









Roger Casement  
April 17. 1915

**ROGER CASEMENT**

**IN BRAZIL**

**Rubber, the Amazon and the Atlantic World**

**1884-1916**

**Angus Mitchell**

Laura P. Z. Izarra (Editor)



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## Foreword

*I believe that editing all of Roger Casement's texts relating to Brazil is a wonderful project. Besides being a great warrior for human rights and defender of indigenous people, Roger Casement was an intelligent observer of nature, society and the human diversity that crossed his complex and adventurous life. I am certain that this collection will shed much light upon the Brazil of his time. Everything that I have read by him, including routine consular correspondences and reports, radiates wisdom and original observations, revealing a man of great sensitivity, unprejudiced, and determined to find the truth without allowing his views to be muddied by cultural biases. He knew places very different to Brazil, ranging from the most primitive and rural communities to the most refined metropolitan centres. This contrast is narrated with great precision, colour and anecdotal richness. In many instances, his appreciation of Brazil appears to be severe, but his concern for its problems, politics and cultural life, demonstrates the strong connection that was established between him and the country of Euclides Da Cunha. Ultimately, his Brazilian experience served to enrich and inform Roger Casement's worldview.*



Mario Vargas Llosa at the monument inside McKenna's Fort near Banna Strand in Co. Kerry, where Roger Casement was captured on 21 April 1916. (Photograph taken by Verónica Ramirez).

Mario Vargas Llosa

(Letter to Angus Mitchell, 27 March 2010)

Trans. Iziar Sarasola.





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# Preface

## Roger Casement: another perspective on modernity in the Amazon

In the years immediately preceding the crisis in the rubber economy, when the population of Manaus was oscillating between 60,000 and 90,000 and the members of its elite were seeking something that might lend significance and permanence to their lifestyles, news reports of a certain British diplomat began to appear in various local papers. He was attempting to set up an investigation into working conditions to see if they were in conformity with norms operating in other Western countries. The inquiry was in connection with labour practices that had been established by rubber producers at the *fin de siècle*. It was in this context that newspaper stories presented the arrival of Roger Casement, a respected member of the British Foreign Office, who had adopted a militant position in defence of indigenous populations in various tropical regions at a time when alterity was not very highly valued in Western forums.

Roger Casement's Amazon journeys, until recently of little interest in the historiography of the region, have always been difficult to assimilate by the intellectual elite and local historians alike since, instead of chauvinistically ennobling the importance of the rubber economy, its export figures or the architectural reflections of the wealth it

generated, Casement was interested in investigating the treatment meted out to members of indigenous populations coerced into the rubber extraction industry by violent intimidation. It was in this context that the newspapers of the city around 1910 reported the appearance of the young diplomat in Manaus as a representative of the British Empire, conveniently omitting any mention of subjects that might have caused offence to members of local society, who still saw themselves as the chosen instruments of the civilizing process of the *belle époque* – a perception that was to be challenged just a few years later by the crisis in the rubber extraction economy.

The voyages of Casement represented a breath of modernity for the region, not in terms of his clothing, which was of such interest to the members of the elite, but because of the subjects he broached which had been hitherto unspoken in the Amazon world. Julio Cezar Arana was obliged to produce a film (later lost in a shipwreck in the First World War) to defend himself against accusations of exploitation of members of indigenous communities, and later local intellectuals would hold literary discussions concerning the penury suffered by the rubber tappers. More recently the publication of

Casement's diaries shed light on another facet of his modernity – sensuality as a form of domination. The description of adolescent flirting on an afternoon of tropical heat typical of Manaus, in a public square designed in the European style of *art nouveau*, reveals the perspective of a foreigner mesmerised by the figure of a pupil at the Dom Pedro II secondary school, a view hitherto hidden in the representation of the Amazon and of its elite at the time of its economic apex.

Roger Casement's Amazon journeys were consigned to oblivion for many years, obfuscated by his subsequent involvement in the struggle for Irish independence in the Easter Rising in 1916 in the midst of the Great War. In his persona there are various dimensions which make it possible to summon up the past. His contradictory character – an Irishman in the pay of the English Crown, who would later become an important defender of Irish independence – is quintessentially Modern. If, as Walter Benjamin argues, the history of certain sectors and themes is a history of the

remnants of History, perhaps, one hundred years on, Roger Casement may now enable us to bring the fresh air of Modernity not only to the history of the Amazon but also into the lives of its inhabitants.

We welcome the present collection of material on Roger Casement by Angus Mitchell which is published under the auspices of the International Symposium 'Roger Casement: Rubber, the Amazon and the Atlantic World (1884-1916)', held in Manaus in August 2010, organised jointly by the *W. B. Yeats Chair of Irish Studies* at the University of São Paulo, the Brazilian Association for Irish Studies and the Federal University of Manaus.

Luiz Bitton Telles da Rocha  
Member of the Organising Committee

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Researcher into Roger Casement in the Amazon

*Translated by Peter James Harris*

# ROGER CASEMENT

## Rubber, the Amazon and the Atlantic World

### 1884-1916

The monumental *Bibliografia Brasileira* compiled by Rubens Borba de Moraes, which ends in 1900, makes no reference to the career of the British consul Roger Casement in Brazil.<sup>1</sup> Even if a supplementary volume were now to be produced and up-dated to the end of the millennium, a bibliographer would be hard-pressed to find a work by Casement which could be included in the great compendium of narratives and texts written by voyagers in Brazil. Yet, despite this lack of any readily identifiable volume, Roger Casement produced a comprehensive body of writing about Brazil which justifies his inclusion as a discerning analyst of the country and the people. His name deserves the same level of recognition bestowed upon better-known travellers and commentators such as Maria Graham, Charles Darwin, Louis Agassiz, Margaret Mee or Claude Lévi-Strauss. This brief publication seeks to retrieve Casement's place within Brazilian history and to place his textual legacy in the much wider contexts of antislavery activism in the Atlantic world

and the nascent discourses of both human rights and anti-colonial activism in the twentieth century.

During his three periods of residency in Brazil as a British consular officer – in Santos (September 1906 to January 1908), Belém do Pará (February 1908 to February 1909) and as consul-general in Rio de Janeiro (March 1909 to August 1913) – Casement witnessed and observed various key events in the nation's modern emergence and cast a critical eye on aspects of Brazil's geopolitical and economic situation within the Atlantic economy. In 1910 he led an official mission into the north-west Amazon to investigate reports of widespread crimes against humanity resulting from the extractive rubber industry. The journey would deepen his concerns about the destructive capacity of empires and the unchecked power of modernization. In 1911 he undertook a second voyage up the Amazon to Iquitos in very different circumstances to try and bring the perpetrators of the atrocities to justice. His investigations sparked public outcry in

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<sup>1</sup> Moraes, Rubens Borba de, *Bibliografia Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Kosmos, 1983). This indispensable two volume guide lists and briefly describes works about Brazil published from 1504 to 1900, and works by Brazilian authors published abroad before the independence of Brazil in 1822.



Britain and helped divert international investment away from the Amazon to the emerging rubber plantation economy of southeast Asia. The decision by the British prime minister, H. H. Asquith, to open up a parliamentary select committee inquiry took

the investigation to another level of public scrutiny. By the middle of 1913, when the report of the committee was published, the Putumayo atrocities had generated a labyrinth of detail about the extractive rubber industry.



**Botanical drawing of *Hevea brasiliensis***

In the first decade of the twentieth century the market value of extractive rubber peaked. A new age of modernization, defined by electricity and the motor car, was heavily dependent on increasing supplies of rubber.

The historical value of this large quantity of text, testimony and evidence directly and indirectly related to the Putumayo

atrocities has attracted an exceptional amount of intellectual and academic engagement. Joseph Conrad, the author of

*Heart of Darkness*, touches the Casement story in intriguing ways. Conrad and Casement had shared accommodation in the Congo and a friendship developed between the two men. Conrad compared Casement to the Spanish missionary and earliest defender of indigenous life, Bartolomé de Las Casas, and Casement organised his journeys up the Congo and Amazon in ways which have strong resonances in Conrad's novel. Another popular author of the age, Arthur Conan Doyle, inventor of the inscrutable Sherlock Holmes, based one of his enduring works of fiction *The Lost World* on information supplied by Casement from his Amazon journeys. In 1932 H.G. Wells included a section on the Putumayo and tropical forced labour in his analysis of industrial society, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*. The anthropologist Michael Taussig's ground-

breaking analysis, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, invoked the texts produced by the Putumayo atrocities as a means of questioning the politics and the distorting constructions of colonial reality. Most recently, the Peruvian writer, Mario Vargas Llosa, has retold Casement's story in his novel *El Sueño del Celta*. In the century which has elapsed since the crimes of the Putumayo were made public, the tragedy has become a source for both enduring controversy and critical analysis of the encounter between the indigenous world of South America and the unchecked advance of modernity. Furthermore, the story is an important source for understanding a pivotal moment in the extractive rubber industry of the Amazon and serves as a valuable insight into the politics of remembering.



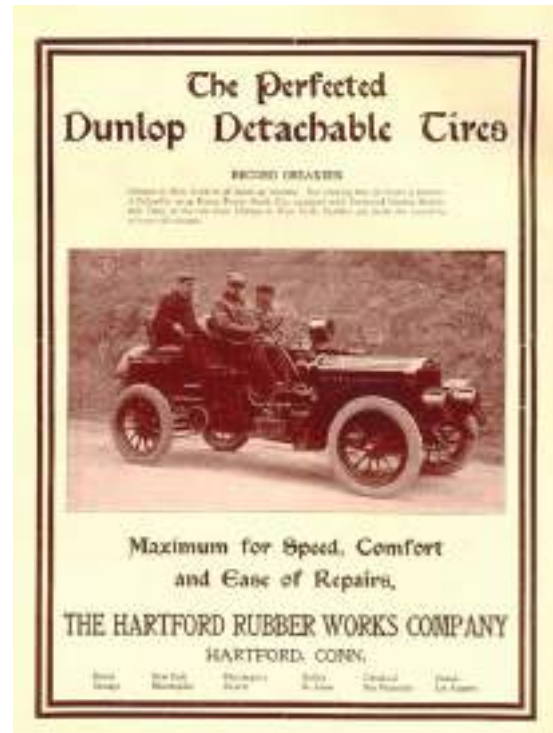
**The reinvention of the wheel**

Demand for rubber began to increase rapidly from the 1880s when a Scottish vet, John Boyd Dunlop, designed a prototype of the pneumatic tyre. Dunlop lived and worked in Belfast but the first Dunlop factory was set up in Dublin.





Early advertisements for Dunlop Tyres



### *Casement in Africa:*

Before arriving in Brazil, Casement had spent twenty years serving in different colonial capacities in sub-Saharan Africa. He arrived at the mouth of the Congo in 1884, shortly before the Berlin West Africa conference, where European & US diplomats and businessmen met to discuss the future of commerce and free trade in Africa and thereby initiated the scramble for the interior

regions. Casement's first appointment was working as a colonial officer for Belgium's King Leopold II's International Association. A photograph taken in 1886 shows him standing beside various senior administrators involved in the Congo enterprise and indicates how, from an early moment in his African career, he was already moving in the highest circles.



**Roger Casement with colonial officers of International Association of the Congo, c. 1886**

From an early stage of his career in Africa Roger Casement made a good impression upon his senior colonial administrators. In this photograph he stands at the back of the group wearing a straw hat.

Early on, however, his concerns about the African enterprise of King Leopold II of Belgium were aroused. He resigned his commission and thereafter took advantage of a number of different opportunities available to a colonial adventurer. He worked for spells as a labour recruiter, surveyor and civil missionary. In 1892 he was spotted by

the British foreign office and employed as a survey officer in the Oil Rivers Protectorate or Niger Coast Protectorate, where he undertook a series of cartographic surveys and intelligence-gathering trips through the hinterland of the Niger delta, between the old Atlantic slaving ports of Bonny and Old Calabar. After a further two years gathering

intelligence on the movement of arms through Lorenço Marques in Portuguese East Africa, he was appointed British consul in Portuguese West Africa, a vast consular district spanning the area between Angola and the Congo territories claimed by France and Belgium.

By this stage Casement had survived fourteen years in Africa and had established himself within government circles as an extraordinarily diligent and honest colonial servant. During the next five years he travelled far and wide through his consular district, moving his office from Loanda to Boma, and redefining and redrawing the boundaries of the British consular district. Africa, however, was growing increasingly unstable as a result of European interference and the imposition of some often heavy-handed administration. Unsettling rumours were circulating around the Atlantic about the 'new slaveries' which



**Roger Casement with Mary Kingsley at Old Calabar.**

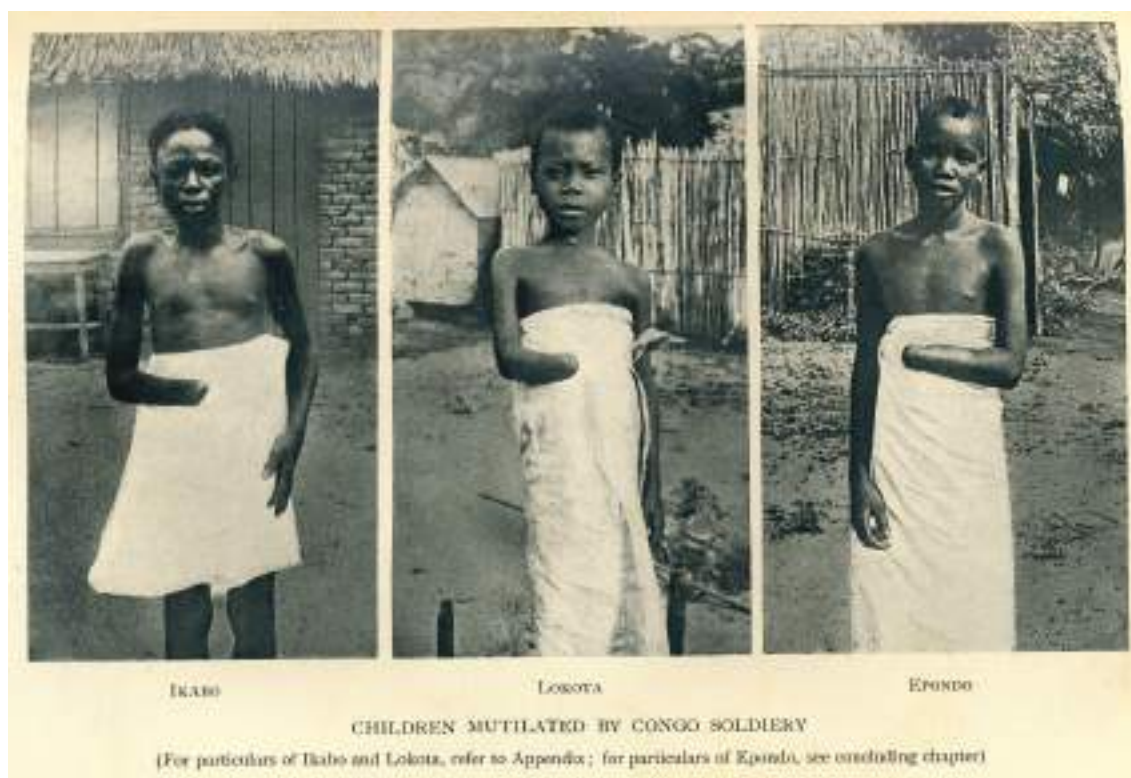
Roger Casement photographed with the Africanist, Mary Kingsley, at the consular residence in the former slave trading port of Old Calabar. Kingsley's two books on her journeys in West Africa – *Travels in West Africa* and *West African Studies* – influenced government policy and the emergence of the policy of indirect rule. Casement's years working in West Africa connected him to the historical undercurrents of transatlantic slavery and the subaltern connections linking Brazil and the Congo.

had arisen following the abolition of transatlantic slavery.<sup>2</sup> King Leopold II's administration in the Congo gained a notoriously brutal reputation, as the indigenous inhabitants of central Africa were forced to conform to a rubber-

<sup>2</sup> The best study on the Congo remains S.J.S. Cooley, *Britain and the Congo Question, 1885-1913* (London: Longmans, 1968). More recently Adam Hochschild created a storm of controversy in his popular retelling of the story in *King Leopold's Ghost: A story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2006). Two recent and valuable studies include: Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884-1926* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Robert Burroughs, *Travel Writings and Atrocities: Eyewitness Accounts of Colonialism in the Congo, Angola and the Putumayo* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

gathering system founded on fear, forced labour and violence. Torture, disfigurement and death were integral to the *modus operandi* of the Congo Free State. Public outrage was awakened through the efforts of a few determined activists and, most notably,

a young journalist E.D. Morel. From 1900 Morel began to write highly critical articles about the political economy of West African trade and gradually built up a cohort of influential support.<sup>3</sup>



### Severed hands.

The deliberate amputation of hands by the regime of the Congo Free State, for those men, women and children who had failed to meet the company's rubber quota, outraged the public and helped attract sympathy to the reform movement. The camera became a valuable instrument in the battle to galvanise public support for the campaign.

<sup>3</sup> Morel wrote a vast amount of material on the politics of West Africa and the Congo. Of particular importance to understanding rubber are *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Flourishing on the Congo in the Year of Grace 1906* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1906) and Wm. Roger Louis and Jean Stengers, *E. D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

In 1903 the British foreign secretary, Lord Lansdowne ordered his 'man on the spot' Roger Casement to make a journey into the upper Congo to investigate and report officially to the government. Since taking up his consular post in the Congo in 1898, Casement had been surreptitiously compiling a case exposing the injustices resulting from colonial administration in the lower Congo. In the latter part of 1903 he travelled through a number of the districts of the upper Congo and compiled a dossier of evidence from

testimony gathered from the victims of the regime and from a number of missionaries with wide-ranging knowledge of the region. His investigation was given added authority by the fact that he had visited several of the same areas at the start of his career in Africa and was able to make a comparison based on his own knowledge and experience of both the benefits and problems arising from colonial administration. His stark and matter-of-fact analysis described the appalling degradation of people and the environment under siege

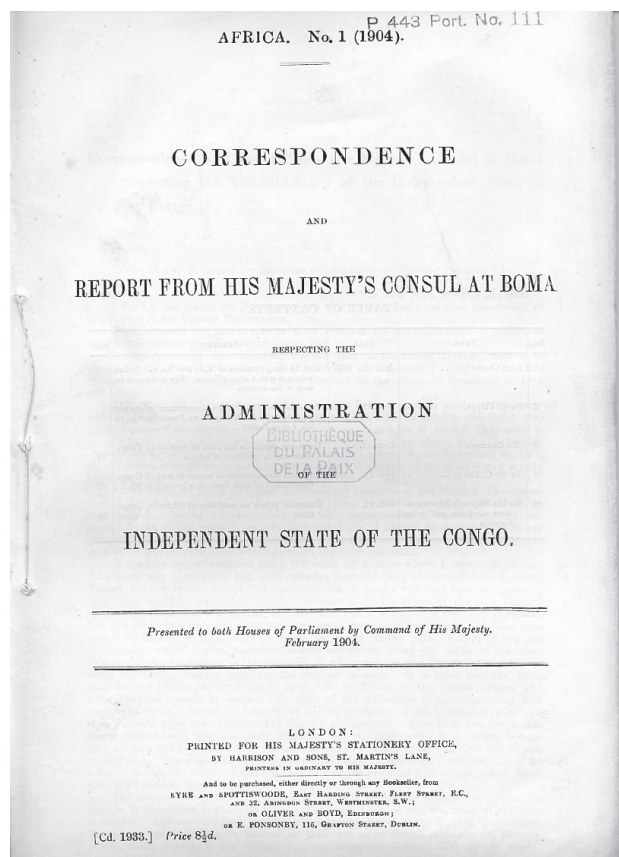


**Roger Casement with May French Sheldon**

The only identifiable photograph of Casement during his 1903 voyage shows him on his return to England. His thin, exhausted frame and ghostly appearance indicate how physically demanding his journey had proved. He is standing beside the author and adventuress, May French Sheldon, who was on her way out to the Congo to compile a report in defence of King Leopold II's regime.

from a regime hell-bent on extracting as much rubber as possible to satisfy an insatiable market demand. As he returned down river he realised that he had to make a choice between remaining true to his conscience or remaining loyal to his official position as a diplomatic representative. To his eventual cost, he chose his conscience.

On returning to England, Casement set about writing his report for the foreign office and setting out his case revealing the barbarities stemming from Leopold's activities. The style of this report was detached, objective, factual, and personal sentiments were largely hidden from view. The evidence was allowed to speak for itself. The report was a terse, condemnation of the system, exposing the betrayal of the humanitarian principles laid down by the European powers in the articles of the Acts of Berlin (1885) and Brussels Acts (1892). What was evident, however, was the indignant moral reaction to the cruelty and barbarism of the regime. But his analysis was based upon observation not dogma. In his view, reform was possible through the implementation of measures capable of improving the treatment of Africans and lessening the barbarism imposed by the system. What he ultimately demanded was 'fair trade' and improved administration through the impartial rule of law bound by international guarantees. In utilising the oral testimony of African voices and in particular young African women, Casement transgressed the protocols of his time and left himself open



#### **Africa No. 1 (1904)**

Roger Casement's official report denouncing the administration in the Congo provoked aggressive denials from the royal palace in Brussels. However, an official Belgium investigation sent out to investigate the accusations on behalf of King Leopold II confirmed the administrative failures.

to accusations of 'fabrication of evidence' and distortion of the truth.

The publication of Casement's report unleashed a bitter war of words. The foreign office, somewhat unnerved by the widespread publicity provoked by the report, began to pull back. Casement had by now linked up with E. D. Morel and together they founded the Congo Reform Association (CRA), a cross-party

lobbying group established to fight for Congo reform. Over the next decade the CRA built up a successful campaign to bring about administrative reform in the Congo and to defend the rights of indigenous ownership of land. The CRA is now widely accepted as a successful experiment in international non-governmental organization, an integral if controversial instrument of contemporary global governance.



**Alice Stopford Green** stood at the centre of one of the most significant networks of power in the British Empire. Her marriage to the social historian J. R. Green gave her unique access to the privileged world of the Oxford high table and the inner circle of British Liberalism.

King Leopold II retaliated by increasing his expenditure on media propaganda in both the US and Europe and paying lavishly for positive publicity and spin doctors to manage a campaign proclaiming the great success of his Congo Free State enterprise. At the end of the year and with his career in Africa effectively finished, Casement tried to take up a new consular position in Lisbon, but bad health got the better of him and he temporarily retired from the foreign office in 1905 to devote his energies to the two causes closest to his heart: Congo reform and Irish independence.

In the summer of 1904, as he recovered from his Congo journey, Casement deepened his involvement with the Irish cultural revival. Since boyhood he had expressed a natural sympathy for the great heroes of Irish history who had resisted English occupation of Ireland. Disillusioned by the failures of imperial power, he now took an active part in the organising of a festival of the glens in north-east Ulster and made new friends and intellectual alliances from among an emerging group of activists intent on building a progressive and independent Ireland based upon values of social equality, humanity and self-determination. The most enduring of these friendships were forged with the historian Alice Stopford Green, and the grassroots organiser, Bulmer Hobson.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alice Stopford Green is a remarkably neglected figure, the only unsatisfactory biography is R.B. McDowell, *Alice Stopford Green: A Passionate Historian* (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1967). Bulmer Hobson was recently interpreted by Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

## *Roger Casement in Brazil*

Casement departed from England for South America in September 1906, destined for his first post, located at the port of Santos, where he would be responsible for a consular jurisdiction stretching across the States of São Paulo and Paraná. His appointment coincided with a greater determination on his part to bring about the political and cultural separation of England and Ireland. Since leaving Africa and taking temporary leave from the foreign office, Casement had allied himself to the cause of advanced nationalism in Ireland and the Sinn Féin movement. He was now determined to bring about the symbolic and practical separation of Ireland from its constitutional union with Britain. Both his private and official correspondence made a deliberate national distinction. 'Remember my address is: Consulate of Great Britain and Ireland, Santos – not British Consulate!' he wrote to Alice Stopford Green as his steamship reached Brazil.<sup>5</sup>

In his private and official communications to his colleagues, friends and family during his first three years in Brazil, the most unsettling aspect of Casement's commentary was his overt and often quite offensive criticism of Brazilian people and culture. Biographers have been quick to employ these comments ad hominem, to imply a hostile racism engrained in

Casement's outlook. There has been a reluctance to apply any reasoned critical scrutiny of Casement's views on ethnicity and identity, which underwent an intricate and fluid process of revision and modification as his own experience of colonial administration transformed his sympathies from social imperialist to nationalist. On one hand, Casement held to some of the dominant values and discursive formations which were required of his position as an official of the foreign office, standing at the apex of the acutely racially determined hierarchy of the British Empire. On the other hand, his comments articulated his fears for the survival of the Irish 'race' and were derived from the scientific racism based on the social Darwinist thinking of his time.

Casement recognized that national identity was principally about cultural survival. Much of his racial commentary on Brazil and the Amazon extended from his evaluation of the encounter between pre-colonial indigenous people and the forces of imperial power and modernity. He understood that colonial society in Brazil had been constructed upon waves of conquest and exploitation: centuries of Portuguese government, transatlantic slavery, the on-going frontier war against indigenous peoples, and the endless cycles of natural resource extraction. This was the legacy that

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<sup>5</sup> National Library of Ireland, MS 10464 (3), Roger Casement to A.S. Green, 21 September 1906.



he discerned in the faces of the Brazilian people and which prompted his often quite intemperate outbursts. Brazilian society collided with his sympathies for the indigenous 'native' still under siege from the internal colonialism of the South American republics, whether Brazilian, Peruvian, Colombian or Bolivian. Initially he censured those same republics for their collective failure to extend the enlightenment hopes of liberty, equality and fraternity to indigenous populations, whose suffering was not in any way eased by the advent of the republics after the wars of independence in the early nineteenth century. After his experience in the Putumayo and his rejection of the possibility of top-down reform, he saw organised resistance amongst oppressed people globally as the only hope of delivering a fairer and more egalitarian world. Shortly after his resignation from the foreign office in 1913 he compared the plight of the South American Indian with the dispossessed Irish language speakers of the west of Ireland. The comparison is problematic but it well conveys his intention to create solidarities of resistance within the Atlantic realm.

Until recently Casement's Brazilian years have been overshadowed by his two decades in Africa and the tragic complications entangling the end of his life. However, in terms of his own intellectual formation, leading to his wholesale rejection of imperial hegemony and the formulation

of a distinct strain of pluralist Irish nationalism, this was a most influential period. His rejection of what he considered to be the objectionable features of Brazilian nationality helped shape his own model for Ireland. His analysis of the political economy in Brazil, and his investigation of the rubber industry in the north-west Amazon, coupled with his wider knowledge of the geopolitics of the Atlantic sphere, further consolidated his determination to overthrow a system which fostered division and suffering. In essence his own aspiration towards a self-sufficient and independent Ireland connected to the wider trade of Europe and the Atlantic world extended out of his rejection of the grubby pursuit of profit and the prizing of commercial interests above human well-being. The new Ireland he envisaged was one based upon affection, love and spiritual concerns and would be motivated by the universal defence of humanity and respect for cultural diversity. In a letter written from Santos to his confidant Alice Green he reflected on his Congo experience:

I realised then that I was looking at this tragedy with the eyes of another race – of a people once hunted themselves, whose hearts were based on affection as the root principle of contact with their fellow men and whose estimate of life was not of something eternally to be appraised at its market "price".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> National Library of Ireland MS 10464 (3), Roger Casement to A.S. Green, 20 April 1907.

The comment may locate his conversion to anti-imperialism to his journey up the Congo in 1903, but it was in Brazil that he developed deeper strategies of resistance and where his experience of the rubber resource was turned him towards the need for paradigmatic change in North-South relations.

His initial expectations about Brazil were quickly dashed by the mundane monotony of his work and the high cost of living. Within a few weeks of arriving he wrote home dejected by the drab and demeaning pace of life in Santos. His correspondence described a mounting sense of frustration: he felt his time was wasted by menial duties



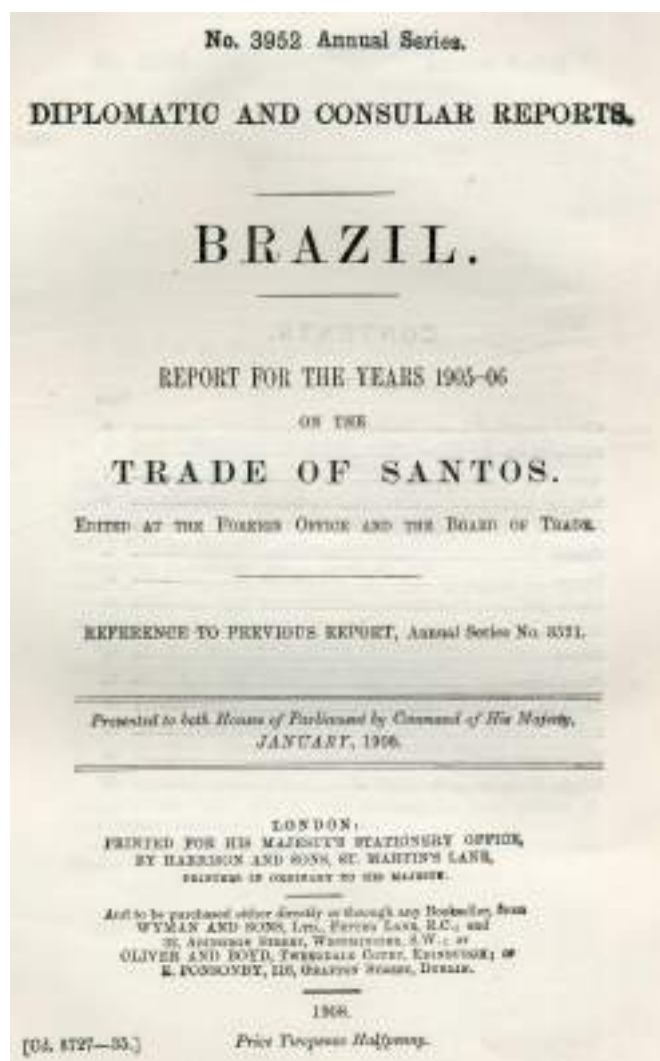
**Casement on the Island of Guarujá**

During his time in Santos Casement spent a good deal of time staying with his friends the Keevils on Guarujá island.

dealing with drunken sailors and marriage licences. In spite of his dissatisfaction, he still managed to keep a steady stream of missives flowing back to his colleagues in the foreign office.

The most relevant piece of writing he produced during this first term of duty was his report on the trade of Santos for the years (1905-06).<sup>7</sup> He confirmed with candour how British economic dominance was beginning to face fierce opposition from the Germans. 'In paper and cement Germany has practically superseded British and all other exporters to this part of Brazil, and she is steadily entering into competition in a variety of other articles once largely supplied from the United Kingdom.' His report also made perceptive comments about the 'invisible exports' economy and the sizeable amounts of money which left the country as a consequence of seasonal migrant workers from Europe and Argentina.

In an effort to draw attention to a distinctly Irish manufacturing industry, he made deliberate reference to the increased import of Guinness stout into the country 'owing partly to the recommendation of the medical



#### **Santos report**

Casement's report from Santos encoded several references to his secret intentions to bring about the constitutional separation of Ireland from the British Empire.

<sup>7</sup> *Diplomatic and Consular Reports – Brazil. Report for the years 1905-06 on the Trade of Santos.* No 3952 [Cd. 3727-35].

faculty.' He also mentioned the popularity of some key goods manufactured in Belfast, notably linen and steamships. The Brazilian Steamship Company, the Lloyd Brasileiro, had two new steamships under construction in Belfast, which were due for delivery the following year. Nevertheless, he noted that all goods coming from Great Britain were generally described as "Ingleze" and Brazilians were unable to distinguish between what was manufactured in Britain and what was made in Ireland.

In February 1908, after several months back in Europe, he was assigned a new consular post at Belem do Pará, the prosperous city at the mouth of the river Amazon, with responsibility for a vast consular jurisdiction stretching across the States of Grand Pará, Amazonas and Maranhão. Initially his private correspondence described his preference for the life in Pará compared to the south of Brazil. His priority on arriving was the urgent need to put the British consular house in



**Dr Augusto Montenegro**<sup>8</sup>

order and to deal with years of neglect by previous consuls as well as a consular archive in complete disarray. He found life in Belém do Pará impossibly expensive and his letters home were filled with details about the unaffordable cost of living. Pará was enjoying the zenith of its boom years. The gracious mango-lined avenues shaded an extensive public transport system and, under the State governorship of Dr. Augusto Montenegro, generous works of civic improvement had made the city into the most modern tropical metropolis in the world.

Despite his complaints, Casement produced a highly informative 62-page report for the British foreign office and board of trade, which demonstrated why he was such a valued and respected official.<sup>9</sup> When compared to the previous eight years of consular and diplomatic reports, this was a substantive piece of work, which went much further than mere dry analysis of trade figures and the talking up of British interests in the

<sup>8</sup> During the Governorship of Dr Augusto Montenegro in the State of Pará, Belem was lavishly endowed with grand schemes of civic design, which turned it into the most modern tropical city in the world.

<sup>9</sup> Diplomatic and Consular Reports – Brazil – Report for the year 1907 and previous years on the trade of the Consular district of Pará, No 4111 annual series [Cd.3727-194].



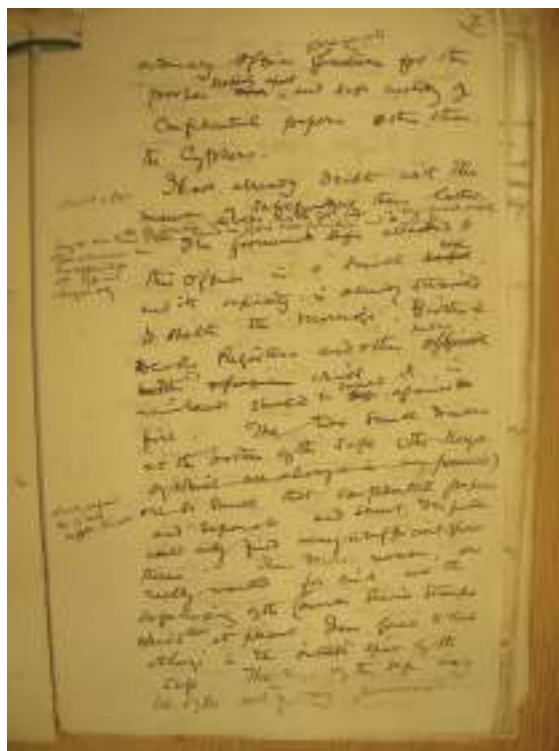
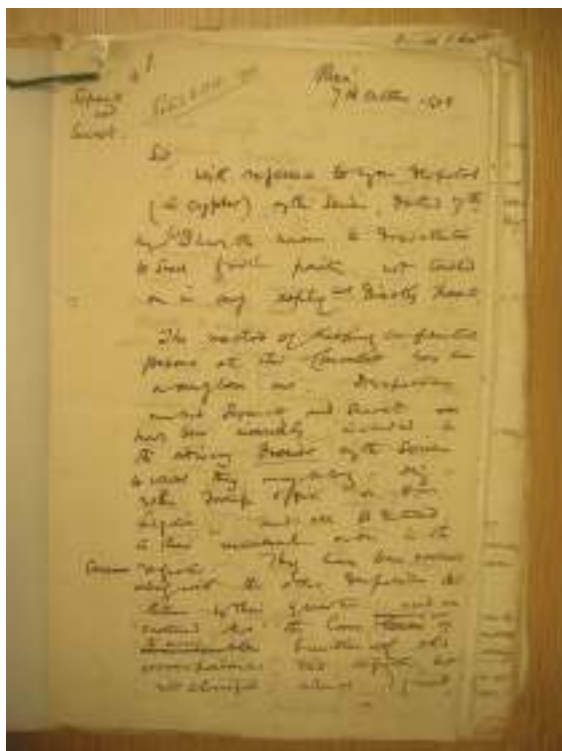
Ave. 16 de Novembro, a palm shaded avenue of Belém do Pará.

region. Illustrated with a fold-out map of the Amazon, the contents included a rich mix of historical and geographical descriptions, economic information, and candid observations about sociolinguistics, population, tariffs, river traffic, tourism, education and public health. Attention was drawn to the disproportionate levels of profit made by the federal state in Brazil from the country's economic interests in the Amazon and how little was invested back into the region in order to improve social well-being, health and education.

In the light of subsequent shifts in the geopolitical economy of rubber, his prescient comments about the Amazon trade contained a discreet warning about the impending collapse of the extractive industry, once rubber production from the emerging plantation economy of Southeast Asia was able to meet the market demand. The overdependence of the Amazon on extractive rubber would inexorably lead to an economic downturn. Casement's Amazon adventures of the next three years would directly coincide with this collapse. His forecast was consolidated with thoughtful

criticism of an economic model which was over-dependent upon the extraction of resources. Reference was made to earlier cycles of the extractive economy. He cited the rise and demise of the turtle oil industry which had resulted in a lesser but noteworthy boom in the region in the decades before the dominance of rubber extraction. The annual slaughter of turtles and the exportation of their oil to burn in the street lamps of western Europe had left rivers bereft of turtle life and had pushed some species of river turtle to the brink of extinction. Further criticism was

aimed at the widespread shooting and trapping of tens of thousands of ibises and the ephemeral use of their brightly-coloured feathers by European fashion designers and milliners. Such concerns about the economic and environmental dangers of the unregulated and relentless extraction of products and resources from the forest was an attitude which has only found wider support in the present day, as the ecological costs of the age of mass production are recalculated in the light of planetary degradation.



**The National Archive (UK) FO 743/22**

On arriving in Belém Casement was appalled at the state of the consular archive and wrote several memos setting out guidelines for the separation and security of secret communiqués.

The main event of these months was a trip to report on the progress of works on the Madeira Mamoré railway. The journey gave Casement insight into the extravagant, often hallucinatory strategies which defined the rampant frontier of rubber extraction in the Amazon. He reported back to London how in Porto Velho most of the Canadian and American managers were down with malaria and the labourers imported from Cuba were not up to finishing the task. Referring back to his own experiences recruiting a work force for the building of the railway from Matadi to Stanley Pool in the Congo during the early 1890s, he suggested that the company should 'look to Africa or the Africans, for the completion of their task.'<sup>10</sup>

In terms of his intellectual formation, it is apparent from surviving fragments of notes held in the National Archive of Ireland that Casement's reading on the Amazon and Brazil in general was wide-ranging and comprehensive.<sup>11</sup> Hours, days, weeks and even months spent aboard riverboats and transatlantic steamships afforded him plenty of time when not writing to read around his subject. He deliberately located his own journeys within earlier traditions of European travel writing and intelligence gathering on and about the region. His correspondence, reports and notes referred to works by the botanists and naturalist-explorers of the

Amazon waterways, whose writings had in many ways prepared the ground for subsequent economic invasion. He was drawn to the rich descriptive accounts by Henry Walter Bates, Alfred Russel Wallace and Richard Spruce, and the stimulating and scientifically-important research, which would remain inspirational to future generations of Amazon ethnobotanists, most notably that of Richard Evans Schultes and Wade Davis.

Further archival fragments reveal his deference to the wider European tradition originating with the enlightenment journeys of Alexander Rodrigues Ferreira, the botanical geographer Alexander von Humboldt, the Bavarian botanist Carl Friedrich von Martius, the Austrian palaeontologist Louis Agassiz and the French voyager Baron de Santa-Anna Nery. He also read lesser known accounts by Henry Lister Maw, the officer of the Royal Navy who made a reconnaissance trip across the Amazon basin in 1827, as well as that of the exploration of the Amazon Valley undertaken by William Lewis Herndon under the auspices of the U.S. Navy. Both voyages helped explain, at an official level, the strategic value of the Amazon for both British and US interests in the Atlantic region. Moreover he read with sympathy and understanding the history of missionary influence in South America and

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<sup>10</sup> National Archives (UK) FO 128/324, Roger Casement to Cheetham, 11 May 1908.

<sup>11</sup> The majority of Casement's papers relevant to time in Brazil are held at the National Library of Ireland in MS 13087.

was aware of the life and work of both Bartolomé de las Casas and the Jesuit missionary, Antonio Vieira. Several references in his correspondence defend the 'lingua geral' and the Quechuan-speaking people of the Andes. The linguistic politics which increasingly informed his construction of Irish nationalism was projected into the South American sphere. Similarly, his belief in the place of missionary work on the Amazon would later be realised when he organised a mission of Irish Franciscans to help stabilise conditions in the Putumayo. The unifying intention of all his reading on the Amazon was to decipher and evaluate the treatment of the indigenous people of the region and to ascertain how different cycles of economic and political interference in the area had affected the culture and life styles of the pre-Colombian world.

In a reciprocal way, Casement used his journeys as a means to improve Ireland's material integration with Atlantic culture. During his two decades in Africa and in keeping with the habits of the time, he had collected a number of ethnographic objects, which include a ceremonial bark costume and a large signalling drum (Manguaré) from the Putumayo.<sup>12</sup> More controversial from a twenty-first-century standpoint standards was

his purchase and supply of birds and animals to the Dublin Zoological Gardens in Phoenix Park. During his trip to inspect progress on the Madeira-Mamoré railway he sent back an animal he described by its Indian name Iguati, which was possibly a Tamandua, related to the great ant-eater. A 1911 letter from L. C. Arbuthnot, the superintendent of the Zoological Society's Gardens, thanks Casement for the delivery of a number of different Amazon animals.<sup>13</sup> The list included a small rainforest cat, or ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), a coati or Brazilian aardvark (*Nasua nasua*), a Capuchin monkey, a colourful Arara and a pheasant-like curassow. However, the most precious of his surviving artefacts from his Amazon travels is his collection of butterflies, influenced no doubt by the entomologist Henry Walter Bates.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>12</sup> The anthropology archive at the National Museum of Ireland contains a number of artefacts collected from sub-Saharan Africa and the Amazon.

<sup>13</sup> See Angus Mitchell (ed.) *Sir Roger Casement's Heart of Darkness: The 1911 Documents* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2003) pp. 601-2.

<sup>14</sup> The Natural History Museum of Ireland holds the collection of butterflies. For an interesting reference to the collection see Rebecca Solnit, *A Book of Migrations : some passages in Ireland* (London: Verso, 1997) pp. 28-43.





**Roger Casement's butterflies** collection from the Amazon hold in the Natural History Museum

A significant part of Casement's consular brief in both Africa and South America was to report on the economic value of natural products. Over the years he had built up a substantial botanical knowledge. By the time he arrived in Brazil he had a close friendship with the most distinguished Irish botanist of the age, Augustine Henry, who had identified hundreds of new plants during two decades as a medic and customs officer in central China.<sup>15</sup> Casement was aware of how the botanical potential of the region was a resource which had great and sustainable value and was of greater long-term worth than the boom-bust cycles of the extraction economy, or 'vegetable filibustering' as he

termed it. He recognized, too, that the botanical richness of the region was unlimited and potentially an infinite source for scientific investigation. Coupled to this was his concern about levels of deforestation, a subject which he regularly referred to in his official writing. In two undated notes he compared the felling of timber from the Amazon rainforest with the history of the deforestation of Ireland and argued how control of habitat was intrinsic to colonial domination.<sup>16</sup>

The cross-fertilization of Casement's thinking on Ireland with his experience of Brazil is most evident in his writings on the mythical island of *Hy-Brasil*, where he

<sup>15</sup> Sheila Pim, *The Wood and the Trees: A biography of Augustine Henry* (London, 1966.)

<sup>16</sup> National Library of Ireland MS13087 (31), *Rough notes on the timber of the Amazon valley*.

endeavoured (not altogether convincingly it must be said) to argue for Irish origins of the name "Brazil".<sup>17</sup> In the Irish poetic imagination *Hy-Brasil* was an expression of utopia, an island paradise lying off the western seaboard of Ireland. At the turn of the century, as the Irish nationalist project began to connect its own past to a more ancient Atlantic tradition, the myth of *Hy-Brasil* became prominent among cultural revivalists. The allegorical charm of *Hy-Brasil* had attracted various poetic and scholastic interpretations since the eighteenth century. Recently, the subject has been well researched and described by the Brazilian author Geraldo Cantarino in his study *Uma Ilha chamada Brasil: O paraíso irlandês no passado brasileiro* (2004).<sup>18</sup> Some of Casement's friends involved in the northern revival in Belfast, among them Dora Sigerson Shorter and Ethna Carbery, had engaged directly with the myth of *Hy-Brasil*, which had become part of the re-imagining of Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

Casement, however, examined the myth of *Hy-Brasil* to critique historical orthodoxy, which he felt had silenced the influence of ancient Irish belief systems, myths and stories in the writing of Atlantic history. In looking at how the Irish origins of Brazil had been written out of the history books, he demonstrated how an Anglo-Saxon version

of the past had obscured and suppressed earlier Irish influences. By ignoring texts written in Irish, historians overlooked and largely dismissed vital sources illuminating the contribution made by Irish trade and monastic culture to the spheres of both the Atlantic and European continent. The argument is well-informed with critical reference to the dominant popular accounts of South American history by Washington Irving, William Robertson, W. H. Prescott and Robert Southey. The criticism clearly extends from the influence of a new national historiography under construction by Casement's intellectual mentor, the historian, Alice Stopford Green. With the publication in 1908 of her history of medieval Ireland *The Making of Ireland and its Undoing*, Green had provocatively expressed how aspects of Irish influence had been persistently suppressed by more dominant structures of historical narrative.

At the start of 1909 Casement was promoted to be British consul general in Brazil and arrived in March of that year to take up his position. For several months he commuted by train each day from Rio to the diplomatic capital of Petrópolis and bore witness to the declining years of the great administration of Brazil's minister for foreign affairs, the Baron do Rio Branco. His

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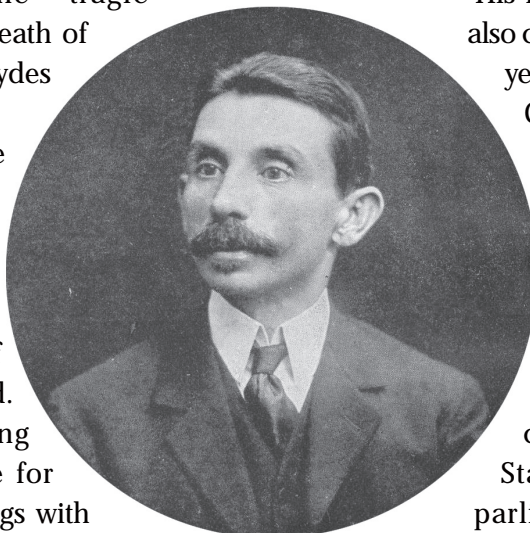
<sup>17</sup> For the text of the essay see the on-line journal *Irish Migrations Studies in Latin America*, 4:3, (July 2006): 157-165.

<sup>18</sup> Geraldo Cantarino, *Uma Ilha chamada Brasil: O paraíso irlandês no passado brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Dora Sigerson Shorter, 'I have been to Hy-Brasail', in *Ballads and Poems* (London: James Bowden, 1899), pp. 62-63. Ethna Carbery, *The Four Winds of Eirinn: Twenty Fifth Anniversary Edition* (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1927), p. 54.

comments on Brazilian life reached a particular pitch of invective captured in a letter reporting the tragic circumstances of the death of the Brazilian writer Euclides da Cunha.<sup>20</sup>

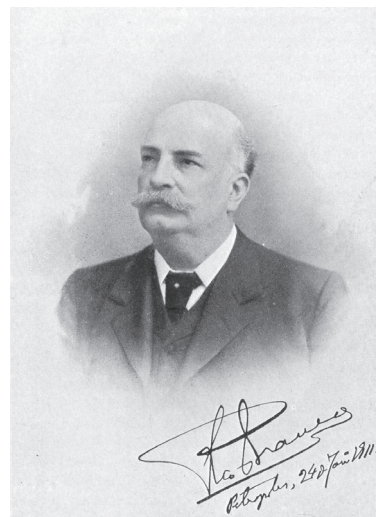
His letters home are filled with angry asides at the continued prevarication of the Liberal government around the issue of Home Rule for Ireland. He rebuked leading statesmen of the time for their duplicitous dealings with both Ireland and the Congo. Arthur Balfour, Lord Rosebery, the prime minister Herbert Asquith and the head of his own ministry, the foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey were persistently targeted. Elsewhere, he censured British power for its pursuit of self-interest at the cost of the wider common good. In one particularly farsighted letter, he predicted the advent of war between Britain and Germany unless British animosity was halted. Some years later, once his treason had been identified and the British authorities began to pick through the details of his life in an effort to understand his revolutionary connections and the motives for his treason, they would have been shocked to discover how, under the cover of his consular post in Brazil, he was discreetly redistributing his



**Euclides da Cunha**

foreign office salary to sustain emerging national revolutionary initiatives in Ireland.

His first three years in Brazil also coincided with the busiest years of the campaign for Congo reform. His regular correspondence with E. D. Morel dealt in detail with the high politics of the Congo, as the aging King Leopold II lost his grip on power and he passed on administrative control of the Congo Free State to the Belgian parliament. Morel kept Casement up to date with many of the sensitive aspects of the



**The Baron of Rio Branco** had presided over Brazilian foreign policy.

<sup>20</sup> A draft of this letter is held in National Library of Ireland MS 13087 (2), 18 August 1909.

campaign, and Casement in return supplied Morel with encouragement and advice, comparing his campaign against Leopold with the endeavours of St Patrick converting the Irish to Christianity. Leopold II died at the end of 1909 and his passing brought the main thrust of the campaign to an end. Casement now sought alternative directions in order to extend the work of the Congo Reform Association to a much wider sphere wherever vulnerable cultures were susceptible to the destructive tendencies of imperial control and the forces of the free market.

As he returned to Europe on leave in March 1910, Casement made a detour south by train to Argentina (he had made an earlier visit there when stationed in Santos). Later on it would emerge that he had good friends among the large expatriate Irish community living in and around Buenos Aires, some of whom were actively sympathetic with Irish independence. Among them were the Duggan family, one of the wealthiest and most powerful of all Argentine families and fervent supporters of the nationalist cause.



The **Royal Palace of Tervuren** on the outskirts of Brussels was built as a monument to Leopold II's rule in the Congo Free State. Today it houses a priceless collection of African Art and a key archive on colonial Africa.

## *Investigating Amazon atrocities*

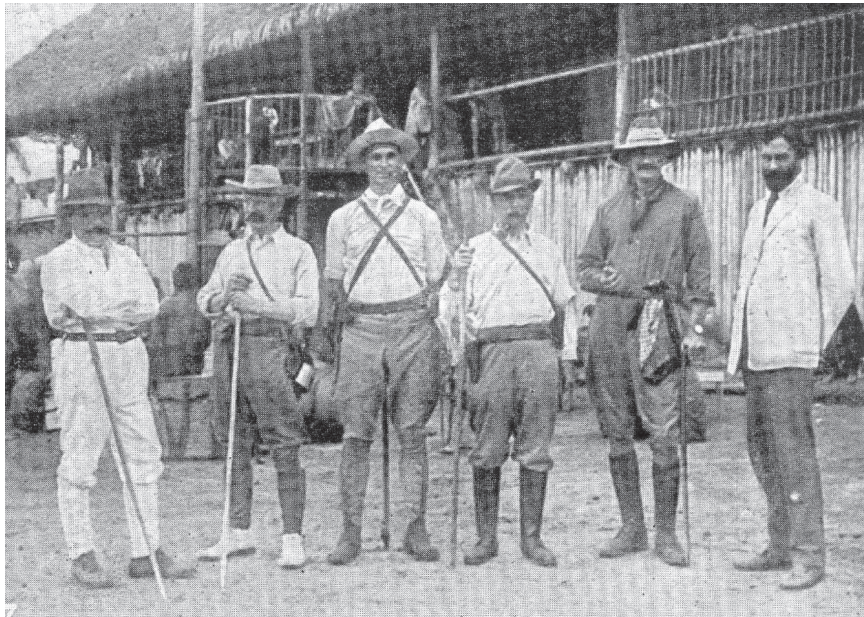
In 1910 Casement arrived back in England after a year in Rio de Janeiro just as another scandal about the extractive rubber industry was breaking in London. A young American railroad engineer, Walt Hardenburg, had stumbled across a brutal regime of slavery in the north-west Amazon in the disputed frontier region between Peru, Colombia and Brazil. The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society took up the cause at a political level and a weekly journal, *Truth*, specialising in financial affairs began to report the story. Casement put pressure on the foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, to send him on a special mission as the British government's representative. In July, Casement embarked, accompanied by a five-man commission selected by the Peruvian Amazon company, to investigate the allegations. They travelled from England to the Amazon by ship, with brief stops in Belém and Manaus, and arrived in Iquitos, headquarters of the Peruvian Amazon Company's activities, in early September.

Casement's journey through the Putumayo region in the latter half of 1910

might now be regarded as a critical moment in the social and economic destiny of the Amazon. His daily observations, thoughts, concerns and actions were dutifully recorded in an extensive journal, published in 1997 as *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement*.<sup>21</sup> During a period of ten weeks Casement moved with the commissioners through the 'devil's paradise', dining with the murderous chiefs of section, writing down the testimonies from the Barbadian overseers, recruited eight years earlier to do much of the company's work. Of the extensive body of text relating to the profits and practices of the rubber industry, this journal survives as the most candid and instructive window into the last years of the Amazon rubber industry as the market boom for extractive rubber went bust. Building on his great experience investigating similar atrocities in the Congo, Casement perceptively infiltrated the complex web of systemic corruption and deception reaching from the oblivious and unaccountable centres of global capital up river into the innermost depths of the tributaries of the upper Amazon.

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<sup>21</sup> See Angus Mitchell (ed.) *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement* (London: Anaconda Editions & Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997). In the introduction I explain the various versions of this diary and give a full explanation concerning the controversy over the disputed diaries.



#### **Commission of Inquiry**

Casement (pictured on the far right) travelled through the Putumayo regions with a group of five English commissioners representing the Peruvian Amazon Company. The commission stayed on the Putumayo into early 1911 and their subsequent report substantiated many of Casement's highly critical findings.

Like the forest which forms the background to the journal, and was another casualty of the atrocity, *The Amazon Journal* is a work of dense description. Casement adopts various voices and guises as official representative, private investigator, empathetic Irishman, law-maker and ethnographer to penetrate through the web of deception, violence and terror which formed the basis of the company's dominance in the area. His empathy for the victims of the crime is discernible at every level of the inquiry. As he listens to the stories and observes the daily activities of the company, he gradually unpicks the layers of secrecy and deception

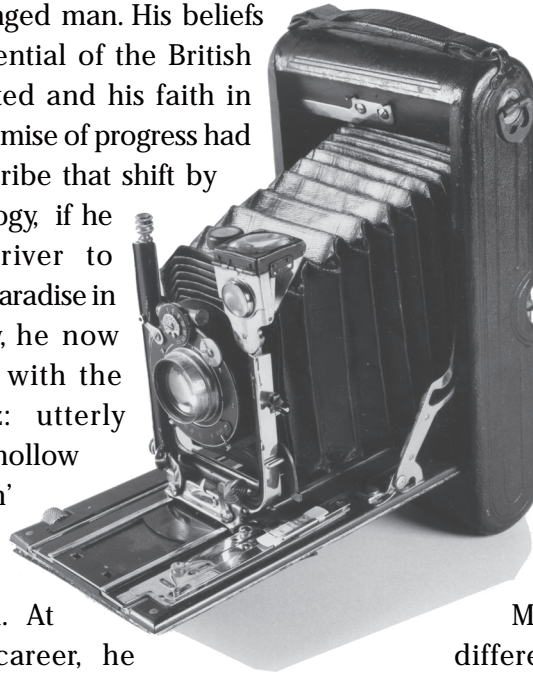
masking the regime and contextualises the atrocity as part of a historical continuum of exploitation unleashed when Columbus first set foot in the 'New World'.

As a supplement to what he witnessed, heard and transcribed, Casement also turned his camera to effective use. As the camera had proved such a useful instrument in provoking people to take action in the Congo campaign he now turned the lens on what he found in the Putumayo. From references he made later on in official correspondence, he compiled various albums of pictures which captured both the tragic exploitation of the Indians as well as their extraordinary

strength and fortitude. Unfortunately the albums have not survived, but a limited number of photographs graphically depict the horror.

Returning down river at the end of 1910 Casement was a changed man. His beliefs in the 'civilising' potential of the British Empire had evaporated and his faith in modernity and the promise of progress had disintegrated. To describe that shift by using a fictional analogy, if he had travelled up river to investigate the devil's paradise in the guise of Marlow, he now returned to Europe with the cynicism of Kurtz: utterly disillusioned by the hollow promises of 'civilisation' and secretly even more determined to overthrow the system. At this juncture of his career, he drafted two ample introductions to his reports comparing the historical plight of the Native American Indian under different formations of colonial government. While some lines of argument in this overview are certainly problematic, they also connect Casement back to a long European genealogy of resistance to European invasion of the Americas. His name was now overtly associated with the lineage of anti-slavery activism and aboriginal protection dating

back to the early nineteenth century. Some of his views, however, foreshadowed an emergent anti-colonial activism and postcolonial thinking, which would find many forms of articulation during the anticolonial struggles of the twentieth century.



Casement's camera<sup>22</sup>

In the first eight months of 1911 Casement wrote his two main reports and transcribed, with the help of a secretary, the testimonies by the Barbadians, which formed the main body of his evidence. The main report delivered on St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1911, was quite different from his initial brief which had restricted his investigation to the condition of British subjects employed by the British-owned, Peruvian Amazon Company. Instead Casement had built up a coherent narrative describing the outrages committed against the indigenous population of the Putumayo.

In August Casement returned to the upper Amazon. The precise circumstances of this voyage remain something of a mystery. There is much to suggest that it was intended

<sup>22</sup> Casement produced albums of photographs during his Putumayo investigation which became powerful instruments in substantiating his case. Many photos have since disappeared but others have subsequently been added to the collection.



Men dressed in bark costumes and balaclavas, one of the surviving photographs taken by Roger Casement in Putumayo.

to prepare British economic interests in the region for the crash in the rubber boom. Casement, who always operated at the shadowy intersection between diplomacy, intelligence-gathering and discreet advocacy, was himself trying to take the investigation to another stage by testing the efficacy of Peruvian law and justice. The arrest and conviction of the main perpetrators of the atrocities motivated his return to the region, but his efforts were largely unrewarded. The local judiciary proved corrupt and impotent. Known criminals walked freely through the

streets of Iquitos, others had disappeared undetected into the Amazon wilderness to find new employment with other companies. Casement spent several uncomfortable weeks in Iquitos trying to activate the local judiciary and preparing for the arrival of a new British consul, G. B. Michell, an old colleague from Congo days.

His time was not wasted and he made important alliances with various anti-Arana networks conspiring to oust the House of Arana from power. Among them was Romulo Paredes, who had recently returned from the



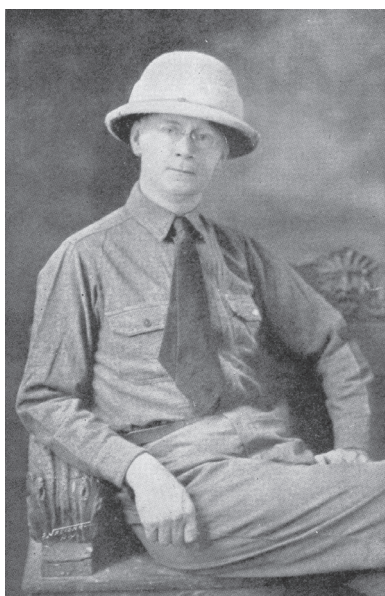
Putumayo after making an official investigation on behalf of the Peruvian government. Paredes supplied Casement with confidential excerpts from his report, which Casement studiously translated from Spanish into English. His findings confirmed Casement's own conclusions and went much further in presenting evidence and testimony gathered directly from the indigenous communities. This added substantially to the case describing the litany of torture, violence and organised terror. It did nothing to improve the condition of the victims.

A key witness to Casement's Amazon voyage of 1911 was the medic and intelligence officer, Herbert Spencer Dickey, who joined Casement in Barbados and then accompanied him all the way to Iquitos. Dickey had more than a decade of experience working in a medical capacity in different areas of South America. His volume of memoirs *Misadventures of a Tropical Medico* (1929) still ranks as one of the most compelling and humorous accounts of the period. Dickey's wry and self-deprecating description of his years in South America begins with his involvement in Colombia's tragic Thousand Days' war and his employment by the Peruvian Amazon Company as a doctor, and extends to his later work as a US intelligence



El Proceso del Putumayo y sus secretos inauditos was another forensic account of Putamayo tragedy published in Lima.

operator. In the late 1930s, after his return to America, Dickey was used as a key character witness in defence of Casement's activities in the Amazon in one final development of his intriguing story.<sup>23</sup>



**Herbert Spencer Dickey**, a doctor and explorer, travelled with Casement from Barbados to Iquitos in 1911 and was later employed by the Peruvian Amazon Company in the Putumayo, where he worked as an informer for Casement.

At the end of the year Casement returned to Europe via Washington. With the support of the British Ambassador, James Bryce, a noted historian and lawyer, he presented his case to the U.S. President, William Howard Taft. The American State Department was persuaded to apply pressure on the Peruvian government and under the emerging special relationship between the British and U.S. governments, a mutually agreeable way forward was arranged. In July 1912 the British government published the Blue Book containing Casement's reports and the Barbadian testimonies. Early the following year the U.S. published an equally comprehensive compendium of official documentation and reports.<sup>24</sup>

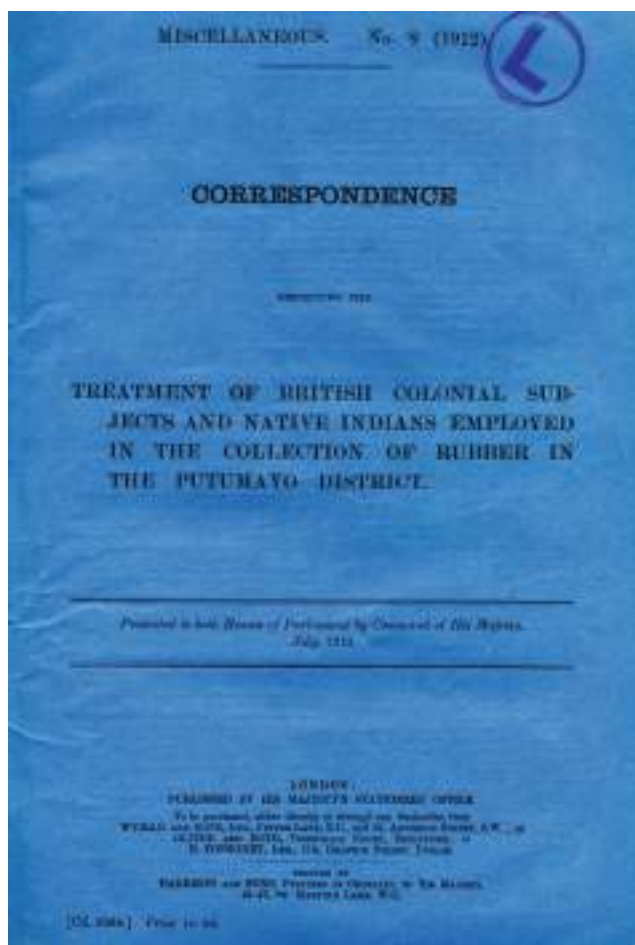
Despite the publication of the Blue Book in mid-July, when public interest was at a low ebb, the investigation attracted widespread coverage around the world. Within weeks the Vatican published an *encyclical* advocating the protection of the South American Indians.<sup>25</sup> Pervasive negative publicity contributed towards the retreat of international investment away from the extractive industry of the Amazon towards the increasingly productive plantations of Anglo-Dutch colonies in southeast Asia. The great

<sup>23</sup> Dickey's memories are told in *The Misadventures of a Tropical Médico* (London: The Bodley Head, 1929). His fuller statement about his travels with Casement is reproduced in *Sir Roger Casement's Heart of Darkness* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2003). pp. 731-740.

<sup>24</sup> Department of State, *Slavery in Peru: Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting Reports of the Secretary of State, with Accompanying papers concerning the Alleged Existence of Slavery in Peru* (Washington D.C.: GOP, 1913).

<sup>25</sup> For the best account of the Vatican's involvement see Francesco Turvasi, *Giovanni Genocchi and the Indians of South America (1911-1913)*, (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1988).

years of prosperity built upon the profits of Amazon rubber came to an abrupt end. Those who could afford to bought a one-way ticket out to begin new lives elsewhere. Many others were stranded.



**The Blue Book** contained the reports and testimonies written down by Casement during his time in the Putumayo in 1910 and described in a dispassionate and official language the violent treatment of indigenous communities.

Still concerned with what might happen to the Putumayo Indians, Casement set about raising funds to support a group of Irish Franciscan missionaries to go the area. One of his strategies to raise money was to write an article for the popular weekly publication *The Contemporary Review*.<sup>26</sup> This amounted to a coherent and comprehensive defence of indigenous life and reveals Casement's empathy for Amerindian culture. Although the tone of the article had to conform with some of the expectations of potential donors, and it adopted a language which was accessible and comprehensible to the British public, it reveals quite a complex comprehension of the historical tragedy underpinning the colonial encounter on the American frontier. His comparison of cultural differences between central Africans and Amazon Indians added to the authority of his approach. Encoded into his analysis were words such as 'clan and 'tribe', which revealed how his reading of pre-colonial Irish history was being discreetly projected into alternative colonial contexts. At another point he commented how the Indian 'was, and is, a Socialist by temperament, habit, and, possibly, age long memory'

<sup>26</sup> Roger Casement 'The Putumayo Indians', *The Contemporary Review*, 561, September 1912 (see appendix).



**Cartoon, *Westminster Gazette***

John Bull and Uncle Sam with a visible air of reluctance, arrest a Putumayo slave-driver.

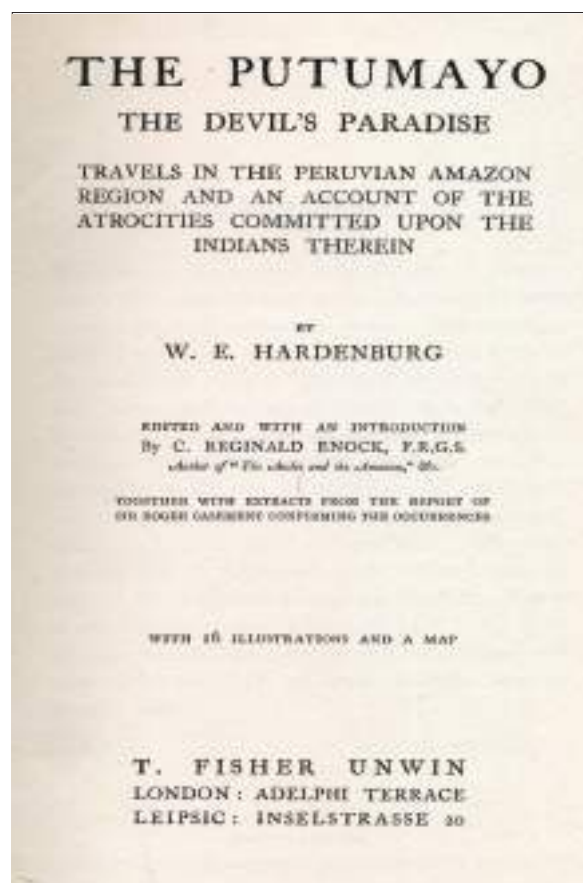
Over the summer of 1912 the sense of public anger in Britain obliged the prime minister Herbert Asquith to take the decision to set up a parliamentary select committee inquiry. This initiated the last chapter of Casement's involvement in the Putumayo atrocities. At the end of 1912 and the

beginning of 1913 a cross-examination of the various protagonists and witnesses in the case was conducted in central London over several weeks. Casement appeared twice before the select committee, and on one occasion brandished a Winchester rifle above his head in court in a gesture intended to

draw attention to the destructive potential of the modern armaments industry. Behind the scenes he worked tirelessly to keep the chairman of the select committee, Charles Roberts, up-to-date with developments in the Putumayo as he heard back from his network of informants still based in the Amazon.

At the end of the year, with his health broken by the long campaign, he left England and headed for the Canary Islands in search of winter sun and relaxation. He took with him a trunk of papers related to his Putumayo investigation so he could continue to work on the case. While staying at Quiney's hotel in Las Palmas he sent Roberts his substantive journal written in long-hand during his Putumayo journey of 1910 and granted him permission to have the manuscript typed up and used in evidence.<sup>27</sup> He then continued on to South Africa and made a brief visit to his brother Tom in the Drakensburg mountains. It is appropriate that Casement ended his involvement with the Putumayo atrocities whilst travelling to Africa for the last time. Since the late eighteenth century Irish radicalism had made a decisive intervention in the matrix of colonial resistance in the Atlantic world, but nothing before or since compared to the

impact of Casement's investigation into crimes against humanity in the Congo and Amazon.<sup>28</sup>



**Hardenburg, *The Devil's Paradise***

The Putumayo atrocities generated a war of words. A series of books appeared from activists seeking to expose the company's activities and those who preferred to silence dissent and forget the scandal.

<sup>27</sup> The correspondence between Casement and Roberts is held among the Antislavery papers at Rhodes House, University of Oxford Mss Brit. Emp S22. The key letter was written on 27 January 1913 from Quiney's Hotel, Las Paalmas.

<sup>28</sup> A useful recent study is P.D. O'Neill and David Lloyd (eds.), *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

## *The End of the Putumayo Affair*

Soon after returning from Africa Casement resigned from the British foreign office and sank himself whole-heartedly into the deepening political crisis in Ireland. He briefly involved himself with a campaign to alleviate the poverty of Irish families living on the fringes of the seaboard of Connemara and made a somewhat exaggerated comparison between their plight and the Indians of the Putumayo.<sup>29</sup> It is significant, perhaps, that during a visit to the Hotel of the Isles in June 1913 he signed his name in Irish and put as his address *Hy-Brasil*.

Following the founding of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913 Casement became one of the principal figures involved in recruiting campaigns and he helped establish units in every province of Ireland. In May 1914 he conspired with Alice Green and some others to purchase and organise the running of a consignment of guns into Dublin.<sup>30</sup> On 28 June 1914, on the very day that the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo, Casement stood at a hallowed site on the Antrim coast and delivered an oration to the Antrim brigade of the Irish Volunteers. He then left by boat first for Scotland and then for America. In the last week of July the guns were successfully landed at Howth. Ten days later Britain declared war on Germany.

By now Casement's treasonable activities were closely surveillanced by British intelligence agencies, but he successfully journeyed to Germany as the appointed representative of Irish revolutionary organisations in the U.S.. In Germany he negotiated with the chancellor for guarantees of Irish independence once the war was over. He also endeavoured to recruit an Irish brigade from among captured Irish prisoners of war.



### **Running of Guns into Howth**

Mary Spring-Rice and Molly Childers pictured on board the *Asgard* smuggling guns into Ireland in July 1914. Casement planned the manoeuvre with the help of the historian Alice Stopford Green and writer Erskine Childers, author of the well-known invasion novel, *The Riddle of the Sands*.

<sup>29</sup> See Angus Mitchell, 'An Irish Putumayo: Roger Casement's Humanitarian Relief campaign among the Connemara Islanders, 1913-14', *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. 31 (2004): 41-60.

<sup>30</sup> See EX. Martin, *The Howth Gun-Running 1914* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1964).

In 1916 he returned to Ireland aboard a German submarine and was arrested on Good Friday, 21 April, at an old fort, near Banna Strand, on the southwest coast of Ireland. After local efforts in Tralee to rescue Casement came to nothing, he was spirited off to England, interrogated by various British intelligence chiefs and placed in the Tower of London to await his fate. Despite his efforts to get word to Dublin and have the rebellion called off, his wishes were disregarded and during Easter week 1916 key strategic sites in central Dublin were occupied by rebel forces of the Irish Volunteers and the Socialist militia force, the Irish Citizen Army, under the command of the Marxist intellectual, James Connolly. The leaders of the insurrection, many of them close collaborators with Casement, were executed in the first ten days of May in a display of efficient military ruthlessness. Casement's situation posed a more complicated problem for the authorities as his networks of support

stretched across the globe, and many people felt that his years spent defending the rights of indigenous people and exposing colonial violence should count in his favour. But imperialist and Ulster Unionist elements in the British Cabinet were determined to get their man. Towards the end of June Casement was tried for high treason at the Royal Courts of Justice and after a sensational four-day trial he was found guilty and sentenced to death. Despite international efforts to pressurise the British government to grant a reprieve, he was summarily executed on 3 August 1916, exactly two years after the outbreak of war. He was the sixteenth Irish leader to be executed for his part in the Easter Rising. What ultimately settled his fate was the extraordinarily convenient discovery by the intelligence agencies of a set of diaries which revealed Casement as a habitual 'invert' and 'addicted to the grossest sodomitical practices'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The full statement relating the Black Diaries to Casement's psychological degeneration appeared in the cabinet memo prepared by the legal adviser to the home office, Ernley Blackwell. See national Archives (UK) HO 144/1636/311643/52 & 53.



**Sir John Lavery, *High Treason 1916 - The Appeal of Roger Casement***

The Irish painter, Sir John Lavery, captured the stuffy tension of Casement's appeal in a history painting of extraordinary significance to Anglo-Irish relations. (King's Inn, Dublin)

In death Casement proved even more of an irritant to the authorities than he had proved in life. The struggle over his reputation and his rightful place in history unleashed a long and often acrimonious war of words between Britain and Ireland. Within Irish republican circles his name was added to the roll of honour of the women and men who had resisted colonial authority and died for a free and united nation. Many people who had known him intimately wondered how and why Casement had turned his back on the

British Empire, which had bestowed him with honours and had supported his campaigns on behalf of the oppressed in the Congo, Amazon and Ireland. Despite efforts to marginalise, reduce or silence his relevance within the official versions of British, Irish and Atlantic history, his ghost kept reappearing to haunt the corridors of diplomatic power. Winston Churchill's description of Russia in 1939 as 'a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma' might suitably apply to the understanding of Roger Casement in death.





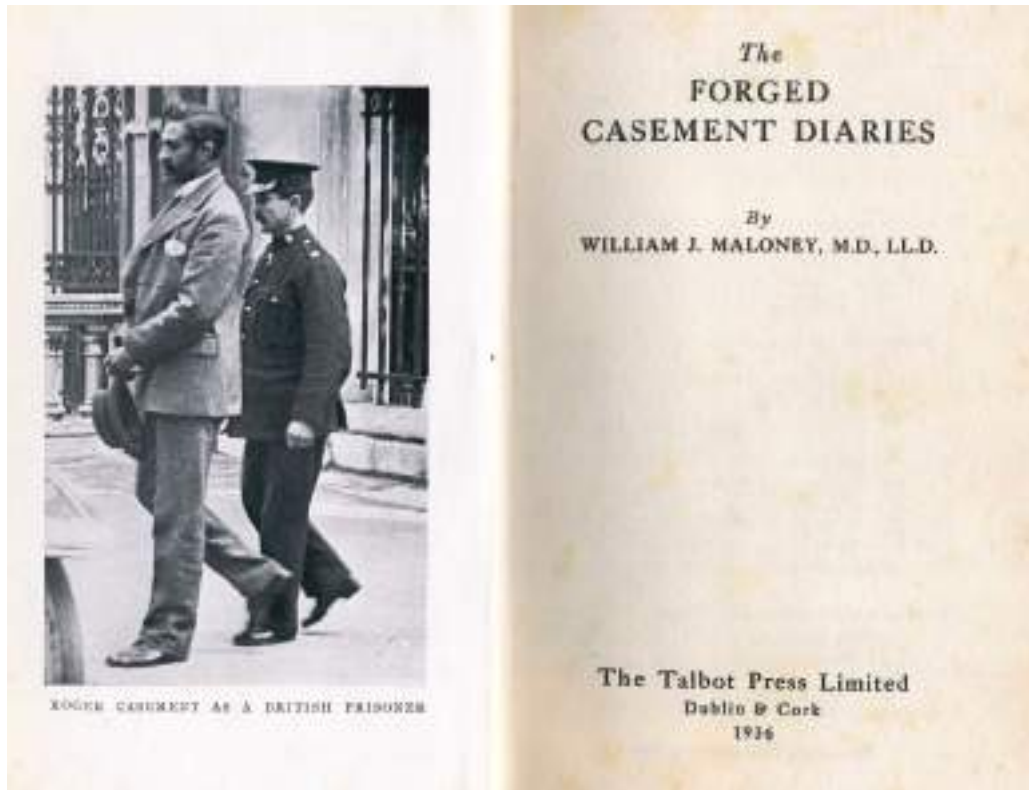
***The Daily Mirror***

Casement's trial was more akin to the show trials staged in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. His 'treason' was unscrupulously used to publicly address issues of national identity, masculinity, loyalty and sexuality.

In the Putumayo, the group of five Irish Franciscan missionaries struggled on until 1917 to deliver some level of protection for the devastated indigenous communities of the Putumayo, but interest in the region

quickly evaporated as attention turned towards the global tragedies resulting from the Great War of 1914-18. Arana retreated from the Putumayo and died in obscurity in Lima in 1952<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> See Olvidio Lagos, *Arana rey del Caucho: terror y atrocidades en el alto Amazonas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2005).



**W.J. Maloney, *The Forged Casement Diaries* (1936)**

The publication of this book in 1936 was the first study suggesting the so-called Black Diaries of Roger Casement were forgeries. Over the years the view has been shared by many other historians and politicians, but the issue remains unresolved.

But if the tragic invasion and desecration of the lands of the Putumayo was forgotten the war over Casement's reputation raged on. In 1938 the Irish poet W. B. Yeats wrote his famous poem *The Ghost of Roger Casement* – a tribute to the work of the Sinn Féin propagandist, W. J. Maloney, which forthrightly accused the war-time British intelligence chiefs of forging diaries to

'blacken his good name'. It was a haunting refrain which still captures the spectral presence of Roger Casement, who would trouble Anglo-Irish relations in every succeeding generation. Despite concerted efforts to limit Casement's significance, his ghost continues to beat on the door like some gothic poltergeist trapped in the irreconcilable duality of Anglo-Irish history.



**W. B. Yeats** the Nobel laureate for literature, W. B. Yeats wrote a letter to the British Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel in 1916 pleading for a reprieve on Casement's behalf. In 1936, he wrote his poem with the haunting refrain *The Ghost of Roger Casement is beating on the door*.

**Roger Casement  
By William B. Yeats**

(After Reading *The Forged Casement's Diaries* by Dr. Maloney)

I said that Roger Casement  
Did what he had to do,  
He died upon the gallows  
But that is nothing new.

Afraid they might be beaten  
Before the bench of Time  
They turned a trick by forgery  
And blackened his good name.

A perjurer stood ready  
To prove their forgery true;  
They gave it out to all the world  
And that is something new;

For Spring-Rice had to whisper it  
Being the Ambassador,  
And then the speakers got it  
And writers by the score.

Come Tom and Dick, come all the troop  
That cried it far and wide,  
Come from the forger and his desk,  
Desert the perjurer's side;

Come speak your bit in public  
That some amends be made  
To this most gallant gentleman  
That is in quick-lime laid.

[October-November 1936]

**The Ghost of Roger Casement**

By William B. Yeats

O what has made that sudden noise?  
What on the threshold stands?  
It never crossed the sea because  
John Bull and the sea are friends;  
But this is not the old sea  
Nor this the old seashore.  
What gave that roar of mockery,  
That roar in the sea's roar?

*The ghost of Roger Casement  
Is beating on the door.*

John Bull has stood for Parliament,  
A dog must have his day,  
The country thinks no end of him,  
For he knows how to say,  
At a beanfeast or a banquet,  
That all must hang their trust  
Upon the British Empire,  
Upon the Church of Christ.

*The ghost of Roger Casement  
Is beating on the door.*

John Bull has gone to India  
And all must pay him heed,  
For histories are there to prove  
That none of another breed  
Has had a like inheritance,  
Or sucked such milk as he,  
And there's no luck about a house  
If it lack honesty.

*The ghost of Roger Casement  
Is beating on the door.*

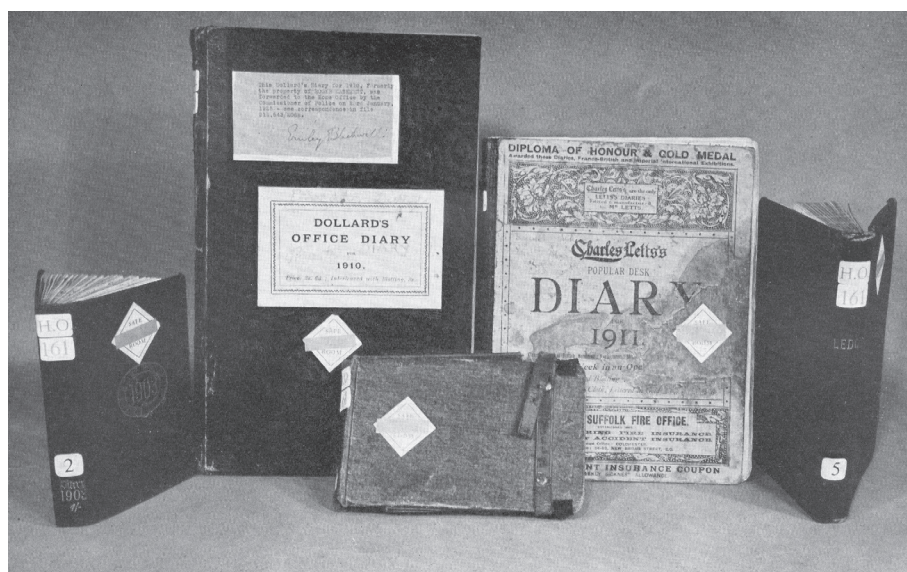
I poked about a village church  
And found his family tomb  
And copied out what I could read  
In that religious gloom;  
Found many a famous man there;  
But fame and virtue rot.  
Draw round, beloved and bitter men,  
Draw round and raise a shout;

*The ghost of Roger Casement  
Is beating on the door.*

[October 1936]

In 1959 the British government released many of the official state papers to do with Casement's Putumayo investigation as well as the so-called "Black Diaries". With much justification Irish and US historians found it suspicious that the disputed diaries coincided with the years 1903, 1910 and 1911, when Casement undertook his official investigations of rubber atrocities and his actions were most accountable to the foreign office. Three of the four diaries in question related directly to his Amazon inquiry and belong to the annals of Amazon history<sup>33</sup>. The storm over the authenticity of these

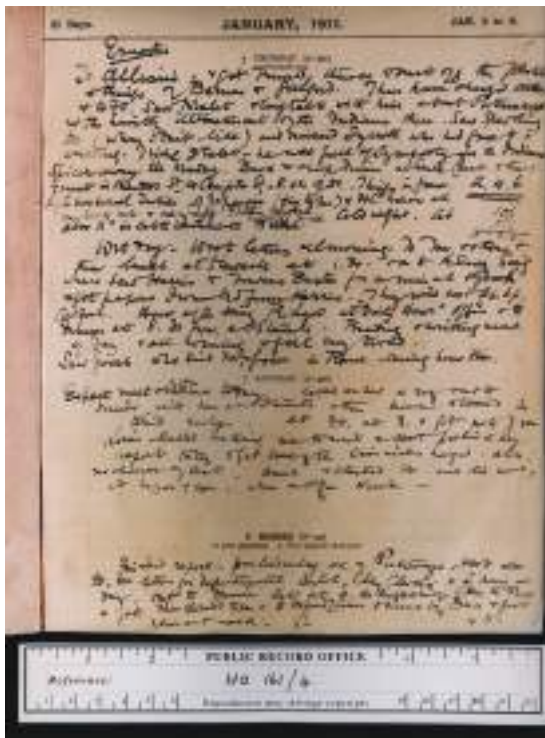
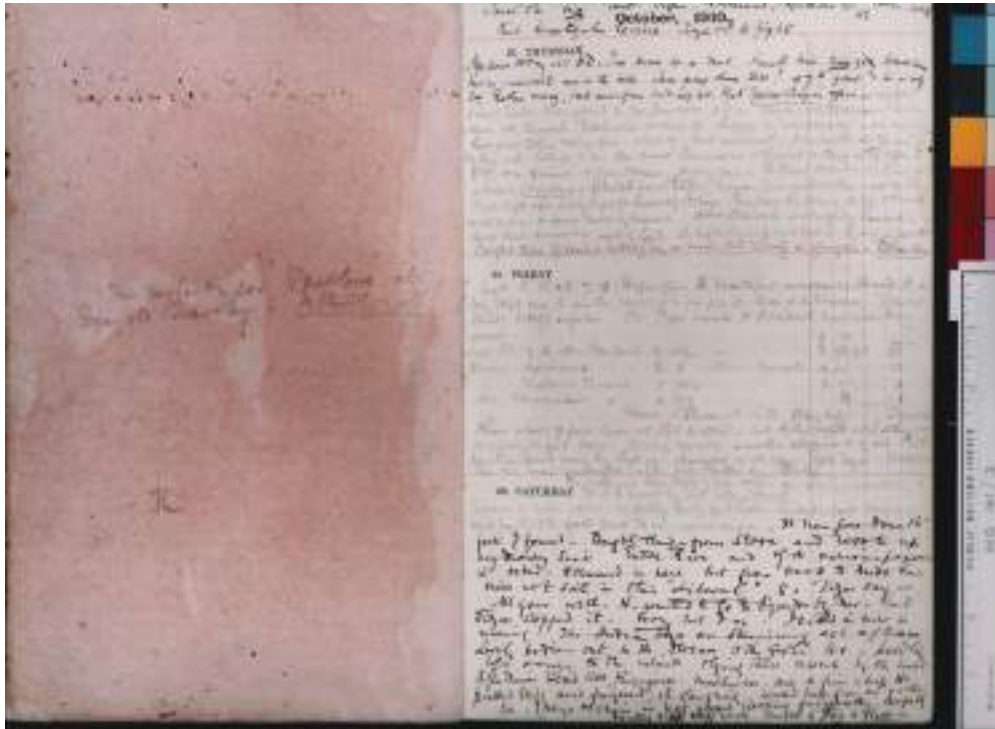
documents burned furiously through the 1950s and continued on until Casement's bones were exhumed from Pentonville prison and returned to Ireland in 1965. At that point, the war over his reputation was silenced at an official level in Ireland. During the 1970s and 80s a series of popular biographies turned the diary narrative into the very axis of Casement's radical interpretation. But the argument determining their authenticity was superficial and unscholarly and was shaped as much by political necessities as by cultural fashions.



### The Black Diaries

The dispute over the Black Diaries remains the longest-running battle in Anglo-Irish relations. A satisfactory resolution is maybe impossible because of the prioritising of politics over history. Will readings by South American intellectuals and academics ultimately decide on the real value of these documents?

<sup>33</sup> For a more extensive development of my argument see Angus Mitchell, 'Beneath the Hieroglyph: Recontextualising the Black Diaries of Roger Casement', in *Irish Migrations Studies in Latin America* 7:2, (July 2009): 253-265; 'Against the Demon', *Dublin Review of Books*, Winter 2009/10, Issue 12; 'Unframing the Black Diaries of Roger Casement', *Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies*, 3 (2009): 183-202.

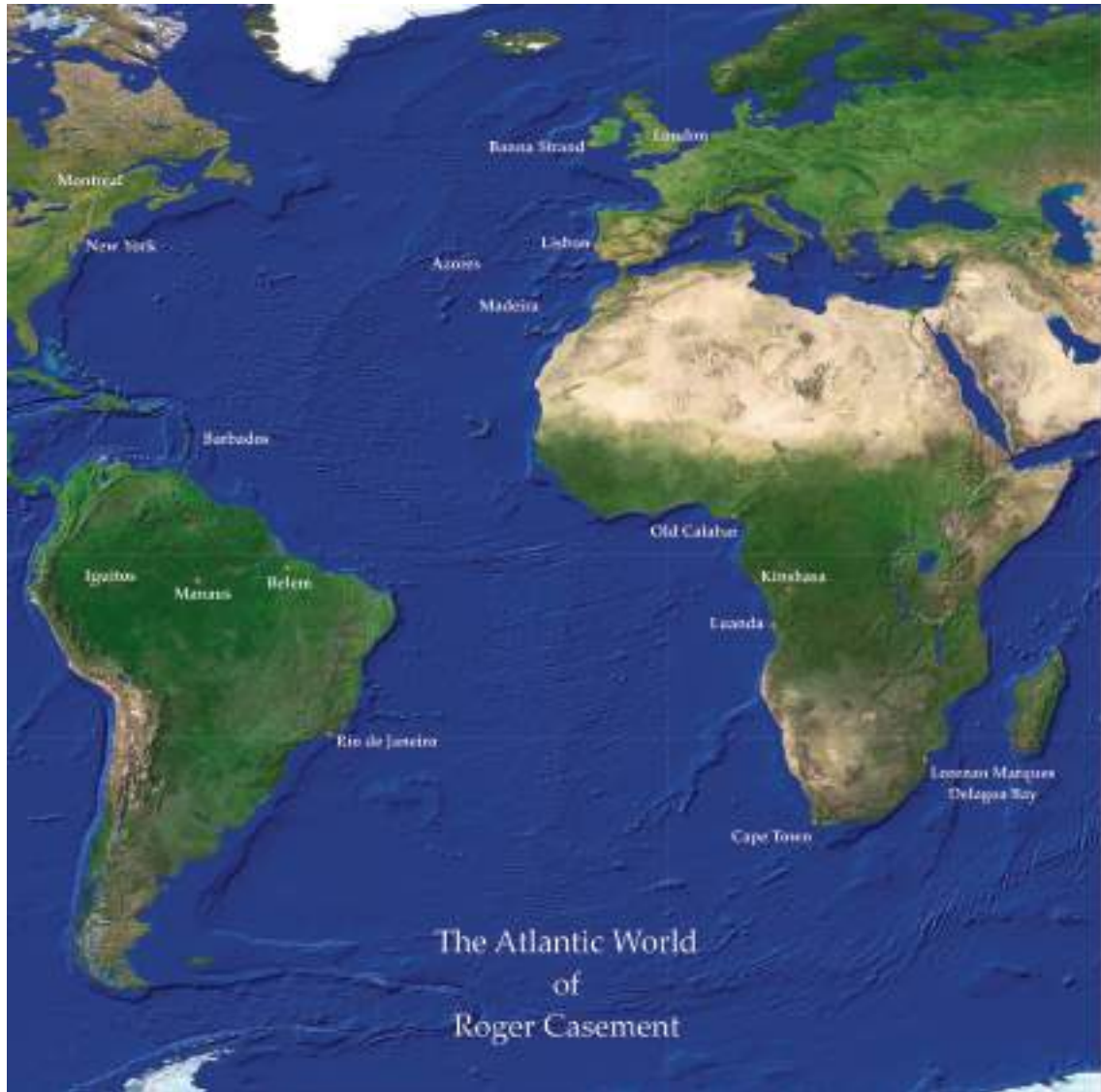


Pages of manuscript from The Black Diaries, 27-29 October, 1910; 5-11 January 1911.

A century after Casement's Amazon voyages it is apparent that his investigations in the Congo and Amazon, followed by his revolutionary turn against European imperialism had extraordinary consequences for transatlantic relations. His position as a founder of the modern discourse of human rights and international responsibilities is unequivocal and assured. Despite the long line of biographies, articles and fictional representations, the deeper critical analysis on his life remains to be done.



Portrait of Roger Casement by Sarah Purser (1913)



**The Atlantic World of Roger Casement**









# APPENDIX

## Roger Casement's Writings on Brazil

### *Traces from Brazilian Correspondence*

Roger Casement was an indefatigable correspondent and during his seven years of diplomatic service in Brazil he produced a wide ranging, if dispersed, body of writing. The following section includes excerpts from letters, reports and notes held mainly among his papers at the National Library of Ireland [NLI]. These constitute a fraction of the overall body of material written by Casement on Brazil and the Amazon, which is mainly deposited among the Foreign Office papers in the National Archives of the United Kingdom at Kew. The excerpts are intended to help deepen understanding of his movements and state of mind during his first three years when he was posted to Santos, Belém do Pará and Rio de Janeiro. In this respect they are revealing about his networks of influence, his shifting views about Brazil and his wider concerns about sub-Saharan Africa and Ireland, written before he embarked on his investigation into the Putumayo atrocities.

His time in Brazil was critical for his own evolution and transformation from imperialist into revolutionary. What is apparent is how Casement was juggling his official career with a number of potentially

subversive causes to do with Irish independence. He was also playing a vital advisory role behind the scenes for the Congo Reform Association. His extensive correspondence with the acting secretary, E. D. Morel [EDM], held in the London School of Economics, covers the entire decade of operations by the Congo Reform Association from 1904-13. It clearly demonstrates that Casement's discreet advice was often acted upon, although he sailed close to the wind in terms of his own requirements to maintain official confidentiality.

His lifelong friendship with his cousin, Gertrude Bannister [GB], offers the most personal insight into his feelings and thoughts. He was not always complimentary about Brazil, although his criticism was often for valid reasons. In his letters to the historian Alice Stopford Green [ASG] he discussed issues to do with a variety of subjects including Irish history, national identity and Africa. Further excerpts are included from his missives to E. H. Cowper [FHC], a close colleague in the consular service, with many contacts in the Luso-Brazilian world. All these correspondences are held in the manuscript collection of the National Library of Ireland.

## Santos: September 1906 – June 1907

*Santos, 21 September 1906*

[...] I am not in a mood for writing – my surroundings are too uncongenial, altho' I am lucky in having a cabin all to myself. We get to Santos on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct., Rio on 8<sup>th</sup> and the first Brazilian port, Bahia, on 4<sup>th</sup> October. I am told Pernambuco is interesting and is called the "Venice" of Brazil – but no one ever goes ashore there, as they are afraid of sharks and being capsized into their jaws – I think, after a West African surf boat & Congo canoe I shall not quail before the Pernambuco sharks. All one's thoughts are really with Ireland – if only one could see daylight ... Remember my address is: Consulate of Great Britain and Ireland, Santos – not British Consulate!! (ASG, *R.M.S. Nile*, 21 September 1906).

*Santos, 12 October 1906*

[...] Everything in Brazil is imported including the inhabitants. There is nothing Brazilian – nothing natural, native and inevitable. No one looks as if he belonged to his surroundings – all, from merchant to dock labourer are here only to get away. I cannot imagine a thing as Brazilian "patriotism" because none of the patriots have anything of this country in their blood. The population is of all variety of colour – and here in the south mostly Italian. All come here to get money and bolt.

Prices of commodities are awful and the money of the country fluctuates from day to day in value. In my case it is a very serious matter – for my income varies with the fluctuating exchange.

The country exists on its natural wealth – coffee, rubber, cocoa, tobacco, cotton etc. It imports its food supplies and its labour & its gold – and its own money being paper there is constant speculation in the money of the country.

Brazil is like the U.S.A. a republic of federated states each with its own congress, President, local revenue, army, customs, etc. but all bound by a common national law, customs duties, federal army, congress and Federal President. I am consul in two of these states São Paulo and Paraná: the first is the important one. It is a tract the size of say France with an estimated population of 3,000,000 mostly Italians and mostly here for a spell only. Its state capital is São Paulo, a city 34 miles inland from Santos lying up in the mountains 2800 feet above the sea.

There is a good railway from Santos to São Paulo owned by a British Company. The journey takes 2½ hours – owing to the gradient – the steepest part goes up by ropes. São Paulo is said to be the most modern city in South America. (EDM, Santos, 12 Oct. 1906).

*São Paulo, 7 November 1906*

[...] I am staying for the present at São Paulo in the hotel there – come down each morning returning from there by the 4.30 train

each evening. Tomorrow I go to Guarujá to the bank manager, Keevil of the London and River Plate Bank – an equally charming man. People here are very hospitable and generous I find. I like them, altho' I dislike the police. The work is absurd. There is nothing to do save deal with deserters, beach combers, and all sorts of loafers & wasters ... The exchange is the devil – always shifting – and generally to the bad. If it were not for the exchange the pay would be all right – but things are very dear at the present rate.

[...] I have an Irish stow away boy now as my servant cleaning my uniform – & a tiny Brazilian kid of 13 as office boy – the two of them are at present fighting over my uniform trying to clean it up for 15 November – when there is a grand review at São Paulo of the troops of the State by the President & I have to go.

[...] The town has improved enormously I should say since your time, it is now not bad & the docks are splendid but there is no interest in life – everyone is pre-occupied over coffee and dodging the exchange – and none of the normal amenities of life hold good here. No one calls on you, for instance, and few smile or talk. This is the height of the busy time & the coffee out-put this year promises to beat all records. (FHC, São Paulo, 7 Nov. 1906).

*Santos, 12 November 1906*

[...] We had a gale yesterday & the sea is rolling in tremendously. I have had a lot of fever since landing – not the fierce African

fever, but a mild, melancholy Brazilian kind which simply takes your appetite away ... Here everyone is mad over coffee – the export is now at its height and Santos is working at high pressure & sending each week over £1,000,000 worth of coffee out to sea. There is an extraordinary amount of work & coffee got rid of in a day for so small & dirty a place. (EDM, Santos, 12 November 1906).

*Santos, 3 December 1906*

[...] Thanks for “Red Rubber” just to hand and for the other papers etc you have sent me. I am distributing them all around. I don't altogether approve of Harris' “Commerce and the Congo Crime” pamphlet. It has too many quotations from people who know as much about the Congo as they do of Santos. In fact I honestly think the “Missionaries” are now trying to make capital out of the Congo question. They were silent for years – they took everything the Congo authorities gave them – often even shared in the plunder – and when I went up river in 1903 many of them regarded me with secret hostility – while all were afraid to speak until they saw I had burnt my boats & had succeeded in effecting a landing on the enemy shore. (EDM, Santos, 3 Dec. 1906).

*Santos, 21 December 1906*

[...] Two days ago your friend warden passed thro' on his way to B. Aires on the SS

*Amazon* and we met by chance on board when I had to go and see the new Minister to Argentina Townley of New York. The diplomatists are quite useless in any real human cause. They think only of the pleasure of life and regard work as a bore. You and I dear Bulldog have moved things all the diplomatists in the world would never have touched if we had not forced them to.

I hope to give a small lecture on Congo things on Sunday evening next in São Paulo – 50 miles away – the capital of this state where there is a larger British community than in Santos. If I could make open appeal I could get more – but there are Belgian Consuls here and they would at once begin a campaign against me. (EDM, Santos, 21 December 1906).

*Santos, 2 April 1907*

[...] I was down in Buenos Aires for a few days in March & saw Warden. He sent me the enclosed Yankee cartoon of Leopold to send to you. We drank success to you & the cause one night when I dined with him ... I am giving most of the last consignment of Congo papers to the (Anglican) Bishop of the Falkland Islands whose diocese is the whole of South America! (EDM, Santos, 2 April 1907).

*Santos, 20 April 1907*

[...] It is a mistake for an Irishman to mix himself up with the English. He is bound

to do either one of two things – either go to the wall, if he remains Irish – or become an Englishman himself. You see I very nearly did become one once! At the Boer War time. I had been away from Ireland for years – out of touch with everything native to my heart & mind – trying hard to do my duty & every fresh act of duty made me appreciably nearer the ideal of the Englishman. I had accepted Imperialism – British rule was to be extended at all costs, because it was the best for everyone under the sun, and those who opposed that extension ought rightly to be “smashed.” I was on the high road to being a regular Imperialist jingo – altho’ at heart underneath all & unsuspected almost to myself I had remained an Irishman. Well, the war gave me qualms at the end – the concentration camps bigger ones – & finally when up in those lonely Congo forests where I found Leopold – I found also myself – the incorrigible Irishman. I was remonstrated there by British, highly respectable and religious missionaries. “Why make such a bother” they said – “the state represents Law & Order & after all these people are savages & must be repressed with a firm hand.” Every fresh discovery I made of the hellishness of the Leopold system threw me back on myself alone for guidance. I knew that the FO wouldn’t understand the thing – or that if they did they would take no action, for I realised then that I was looking at this tragedy with the eyes of another race – of a people once hunted themselves, whose hearts were based on affection as the root principle of contact with their fellow men and whose estimate of

life was not of something eternally to be appraised at its market “price”. And I said to myself then, far up the Lulanga river, that I would do my part as an Irishman, wherever it might lead me personally.

Since that, each year has confirmed me in my faith in that point of view. I got back to Ireland early in 1904 – got to find the Gaelic League at once – and all the old hopes and longings of my boyhood have sprung to life again... (**ASG**, Santos, 20 April 1907).

*Santos, 15 May 1907*

[...] Buenos Aires I liked greatly – it is a splendid place, full of life and people and a tremendous contrast from the gloomy melancholy mind of Santos (**FHC**, Consulate of Great Britain and Ireland, Santos 15 May 1907).

*Santos, 21 June 1907*

[...] The revolt of Belgium itself against Leopoldism is the best sign we have yet had. Personally I do not think any great change can now take place while Leopold lives. He is sacrosanct in infamy and will not be dethroned. Changes will be forced on him no doubt – but the main scheme will remain locked in his heart (or brain) and until he passes away he will continue to control the changed structure.

Still you have wrought for eternity – for the eventual complete stifling I think of the

horrid conception of misrule he was nearly successful in erecting into a permanent and recognised system of “administration”.

Africa will outlive Leopold and all his works, and healthy millions of her children will again fill the enormous wastes his damnable greed has created. The old life will come back to the heart of Africa – that is certain. The Blackman is just as eternal as the whiteman and rather more virile. (**EDM**, Santos, 21 June 1907).

*Consular Report on Santos 1905-06*

[...] The import of Guinness stout is largely on the increase in Brazil, owing partly to the recommendation of the medical faculty and to a reduction of duty based on the recommendation having been accorded it. Doubtless other Irish imports find favour in Santos and São Paulo, but it is impossible to trace the country of origin in many cases of British imports, all goods coming from Great Britain or Ireland being described in Brazilian customs returns as “Ingleze”.

Thus Dublin stout, Belfast mineral waters (which are in high favour), Belfast linens and Belfast-built steamships all figure equally as of British origin. In no case under existing methods of shipment and invoicing would it be possible to discriminate, for the purposes of statistical report, between goods manufactured in Great Britain from those made in Ireland. As a matter of fact the largest single entry – if such it may be termed – in 1906 into the port of Santos consisted of a

vessel, the product of Irish industry. I refer to the “Araguaya” one of the latest additions to the Royal Mail Company’s fleet. The Brazilian Steamship Company, the Lloyd Brasileiro, is ordering several new vessels in Europe, and two of these are being built in Belfast and will, it is hoped, be received in Brazil during the course of 1907. (Diplomatic and Consular report on Santos 1905-06 Cd. 3727-35).

*27 June 1907*

[...] Your welcome letter of 7 June finds me on the eve of packing up to quit this benighted and murky and very black bottom of a coffee pot. I go, God willing, by *S. S. Amazon* of Royal Mail Coy on 2 July and shall, God equally willing, be in Southampton on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June, but I may just stop at Lisbon a week, as I have friends there.

... I don’t believe in the English national character at all: individually there are lots of decent Englishmen – collectively they are a poisonous compound – and we Irish should realise that as long as we go on “appealing” to and supporting Englishmen in the hope that they’ll do “something” for Ireland, we shall be sold. Hopelessly sold. Their one view of life is to make, to get, to have, to possess ... I see this same process at work here in Brazil – the Portuguese & others coming here have quickly become “Brazilians” – no man could define Brazilian “nationality” – and as to race – it is made up of a great many different stocks – but the thing is here and is turning them all – Italian,

Portuguese, Spaniard, German or Negro – into a Brazilian people – and the type that will ultimately evolve will more and more assimilate itself to the old Indian stock of the land, altho’ these are well nigh exterminated. Ireland, with far more vigour, and with a traditional mind which has never ceased to flower and bear fruit must win to herself all the jarring elements of invasion. (**ASG**, Consulate of Great Britain and Ireland, 27 June 1907).

## Belém do Pará: February 1908 – November 1908

### *Report for Pará 1907*

[...] The city of Pará is one of the largest equatorial cities, situated as it is, only 90 miles south of the line. There are some beautiful avenues, fine commercial streets and very charming public squares and gardens. Viewed from a height the houses and streets almost disappear in a sea of verdure. Most of the suburban streets are planted with mango trees, and as these trees grow rapidly and luxuriantly they speedily overtop most of the houses.

[...] An excellent system of electric trams, with very extensive ramifications of electric lighting, both controlled by the one company, a British undertaking, now furnish the city with speedy and comfortable means of intercommunication. In June 1908, the



length of line under electric traction will be 35 miles served by 68 cars. (Diplomatic and Consular Report for Pará 1907 Cd. 3727-194).

*Pará, 18 March 1908*

[...] Here I am in Pará now almost 4 weeks ... I like Pará very much better than Santos. As a city there is no comparison. This is a civilised town and the whole community are far nicer both natives and Britishers. The streets, squares etc. here are charming and the electric tram service excellent. The people are generally much nicer than the Santistas – cleaner, quieter, more polite and nicer looking. Altogether one feels in a civilized community – at Santos it was a shipping den and nothing else – a loathsome hole. I have a nice house in a beautiful square – but I am taking a consular office down town from 1<sup>st</sup> April – and then give up this house. It costs £20 a month – and I have to pay the clerk £350 a year. There is £590 a year just for office and clerk. The cost of everything is excessive – as high or higher than Santos. The people dress here – all classes – & the working men are clear-skinned and clean clothed – and the women even pretty with flowers in their hair, as in Seville. There is a splendid theatre – not often open, I am sorry to say – and some fine buildings and really beautiful public gardens and squares. The British community is a sociable, friendly one, more like the old Santos people you knew, I expect, without any stand offishness or obtruding commercialism. Rubber is down and trade bad – but everyone

seems cheerful – and ladies of the *vida galante* are still in evidence and their diamonds and feathers fill the dining room at my hotel – the “Paz” – which as a hotel is poor and as a restaurant is poorer. (FHC, Pará, 18 March 1908).

*Pará, 23 March 1908*

[...] Do you ever remember the Slieve Donard Hotel at Newcastle Co. Down, Ireland in January 1904? How we planned and plotted – & I said that if the Congo question was to be made a living one, it must be taken out of the hands of the EO. & Govt, and made a people’s question – & how I said to Yours truly, “Thou art the man!” Well, you have proved yourself indeed the man. (EDM, Pará, 23 March 1908).

*Santos, 15 May 1908*

[...] I got your cheery letter (& the photo which is excellent) on getting back to Pará from a brief tour up the almighty Amazon river about 1600 miles each way ... Personally I am not well – neither in body nor mind. I have been more or less seedy since I landed here. The extreme discomforts of life and unsuitability of food & want of sleep dare put me out & I got some fever up river – but my bodily discomforts are not so distressing as the financial embarrassments of this post. The cost of living here so greatly exceeds the pay etc. – that I am already out

of pocket & shall very soon be unable to pay my way .... I have drafted my letter of resignation to Sir Edward Grey.

[...] I rather like Pará for itself. The people appeal to me much more than the southern Brazilians. They have more of the "native" in them – in colour, mien & manner – more affable, amiable and gentle & with their dark Indian skins & blue black Indian hair (the most wonderful heads of hair, with a native oil that makes it shine a mile off) v. dark, gentle eyes (not fierce, hard eyes of cold black) & white teeth they are pleasing to look upon and agreeable to talk with.

Have you seen & read Mrs Green's book – she tells me it is, or was, on point of issue. I fear she may have hurried it. I hope not. Some of her work is wonderful at other times she is poor – very unequal; too much invective perhaps & not quite enough explanation. But she has a great grip of her subject & she writes about Ireland from a deep heart. The tragedy of that dear old country is a far deeper & more dreadful one my dear E.D.M. than the dreadful tale of Leopoldism on the Congo. The Congo will revive and flourish – the black millions again overflow the land – untouched, untainted – but who shall restore the destroyed Irish race, the dead Irish tongue, the murdered Irish music, the wealth of gentle nature, lovable mind, high temper & brave generous heart ... (EDM, Santos, 15 May 1908).

#### *Diplomatic and Consular Report for Pará 1907*

[...] The growth of Pará from 16,000 in 1850 to whatever it may be to-day – 130,000 or 185,000 – is solely due to the growth of the rubber trade. All other sources of prosperity are unimportant beside this the staple product of the Amazonian industry. The first records of rubber exports from the Amazon I find recorded were in 1830, when a quantity of 156 tons was shipped from Pará. The trade had more than doubled in 1840, when 388 tons were shipped, and in 1850 this had risen to 1,467 tons. In 1857 rubber amounted to only one-third the value of the total exports from Pará – the figures being for rubber 139,000*l.* [sterling] out of a total export trade of 450,720*l.* In 1858 rubber gave 123,000*l.* out of a total of 356,000*l.* of exports, employing 104 vessels of 29,493 total tonnage. From this on, a steady increase of rubber production ensued until the Amazon Valley became the recognised centre of supply for the world's growing demand.

It is estimated that the quantity of rubber annually used in the world's industries represents a value of 25,000,000*l.* The annual consumption has been for the last four years as follows:

	Tons
1903 ... ..	50,384
1904 ... ..	55,275
1905 ... ..	61,397
1906 ... ..	65,000 (estimated)

When it is reflected that almost the whole of this great quantity represents a

production from non-cultivated sources it is legitimate to speculate as to the future of the world's rubber trade when cultivated rubber begins to play an important part in the sources of supply.

Tropical America contributes 63 per cent. of the world's total – all of it wild rubber gathered in swamp and forest from virgin soil; Africa comes next with 34 per cent., collected by even more primitive methods in still wilder regions; leaving to Asia the modest contribution of 3 per cent., but all of it the product of careful cultivation, supported by capital and scientific application of labour. That this agricultural outlay in Ceylon, Malaya and elsewhere, where rubber plantations are being systematically extended, must in future years largely influence the supply of rubber cannot, I think, be disputed. (Diplomatic and Consular Report for Pará 1907 Cd. 3727-194).

## Rio de Janeiro: March 1909 – March 1910

*Rio de Janeiro, 31 March 1909*

[...] The voyage out by the Royal Mail *S/S Amazon* was most agreeable, but ended at Rio ... I got a chill the very day I arrived and it gave me a nasty attack of fever - 106° temperature and dreadful vomiting. Just like Congo. The doctor put me right ... Rio is very expensive – as bad as Pará – only I've more pay here and also I can live in a hotel – to keep a house is out of the question

... The view from my window in the hotel is glorious – at my right is Corcovado, a great peak of granite looking down on Rio, about 3000 ft high & other wooded mountains & hills innumerable and below the beach and bay. (**GB**, Rio de Janeiro, 31 March 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 25 June 1909*

[...] The President of Brazil died last week and I had to go in my war paint to the funeral. It was a huge crowd (**GB**, Rio de Janeiro 25 June 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 29 June 1909*

[...] The campaign against Leopold's crime was not due to any act, or shaping, or outcome of political effort or policy of H.M. Govt. – it was due solely to you in the first place & to me in the second. You got up the parliamentary following and I got up the Congo! I went up river, remember, off my own bat – not as a result of any order of theirs. I had started and was already at Stanley Pool with all my measures prepared when they telegraphed out suggesting that in view of the debate of May 1903 I might start. So it has been from the first – they have followed not led. (**EDM**, Rio de Janeiro, 29 June 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 2 July 1909*

[...] I was a magnificent Bird of Plumage two weeks ago – the President of

Brazil died and at the funeral I appeared along with His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires (who is a Scot and a decent one and a bit of a Home Ruler) in full uniform – & I hear we are on all the cinematographs of the city, just as we left the Palace for our motor. I'm told I'm excellent & that I move with sprightly grace in my cocked hat into the motor – but I will not attempt to visit the show. (GB, Rio de Janeiro, 2 July 1909).

*20 September 1909*

[...] I transmit herewith a series of photographs of the native Indians of the State of Espirito Santo, a branch tribe of the Botocudo family who are among the most debased of the aboriginal inhabitants of Brazil. This tribe is termed locally the Bugre, and inhabits chiefly the left bank of the Rio Doce, a large river of the State of Minas Geraes ... The photographs ... illustrate a type of humanity which, outside of Brazil, is not anywhere else to be found in close touch with, yet entirely untouched by, modern civilisation.

The Australian bushman may be cited by some, but there is really no parallel between the relation he occupies to, say, the Queensland settler of white blood and that which the Brazilian Indian occupies to the Brazilian properly so termed. The bushman in Australia is a man apart, with whom the European has never had any relations save those of hostility, loathing and contempt, whereas the Indian in Brazil is the foundation

stone of its national citizenship. His blood mingles in the highest families in the land, and the facial characteristics these photographs of the Bugres offer are to be met with every day in the streets, cafés, reception rooms and even Departments of State of the Brazilian Capital.

Yet this tribe (one of many) inhabiting a region that for centuries has been colonised by a European race, within a few miles only of long established European settlements, the people of which have freely mixed their blood with that of these Indians, have retained within view of their 'civilizers' the rude habits of a social existence that dates from the most primitive era of humanity. I found, in my recent journey up the South bank of the Rio Doce, constant references in conversation to this tribe of Botocudo Indians as 'just across' that narrow river, yet no attempt seems to have been made during centuries of Portuguese and Brazilian rule to modify their environment, instruct or in any way humanise this primitive people. They remain exactly as they were on the first day the Portuguese invader landed on Brazilian soil, although the incomers have freely intermarried and are even proud of their connection with this and other native Indian tribes.

So little intellectual (or even ancestral) curiosity exists among Brazilians that until a German photographer quite recently visited Victoria I believe no photograph could be procured of a people who constitute the basis of the claim to separate nationality that Brazilians are so proud of asserting over their European motherland. [TNA FO 369/198

Roger Casement to Foreign Office, 20 September 1909].

*Rio de Janeiro, 2 August 1909*

[...] I got back from Vitoria on Thursday night after 23 days of the most delightful absence from Rio ... Now I am back in the ghastly sham city with its pretentious claptrap imitation life of Europeans by a horde of savages dressed to look like Parisians. How I loathe them and I think often of your poor father when he came here from Africa. No wonder he resigned and fled in despair. (GB, Rio de Janeiro, 2 August 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 18 August 1909*

[...] Classical and Barbarous history, sacred and divine records, the lore of Egypt and the prehistory records of Arabia Petrea are ransacked for names that shall dignify and beautify existence.

Thus, for instance, a few days ago a paragraph appeared giving details of an ordinary assault on a policeman committed by a Portuguese workman. The injured policeman we were told was the soldier N<sup>o</sup>. 73. "Justiniano Diocleciano Fermino de Souza Pinto" while two of his comrades on duty who ran to his assistance were respectively: Hermenegildo Pompeo Octavio de Braganza and Miliadiades Procopio de Azervedo Barria. All the policemen, it should be understood, were as black as your hat.

A case that has convulsed all Brazil from President down is the shooting of Dr. Euclides da Cunha, a distinguished literary man and civil engineer, who is universally acclaimed as one of the greatest Brazilians of the day. The whole tragedy is incredibly stupid, squalid and blood thirsty.

Monday morning's papers came out with the whole miserable story in the largest type and since Monday the press has been full of telegrams of condolence and sorrow from all parts of Brazil; which the President, the Baron de Rio Branco and the leading persons in the political and public life of the country – including the Chambers – have expressed sorrow and hastened to be publicly represented at Dr. Euclides da Cunha's funeral. The newspapers speak of his "assassination" which, to anyone who can read, it is plain that Dr Cunha far from being assassinated was shot in self-defence by two young men, cousins of his wife whom he had furiously attacked with a revolver and seriously wounded before the elder of them, after firing the two shots into the wall as a warning to save his own life and that of his brother finally shot this bloodthirsty madman.

Dr Euclides died on the spot in the house of the two brothers into which he had furiously broken and opened fire without the slightest warning. While, of the boys, one is lying very dangerously wounded, shot through the stomach and lung, and the other is in a less grave condition.

The reason for Dr. Cunha's horrible crime and his own death are the inevitable ones of Brazilian life – jealousy bred of a base

suspicion of his wife fed by secret slander and suggestions of the peeping “friends” of the household and indulged in sullen brooding to the verge of madness by this illustrious national litterateur. The lady, who is 38 years of age and the mother of four sons (the eldest of whom, by the way is called Solon) had a natural affection for her two cousins, the boys in question, who are orphans and both military students. To aid them in their careers she had shown much friendship and given assistance at first always with her husband’s open approval and support. This feeling on his part finally degenerated to one of gross suspicion and the boys left the house to set up a modest establishment of their own several miles away from Dr. Cunha’s.

It was here, without any warning, that he sought them with the declared intention of “killing both,” early in the morning of Saturday last and met a well merited death. Yet the press universally speaks of his assassination. The extraordinary personal nomenclature of the Brazilian mind of course distinguishes this tragedy in high life. The two boys are named respectively Dilermando de Assis and Dinorah Candida de Assis. The names of the latter youth, it will be seen, are both female names – one of them culled doubtless from the opera “Norma”.

Dramas of this character are of such frequent occurrence in Brazilian life that to read of them becomes a dreary part of the depressing daily round.

The most perverted view is invariably taken. Suspicion invariably takes the place of evidence and the most copious tittle-tattle and

slander from all quarters is minutely gathered by the police and magistrates. Thus the wounded lad Dinorah de Assis, in the hours succeeding the crime was “autopsied” mentally by the delegado of the 14 district “all through the night to the dawn of Sunday”, altho’ in any sane community he should at least have been in the doctors hands or in bed in hospital. Public sympathy as surely goes out to the criminal as in other lands to the victim [...] (NLI MS 13087 (2), Rio de Janeiro, 18 August 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 19 August 1909*

[...] I enclose a copy of the pamphlet on Brazilian Flax Plant “Canhamo braziliensis Perini” which may interest Belfast people. I also send you, under separate cover a packet of seeds of the plant which your botanical people might experiment with. The seeds are hard to get out here. I don’t know if the plant is really all that Dr Perini claims for it. Some of our home people who analysed samples of plant and fibres pronounced a rather hostile opinion [...] I send also a few specimens of cotton embroideries made by Brazilian women I am told in the small state of Alagoas north of Rio. (Belfast Central Library, E J. Bigger papers, Roger Casement to Horner, Rio de Janeiro, 19 August 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 1 September 1909*

[...] I am staying up in Petropolis, nearly 30 miles from Rio. We cross the bay in a steamer which takes 65 minutes and then a little over an hour in a miserable railway up the mountains 2,700 feet to this small hill settlement where the diplomatic body resides all the year [...] It is just 28 miles away from Rio takes 2 hours and 20 minutes [to get here]. I go down at 7.30 am very morning, arrive about 9.40 and return at 4 by the boat and arrive at 6.20 pm. So I spend well over 4 hours every day covering 56 miles and the ticket costs 12/6 a day! This gives you an idea of Brazilian 'civilization'. This town remember is the residence of the President and Brazilian government during a part of the year and of the 'upper classes', and of the foreign diplomats all the year. The newspapers of Rio come up by train and arrive at 8.40 am. They cannot be bought at any shop in all Petropolis – only from three street vendors and they charge three times the price of the newspaper. Thus the *Jornal do Brasil* – the Brazilian *Daily Telegraph* with the largest circulation – is published at 100 reis (about 1½ d.) per copy. It is sold here, 28 miles away at 300 reis (about 4½ d.) ... The railway company is the Leopoldina railway – an English company with headquarters in London. I have paid 10/- for the conveyance of a small trunk from Rio to Petropolis and then had to wait two days to get it. The "carriages" are small trucks with no room for a handbag scarcely and none at all for my knees. (GB, Rio de Janeiro, 1 September 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 15 September 1909*

[...] The Entente Cordiale is at the bottom of it all, but it is because in quite another sense Germany is at the bottom. Instead of trying to arrive at a generally friendly arrangement with Germany on all points, which would obviously include the Congo, we have gone out of our way for several years now to eliminate Germany from our councils and as far as we could from the councils of others. We have tried to bottle up very new wine indeed in very old diplomatic bottles and the bursting will cut many hands and perhaps an artery. Now things have reached so evil a pass that peace between the two great powers of Europe can hardly be kept. Both are preparing for war and faster than the world at large suspects – but the fault lies far more with England than with Germany. It has been a wretchedly stupid business – based first on jealousy, trade, ill will and greed of commerce and now resting largely on fear too. The English have become afraid of the Germans, afraid of German expansion, of German commercial training, of the German fleet even – and so the entente with France has become more and more a necessity to her statesmanship. I said years ago the power to make the Entente with was Germany – that I should have invited Germany into Morocco or anywhere else she wanted to go – to Brazil for one – where her expansion would not hurt the British Empire. Now the miserable effort at bottling up Germany has gone so far it is hard to get back to sober statesmanship. (EDM, Rio de Janeiro, 15 September 1909).

*Vitoria, Espirito Santo, 17 November 1909*

[...] The house I am staying is perched on a wee hill over the sea and one can run out and bathe – and I have a splendid time with not a soul to bother me. The only people about are half Indian natives and rather nice simple beings. (GB, Vitoria, Espirito Santo, 17 November 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 19 November 1909*

[...] I inclose [sic] a letter for Conan Doyle\* – I don't know his address. I am away on a journey and write you in brief snatches (EDM, Rio de Janeiro, 19 Nov. 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 30 November 1909*

[...] The native possesses rights of citizenship and it is a monstrous thing that at this stage of civilized development any Christian executive should talk of "giving" or "restoring" what was his by right divine.

All the Executive has got to do is to administer its laws that these anterior rights are safeguarded and so aided to development that they may produce ever greater good. Put this rule of life in contrast with the devilish theory and hellish practice of Belgian administration in Central Africa and it seems to me hopeless to expect of that

people any sane comprehension of their duties and of the rights of those they rule. (EDM, Rio de Janeiro, 30 Nov 1909).

*Rio de Janeiro, 25 January 1910*

[...] I am still flourishing altho' I've been seedy of late. The heat is terrible - 100° in the shade in my office. I go up to Petropolis every day now as it's cooler there. (GB, Rio de Janeiro, 25 January 1910).

*Mar del Plata, Argentina, 21 March 1910*

[...] This is called the "Brighton" of the Argentine – and is a very fashionable place indeed ... There are a great many Irish people here & most of them very rich indeed. They are far the most successful of all the immigrants into this wonderful country. (GB, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 21 March 1910).

*Notes on Timber of the Amazon Valley*

[...] In Ireland, as we know, once a land of trees, the scarcity of timber is now so great that a Royal Commission was appointed in 1907 to report upon the best means of preservation of what is left and restoration of that already destroyed. On all hands indeed, the civilized races of mankind are beginning

\* In 1909 Arthur Conan Doyle published *The Crime of the Congo*, a powerful condemnation of King Leopold's regime.



to realise that the wood supplies of modern industrial life are reaching their limits so rapidly as to threaten peril to many existing industries and to exclude the possibility of development of new ones. The need for wood and forests that have not heard the ring of the woodman's axe or the whirr of the saw wheel is as great as or greater than the need for new sources of food supply. Uncultivated lands the Earth still has in plenty, wherein the maize and manioc, the wheat crop and the banana may yet be raised to meet an ever expanding demand; but the untouched forested zones are now perilously few – and while a tree may be felled in a moment, it needs may be a century to develop to any stage of useful growth. The Japanese proverb that no man may die in a sense of duty done who has not planted a tree should be translated into school books and applied in the daily lives of all Western peoples.

Altho' Brazil is said to derive its name from the quantity of Brazil wood it furnished in the middle ages to the European markets, today the export of timber is infinitely less from this vast forested country than from any other region of the globe where trees are many and men are few. Not only is this so, but it may credibly be said that, despite the yearly widening area of demand and the untouched vastness of the sources of the supply, Brazil as an exporting timber country has fallen off in the last years and probably today ships less timber than was the case fifty or sixty years ago.

The reason for this disregard for one of the more sizeable sources of her wealth has already been explained in the greater facility

with which rubber & coffee can be produced, and the far greater profits to be individually derived from exploiting these sources of wealth than in a systematic development of the timber trade. The scarcity of labour, the inadequate population, the absence of means of transport all go to seal up, in a seclusion deep as that of primitive nature, the vast recesses of the Amazonian forests. Even the very trees are unknown. Their names and uses. The Amazonian flora is very far from being entirely known. As a very large number of specimens have been neither classified nor described scientifically, for very many years to come botanical investigation will have free scope in a field which is practically unlimited and where most curious discoveries may be made. (*The Land of the Amazons* by the Baron de Santa-Anna Nery, p.80). Thus wrote within quite recent years a distinguished Brazilian, himself a native of the Amazon Valley and one who joined to scientific attainments had a local knowledge derived from his early years in the State of Amazonia [...]

[...] From the earliest times we find civilized man a destroyer. He slew the trees as he slew the inhabitants from motives of safety or to fulfil the designs of conquest. The Inquisition of New Spain or the Puritans of New England were equally improvident of life whether it belonged to the vegetable or animal kingdom. Prescott tells us that in the times of the Aztecs, the Mexican tableland – today a parched sun-soaked steppe – was thickly covered with larch, oak, cypress and other forest trees “the extraordinary dimension of some of

which, remaining to the present day, show that the curse of barrenness in later times is chargeable more on man than on nature. Indeed the early Spaniards made an indiscriminate war on the forest as did our Puritan ancestors, though with much less reason. After once conquering the country, they had no lurking ambush to fear from the submissive, semi-civilized Indian and were not like our forefathers, obliged to keep watch and ward for a century.

As the Spanish invaders of Mexico did with the forests of the Aztec plateau, so the English invaders of Ireland did with the great woodlands of Munster and Ulster. In their case the commercial instinct, doubtless still more primitive than religious fervour in the Spaniard added a fierce incentive to a policy of unearthing the "Irish wood-kerne" from his lair. The great forest of Glanconkyne, which covered a wide portion of the modern counties of Tyrone and Derry and remained down to the last days of Elizabeth a stronghold of Irish woodcraft was almost entirely destroyed within the next two reigns. In the days of Charles II, sixty years after the axe of Chichester was first laid to their roots, scarce one of the mighty oaks, whose name alone survives in the many forms of "Derry" (tr. Doire) applied to town or hamlet still stud the land, remained to indicate the great forest stronghold of the O'Neils. It is a far cry from Lough Erne to the Amazon. What the fierce Spaniard or the calculating "Anglo-Saxon" (whether the field of his exploits was the Tudor wrath in Ireland or the Puritan evangelization by axe and firebrand in New England) refused to spare the milder Portuguese travellers and

colonists rather than conquerors viewed with indifference and left wholly unsubdued. The mighty forest of the mightiest river system, flowing through the greatest valley of the world remains to this day almost exactly what they presented themselves to the eyes of the first discoverers.

[...] The Indian tribes it is true have almost entirely passed away. But the process of extirpation has been one of disease rather than destruction; and in many cases the disappearance of the tribe has been due to the gentle blending of its blood in that of its invaders. Alone among the conquering races of Europe the Portuguese have preferred to mix the blood of the conqueror with that of the serf and whatever may be thought of this policy on succeeding generations.

Those who doubt its wisdom will find support to their views in the frank condemnation of Agassiz, himself a warm friend of Brazil and the Brazilians. I observe that while Brazilians admire and often quote his eulogies of their beautiful continent reference is never made to his remarks on their head, which those interested may find at page 7.

The question of the blending of mankind in seemingly unnatural unions is despite Agassiz, still an open one. We know not how the Aryan branch arose nor the Caucasian developed – the Celtic, the Teutonic or any other of the distant families of noble birth were first begotten. It may be that in the liberal policy, the sincere and whole-hearted sense of equality which has led Brazilians to a mixture of races nowhere else attempted on so wholesale a scale

we shall find a loftier impulse of humanity, finding enduring expression for the good of mankind, than in that ruthless unbending separation of the ruler from the ruled of which the English are and have been the most pitiless examples. (NLI MS 13087 (31) Notes on Timber of the Amazon Valley).

### *Origins of Brazil*

[...] The name Brazil is probably the sweetest sounding name that any large race of the Earth possesses. How this musical name came to be assigned to the great country of South America did not interest me until after I had landed at Santos in the autumn of 1906. We accept the names of countries and of places as we find them on maps without question taking them as a matter of course just as we accept the Atlantic Ocean or Asia. The name seems a part of the country and if a very inquisitive mind should ask the origin of the name itself, reference is made to a school geography, where the new-comer may find a probable commonplace origin. Thus it is with the name Brazil.

The beautiful name that we are told came from a dye-wood used in the commerce of the

Middle Ages. Whether it be the individual Brazilian we ask, the school book we turn to or the encyclopaedia we appeal to, the answer is the same – brief, unexplanatory and precise – the country was named from the abundance of the dye-wood that was soon exported from its shores after the discovery. It was first called *Terra de Santa Cruz* – Land of the Holy Cross – by Cabral, its discoverer, a baptism that the King of Portugal his master confirmed. But in spite of official and royal recognition the dye-wood prevailed over the wood of the true cross. Such, in brief, is the universal reason assigned to the naming of Brazil. No writer has even got beyond this: altho' a few have been on the threshold of the truth without knowing it. For there is no doubt at all that in so deriving the name Brazil the country from the dye-wood of medieval commerce, the school book, the individual Brazilian, the encyclopaedia and the dictionary are astray.

[...] Strange as it may seem, Brazil owes her name not to her abundance of a certain dye-wood but to Ireland. The distinction of naming the great South American country, I believe, belongs as surely to Ireland and to an ancient Irish belief old as the Celtic mind itself. (NLI MS 13087)

## The Putumayo Indians

*This article, published in The Contemporary Review of September 1912, was written to raise funds and awareness for the Putumayo Mission Fund, an initiative instigated by Casement with the consent of the Vatican. In early 1914, four Irish Franciscan missionaries arrived in the Putumayo and established two mission stations to help protect the indigenous population. They remained there until 1917.*

[...] The region of the Putumayo formed until a comparatively recent period one of the least known districts of the upper Amazons, and to its isolation may be attributed the survival in fairly large numbers of its native races. No civilised government, until quite recently, exercised any authority in the region, and no civilised men had established themselves among the various kindred tribes which inhabit the thick forest that stretches in a well-nigh unbroken wave across the expanse of country that extends from the Putumayo to the Japurá. These two rivers, both rising in the Ecuadorean and Colombian Andes, not very far from Quito, empty themselves into the Amazons in Brazil, after courses of perhaps 1,200 miles and 1,700 miles respectively.

The origin of the word Putumayo I have not been able to determine. It would seem, in the first case, to have applied not to the great river now called by that name, but to a district of country lying far inland of a point on the north bank of the Amazons, termed Pebas, which is itself only some ninety miles

below Iquitos. The present Pebas is a small trading settlement, which was formerly a place of greater importance. To-day, it consists of two or three houses of Peruvian traders who control the Indian tribe called the Yaguas (named after the river they are mainly settled upon), and through these Indians exploit the wild rubber of the inland forest. In earlier records "Putumayo" is spoken of as a place, a "nation" or country reached via Pebas. Pebas itself is situated at the mouth of a small tributary of the Amazons called the Ampiyaco, and it was probably up this river that the earlier attempts to reach the Putumayo were made by dwellers in the Peruvian Montaña. The Montaña is the name applied to the whole forest region of Peru stretching from the foothills of the Eastern Andes to the Brazilian frontier.

The tribe called the Yaguas Indians are not, properly speaking, Putumayo Indians, but since it was through the country of this tribe that the first attempts to reach the Putumayo from Peru were made, a short account of these people may not inappropriately lead up to a description of the inhabitants of the Putumayo.

Attempts to enslave the Indians of the Putumayo would appear to have been made at an early date, for records of slave raids in the region exist as far back as 1706. A detachment of Spanish soldiers was actually stationed at Pebas about 1790 "to prevent the incursions of Portuguese slavers" among the Putumayo Indians. As a rule, the Portuguese slave dealers had ascended the Japurá until they reached the higher forest regions where

the Indians were more numerous; but the mention in the archives of Loreto of the measures taken by the Spanish authorities shows that the raiders had extended their operations far above the mouth of the Japurá along the main stream of the Amazons.

In an interesting record of a journey down the Amazons in 1828 Lieutenant Henry Lister Maw, R.N., who had quitted the coast of Peru in December, 1827, and reached Pará on the Atlantic in April, 1828, speaks of "Putumayo" as a locality, and places it vaguely somewhere between Iquitos and the Brazilian frontier. He quotes from a report of the then Vicar of Moyobamba, addressed to the ecclesiastical authorities at Lima, dealing with all the settled "pueblos" in the Diocese of Maynas, a passage where the Vicar refers to the "pueblo of Putumayo" as the furthest point of his titular jurisdiction. The Vicar wrote to Lima:

I am ignorant of its Church and of the State in which it is, but I am certain that it has no curate. It is the line where the aforementioned Government with the title and name of the Missions of Maynas terminates.

Describing the Yaguas Indians he saw at Pebas in 1828, Lieut. Maw says:

If, as has appeared to me natural to suppose, the subjects or descendants of the Incas retreated to the Montana before the Spaniards, one of these tribes called the Yaguas bear strong marks of being so

descended, not only as they differ from the other Indians, almost as much as they do from Europeans, but what is extraordinary, they wear their hair cut straight across the forehead and cropped behind in the manner that is described as one of the distinguishing marks of the Incas, and which we never saw among any other of the Indians. They are tall, with good figures and their complexion is a tawny-yellow, scarcely darker than the Moyobambians. Their hair is lighter than that of the common Indians, and the expression of their countenances far from stupid. They wear sashes made of thin white bark, which fall before and behind, and have their heads and arms ornamented with the long feathers of the scarlet macaw, or, as it is there called, papagayo. Indeed I think it is scarcely possible to give a better description of the Yaguas we saw at Pebas than by referring to the prints usually published of the Peruvians at the time of the Spanish conquest [...]

Before the revolution (the revolt of the Spanish colonies) there was a communication with several nations living half a month's journey, particularly with the Putumayo nation near Pasto. The latter are numerous, and used formerly to collect much sarsaparilla and beeswax, but when the revolutionary war commenced the Spaniards sent soldiers to Pebas and the Indians were afraid to come.

Lieutenant Maw does not associate this "Putumayo" with the "pueblo" of the Vicar of Moyobamba, for he refers as follows to the supposed site of the latter:

Shortly before reaching Tabatinga (the Brazilian frontier) we passed a pueblo on the left bank, the name of which I could not learn from the Indians, but which was, perhaps, "Putumayo," mentioned by the Vicar of Moyobamba.

Three hundred miles further down the Amazons, when he actually passed the mouth of the Putumayo river, Lieut. Maw learned of it only under its Brazilian name of Iça (pronounced Isaa), and was not at all aware that this was the same river which, higher up, is known by its Peruvian name of Putumayo. Lieut. Maw mentions that parties of whites were accustomed to ascend the Japurá on slave raids, as that river was then considered "the most favourable district for catching Indians." He describes the manner of these man hunts, and the description then given holds good of some parts of the upper waters of the Amazon at the present day.

The Japurá washes the northern shores of the forest area in which the several tribes to-day forming the "Putumayo region" dwell. That these tribes were once numerous is clear from the long-continued efforts of the slavers to tap that prolific source of life, and in these unenviable efforts Brazilian, or rather Portuguese slavers would seem to have been much earlier than those of Spanish descent. The three chief forest streams draining into either the Putumayo or the Japurá, along whose courses the most numerous Indian settlements extended, all bear names upon the map that indicate a Brazilian origin. These rivers are the Caraparaná and Igaraparaná,

flowing into the Putumayo, and the Cahuinari, flowing into the Japurá. It is the region drained by these rivers, each of them a stream several hundred miles in length, that forms the homeland of the so-called Putumayo Indians.

The district may be said roughly to cover 50,000 or 60,000 square miles, but it is only the upper and middle courses of these rivers which have, or had, any large Indian population, so that the really inhabited portion probably does not exceed 25,000 square miles. The forest is here healthier and comparatively drier, and the mean altitude would be from 600 to 900 feet above sea-level. The population in the earlier years of the last century was doubtless much greater than it is to-day, and may very well have been then 100,000 human beings. The portion of it I visited has been put in more than one computation at 50,000 within the last twelve years, although at the date when I was on the Igaraparaná, in 1910, it was by no one estimated at more than 10,000 for that district. The diminution has not been entirely due to the deaths of the Indians, brought about by means I will not discuss here, but must also in some measure be attributed to the flight into territories lying north of the Japurá of large bodies of fugitives seeking to escape from the rubber exactions imposed upon them.

The various tribes of this region had remained a practically untouched people up to the closing years of the last century. Their relation to the white men had been only a distant one, that of savages visited from time

to time by raiding bands or parties of so-called traders who came to buy or catch Indian slaves. These expeditions, as I have said, came chiefly up the Brazilian waterways, and were mainly organised by Portuguese dwellers along the main course of the Amazons. Brazilian law at that time was impotent to hinder this nefarious traffic. Evil as it was – and the magnitude of the evil is abundantly testified to by foreign travellers, from Lieut. Maw on to Alfred Russel Wallace, and even by Louis Agassiz, who wrote at a later date – it left the Putumayo tribes, who were victims of or parties to it, untouched in their home life and social relations. Where there were no good men or worthy motives among the civilised intruders it was much better they should remain as occasional visitors with criminal intent than that they should settle among the savages; their presence could only corrupt even if the latter should survive the contact.

The Indians of the Amazon woodlands had, and have, many excellent qualities. Although savage in their surroundings they were not, in fact, savages as the word is understood – for example in Central Africa; and even where cannibalism exists among South American Indians these remote tribes have preserved a gentleness of mind and docility of temperament in singular contrast with the vigorous savagery of the far abler African. Although the wild tribes in the great Amazon forest lived, and live, in a constant state of hostility with one another, they were and are averse to bloodshed. The African savage, on the contrary, delights in bloodshed,

whether it be on the field of battle or in human sacrifice. To him half the purpose of killing lies in the act of killing. To adopt the Zulu phrase, when he goes to war he “sees red.” He is not content with merely getting his adversary out of the way, but he wishes to shed his blood, to hack his limbs, and to rejoice in a gory triumph. His weapons of offence and defence are fashioned to this end. They are blood-letting weapons. His huge spears with blades a foot long, his great battle-axes and curved knives for beheading, are fashioned for slaughter. Not so the South American Indian. To take his enemy’s life was, perhaps, a necessity of his environment, and therefore he had to possess arms to this end, but these arms are, if the word can be used, the most gentle engines of death – the silent blow-pipe with the tiny dart only a few inches long, the small throwing spear that a woman or boy can hurl, and the noiseless bow and arrow. The blow-pipe is perhaps, the most effective of these weapons. Where the African clove his adversary with a heavy axe, or ripped him open with a spear, the Indian took his enemy’s life noiselessly, and with scarcely a drop of blood.

The Indian dislike to bloodshed was noticed by Lieut. Herndon, an officer of the United States Navy, who descended the Amazons in a Canoe in 1851, and he thus records this characteristic of the race in his remarks upon the people of Chasuta, an Indian village he passed through on the banks of the Huallaga:

I have noticed that the Indians of this country are reluctant to shed blood, and seem to have a horror of its sight. I have known them to turn away to avoid killing a chicken when it was presented to one for that purpose. The Indian whom Ijurra struck did not complain of the pain of the blow, but bitterly and repeatedly that "his blood had been shed."

Lieut. Herndon refers here to a tribe who were already under the influence of Christian teachers, but who, in this, as in other respects, retained their natural instincts. He mentions these Chasuta Indians as "a gentle, quiet race; very docile, and very obedient to their priest, always saluting him by kneeling and kissing his hand"; but "they, nevertheless, excelled as hunters."

Although constant fighting prevailed among the wild Indian tribes hidden in the forest, it is clear that they did not think principally of war, for had this been the case, their dwelling would have been otherwise constructed than they are. Tribes situated in similar circumstances in Africa speedily learn to fortify their dwelling-places. African villages, even of the rudest kind, are frequently surrounded with stout palisades, trenches and other defensive out-works. South American Indians, although very skilful builders, and with ample material for building, have always contented themselves with dwellings that offer no protection whatsoever against assault. The houses of the Putumayo tribes, for example, are, as dwelling-houses, much loftier and better constructed than the majority of African dwellings of the same type

of forest-dwellers, but they afford a shelter only against the rain and sunshine, not against an enemy. These dwellings are very ably constructed. Several Indian families congregate together, all of them united by close ties of blood, and this assemblage of relatives, called a "clan," may number anything up to, perhaps, three hundred individuals, all of them dwelling beneath one roof, in a large central dwelling-place, presided over by a hereditary chief. A clearing is made in the forest, and, with the very straight trees that abound in the woods, a lofty and very spacious tribal house is erected. The uprights are as straight as the mast of a ship. The ridge-pole will often be from thirty to forty feet from the ground, and considerable skill is displayed in balancing the rough beams and adjusting the weight of the thatch. This thatch is composed of the dried and twisted fronds of a small swamp-palm, which admirably excludes both rain and the rays of the sun. No tropical dwelling that I have been in in Africa is so cool or dry as one roofed with this material. The roofs, or thatches, of these dwellings extend right down to the ground and serve in place as walls. They are not designed as a bar against intruders so much as to keep out sunlight and wet, and in no case could they serve as a protection against attack.

The causes of conflict between neighbouring tribes of Indians were invariably not for purposes of gain or profit, but in the nature of family quarrels, or founded on purely personal disputes. The Indian had no desire to enrich himself at the



expense of his neighbour. He was, and is, a Socialist by temperament, habit, and, possibly, age-long memory of Inca and pre-Inca precept. When one tribe attacked another tribe the cause of conflict was almost certainly a personal one, and very often, I should say, due to an accusation of witchcraft, or involving, possibly, a point of honour. An individual of one family had died, and the reason of death was said to be due to the enmity and malpractices of a neighbour. As each clan was but a single family, the injury of one member became the grief of all.

While I was at a station called Occidente, in the middle of the forest, between the Japurá and Igaraparaná, one day in October, 1910, a large wood ibis, a magnificent bird, came sailing high from the north. He circled round, and finally descended in the station-clearing, within a few yards of the house where we were all at luncheon on the verandah. Many Indians from the forest, belonging to the Huitoto and Muinanes tribes were assembled in the compound, and these were greatly excited at the advent of the bird and his deliberate descent almost on the very ground where they stood.

It was with difficulty I prevented the bird from being killed. A chief of the Muinanes, named Hatima, a friend of mine, who possessed a rifle, for which I had given him cartridges, begged to be allowed to shoot the ibis; but, to oblige me, the bird was left unmolested in full view of a watching crowd of mingled Peruvians and Indians. After resting himself some minutes and pruning his feathers, he again took wing, and, rising in

two or three circles, was soon at a great height, when he wheeled southwards and disappeared over the distant fringe of forest, flying towards the Huitoto country by the Igaraparaná. Hatima protested ruefully that this bird had been sent by their enemies, the Carijonas, a tribe across the Japurá, to bring disaster upon them, and that my intervention had aided the malice of their foes. Witchcraft plays as important a part in the life and death of a Putumayo Indian as in that of a Bayanzi of the Congo or a spirit-haunted dweller on the Niger.

The Indians of the Putumayo consist of some six or seven distinct tribes speaking different languages, or, possibly, wholly differing dialects of the same language. In manners and customs they are identical, although their characters differ considerably. The principal tribes are the Huitotos, the Boras, the Andokes, the Muinanes, the Recigaros, the Ocainas, and the Nonuyas inhabiting the region in which the operations of the Peruvian Amazon Company have been carried on. Of these, the Huitotos are the most numerous, while the Recigaros are probably reduced to a mere handful.

The Huitotos are the least sturdy and courageous of these tribes, and for that reason have felt the heaviest burden of rubber-collection. The Boras and Recigaros are the finest physically and in morale of the tribes enumerated. The former are still largely unconquered – that is to say, they dwell in their remote forest-houses unburdened with the blessings of “civilization,” and free to cultivate their patches of cleared forest in

such peace as their natural surroundings permit. Many, however, have been turned into rubber-collectors, and have suffered much in the process. They are fine specimens of manhood, as are the Recigaros, straight and clean-limbed, with often very pleasing features, and are brave, intelligent, and capable.

All these Indians are, indeed, notably intelligent. Their weakness lies not in lack of intelligence so much as in that prevailing docility of mind which leads the Indian everywhere, in that part of South America, to submit to the white man and to render him and ever too ready obedience. The causes of this submissive demeanour undoubtedly lie in the fundamental characteristics of the Indian race. It was doubtless this quality that enabled the Inca sovereigns, and those who went before them, to construct a communistic empire on the Andean plateau out of much the same raw material. I am aware that more than one writer asserts that the population of the Andes was of a wholly different origin from the forest Indians, but I do not share this belief. It would seem to me that all the Indians of the New World are derived from a common origin, for the points of resemblance among them are innate and equally visible in widely separated communities, while the points of difference can everywhere be accounted for by the force of circumstance and the influence of food, climate, and surroundings.

So far as my perception carries me, I should say that the tribes interned in the vast Amazon forests were of identical origin with the Aymaras and Quichuas of the Inca Empire,

differing obviously in many respects, owing to external circumstance endured for long ages, but preserving many common characteristics, and, in their general outlook on life, retaining an abiding mental attitude alike in the forest as on the mountain height. A curious fact I noted during my brief stay on the Putumayo goes to support this view. The music, songs, and dances of the forest Indians are not based on their life of to-day, but are drawn from some far-off ancient fount of inspiration. To describe these as I witnessed them more than once in the heart of the deep equatorial forest, would be to describe what Lieut. Maw, writing nearly a century earlier of the dance he observed on the Pacific slope of the Andes, termed the "old Inca dance of the Indians." Passing through the streets of Contumasa he "met several groups going about in masks, performing the old Indian dance handed down from the time of the Incas: the music consisted of the "ancient drum and a kind of pipe or flute. When they stopped to dance it was in an irregular circle." This would, very briefly, stand for any of the Indian dances still celebrated hundreds, and even thousands of miles from the site of the Inca civilisation, and such as I frequently observed on the Putumayo.

The drum and the flute pipes and the masked men were a necessary part of each performance, and the dancers always separated into diverging and irregular circles, while the song that accompanied this motion was rendered in words that none of the Peruvian or Colombian white men, who often

spoke the native language of the tribe with extraordinary fluency, could understand anything of. They all answered my inquiry that when the Indians danced they sang "old, old songs" that no one knew the origin of, and the very words of which were meaningless outside the dance. No explanation was forthcoming – the songs were "very old," and referred to some dim, far-off events that none of the whites could learn anything about; the Indians only said they came down from their remote past. That that remote past was something wholly different from their present-day environment I became more and more convinced as I studied these innocent, friendly, child-like human beings.

They went, it might be said, almost quite naked – the men only wearing a strip of the bark of a tree, wound round the loins, while the women, entirely nude, stained their bodies with vegetable dyes, and, at dances, stuck fluff and feathers with an adhesive mixture to the calves of their legs and sometimes down the hips. The men, too, stained their bodies with varied native dyes that soon wash or wear off. Both sexes are chaste and exceedingly modest. Their minds are alert, quick and perceptive – although not, I think, receptive – and their dispositions cheerful and courteous. Their possessions were practically nil, and their surroundings depressing in the extreme – a morbid, dense, and gloomy forest, inhabited by wild beasts, serpents and insects, and subject to one of the heaviest rainfalls in the world, accompanied often by the most tremendous storms of thunder and lightning to appall the stoutest heart. No metals

anywhere exist, and even stones are very scarce – the forest was their end-all and their be-all. They had no domestic animals of any kind, and no food or materials, save such as might be derived from the unending woodlands in which they were submerged. Such surroundings as these neither offered a future nor held a past.

The stars and the heavenly bodies played no part in the lives of those sunk in this gloom of an eternal under-world of trees. To all intents and purposes their bodily existence was on a par with that of the wild animals around them, and if the wild beasts were at home in the forest the wild men, it might be thought, were equally its denizens. Yet nothing became more clear the more these Indians were studied that they were not children of the forest, but children of elsewhere lost in the forest – babes in the wood, grown up, it is true, and finding the forest their only heritage and shelter, but remembering always that it was not their home. They had accommodated themselves, as far as they might, to their surroundings, and made a shift at living there; but had never really accepted this environment. Thus while their bodies were strayed and lost in the trees, their minds, their memories, maybe, refused to accept these surroundings. They never gave the impression of being at home. They had refused to make the material best of circumstance. While their knowledge of the forest and everything it possessed was profound, one felt that these age-long denizens of the woods were not citizens of the forest, but strangers, come by chance

amid surroundings they did not love, although they knew them by heart, and that their lives were spent in an hereditary picnic rather than in a settled occupation. All their material surroundings were temporary – their only permanent possessions were mental, and, if I may use the word, spiritual. While Nature in her garb of lofty trees was gloomy, overclothed and silent, the Indian was laughing, naked, and ready to sing and dance on the slightest provocation.

While he abstained from providing himself with a strong-hold, or abiding place, or even cultivating beyond his most immediate needs, he was always ready for a dance, a game, or a hunting expedition. His dances, his songs, were a more important part of his life than the satisfaction of his material wants. These might have been much better provided for had he bent all his energies in that direction, but it seemed as though the Indian was haunted by a memory of other circumstances than these he dwelt in, and that the hope of escape, of restoration, of finding the way out of the region into which he had strayed and wherein he had got lost came between him and sustained settled effort to make a native land of this accidental forest. Everything but his music, his dance, and songs was temporary; his house, or clan dwelling, he shifted from point to point within the region his clan claimed lordship over, and his forest clearing and garden of yucca (or cassava) grew with equal facility on the new site. While there was no way out of the forest for the body, turn his eyes where he might, he found a way out for his mind. While he lived

in shadow mostly, he delighted in brightness, and even in beautiful things. His naked limbs he stained with vivid hues, and he rejoiced in the gloriously beautiful feathers of the forest birds, and decorated himself with these. To his dances he brought a graceful frond of some plant plucked by the track as he came to the meeting-place, and in the movements of the dance these varied staves of delicate leaves were waved in obedience to the movements of his limbs that themselves obeyed some carefully-remembered cult or motion he had not picked up by the wayside.

Thus while the Indian is spoken of as a savage, and, if we view his material surroundings, rightly thus termed, his mind is not that of a savage. While he must be described as very primitive if we measure him by his material gains over his surroundings and the extent of his worldly possessions, he is by no means a primitive man if we regard his mental faculties. He is an intelligent human being, even a singularly intelligent one in some respects, who finds himself by some strange fate lost in the woods and compelled to reside in surroundings for which he has no true affection. Most of the Indians I met had, I really believe, a positive distaste for the forest. Had I lifted my finger and possessed the means to convey them away, whole tribes would have fled with a shout of joy from the haunts they had dwelt in for unnumbered ages, to accompany the stranger white man to that other world they had never seen, but, I verily believe, had never forgotten! While naked in body, slim, beautifully shaped and proportioned,

coloured like the very tree-trunks they flitted among like spirits of the woods – their minds were the minds of civilised men and women. They longed for another life – they hoped ever for another world. And this longing was, and is, at the bottom of much of that ease with which the first white man to come among them was able to “conquer” them. Their submission is not alone that of the submissive, gentle Indian mind in front of its mental superior, but that of a mind that has known better things than anything the forest can offer, and has never ceased to hope for the means of re-contact with them.

In this, too, I believe lies the secret of the Indian’s ready acceptance of the guidance of religious instructors. Wherever the Jesuit or Franciscan fathers were able to reach the Indians, these followed them with one accord out of the forest, and built their houses around the “padre’s,” and delightedly submitted to his authority. Every single traveller on the Amazons, whose works I have read, bears witness to this recurrent trait. Speaking of the Indians of Pebas, in 1851, the Yaguas, whom Lieut. Maw had seen in the course of his earlier voyage, Lieut. Herndon, the American officer, thus relates an instance of their attachment to the good priest who had first come to them:

The history of the settlement of this place is remarkable, as showing the attachment of the Indians to their pastor and their Church. Some years ago, Padre José de la Rosa Alva had established a mission at a settlement of the Yaguas about two days journey to the

northward and eastward of the present station, which he called Santa Maria, and where he generally resided. Business took him to Pebas, and unexpectedly detained him there for fifteen days. The Indians, finding he did not return, reasoned with themselves and said, “Our father has left us; let us go to him.” Whereupon they gathered together the personal property the priest had left, shouldered the Church utensils and furniture, even to the doors, set fire to their houses, and joined the Padre in Pebas. He directed them to the present station, where they builded houses and established themselves.

Here the Indians were determined not to be “lost in the forest” again. The superior being who had come among them with a rule of kindness and good-will was far more to them than forest home and tribal hunting-ground. His belongings and the Church he had taught them to venerate were carefully transported – their own houses were cheerfully abandoned to the flames. This little story could be related of many places on the main banks of the Amazons, wherever the kindly and affectionate influence of the early Catholic missionaries had penetrated. The Jesuits were excluded from that region for their virtues. Their teaching made the Indians “citizens,” but the white men wanted not citizens but slaves. The greed of the “negociantes” was stronger with the Governments of that day than the unselfishness of the Church. The Jesuits might have saved all the Indian tribes of the lower and middle Amazon had it not been for the

greedy savagery of the Portuguese “colonists.” Wherever the Franciscans, who are in Peru to some extent what the Jesuits were in Brazil, have had means to protect and help the Indians, they have carried on the good work that Lieut. Herndon and others noted in the early and mid years of the last century. Where they have failed, it has been due to the success of “commerce” over civilization, of covetousness over Christianity. Lieut. Herndon thus records the impression made upon him at one of the little Franciscan settlements on the Huallaga, far above the modern commercial centre of Iquitos, which to-day can offer no such spectacle:

August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1851. – Went to church. The congregation – men, women, and children – numbered about fifty. A little naked, bow-legged Indian child of two or three years and Ijurras’ pointer puppy, which he had brought all the way from Lima on his saddle-bow, worried the congregation with their tricks and gambols, but altogether they were attentive to their prayers and devout. I enjoyed exceedingly the public worship of God with these rude children of the forest, and although they probably understood little of what they were about, I thought I could see its humanising and fraternising effect upon all.

Is it too late to hope that by means of the same humane and brotherly agency something of the good-will and kindness of Christian life may be imparted to the remote, friendless and lost children of the forest still

awaiting the true white man’s coming into the region of the Putumayo?

(*The Contemporary Review*,  
September 1912)

*‘The Elsewhere Empire’ in The Crime Against Europe, 1914*

[...] The British Empire is no northern oak tree. It is a creeping, climbing plant that has fastened on the limbs of others and grown great from a sap not its own. If we seek an analogy for it in the vegetable and not in the animal world we must go to the forest of the tropics and not to the northern woodlands. In the great swamps at the mouth of the Amazon, the naturalist Bates describes a monstrous liana, the “Sipo matador” or murdering creeper, that far more fitly than the oak tree of the north typifies John Bull and the place he has won in the sunlight by the once strong limbs of Ireland.

Speaking of the forests around Pará, Bates says: “In these tropical forests each plant and tree seems to be striving to outvie its fellows, struggling upwards towards light and air – branch and leaf and stem – regardless of its neighbors. Parasitic plants are seen fastening with firm grip on others, making use of them with reckless indifference as instruments for their own advancement. Live and let live is clearly not the maxim taught in these wildernesses. There is one kind of parasitic tree very common near Pará which exhibits the feature in a very prominent manner. It is called the “Sipo

matador”, or murderer liana. It belongs to the fig order, and has been described and figured by Von Martius in the Atlas to Spix and Martius’s *Travels*. I observed many specimens. The base of its stem would be unable to bear the weight of the upper growth; it is obliged therefore to support itself on a tree of another species. In this it is not essentially different from other climbing trees and plants, but the way the matador sets about it is peculiar and produces certainly a disagreeable impression. It springs up close to the tree on which it intends to fix itself, and the wood of its stem grows by spreading itself like a plastic mould over one side of the trunk of its supporter. It then puts forth, from each side, an arm-like branch, which grows rapidly, and looks as though a stream of sap were flowing and hardening as it went. This adheres closely to the trunk of the victim, and the two arms meet at the opposite side and blend together. These arms are put forth at somewhat regular intervals in mounting upwards, and the victim,

when its strangler is full grown, becomes tightly clasped by a number of inflexible rings. These rings gradually grow larger as the murderer flourishes, rearing its crown of foliage to the sky mingled with that of its neighbor, and in course of time they kill it by stopping the flow of its sap. The strange spectacle then remains of the selfish parasite clasping in its arms the lifeless and decaying body of its victim, which had been a help to its own growth. Its ends have been served – it has flowered and fruited, reproduced and disseminated its kind; and now when the dead trunk moulders away its own end approaches; its support is gone and itself also fails.

The analogy is almost the most perfect in literature, and if we would not see it made perfect in history we must get rid of the parasite grip before we are quite strangled. (Roger Casement, ‘The Elsewhere Empire’ in *The Crime Against Europe*, 1914).

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### **Credits (Images)**

**Front Cover:** Pencil sketch of Roger Casement by William Rothenstein (1911). (National Portrait Gallery, London).

**Front endpaper:** Postcard of the port of Manaus, edited by 1900. In: Gerodetti, João Emilio and Carlos Cornejo. *Lembranças do Brasil. As Capitais Brasileiras nos Cartões-postais e Álbuns de Lembranças*. São Paulo: Solaris, Edições Culturais, 2004. p. 232.

**Image before the Appendix:** Authorities and illustrious passengers inspecting part of the railway Madeira-Mamoré. In: Gerodetti, João Emilio & Carlos Cornejo. *As Ferrovias do Brasil nos Cartões-Postais e Álbuns de Lembranças*. São Paulo: Solaris, Edições Culturais, 2005. p. 255.

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**Photograph of Roger Casement** (17 April 1915): Roger Casement in Berlin from *Diaries of Sir Roger Casement: His Mission to Germany and the Findlay Affair* (Munich: Arche Publishing, 1922)



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