court of Iquitos, in this paper, it appears that the first clerk, Aurelio Lopez Montoya who accompanied Dr. Paredes is one of the permanent clerks of the Iquitos court.

 The first copy of “El Orients” now transmitted, that of 2nd September last, has on the first page a telegram from Lima of 16 August 1910 bearing upon the judicial investigation into the Putumayo charges then ordered by the Peruvian Attorney General, Dr. Cavero.

Right Honourable

Sir Edward Grey, Bart., M.P.

etc etc

Foreign Office

It will be seen from this telegram that the Peruvian Government are stated to have been moved to take action by a letter which appeared in the Lima “Comercio” written by a Senor Enrique Deschamps, from Barcelona.

 Senor Deschamps described the investigation then actually taking place in London into the “various horrible crimes” committed on the Putumayo, and the telegram adds that this important letter has created “a great sensation” in Lima.

 This telegram appeared in the Iquitos press a fortnight before the Peruvian Amazon Company's Commission set out for the Putumayo.

As to the spirit animating the “Oriente”, where foreign interests in Peru are at issue, I cannot do better than draw attention to the two articles which appear in the two subsequent issues of the paper now transmitted. (Nov 15 & Nov 23 1910)

That in the issue of 15 November entitled “The Black Ship” is probably an editorial; I was informed at the time it was from the pen of Dr. Paredes himself although bearing the initials “S.Y.”

It consists of a very discreditable attack upon a French-Dutch company which at the time of my return from the Putumayo was represented in Iquitos by two of its directors and a body of Colonizing settlers they had brought with them from France and Holland. They had a small steamer which was to be put together at Iquitos and then the party was to proceed up the Pastaza (another affluent of the extreme upper Amazon) to Ecuadorian territory, where the Company had obtained an important colonizing concession from the government of Ecuador.

The two heads of this company in Iquitos were a Frenchman, a Mons. Fabre, and a Dutchman, a sea Captain Vander Est. No legal opposition could be offered to this project. Messrs. Fabre and Vander Est had all their papers in order and there was a complete assurance of their bona fides, furnished not only by the French consular agent in Iquitos but by the Peruvian Minister at Madrid among other authorities. The party asked nothing from the Iquitos authorities, their right to navigate the upper Amazon and enter Ecuador by the route of the Pastaza being legally established.

The Prefect had professed himself satisfied with the character of their undertaking and they were given to understand that no difficulty existed to their carrying out their mission.

As a matter of fact these public assurances by the Prefect were entirely nullified by the secret threats of the local authorities.

All the leading firms in Iquitos who were disposed, as a matter of business, to help Messrs. Fabre and Vander Est were warned by the Captain of the Port, a Senor Donayre, in conversation, that if they assisted the Franco-Dutch company to mount their steam launch on their ships, or otherwise to assist the expedition, their establishments would be burned. I was informed of this threat not only by the French Consular agent, but learned of it from other quarters.

As a result of these threats no one of the local firms dared undertake the agency of the Franco-Dutch company. The steam launch was, nominally, sold to the firm of which the French Consular agent was a member, and the minor members of the mission remained idle in Iquitos while Messrs. Vander Est and Fabre returned to Europe to seek diplomatic aid of their respective governments.

It was, I may add, to Mons. Fabre that Senor Pablo Zumaeta offered the shares of Julio C. Arana in the Peruvian Amazon Company.

It will be observed from this article in the “Oriente” that Dr. Paredes was a party to fomenting public feeling against a company of foreigners whose intentions were in no way hostile to Peru, and of a purely business aspect likely to prove beneficial to Ecuador and ultimately to all the peoples of that region. The article ends with the threat that if these foreigners, in league with the enemies of Peru, did not take themselves off the people of Iquitos would lynch them.

I met Captain Vander Est and Mons. Fabre repeatedly – they travelled to Europe on the same steamers with me – and I have no doubt of the truth of the story told to me – in Iquitos showing that the local authorities had behaved towards this peaceful mission of European colonists with concealed ill will and local threats that completely defeated their enterprise.

The third extract from the “Oriente”, that of the 23rd November 1910, contains an editorial from the pen of Dr. Paredes himself, so I was assured by Messrs. Booth's agent entitled “Torpe Diversion”.

This article, most unfair in tone, attributes to the mail steamers of the Booth Company the deliberate intention of capsizing for amusement, by the wash of the steamer, the small canoes and boats that navigate the environs of Iquitos, and cites the case of a craft of this kind, the property of two young men named Suarez and Montani, which a day or two before had been sunk, just below Iquitos, in the side wash of the S.S. Manco. So far as the “Oriente” was concerned the matter was sub judice. No report of the occurrence had been received from the “Manco” which was then hundreds of miles down the Amazon and the representative of the Booth Company was quite prepared to deal firstly with the claim of Messrs. Suarez and Montani for the loss of their canoe and goods, once the facts were established.

The tone of the “Oriente” editorial is altogether wrong and imputes the very worst intentions – manifestly without the shadow of justification – to the navigating officers of the British vessel. The Booth Company depends, for the maintenance of the Iquitos line of steamers, upon the support and good will of the community of Iquitos, and it is obvious that the conduct of the kind attributed to the Captains and officers of their steamers could not be indulged in and maintained, as is here asserted, for purposes of “diversion”.

 Canoes may or may not be sometimes capsized in the wave of a passing steamer, doubtless this must occasionally occur (I have seen it happen elsewhere notably on African rivers) where a light craft heavily laden to the water’s edge is caught, accidentally, too close to the wash of a steamers course, but in all such cases it is manifestly an accident.

To contend, as Dr. Paredes does in this article that the British officers of the Booth line indulged in proceedings of this kind, as an amusement, is a gross breach of truth and a vicious appeal to anti-foreign prejudice – in existence, to some extent, in very backward communities like that of Iquitos.

The significance of such unfair comment as this, in relation to the Putumayo investigation, lies in the fact that it comes from the very judge who is now deputed to investigate charges against Peruvians brought by foreigners.

When we add to this that the Peruvians indicted or at any rate responsible for the crimes in the indictment, are friends of this judge and have already been warmly defended in his paper when accused of these very crimes by other Peruvians, it is not unfair to surmise that his point of view must be largely influenced in the investigation he is now conducting by prejudice on one hand and predilection on the other.

The “Oriente” as I have said, was one of the principal champions of the Arana Syndicate in the long controversy of 1907 and 1908 when the crimes on the Putumayo were being ruthlessly exposed in Iquitos in the newspapers La Sanction and La Felpa.

Those two organs were declared by Senor Julio C. Arana, in his statement to the shareholders of the Peruvian Amazon Company, to be blackmailing organs.

I know nothing of the personality of Senors Saldana Rocca and Dario ??menta who conducted that campaign against the Arana-Zumaeta Syndicate.

They may have been would be blackmailers, but the charges that appeared in those two papers were certainly in the main true. I have again and again found that the depositions that were then made public, by men who I never met, to be amply borne out by the independent testimony of the Barbados men – and even by that of Peruvian agents of the Company. The evidence against the Arana Brothers was indeed overwhelming, and had the slightest desire existed in Iquitos to find out the precise truth, or to stop the excesses on the Indians, the time for action was then when the charges were first made, and publicly made in Iquitos, with a host of witnesses at hand proclaiming their desire to be interrogated, and when even Indians themselves, with the scars and weals of their flagellations upon them were actually in Iquitos, brought from the Putumayo so that the authorities might examine for themselves these victims of the crimes denounced.

The then Prefect Carlos Zapata, was a friend of Senor Julio Arana, and instead of investigating these charges he used his authority to conceal the scandal and even caused, so it is asserted, some of the malefactors arrested by Peruvian military officers on the Putumayo, to be released.

The “Oriente” was the voice of the Arana-Zumaeta gang of criminals, and although I possess no copies of that journal at the time of this controversy I find it more than once referred to as a subsidised organ of the Aranas in the charges brought forward in La Felpa and La Sancion.

Thus in La Sancion of 17 October 1907 a letter from Juan C. Castanos appeared contradicting the assertion of one Ernesto Costa which it is stated happened in “El Orients” of the 12th October.

Castanos asserts that Costa, far from being in a position to defend that Putumayo regime was himself a cowardly murderer of the Indians. He narrates the circumstances of the double murder of two Indian carriers by Costa, whom he met close to the scene of the crime in April 1907, within a few days of its commission, and cites a Dr. France as evidence of the crime, and Julio Muriedes and Carlos Soplin as eye witnesses of it.

He certified his signature to this charge on 14th October before the local notary Federico M. Pizarro.

Again, in the Sancion of 23rd September 1907 a letter to the editor appears dated 20 September, signed by one F. Elsner. This man, I learned, was a German mechanic who had been engineer of one of the Arana syndicate's launches on the Putumayo. He begins his letter by asserting that in “El Oriente” of “the 17th September I have seen the incorrect narration of the events which took place on the 5th instant at 7 p.m. at La Chorrera.”

After narrating the incident in question he ends his letter by saying “I make this publication with two objects – 1. To put things in their place and not as a certain organ of the subsidised press wishes them to appear. 2. To let the people and the authorities judge by this of the innumerable abuses which are committed in the region of the Putumayo by the employees of the famous J.C. Arana & Hermanos Company.”

In the Sancion of 22 August 1907 a long letter to the editor, dated 31 July, appears signed by Julio F. Muriedas. This letter begins: “I enclose to you a copy of the article Atentado Frustrado en el Putumayo which I intend as an answer to the article with the same name published in No. 193 of the biweekly “El Oriente”. As we have already agreed, I shall consider it a favour if you will publish this article in any of the newspapers of the locality. I accept all responsibility, according to the statutes of the laws, as to its contents and form.”

The letter constitutes a catalogue of crimes preferred against many agents of the Arana syndicate by name. These men are charged not only with murder and torturing Indians, but one of them, with such a savage assault upon a young Peruvian named Juarez that the boy finding himself “completely crippled, for blood rushed from his mouth, ears and nose, upon seeing himself lost, I repeat he shot himself with his revolver.”

In La Felpa of 8 February 1908 an article appeared entitled “More about the Putumayo” – Sackings arson murder of wounded – violations and rape of women by the Arana Coy – Loayza conceives, prepares and executes the assault – no penal punishment.” The article is a lengthy one and deals with the attack upon the Columbian establishments on the Caraparana which ended in the sack of La Union and the murder of the Columbian occupiers.

The article after recording some of the murders goes on –

“The dead were robbed of everything they had on them. These 'Patriotic youths, whose only thought was to advance the flag of Peru one step more along the paths of conquest” (words of El Oriente) these jackals, we say, once masters of the field applied themselves to sacking.”

The “Oriente” is again referred to, further on, in the following terms:

“Labour patriotic, moralising, energetic, virile, and all the other fine things that the ventral El Oriente says of the work of its employers, the assassins of Arana.”

The foregoing quotations sufficiently establish the part of the paper “El Oriente” played in the public discussion of these crimes when the matter first came forward in Iquitos. I do not know if Dr. Paredes was then its editor.

An intimate relation often exists among the principal native inhabitants of a small community like Iquitos and I find Dr. Paredes' name associated with that of Pablo Zumaeta in local affairs. The actual comisario, or magistrate on the Putumayo was one Amadeo Burga, and this man would have been the official to whom I should have presented my letter of authority from the Prefect had I ever encountered him in the course of my journey. From a private letter I have received from Mr. Louis Barnes of the Company's Commission, this man was found by the Commissioners to be the Company's salaried agent at the post of Argelia on the Caraparana and Mr. Barnes in his letter refers to him in what are really unprintable terms.

Yet this is the chief executive authority of the Peruvian government on the Putumayo, the other one, entitled Juiz de Paz, being the Company's paid agent at Sur Este section – a sub agency under the El Encanto agency, the headquarters of the Caraparana district.

I find Burga frequently referred to in the Felpa and the Sancion articles, or in the depositions offered to Mr. Hardenberg. He is always spoken of in highly uncomplimentary terms – once referred to as a “quadruped” and more than once deliberately charged with crimes against the Indians committed in his capacity of paid agent of the Aranas. In a letter to Mr. Hardenberg dated 23 May 1909, one J.F. Muriedos speaks of Burga as the brother in law of Pablo Zumaeta – “In regard to the ex-commissioner of the Rio Napo, Amadeo Burga, the ?? and brother in law of the criminal Pablo Zumaeta” – and there follows a charge of criminal abuse of his authority, at the head of eight soldiers, by Burga who was said to be on a “commission” or raid for the Company.

Mr. Cazes told me that Burga had certainly been a paid agent of the Aranas when Commissary of the Napo and he appeared to believe that Zapata the former Prefect was also paid by Julio C. Arana.

It will be remembered that Senor Arana cited as a “high authority” who vouched for the civilisation introduced by his company into the Putumayo, Senor Reyes de Castro, the Peruvian Consul General at Manaos. This was the man charged with editing the diary of Robuchon, the French explorer, issued as a public document at the cost of the Peruvian government. This book is clearly designed as a puff to the Arana enterprise, and I have no doubt was put forward by Julio Arana as one of the proofs he brought to Europe to obtain British financial support to floating his Putumayo enterprise into the Peruvian Amazon Company.

Anyone reading it with the least knowledge of the facts must see the purpose of its issue. The Peruvian government were doubtless ignorant agents in the matter, believing the stories told by Arana that his Putumayo enterprises were of national value and attended to the advance of the national flag in a savage wilderness. The Peruvian Consul General was not equally ignorant – nor was he innocent. I obtained proof, during my stay at Iquitos, that he was in receipt of moneys from the Peruvian Amazon Company. The admission was made by Mr. Gielgud, the Secretary and manager of the Company.

The instructions to the Commission were produced at an early stage of our stay in Iquitos to satisfy me that one of its functions was to enquire into the conditions of the Indians. It had been asserted in “El Oriente” a few days after our arrival that the Commission was sent out solely in the interest of the Company's commercial and economic development, and I had drawn the Commissioners' attention to this statement (which they had not observed) and asked if that was a legitimate definition of the scope of their enquiry. To satisfy me that it was not authorised by them they produced for my inspection the lengthy instructions issued to them by the Board of Directors. Glancing over this document I found the following duty among others assigned to the Commission – “to report whether C Duble and Carlos Reyes de Castro really performed services of value to the Company.”

The latter is the Peruvian Consul General at Manaos, the “independent authority” more than once cited by Senor Arana.

I asked for an explanation of this instruction and, with some hesitation, was informed by Mr. Gielgud that Sr. Reyes de Castro figures in the Manaos books of the Company for several “advances of cash” – which it was subsequently admitted there was no intention of asking him to repay.

At a later stage of my journey, when the criminality of the whole affair had been made clear and no member of the Commission any longer sought to defend the Company's methods on the Putumayo, it was frankly admitted to me, by Mr. Gielgud, that while the Company's vessels frequently transported government troops to and from the Putumayo, no charge had been levied for these services.

Gratuitous transport (and victualizing on board) had been given to the military contingents, officers and men, in attacking the Columbian settlements and in transferring these, by assault and murder, to the profit of the Company and in all those other duties assigned by Macedo and Loayza, the two chief agents, to the military garrison on the Putumayo.

It would make this dispatch inordinately long to adduce further evidence of the intimacy prevailing between the local authorities and heads of the Company at Iquitos and on the Putumayo, or to explicate further the character of many of these officials. With few exceptions I believe them to be as untrustworthy as either Julio C. Arana or Pablo Zumaeta.

It may be true, as Mr. Cazes states, in a personal letter to me that the judge, Dr. Paredes has gone to the Putumayo “on his metal”, but I have little hope that his investigation will be conducted on impartial lines. Certainly if he was the responsible editor of “El Oriente” in 1907 and 1908 it would be impossible to expect it.

I some time ago drew up a precis of the various evidence in La Sancion and La Felpa and in the depositions made to Mr. Hardenberg – so much of which I found to be entirely true – and I should be happy to transmit this document – a lengthy one – if it might prove of service. Its value today chiefly lies in this – that it furnishes proof of the publicity given to the charges against the Aranas in Iquitos, as long as 1907, by men who then courted an open enquiry, and that no action followed accusations of a definite kind and of the most revolting character. The chief criminals, the men who I met on the Putumayo and who are now either in flight or at or near Iquitos are again and again denounced in these charges.

The proof that these charges were true was again and again established to my satisfaction on the spot; and finally indeed admitted by Senor Tizon, whose excuse for the apathy of the Prefect Zapata was that the land was a “no man's land” belonging neither to Columbia or Peru – and that he could not intervene.

Senor Zapata nevertheless accompanied Sr. Arana in 1908 to this region and released some of the men his own officers had arrested. Senor Carlos Reyes de Castro also visited the region as Arana's guest, while “El Oriente” defended all the criminals, and now, its editor, the acting judge Dr. Paredes goes as chief of the reforming and punitive tribunal.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

With the highest respect,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

Roger Casement.