Roger Casement: How Effective Was the British Government’s Smear Campaign Exposing the Homosexual “Black Diaries”?

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**Introduction**

On 3 August 1916 the British government executed the Irish patriot Roger Casement, a former British consul, for treason at Pentonville Prison in north London. His trial, held in late June, had lasted only four days, and upon the pronouncement of his sentence his friends and supporters set ablaze an international movement aimed at the British government in an effort to secure a reprieve. Early in his career Casement had earned international notoriety when he exposed the imperialist European rubber-company atrocities occurring in Belgian King Leopold II’s Congo. Casement’s expedition, investigation, and report (delivered in 1904) resulted in the twentieth century’s first major humanitarian movement, which ultimately forced Leopold, who had been acting as an exploitative private entrepreneur, to surrender his personal holdings in Africa and to cede control of the Congo Free State to the Belgian parliament.[1](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f1" \t "_blank) Less than a decade later, in 1910, recalling his success in the Congo, the British government issued a similar assignment to Casement, this time to investigate the treatment of the Putumayo Indians of Peru, where the British-registered Peruvian Amazon Company held murderous sway. Once again, Casement’s report (issued in 1911) exposed the extreme measures of cruelty and exploitation practiced by rubber-company barons against the natives of the region. While his account did not inspire a second humanitarian movement, the company responsible began to liquidate its assets and slowly withdrew from the area, and Casement received a knighthood for his efforts to shield the Amazonian Indians. As a result of his work in Africa and South America, Casement earned the respect of many prominent figures in different spheres of public life, from noted authors to influential clergymen and powerful politicians.[2](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f2" \t "_blank) Many of these people, and a host of others, rallied behind him in the summer of 1916, fighting unsuccessfully to save him from the gallows.[3](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f3" \t "_blank)

The journey from hero to traitor was not really a long one for Casement, and in his mind the actions that resulted in his being hailed as a hero were not entirely divorced from those that branded him as a traitor. In 1914, only three years after his exposé of conditions in the Peruvian Amazon, Casement, who was now retired from the consular service, completely channeled his energy into fighting against what he perceived to be British colonial agression in Ireland, his beloved homeland. Since Britain was then engaged in the First World War, to advance his revolutionary ambitions, Casement, along with other extreme nationalists, looked to the Central Powers for aid. He journeyed to Germany, where he hoped to secure weapons for the Irish Volunteers back home, and where he hoped to recruit a brigade from among the Irish prisoners of war who would be willing to fight for independence from Britain. Though he immersed himself completely in this endeavor, as he had in every other major effort of his life, he became dejected after less than two years when his illusion, that Germany would become Ireland’s savior, finally faded. Having failed to secure either enough arms or a sizeable Irish brigade, Casement decided to return to Ireland in a German U-boat with the intention of persuading Irish Volunteer chief of staff Eoin MacNeill to cancel the planned rising. Shortly after his landing on Banna Strand in Kerry on 20 April 1916, British authorities captured Casement and transported him to London, where he stood trial. The court found him guilty of treason and sentenced him to be hanged.[4](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f4" \t "_blank)

The British government feared an emotional outpouring of support for Casement from around the world, especially in the United States—with its large population of Irish immigrants and men and women of Irish descent—a country that Britain was currently courting to become its ally in the war against Germany. British officials instituted a smear campaign designed to blacken Casement’s reputation, repulse potential supporters, and deter those who might be tempted to consecrate him as a martyr following his death.[5](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f5" \t "_blank) This campaign was founded upon evidence taken from several “black diaries” [6](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f6" \t "_blank) supposedly discovered in Casement’s London home shortly after his arrest. These diaries graphically described his sexual encounters with European, African, and Latino men of all ages, including teenage boys. There were also excerpts in which Casement described in detail the male anatomy of men whom he met while living and traveling abroad.[7](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f7" \t "_blank) Homosexuality, decades away from public acceptance in Britain and the United States, could be wielded as a weapon powerful enough to demolish any enemy, and that is precisely what the government intended to do.

For years historians have claimed that this smear campaign was waged on both sides of the Atlantic, successfully deterring public opinion, discouraging influential supporters, and permitting England to execute Casement as a traitor without a popular backlash breaking out in America, particularly among those of Irish birth or descent. But a careful perusal of contemporary American newspapers depicts a different story. As this article will show, an examination of newspapers distributed in different regions of the United States indicates that the “black diaries” or reports about them played virtually no role in shaping public opinion. The smear campaign instituted by the British government never reached American shores, or if it did, the smears were squelched by the very newspapers on which the British government was relying to spread them. The press alluded to the diaries on only a few occasions, and when journalists or editors did so, it was rarely to highlight Casement’s failings in an effort to discourage American support, but to call into question Casement’s sanity, with the suggestion or assertion that his mental faculties had quite possibly been damaged after years in the tropics. By questioning his sanity, journalists inspired sympathy for Casement, not apathy or disgust. To conclude that nearly everyone in the United States empathized with Casement’s actions in Germany or Ireland would be far from the truth. Casement certainly experienced some negative press in the United States, but newspaper accounts strongly suggest that a majority of Americans did not want to see him executed. In an effort to save his life supporters sponsored petitions, wrote editorials, and held rallies. The United States Senate even toiled to secure a resolution in his behalf. Even if the “black diaries” or rumors of their contents were simply kept out of the press and avidly circulated behind the scenes, such a subterranean campaign does not appear to have had a detrimental effect on his support since the public effort to save him never faltered. Furthermore, many American newspapers after his execution hailed Casement as a martyr—the British campaign clearly having failed on that front.

**Historians and Biographers**

It was not until the 1950s that historians first began citing the British smear campaign as the reason why the agitation for clemency failed. In 1957 the English poet Alfred Noyes published his book *The Accusing Ghost, or Justice for Casement*, in which he made his readers aware that following Casement’s trial many men and women in the United States supported him, perhaps most notably in the Senate, which favorably entertained a resolution calling for clemency. Commenting on the reason for the ultimate failure of the resolution, Noyes declared: “It was known that the American Senate was about to support the appeal for reprieve, and there was little question that it would have succeeded but for the intensive campaign in which the alleged diary was circulated, ‘by judicious means’ and without the knowledge of the victim.”[8](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f8" \t "_blank) Noyes expressed confidence that if the “black diaries” had not been circulated, if they had been kept out of the public sphere, Casement would not have been executed for treason despite his guilt.

Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias, in their 1959 work *The Black Diaries: An Account of Roger Casement’s Life and Times, with a Collection of His Diaries and Public Writings*, concurred with Noyes that Casement’s enemies had manipulated the diaries. Although these co-authors did not argue as explicitly as Noyes that knowledge about the diaries ultimately resulted in the failure to secure a reprieve, they heavily implied that the diaries had brought about Casement’s execution. They firmly stated that the adverse reaction in America to Casement’s sentence was intense, and they cited as evidence a communication from Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador in Washington, to Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary. The citation of this dispatch was immediately followed by a sweeping statement about the insertion of the “black diaries” into the public sphere: “During all this period the methodical circulation of the diaries was carried out—from the king to the archbishop of Canterbury, from the American ambassador to members of the press.”[9](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f9" \t "_blank) Government agents presented the diaries to the press in hopes that the journalists would utilize their platform to poison influential minds and blunt or derail the collective push for a reprieve that had begun to build.

In 1960, Geoffrey Parmiter published his scholarly article “The Casement Diaries,” in which he argued that to counter the support Casement was receiving in America, rumors regarding the “degeneracy” of his moral character began to circulate in the United States along with photographs of actual diary entries. Despite this limited evidence, Parmiter affirmed that the strategy was successful: “The propaganda to blacken Casement’s character . . . had considerable effect, and many of those who had signed petitions withdrew their signatures after seeing the photographs. As a result, the petitions that were eventually presented were not as impressive as they might have been.”[10](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f10" \t "_blank) Parmiter offered no proof of this last assertion, nor did he mention the names of any individuals who might have backed away in light of the “black diaries.” He admitted that it was “of course impossible to measure the effect of this clandestine propaganda,” yet he ascribed to it some degree of success when he concluded that “America’s declaration of war was not delayed.”[11](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f11" \t "_blank) He therefore implied that the smear campaign did indeed succeed in turning American opinion sufficiently against Casement to prevent a condemnation of the U.S. government when it finally opted in 1917 to support Britain in the war.

Among the most influential works on Roger Casement has been Brian Inglis’s biography, which first appeared in 1973; it has been cited frequently in the footnotes of other historians and biographers writing about Casement. While Inglis presented some evidence to indicate that the diaries were not as successful in blemishing Casement’s character as others had claimed, Inglis did flatly declare that “the decisive reason . . . for the failure of the campaign for a reprieve was that Casement’s diaries had been found in his Ebury Street lodging.” [12](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f12" \t "_blank) Inglis went on to argue that the British circulated the diaries in order to prevent influential citizens, including journalists, from supporting a reprieve: “Particular care was taken that influential Americans in Britain should see extracts. . . . And they were shown to crusading journalists in Britain who could be expected to take up the reprieve cause.”[13](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f13" \t "_blank) [inc. Henry Massingham]

Three years after Inglis’s biography appeared, B.L. Reid published *The Lives of Roger Casement*. It is not surprising that Reid also presented the “black diaries” as a central reason why Roger Casement was not reprieved. According to Reid, “About the third of May, Captain Reginald Hall of Naval Intelligence, who had shared in the early interrogations, called into his office in the Admiralty a number of English and American press representatives and showed them what he identified as photographic copies of portions of Casement’s diaries, describing homosexual episodes.”[14](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f14" \t "_blank) There is no doubt that agents of the British government showed the diaries to these press representatives with the intention that their contents would be passed on to the general public via their respective newspapers. Despite the exposure of the diaries, Reid acknowledged that the campaign for clemency had intensified in the days leading up to Casement’s execution. Unfortunately, in Reid’s view, the smear campaign proved to be more effective, and in the end the support garnered by Casement simply proved to be inadequate:

The collective pressure was powerful, though in the long run not powerful enough. That so much support could be collected in favor of reprieve, even from many who were offended by one aspect or another of Casement’s behavior, showed the loyalty and respect he and his achievements had inspired. . . . But the “secret slanderers” had done their work too well, and the “moral” issue was bound to supervene and to put off many who would have been his advocates.[15](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f15" \t "_blank)

Reid thus argued that the “secret slanderers,” those who had busied themselves in exposing the “black diaries,” successfully silenced enough of Casement’s supporters to render ineffective those who still spoke out in his favor. Had it not been for the circulation of these diaries or reports about them, Reid seemed to say, those who wished to see Casement reprieved might not have been disappointed on 3 August.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, Angus Mitchell, in an attempt to prove that the lurid diaries had been forged, wrote “Casement’s Black Diaries: Closed Books Reopened.”[16](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f16" \t "_blank) In this article Mitchell suggested that one of the principal reasons why the British government had fabricated the “black diaries” was to ensure the certainty of Casement’s execution. By falsifying his innermost thoughts and his private actions, and then distributing the damning material to key individuals, the government had hoped to defame Casement and in the process deter the powerful lobby that was accumulating impressive support in his behalf. Mitchell had no doubt regarding the government’s success in this endeavor and expressed it with a barely concealed tone of contempt: “The rumours of Casement’s ‘sexual degeneracy’ that were circulated before and after his trial in 1916 confused almost everyone. Casement’s powerful lobby of supporters retreated into silence. Casement’s martyrdom was prevented and the clemency appeals thwarted.”[17](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f17" \t "_blank) Mitchell reiterated this claim in his 2003 book *Casement*. He specifically maintained that “in the U.S. the diaries were used to confuse and undermine all popular and political support. They destroyed Casement’s respectability as well as the movement and ideals for which he had fought. In the long run they even defined the most difficult matter of all: ‘the verdict of history.’ Casement was gradually expunged from the official narrative of Africa, the Amazon, and Ireland.”[18](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f18" \t "_blank) In short, Mitchell claimed, had it not been for the diaries, Casement would not have been executed, or if the government had still persisted in seeing him hanged, he would have been lifted on the rising tides of Irish anger and contempt, eventually earning him the status of a martyr.

Brian Lewis reached similar conclusions in his article “The Queer Life and Afterlife of Roger Casement,” published in 2005. Casement’s sex life was a centerpiece of this article; the scandal that the “black diaries” provoked shortly before his execution was mentioned only in passing. But the limited comments that Lewis deemed relevant concerning the smear campaign are significant for this study: “The diaries were a godsend, confirming anecdotal evidence the secret service had picked up in Norway that Casement was queer—a degenerate, a pervert. Selected pages were distributed among journalists, politicians, and leading Americans—anyone who might be prepared to mount or support an appeal for clemency. The strategy worked: the outcry was muted.”[19](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f19" \t "_blank) In sum, most of Casement’s biographers, as well as historians exploring various features of Casement’s life, cite the “black diaries” as the primary reason why the campaign for clemency failed. There is general agreement that by publicizing these diaries, the British government successfully sabotaged any chance that Casement might have had to avoid the gallows. But did the “black diaries” really elicit such negative reactions among Casement’s supporters or the wider public in America?

**Did the Smear Campaign Succeed?**

To test this interpretation affirming the success of the British smear campaign in the United States, I turned to several leading American newspapers as well as to a set of important Irish-American newspapers printed in 1916. Given Britain’s desire to secure American support during its war with Germany, and given the emphasis placed by historians on British efforts to soil Casement’s reputation by exposing the “black diaries” to influential American journalists, I expected to find some rather derogatory coverage of Casement before, during, and after his trial. But after carefully examining the *Boston Daily Globe,* the *Chicago Daily Tribune,* the *Hartford Courant,* the *Los Angeles Times,* the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* the *Irish World,* and the *Gaelic American*, I had to admit a certain degree of surprise. What prior historians had led me to believe I would find simply did not exist in the American press. I perused articles spanning the time from Casement’s arrest on 21 April 1916 through a period of several months following his execution on 3 August of that year. Instead of finding explicit references to his “degeneracy,” I discovered instead overwhelming support for the famous Irishman—support that remained fairly consistent throughout the spring and summer of 1916. Even though some people of influence, including politicians, saw excerpts from the diaries, there is no indication in the American press that they turned against Casement, or that the campaign for his reprieve suffered significant damage because of astonishment or revulsion over Casement’s homosexuality as depicted in the “black diaries.”[20](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f20" \t "_blank)

Neither these diaries nor the revelations they contained were at any time in 1916 a focal point of the newspaper coverage in the United States. On 21 July, the only time when the diaries were explicitly cited in the newspapers consulted for this study, both the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* printed almost identical articles, neither of which was derogatory or condemnatory in substance or tone. In fact, the headline for the *Los Angeles Times* read, “May Save Sir Roger: Insane Asylum to Be His Refuge,” while the *New York Times* headline stated, “Hears Casement Is Saved: Report in Chicago Declares Sir Roger Will Go to Insane Asylum.” Both headlines appealed to the widespread desire among Americans in general and Irish-Americans in particular to see Casement spared from the gallows. As a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* put it, “It is the understanding here that Sir Roger Casement will be sent to an insane asylum because of evidence obtained indicating that his mind is abnormal. His diary contains reference to acts which he writes he committed and which are of a character the British government feels it cannot make public.”[21](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f21" \t "_blank) What acts Casement had committed, and why British officials reportedly felt that they could not make them public went unmentioned, for the writers of these articles intended not to soil Casement but to rejoice in the possibility that a widely admired man would not be executed.

Five days later, the idea that Casement might face incarceration in an insane asylum instead of death seemed more whimsical than real, yet the *New York Times* printed excerpts from a letter written by the crusading British journalist and war correspondent Henry W. Nevinson that had appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*. Nevinson alluded to the “black diaries” as certain “documents” relating to the case but strongly criticized the parties responsible for making such humiliating insinuations against a man who was widely respected despite his crime:

It is common knowledge that insinuations against Casement’s private character have been passing from mouth to mouth. These insinuations have no bearing on the charge of which he was convicted, nor have they been established or mentioned in court. They are said to be founded on documents discovered by the police among Casement’s property. . . . I can only say that anyone who may have attempted by any such means to blacken the character and prejudice our feelings toward a man who stands in acute danger of degrading and hideous death is, in my opinion, guilty of a far meaner and more loathsome crime than the worst which could possibly be unearthed in the career of the criminal himself.[22](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f22" \t "_blank)

If this article significantly affected public opinion toward Casement in the United States, it could have succeeded only in a way that would not have appealed to the British government. It might have pricked some readers’ curiosity as to what exactly the government’s insinuations against Casement were, but there was nothing in Nevinson’s letter to dampen the support that Casement currently enjoyed.

The press in America disseminated the belief that Casement was not entirely sane almost immediately. When The *New York Times* announced Casement’s arrest on 25 April, the report did not condone his behavior, but its tone was somewhat mournful. Though his guilt was almost acknowledged, an attempt was made to excuse his behavior by stating that his mind was no longer sound:

The news of the capture of Sir Roger was received here with satisfaction mingled with regret at the close of what, previous to his alleged activities with the Germans, had been a brilliant career, useful both to humanity and his own country. That he should have engaged in such a madcap enterprise as the official communication gives as the reason for his seizure is thought to lend color to the view, held by old friends here, that he is mentally unbalanced.[23](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f23" \t "_blank)

It must be noted that this presumption regarding Casement’s loss of sanity was grounded in the belief that the tropics, where Casement had spent extended periods of his life in service to the British government, had finally taken their toll on the man who had repeatedly put the interests of humanity before his own. At this time many Westerners adhered to the belief that native adults within the colonies paid too much attention to sex and as a result were controlled by their sexual desires. Single European men forced to spend protracted periods of time in hot colonial climates eventually succumbed to sexual desires similar to those of native men. Few people doubted that a prolonged stay in the tropics could cause an individual to become a completely different person both physically and morally. Some of the less fortunate would even suffer severe mental degeneration—or insanity.[24](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f24" \t "_blank) This belief captured the attention of Casement’s supporters as a plausible way to explain his “abnormal” behavior as depicted in the “black diaries.”

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the renowned creator of Sherlock Holmes, was a devoted friend and ally of Casement for many years, and his support, right up until Casement’s execution, never faltered. In an effort to rescue his friend he helped to propagate the belief that Casement was no longer sane.[25](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f25" \t "_blank) Under the headline “Conan Doyle Thought Him Crazy,” the *New York Times* offered this set of comments on 25 April 1916:

His [Casement’s friends with one accord declared that the reports were exaggerated, or that Sir Roger was not responsible for his actions. His very manner of approaching the German government, they held, revealed an abnormal mind. His friends recalled his long career in the consular service, principally near the equator, . . . and were sure that the tropical sun had destroyed his constitution.[26](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f26" \t "_blank)

For those who wished to see Casement avoid death, this article represented a helpful breakthrough. To be branded insane, especially by friends or admirers, was hardly flattering; it was a fall from grace, a tumble from the lofty pedestal on which many of his contemporaries had once placed him, but regardless of the stigma, to have him alive, though considered insane, was preferable to watching him die a criminal’s death. On the following day, 26 April, in line with the insanity defense, the *Washington Post* announced: “Sir Roger probably will escape execution, it was stated today. Officials are said to be convinced that Sir Roger has been mentally unbalanced for the last three years. Despite his conduct after long years in the service of his country, he probably will be confined in some institution and closely guarded for the remainder of his life.”[27](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f27" \t "_blank) In a message to the Foreign Office on 26 May, British Ambassador Spring-Rice wrote from Washington that in America the opinion was quite widespread about Casement “that his brain had suffered from exposure in the tropics and that his mind did not work normally”—one of the numerous arguments used by Spring-Rice himself to persuade his own government to grant a reprieve.[28](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f28" \t "_blank) Spring-Rice had delivered the same message about “almost unanimous” American newspaper accounts of Casement’s “insanity” in a dispatch on 28 April: “They urge that he is generally believed in this country, where he is well known, to be insane or at least suffering from neurasthenia. It is argued that his execution would raise him to the rank of martyr and that the best thing . . . would be to put him in a madhouse.”[29](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f29" \t "_blank)

Of course, not everyone accepted the notion that Casement’s sanity had deserted him somewhere near the equator. Some observers, according to the *Washington Post*, went so far as to accuse the British government of spreading the rumor for its own selfish gain: “Local friends of Sir Roger refuse to believe he is insane, and declare that the British government has simply made the announcement to cover up a decision not to execute him.”[30](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f30" \t "_blank) One well-known American lawyer summed up the reason why many believed that the British government would not risk executing him, and it was the same reason to which many historians later pointed when depicting British apprehension regarding Casement’s sentence. This lawyer reportedly declared: “I don’t believe he will be executed. To do so would make him a hero and a martyr. It would hurt England’s cause in Ireland and in this country.”[31](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f31" \t "_blank)

Although British officials had to admit that some American newspapers recognized Casement’s guilt and supported his execution, British fears concerning American public opinion toward the case were hardly unfounded. Even acknowledgments of Casement’s guilt in the press fell far short of exonerating English policies in Ireland. A survey of American newspapers reveals that a substantial segment of the U.S. population believed that Britain had provoked both Casement’s intrigues with Germany and the 1916 Rising.[32](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f32" \t "_blank) At a time when England was vulnerable on the world stage, such criticism could have detrimental effects. For example, on 30 April the *New York Times* reported that Irish-born State Supreme Court Justice John Goff, a long-time “advocate of absolute freedom for Ireland,” had “expressed the opinion that possibly England herself had instigated the affair in Dublin [the Easter Rising for the sake of getting an excuse for even more oppressive measures in that country than she had yet practiced.” [33](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f33" \t "_blank) Even if there was no truth to this accusation, the very fact that so prominent a figure as Goff had voiced such suspicions would lend them credence, especially among Irish Americans angered by British severity during and immediately after the Rising.[34](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f34" \t "_blank)

Thousands of men and women of Irish birth or descent gathered on 10 June 1916 in Madison Square Garden. They came together to commemorate the Irish revolutionaries who had lost their lives participating in the Rising or who had been executed by firing squad after its failure. So large was the throng that the Garden was unable to accommodate everyone, and a half-hour before the meeting began, police barricaded the entrance and prohibited anyone else from entering. The overspill of Irish-American men and women refused to go home and instead reconvened for two outdoor meetings that were held on Madison Avenue. Within the Garden the attendees expressed great sympathy for those who had died, but these sentiments were often overshadowed by anger and resentment over England’s treatment of Ireland. The prominent New York Democratic politician, lawyer, and orator W. Bourke Cockran, who gave the keynote address, was adamant about his desire to see English rule of Ireland completely overthrown:

This meeting is a protest against a barbarity without a parallel in the history of civilization, and it is also a meeting to consider means to make impossible the recurrences of such atrocities as have recently taken place in Ireland at any time in the future history of mankind. The only way to make it impossible is to overthrow root and branch the system responsible for these outrages. The execution of the patriot Pearse and his followers is a monument to the treachery of the British government and the cowardice of British soldiers.[35](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f35" \t "_blank)

The Irish-born Cockran, taking note of the alliance that allegedly existed between the United States and Great Britain, declared that the British decision to execute the leaders of the rebellion had ensured the failure of such an alliance. In view of Cockran’s high political visibility (and, ironically, his friendship with Winston Churchill and his family), his words were likely to have been taken seriously in London, enhancing Britons’ fears that the United States might not come to their aid by declaring war on Germany.

Also addressing the vast crowd in Madison Square Garden that evening was Congressman John J. Fitzgerald, who railed against what he regarded as the long history of British injustice in Ireland. Like Cockran a powerful orator, Fitzgerald laced his emotional speech with anti-British sentiments:

As men of Irish birth, of Irish blood, or of Irish sympathies, we join tonight to denounce the British government in the forum of enlightened, Christian public opinion for the long-continued and ever-increasing misdeeds and misrule in Ireland. In the name of humanity we demand an immediate change. Existing conditions are intolerable; they are irreconcilable to the elements of Christian civilization. Ireland had too long endured burdens unjust, oppressive, and indefensible.[36](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f36" \t "_blank)

Fitzgerald’s political prominence (he served as a Congressman from New York in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1899 to 1917) must also have discomforted those with ambitions to cement an American alliance with Britain in the war against Germany and its partners.

Casement’s trial, conviction, and sentencing (26–29 June 1916) added to the passions stirred in the United States by British suppression of the Easter Rising and the execution of its leaders. With Casement now judicially condemned to die, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published an article on 1 July that, while affirming his guilt, stressed what its writer saw as the self-inflicted damage to Britain’s reputation caused by the reflexive severity of its Irish policies:

The English seem to be incapable of getting rid of the tradition of misgovernment which taints their rule in Ireland. . . . Casement has forfeited his life. He is even more guilty than the Irish scholars whose idealism led them into a murderous, futile attempt. The law by which a state protects itself against the enemy within has been exercised against him, but what an unimaginative, unsympathetic policy it is that cannot refrain from making a bad situation worse by severity. If the English used one half the common sense in Ireland that they have used in South Africa, the Irish would be as stout defenders of the British empire as the Scotch. If Ireland were given a few illustrations of comprehending clemency as outstanding as the illustrations of unremitting severity it has seen, Ireland might become proudly and securely a state in the British empire.[37](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f37" \t "_blank)

Nearly three weeks later, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* again criticized British policy in Ireland in an editorial that more or less accused Britain of hypocrisy. This allegation arose out of the contrast that existed between harsh British treatment of the Irish and Britain’s defense of another small nation, Belgium, an action stemming from German aggression. The editorial writer asked pointedly, “Is it more important that a political nation such as Belgium should be protected from German imposition than that a real nation such as the Irish should be protected from English imposition?”[38](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f38" \t "_blank) The editorial then assailed England for its treatment of Casement and the executions that had already occurred:

It was outrageous to punish the Irish dreamers as traitors. They were traitors to nothing. They owed spiritual allegiance to nothing. They never had accepted the conditions of government. They struck for freedom, foolishly, but grandly. They gave their lives without a whimper.

Poor infatuated England, with a Tory mind working in a shell of age-thickened prejudice, can devote one part of its thought to the relief of Belgium and another part to the punishment of Irishmen who think that Ireland ought to be what the English fight to make Belgium.

At the finish of this ironic tragedy comes poor Casement, who, if he had his proper place, would be in motley in medieval times, and nothing stands between him and the hangman but clemency. Justice says hang him for a crime committed against an empire which commits a greater crime in punishing him.[39](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f39" \t "_blank)

Less than a week after Casement’s arrest, Jeremiah O’Leary, president of the American Truth Society, an Irish-American organization, did not hesitate to declare Casement a patriot and to depict his conduct as being analogous to that of George Washington, a comparison that would be made repeatedly by others over the course of the next several months. In essence, O’Leary sought to brand as a hypocrite any American who spoke out against Casement and agreed with the charge of treason. After all, was America itself not founded on the blood of a revolution, a rebellion born out of extreme disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the rule of a distant nation—the very same nation whose yoke Ireland was now attempting to throw off? Always an active proponent of propaganda against England, O’Leary placed Casement on the same footing as the heroes of the American Revolution:

We desire to call to the attention of the American people that the only crime Sir Roger Casement has committed has been that he loves his country even unto death if necessary. He did what Washington and the American patriots did, and now, by strange coincidence, their foe is his foe.

The United States was created by revolution. Now that the nation is rich and great, this is no time to asperse the motives and conduct of men that are simply following our noble example.

We feel confident that the American people, exclusive of interested elements, do not approve of the attempts to besmirch the patriotic efforts of Sir Roger Casement and others to obtain the liberty of Ireland.[40](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f40" \t "_blank)

The *Washington Post* printed these artfully crafted words as part of a statement issued by the directors of the United Irish-American Societies. It can be argued that if Americans, especially those of Irish birth or descent, did not already hold Casement in high regard, he would not have been compared to the heroes of the American Revolution. If O’Leary and other like-minded Irish Americans had their way, any attempt to blacken Casement’s name would now be tantamount to tarnishing the name of America’s first president.

Nearly three months later, Senator James A. O’Gorman, Sr., of New York, while pressing for a U.S. Senate resolution in favor of clemency for Casement, also emphasized the similarities between the condemned Irishman and George Washington:

If Sir Roger Casement be a criminal, then George Washington and John Hancock and John Adams were criminals. They were all rebels protesting against wrong and tyranny. The names of those who fail, no less than those who succeed in rebellion, remain enshrined in the hearts of a grateful people. According to the standard that guides men, are they not both, the successful and the unsuccessful rebel, to be judged by the animating purpose of their conduct? Though its votaries fail, the struggle for liberty is eternal.[41](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f41" \t "_blank)

In addressing his fellow senators, O’Gorman appealed to their common political ancestry, to the historical events that permitted their political institutions to evolve, for had there never been a John Hancock boldly placing his signature on the Declaration of Independence, there very well might never have been a U.S. Senate. Just because Casement had failed where the others succeeded certainly did not mean that future generations would remember him unfavorably for the action he had taken against what he perceived to be an oppressive government.

Many historians have alleged that in the weeks leading up to Casement’s execution, the British government persisted in its efforts to smear Casement’s reputation both at home and abroad.[42](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f42" \t "_blank) But it appears that British officials conducted this slander campaign predominantly behind the scenes, and that the general American public was left completely unaware of the inflammatory contents of the “black diaries.” Even though the British circulated these diaries or photos of portions of them to journalists, for some combination of reasons the press did not utilize this material to poison public opinion against Casement.[43](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f43" \t "_blank) Instead, newspaper correspondents and editorial writers hewed to the same lines as before: they predominantly voiced pro-Casement sentiments and argued strongly in favor of a reprieve.

Once Casement’s trial came to a dramatic conclusion on 29 June, his death sentence served as an indication to his American supporters and sympathizers that either their voices were not loud enough in backing Casement and condemning England or that the British government had opted to close its ears. Refusing to be silenced, however, large groups of Irish Americans and other U.S. supporters clamored even more aggressively in Casement’s behalf. Since just over a month remained until his scheduled execution, no time could be wasted in their attempts to secure a reprieve. The American press first reported Casement’s sentence the day after the British court had handed it down. As expected, most—though not all—U.S. newspaper reports expressed the hope that the sentence would either be reversed on appeal or commuted to a term of imprisonment. The *New York Times* published the reaction to the sentence of Daniel F. Cohalan, a New York State Supreme Court Justice and for many years a leading Irish-American republican nationalist. Cohalan expressed no surprise that an English court would convict Casement, but his words indicated a certain amount of confidence that England would recognize the ill-advised nature of executing this famous Irish republican: “No one would be foolish enough to think that England would spare Sir Roger’s life as a matter of justice or even of mercy. But many have thought that she might do it as a matter of enlightened self-interest, in order to show the neutral world that she was not always blood-thirsty and had occasional spells when her actions did not belie her words.”[44](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f44" \t "_blank) Were Casement put to death, Cohalan predicted, he would indeed be transformed into a martyr—exactly what the British government hoped to avoid.

The support of Irish Americans and other U.S. citizens for Casement also manifested itself in an outpouring of messages to President Woodrow Wilson, imploring him to assert his influence in an attempt to save Casement. Identical stories carried in both the *Boston Globe* and the *Hartford Courant* on 1 July made this clear:

Before leaving Washington today, President Wilson received dozens of telegrams from all parts of the country urging him to intercede with the British government in an effort to save the life of Sir Roger Casement, sentenced to death yesterday for treason.

Mr. Wilson conferred with Secretary of State [Robert Lansing] in regard to the question, and they considered what steps could be taken with propriety in behalf of Sir Roger, but no decision was reached before they left for New York.[45](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f45" \t "_blank)

While many individuals and groups reached out to the president as the most powerful politician in the United States, their efforts would end in frustration because of Wilson’s ultimate decision to stand by silently.[46](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f46" \t "_blank) But was his decision based on knowledge of the “black diaries” or instead on his negative feelings toward Irish republicanism? There is no doubt that Wilson knew about these diaries. In a journal entry written on 1 August 1916, Wilson [Walter Page??] noted that Prime Minister H.H. Asquith had told him of their existence: “He spoke . . . of the unmentionable Casement diary, which shows a degree of perversion and depravity without parallel in modern times.”[47](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f47" \t "_blank) [Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* [7 Aug.–19 Nov. 1916*,* ed. Arthur S. Link, 69 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 38:255.] But this information probably does not suffice to explain Wilson’s silence. A published letter from Secretary of State Lansing to Wilson carries an editorial footnote relating to a memorandum by James Gerard, the American ambassador to Germany. The footnote states: “The typed memorandum concerned a report in [the *Berlin Continental Times*] to the effect that Gerard had heard of Sir Roger Casement’s plan to land in Ireland, that Gerard had sent this news to Wilson in cipher, and that Wilson, or two members of his cabinet, had betrayed Casement to Spring-Rice.”[48](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f48" \t "_blank) If Wilson had been at all involved in Casement’s arrest, it would have been much more difficult for him to plead subsequently for Casement’s reprieve. In addition, three years later, after the end of World War I, Wilson again demonstrated his lack of sympathy toward the Irish cause. In 1919 petitions flooded in, pressing Wilson to intervene in Ireland’s behalf at Versailles, and the U.S. Senate passed a resolution requesting that America aid the Irish delegation in attaining a hearing at the peace conference, but Wilson once again opted to do nothing. His repeated silence could suggest that his antipathy toward the Irish republican cause (or what was by 1919 much the same thing—his dire need to secure British backing for a League of Nations), and not the “black diaries,” had kept him from intervening in the Irishman’s behalf in 1916.[49](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f49" \t "_blank) But both factors may have determined Wilson’s decision against intervention.

Despite Wilson’s silence regarding Casement, U.S. newspapers continued to record the broad support that Casement was receiving from across America. Several papers, including the *New York Times,* reported on 2 July that U.S. Ambassador to Britain Walter Hines Page would express limited American support for Casement to the British government: “No formal action can be taken by the United States government, but Mr. Page will be instructed to bring the matter to the attention of the foreign ministry informally and merely as a matter of information.”[50](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f50" \t "_blank) Page’s unofficial intervention reportedly came “as a result of the large number of telegrams, letters, and memorials that have come to the White House and to members of Congress urging the president to use his good offices in an effort to save Sir Roger’s life. These requests have come from prominent Irishmen in the United States, Irish-American organizations, and from private individuals.”[51](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f51" \t "_blank) In view of the persistent calls coming from highly placed Irish-Americans and others with influence for Casement’s reprieve, despite British efforts to discredit him, one must again seriously question how effective the covert disclosure of the “black diaries” by British officials could have been.

In Boston toward the end of the month, nearly three thousand Irish-American men and women, all members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) or its Ladies’ Auxiliary, gathered to express their outrage over England’s execution of the Irish rebels. Their sense of anger culminated in a telegram addressed to Prime Minister Asquith, Ambassador Page, and others proclaiming: “The national convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, in convention assembled at Boston, Mass, U.S.A., 250,000 members representative of the Irish in the United States, do protest the [scheduled hanging of Sir Roger Casement as an act of inhumanity that the Irish people can never forget and never will forgive.” The AOH telegram added: “The hanging of Casement must be accepted by the Irish people as an act of hate and not of justice.”[52](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f52" \t "_blank) The tremendous volume of Irish-American voices raised in support of Casement and in opposition to English policy in Ireland casts serious doubt on any notion that knowledge of the “black diaries” had permeated numerous Irish communities in America.

If continued support of Casement in the press is any indication, it was not only Irish-Americans who appear not to have glimpsed the import of these diaries. In addition, many prominent American politicians also remained unwavering supporters of Casement right up to his execution. If the British government passed the “black diaries” around in some form in high U.S. political circles, it seems that they were ignored, disbelieved, or chalked up to insanity. While Wilson neglected to exert his influence in Casement’s behalf, those favoring a reprieve found a helpful and formidable ally in New Jersey Democratic Senator James Martine. Throughout the month of July he worked tirelessly to secure the adoption of a resolution in the U.S. Senate that would result in a stay of execution. Newspapers first made public his involvement on 1 July, the day after Martine had introduced his resolution in the Senate. The text of the resolution expressed sympathy for Casement and urged President Wilson to exert his influence for clemency: “Whereas the Senate of the United States has heard with deep regret that the sentence of death has been pronounced upon Sir Roger Casement after a hasty (so-called) trial, therefore, be it resolved, that the president of the United States be and he is hereby requested to ask a stay in the execution of said sentence in order that new facts may be introduced.”[53](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f53" \t "_blank) Martine had gladly agreed to introduce the above resolution at the urging of Casement’s sister Mrs. Agnes Newman, who was heavily campaigning around the United States to secure influential backers for her brother.

On 23 July the *New York Times* reported that two more Senators—Democrats James D. Phelan of California and James Vardaman of Mississippi—had come forward in support of Senator Martine’s efforts to save Casement. The son of an Irish immigrant who had become rich in the California Gold Rush, Phelan was a former mayor of San Francisco. Vardaman, a former governor of Mississippi, was known as “the Great White Chief” for his advocacy of white supremacy. With Vardaman’s backing, Phelan introduced a second resolution that he was confident would be endorsed by all who believed that England should refrain from any further staining of its hands with the blood of Irishmen: “Resolved, that the president of the United States be and hereby is requested to ask the British government to exercise clemency in the treatment of Irish political prisoners.”[54](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f54" \t "_blank) Still, not all Senators approved of some degree of intervention by the United States. At the request of Democratic Senator William Stone of Missouri, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, no action was taken on either Martine’s or Phelan’s resolution until the following Monday. Stone’s fear was that if the United States proved to be too active in the matter, it would offend the British government and thus have a detrimental effect on Casement’s highly tenuous position. Were Stone’s words and actions influenced by the “black diaries” or knowledge of their contents? Though it is impossible to say for certain whether they were, Stone’s action seemed to imply a belief that the British government would ultimately be persuaded to grant Casement clemency. (Stone was no special friend of Britain; he was one of only six Senators to vote against the U.S. declaration of war against Germany in 1917.)[55](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f55" \t "_blank)

Several days later, Senator O’Gorman of New York spoke out in favor of the resolutions offered by Martine and Phelan. In an address to the Senate he cited several precedents in which the U.S. government had intervened in an attempt to save the life of a non-American citizen abroad. O’Gorman reminded the Senate that “Thomas Jefferson . . . had appealed to Congress in 1793 to ask of France the release of General Lafayette, then in prison. In 1867, Secretary Seward had interceded in vain to save the life of [Emperor Maximilian in Mexico, and President Grant in 1869 sent an appeal to the British government in behalf of Irish political prisoners.”[56](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f56" \t "_blank) Overall, there existed within the Senate a high level of confidence that a vote would be secured in favor of an appeal for clemency. As the days passed, the movement in support of Casement gained momentum.

Less than a week before the execution, the *Boston Daily Globe* publicized a special dispatch showing the extent to which the U.S. Senate had rallied behind Casement:

After a comparatively brief discussion, the Senate today adopted by a vote of 46 to 19 a resolution offered by Senator Pittman of Nevada expressing the hope of the Senate that Great Britain would observe clemency in the treatment of Irish political prisoners, and asking the president to convey this hope to the British government. Sir Roger Casement was not specifically named, but it was well understood that it applied to him. In adopting any resolution whatsoever, the Senate overruled the Committee on Foreign Relations, which had reported recommending the rejection of all pending resolutions relating to Casement.[57](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f57" \t "_blank)

Thus the resolution in Casement’s favor passed by a margin of more than two to one. Senators who opposed the resolution rarely gave reasons. Could the “black diaries” have influenced some or all of the opposing votes? It is possible that some senators had heard about these diaries. But even if the highly dubious assumption were made that the diaries were common knowledge within the Senate, they had obviously failed to produce the intended effect of weakening official support for Casement.[58](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f58" \t "_blank)

As a strong supporter of American entry into the war on the side of Britain, Henry Cabot Lodge, Republican Senator from Massachusetts and one of President Wilson’s main opponents on military issues, exerted his own special influence with the British government in Casement’s behalf. The *Boston Daily Globe* reported on 1 July:

Only last night Senator Lodge had a conference with officials of the British embassy, and as a result, the Massachusetts senator dispatched a personal appeal by cable to Viscount Grey, the British minister for foreign affairs, urging commutation of the Casement sentence. Senator Lodge and Viscount Grey are personal friends, and it is believed that his appeal will have great weight with the British Foreign Office.[59](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f59" \t "_blank)

While Casement supporters no doubt hailed this news with enthusiasm, Senator Lodge’s connection proved to be not potent enough. Grey did not need encouragement from Lodge or anyone else. He had already urged that Casement’s sentence be commuted, but he could not sway his colleagues.[60](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f60" \t "_blank)

While we cannot say whether Senator Lodge saw or knew about the “black diaries,” there is evidence that other key figures did. Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to Britain, was one of them. On 1 August, Prime Minister Asquith informed Page that the cabinet had no intention of reprieving Casement. In the course of their conversation he inquired whether Page had heard about the diaries. Page admitted not only to having seen them but also to having copies of the diaries in his possession. Hearing this, Asquith was elated and responded, “Excellent, and you need not be particular about keeping it to yourself.”[61](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f61" \t "_blank) [Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 445. See also Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries*, 29.] One could speculate that his having seen the “black diaries” was perhaps the reason why Page advised the U.S. State Department in regard to Casement that “official representations would not be received [by Britain] in a kindly way.”[62](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f62" \t "_blank) Knowing that British politicians and officials hoped to besmirch Casement’s reputation could well have alerted Page to the intention of British leaders to ignore any interference, official or otherwise, from the United States. But there is no indication in the press that Ambassador Page himself took an adverse public position in regard to a reprieve.

It is evident, however, that Page shared some information regarding the “black diaries” with Secretary of State Lansing and expressed his belief that if the diaries were made known to U.S. government officials, they would be effectively alienated from Casement’s cause. In a telegram to Lansing, Page wrote: “I am privately informed that much information about [Casement] of an unspeakably filthy character was withheld from publicity. . . . If all the facts about Casement ever become public, it will be well that our government had nothing to do with him or his case even indirectly.”[63](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f63" \t "_blank) [Wilson, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 37:353.]

Did Page speak of the “black diaries” to members of Congress or others? Reid certainly suggested this possibility, for he stated that Page “gave the diaries a salacious reception and his word undoubtedly had effect in Washington.” [64](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f64" \t "_blank) [Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 419.] But no proof of such action exists in the press. The newspapers, largely ignoring the issue of the diaries, do not shed any light on Page’s activities regarding them.

It would be most interesting to know whether some senators had seen copies of the diaries or heard accounts of them. Nonetheless, whatever senators may have known or thought of Casement’s personal life, the great majority of them still voted for clemency. Much of the evidence discussed here runs counter to what Alfred Noyes mistakenly explained as the reason for the ineffectiveness of the Senate resolution. In 1957 he declared that the Senate would have been successful in securing a reprieve for Casement had it not been for the “intensive campaign” of the British government to circulate the “black diaries.”[65](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f65" \t "_blank) To date, no further evidence has surfaced to illuminate this matter.[66](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f66" \t "_blank)

According to U.S. newspapers, Irish Americans and other U.S. citizens were not the only ones struggling to obtain a reprieve for Casement. Indeed, leading organs of the American press gave the impression that there was far-reaching support for reprieving Casement in both Britain and Ireland. On 25 July, for example, the *New York Times* reported on the basis of information published by the London *Evening Star*:

Colonel Maurice Moore, Inspector General of the National Volunteers, Redmond adherents, had forwarded a petition to Premier Asquith praying for the revision of the death sentence on Sir Roger Casement. The petition . . . was signed by six bishops, twenty-six members of parliament, and fifty-one others, described for the most part as members of universities and other learned bodies.[67](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f67" \t "_blank)

As previously noted, historians have often stated that many people, once they became privy to the existence of the “black diaries,” revoked their support for Casement. Yet the *New York Times* and other American papers mentioned only those in favor of clemency and neglected to name anyone who withdrew from the campaign for a reprieve. On the day after Casement’s death the *Hartford Courant* declared, “Many prominent men both here and in Great Britain interested themselves in Casement’s behalf, including George Bernard Shaw and the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats.”[68](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f68" \t "_blank) Signed petitions in favor of leniency continued to inundate the British government as late as 3 August, the day set for Casement’s execution.[69](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f69" \t "_blank) Had exposure of the “black diaries” truly damned him, these petitions might very well have dried up long before Casement went to the gallows. Indeed, on the same day that information pertaining to Moore’s petition was released, the *Washington Post* announced that Pope Benedict XV had “interceded in favor of Roger Casement, endeavoring to obtain grace for him from the British government.”[70](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f70" \t "_blank) Knowing the hostile views of homosexuality held by the Catholic church, one cannot help but wonder if anyone ventured to share information about the contents of the “black diaries” with the pope or **Vatican** officials.

On 30 June, the day after Casement’s sentence had been passed, the *New York Times* claimed that “Sir Roger ever since his arrest had maintained that if convicted of high treason for attempting to rid Ireland of the British government, he would go down in history as a martyr to the Irish cause.”[71](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f71" \t "_blank) On 3 August Casement’s prediction, despite British attempts to smear his name and reputation, appears to have been fulfilled. Many American newspapers carried similar headlines referring to the execution and the failure of Casement’s friends and supporters to secure a reprieve. Once these newspapers had announced Casement’s death, they generally proceeded to hail him as a martyr while deploring British conduct.[72](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f72" \t "_blank)

One of the last articles written in the twilight hours of Casement’s life appeared in the *Washington Post* and read like a final warning to the British government. Death to a one-time hero could result only in martyrdom, its author insisted, and the flame sparked by his death would ultimately be carried into the future by other Irishmen dedicated to the freedom of their country. If England desired peace with Ireland, it should forego the pleasure of his execution. Knowing that the point of decision had effectively passed, the writer concluded solemnly:

By the hour this reaches the reader, the fate of Sir Roger Casement will be sealed. The British government will have snatched him from the gallows at the eleventh hour, or he will have paid the penalty of treason. Mankind will then pass judgment not only on Casement but on the British empire, according to its final decision. . . . If Casement be executed, he will no longer be regarded as a half-daft Quixotic knight, but a martyr whose blood mingles with that of Emmet.

The execution of Casement would be a colossal blunder on England’s part, relieved by no advantage now or hereafter. . . . Organized rebellion might hide its head for a while, but the spirit of revolt would be vitalized by the blood of another martyr, and England would again feel the thorn that has pierced her side for centuries.[73](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f73" \t "_blank)

Britain spurned the resounding advice received from America; it executed Casement while continuing to accuse the Germans of barbarous behavior toward their own criminals and toward their prisoners of war. This hypocrisy was noted in the *Washington Post* on 4 August, when one astute writer observed, “Americans are sick of having one side or the other in the European war trying to work up prejudice and hatred while committing acts just as offensive as those charged against the enemy.”[74](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f74" \t "_blank) A brief letter to the editor printed several days later in the *New York Times* echoed the charge of hypocrisy against British policies expressed in the *Washington Post*. The writer began by criticizing England for carrying out Casement’s sentence in a humiliating hanging, while asking why the “honor” of being shot by firing squad was denied him. British spectators had mocked Casement, jeering him at his execution, a behavior that the letter writer found absolutely repugnant, causing him to comment sarcastically of Britons: “All this makes a fine, noble picture and a particularly striking one, coming as it does from a country which all through the war has been preaching ‘humanity.’ It is they who call the Germans ‘Huns!’”[75](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f75" \t "_blank) Ten days after his execution, Casement still had not faded entirely from U.S. newspapers. Mostly, he was spoken of in a regretful tone, as in the *Hartford Courant*, which mournfully reminisced, “Although hanged as a traitor, Roger Casement will no doubt continue to be esteemed by the world as a man of courage, integrity, and high purpose.”[76](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f76" \t "_blank) Such words would certainly not have been selected if the journalist who typed them had seen the “black diaries” or had been in the least influenced by reports about them.

After taking a few days to mourn the loss of a friend, John Quinn, the New York City lawyer and son of Irish immigrants who achieved enduring fame as a bibliophile and patron of the arts, chose writing as an outlet to cope with his emotional loss. Quinn had first met Roger Casement in 1914 when Casement stayed with him on a visit to the United States designed to raise money for arms for the Irish Volunteers. Quinn took a liking to him, however doubtful he was about both Casement’s reasons for being in the States and about his mental balance. When news of the rebellion reached Quinn in April 1916, he was torn by conflicting emotions. He was “disgusted and depressed by the horrible fiasco in Ireland” and regarded the Rising as “treasonous and madly romantic,” but he was appalled that England could be so tactically stupid as to execute the leaders.[77](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f77" \t "_blank) In the end, however, his mixed feelings regarding the Rising descended on Casement, and even though he never questioned Casement’s guilt, he threw himself into a frenzy of activity to save the man’s life. He wrote appeals to newspapers, contacted powerful people at home and overseas, talked with British officials stationed in the United States, and set out to shape American opinion about a reprieve. When whispers of the “black diaries” reached his ears, his temper flared. Having known Casement personally, Quinn was convinced that there was no way he could be a homosexual. Immediately, Quinn thought of the notorious Pigott forgeries that had been used by British Conservative politicians to blacken Charles Stewart Parnell’s name in the late 1880s, and he believed that Casement too had been made a victim, with these diaries forged to disparage his character. This belief lasted only until Captain Guy Gaunt, naval attaché at the British embassy in New York, allowed Quinn to view photos of the diaries. Having seen them and having earlier come to know Casement’s handwriting, he could no longer deny their authenticity. But he refused to allow Casement’s sexuality to trump his public career, with the result that Quinn penned a lengthy but eloquent essay on Casement’s life.[78](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f78" \t "_blank)

Quinn’s piece, entitled “Roger Casement, Martyr,” appeared in the *New York Times* on 13 August, in its Sunday magazine as the feature article. It was simultaneously a testament to Casement’s work as a great humanitarian and a critique of England’s inability to treat the humanitarian with humanity. Quinn was unsparing in his criticism of the British government’s unwillingness to pardon Casement and rued its consequences. “The English cabinet,” he declared, “lacked courage and magnanimity. . . . Casement’s execution has played right into the hands of the Irish extremists and irreconcilables.”[79](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f79" \t "_blank) England did not need to hang Casement; it had already proven a point by executing the other Irish revolutionaries of 1916. Quinn also believed that Americans might have viewed the recent actions of Britain quite differently if it had opted to let Casement live:

When did one wrong [the execution of the Rising leaders] make another right? Did one blunder require or justify another? Had clemency been shown to Casement, fair-minded Americans would have said that was England’s way of regretting the execution of those fifteen men. . . . His ill-fated journey [to Germany] cost no lives. England had weeks to decide between humanity and wise policy and her pound of flesh and inhumanity.[80](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f80" \t "_blank)

Near the conclusion of his essay Quinn combined a searing denunciation of English law with an emotive testimonial to Casement’s martyrdom: “In the eyes of English law [Pentonville Prison is a place of shame! But in the eyes of humanity it is a place of glory! A hero and a martyr lies there. His body lies in a burning winding-sheet, but the quicklime bites and burns into the English claim that she is fighting for humanity.”[81](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f81" \t "_blank)

In protest against the hanging of Casement six thousand people swarmed into Faneuil Hall in Boston on 18 August. According to the *Boston Daily Globe*, the hall was too small to accommodate everyone, causing the overflow to reconvene elsewhere. Political passions gripped the crowd, who were “stirred deeply at times by the speakers, especially when the deaths of the martyrs and the brutality of Great Britain were referred to.”[82](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f82" \t "_blank) Among the resolutions adopted at this gathering of mostly Irish Americans was one that epitomized the militancy of those in attendance: “Resolved, that we, the American citizens of Boston in mass meeting assembled, call on the president of the United States to demand from the government of England apology and reparation for these acts and the disavowal and dismissal of the officials responsible for them; and we ask that he use the power and authority of this republic to secure these ends.”[83](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f83" \t "_blank) If any members of the Faneuil Hall crowd had heard even whispers about the contents of the “black diaries,” it is most unlikely that these whispers altered their attitudes toward the fate of Casement and the other victims of British repression in Ireland. As the month of August drew to a close, Casement’s Irish-American backers were still publicly defending him and condemning England’s refusal to pardon him. On 26 August the *New York Times* informed its readers that Joseph McLaughlin, national president of the AOH, “in his address before the state convention of the Maryland order . . . , deplored the execution of Sir Roger Casement and the Irish revolutionists and declared [the British] were murderers.”[84](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f84" \t "_blank) This was exactly the reaction that British politicians and officials had been hoping to deflect or defuse by leaking information about the “black diaries.”

**Conclusion**

Why, then, did the British government’s smear campaign fail? If American journalists were made aware of the “black diaries,” why did they neglect to use them as Britain intended? Perhaps one significant indication can be found in the recollections of Ben S. Allen, an American reporter for the Associated Press in London. Allen recalled telling Captain Reginald Hall, who had offered him an “exclusive” for the A.P., that he would consider using the scandalous material only under the condition that “it must be authenticated completely before we would use it, and I saw only one way of doing so, and that was by permitting me to show it to Sir Roger Casement, then in Pentonville. If he were to acknowledge it as authentic, I would then submit the documents to my chief in the London bureau of the A.P.”[85](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f85" \t "_blank) Since Allen was not allowed to speak with Casement to confirm the authenticity of the diaries, he opted not to expose either the hand-written sheets or the typewritten excerpts he was shown later.

In the absence of other evidence, one can only speculate as to why the smear campaign failed. Several possibilities deserve consideration. Lacking a scandal approximating that ignited by the Oscar Wilde trial of 1895 in London, Americans did not make homosexuality as much of a focal point in their campaigns for moral purity.[86](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f86" \t "_blank) As a result, public knowledge that an individual had engaged in homosexual activities might not have been as detrimental to that person’s reputation in the United States as it was across the ocean. While segments of the American population were less censorious about homosexuality than were Britons in this era, Americans did not respect it as a lifestyle either.[87](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f87" \t "_blank) Beyond the level of the urban working class, homosexuality was still rather taboo, and journalists or publishers might have been leery about printing material that could have adversely affected sales of their newspapers. If accounts of the “black diaries” were spread to influential men and women behind the scenes, it is possible that they simply chose to attribute them to a diseased mind. Casement’s time in the tropics investigating and exposing inhuman exploitation had transformed him into an international hero, and to believe that the tropical environment in which he fought for others had caused him to become mentally unhinged was more palatable than to accept his homosexuality. Furthermore, given the harrowing picture of British misrule in Ireland deeply ingrained among Catholic Irish-Americans, they would have been highly skeptical, to say the least, about any damaging rumors or reports concerning Casement that originated from the British government. If prominent figures of Irish birth or descent in the United States were offered a viewing of the “black diaries” or copies of them, it is likely that their cynicism regarding the British government would have prevented them from interpreting the diaries as seriously as British officials anticipated.

We may never know exactly whose eyes fell upon entries from the “black diaries” between April and August 1916, and it is therefore impossible to accurately determine why they did not adversely affect Casement’s public reputation, as was clearly intended. But to judge from newspaper coverage, it seems that the vast majority of Americans, including Irish immigrants and those of Irish descent, remained ignorant of Casement’s homosexuality. As a result, nothing prevented Irish Americans in particular from rallying behind Casement, campaigning for a reprieve, and then, following his execution, memorializing him as a martyr.

Unfortunately, because of the efforts of the British government to smear Casement’s reputation, history has remembered Casement mostly for the “black diaries” and for the controversies they stirred up long after his death. Before retiring from the British consular service, Casement compiled an impressive career as a humanitarian who exposed gross injustice. When he immersed himself in the Irish struggle for independence, his idealism (and, it must be said, some measure of ineptitude) made him vulnerable to the operations of the British intelligence apparatus. The manipulation and circulation of the “black diaries” pushed his sexuality to the forefront. As a result, a comparable amount of scholarly and popular attention has been- given to his sexuality as has been accorded to his humanitarian efforts. [88](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f88" \t "_blank) But possibly the two are intertwined. Novelist Colm Tóibín has made precisely this point: “Perhaps it was his very homosexuality . . . which made him into the humanitarian he was, made him so appalled. Unlike everyone around him, he took nothing for granted. His moral courage . . . came perhaps from his understanding of what it meant to be despised.”[89](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f89" \t "_blank) Throughout his life Casement proved to be many things to many different people—British civil servant, Irish nationalist, humanitarian hero, revolutionary, traitor, republican martyr, active homosexual. His homosexuality, which might have been a secondary characteristic, has instead, owing to the attempt of the British government in 1916 to tarnish his name, tended to dominate history’s collective memory of Casement’s impressive life and accomplishments.

[Elizabeth Jaeger](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/#front)

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**Footnotes**

[1.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f1-text" \t "_blank) Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998); Séamas Ó Síocháin and Michael O’Sullivan (eds.), *The Eyes of Another Race: Roger Casement’s Congo Report and 1903 Diary* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004); Andre Porter, “Sir Roger Casement and the International Humanitarian Movement,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29:2 (2001), 59–74.

[2.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f2-text" \t "_blank) Jordan Goodman, *The Devil and Mr. Casement: One Man’s Battle for Human Rights in South America’s Heart of Darkness* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010); Porter, “Sir Roger Casement and International Humanitarian Movement,” 59–74; Michael Taussig, “Culture of Terror—Space of Death: Roger Casement’s Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26:3 (1984), 467–97.

[3.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f3-text" \t "_blank) In the past fifteen years there has been a surge of scholarly and popular interest in Roger Casement, resulting in numerous books analyzing his diaries as well as delving into the time he spent in both Africa and the Amazon. These works include Roger Sawyer, *Roger Casement’s Diaries, 1910: The Black and the White* (London: Pimlico, 1997); Angus Mitchell, *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997); W.J. McCormack, *Roger Casement in Death, or Haunting the Free State* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002); Jeffrey Dudgeon, *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries, with a Study of His Background, Sexuality, and Irish Political Life* (Belfast: Belfast Press, 2002); Angus Mitchell, *Casement* (London: Haus Publishing, 2003); Ó Síocháin and O’Sullivan, *Eyes of Another Race*; Séamas Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, and Revolutionary* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008); and Goodman, *Devil and Mr. Casement.*

[4.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f4-text" \t "_blank) Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Mitchell, *Casement*; Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement*; Giovanni Costigan, “The Treason of Sir Roger Casement,” *American Historical Review* 60:2 (1955), 283–302.

[5.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f5-text" \t "_blank) For this smear campaign, see Christopher Andrew, *Her Majesty’s Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (New York: Viking, 1986), 247–48.

[6.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f6-text" \t "_blank) In reading about Casement, one must understand the vital difference between the “black diaries” and the “white diaries.” The “black diaries” refer to journals penned by Roger Casement and spanning the time that he spent in both the Congo and the Amazon. Interspersed throughout these writings are graphic details about his promiscuous homosexual encounters. The “white diaries” were written concurrently and pertain to business, predominantly to Casement’s investigations regarding the rubber-company atrocities committed in Africa and South America, without noting any of his sexual activities. Scholars and popular commentators still debate the authenticity of the “black diaries,” with some claiming that the British government, using the “white diaries” for references and other material, forged the “black diaries.” In disputing the authenticity of the “black diaries,” skeptical commentators have compared journal entries written in both diaries on the same day. In 2002 Dr. Audrey Giles, a forensics expert, examined the “black diaries” and concluded that they are undoubtedly genuine. See Paul Tilzey, “Roger Casement: Secrets of the Black Diaries,” BBC, 6 June 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/casement_01.shtml>[accessed on 6 Aug. 2011. In this article I accept the “black diaries” as genuine based on the forensic evidence as well as on my belief that claims of forgery have been influenced by an element of homophobia. Large elements of society in Ireland, Britain, and the United States have regarded and still view homosexuality negatively, and not wanting this “negative” label attached to a man who in Irish nationalist and other circles was and is perceived as a hero provides a strong motive for belief in the forgery case.

[7.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f7-text" \t "_blank) Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias, *The Black Diaries: An Account of Roger Casement’s Life and Times with a Collection of His Diaries and Public Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1959); Dudgeon, *Roger Casement*; Mitchell, *Amazon Journal.*

[8.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f8-text" \t "_blank) Alfred Noyes, *The Accusing Ghost, or Justice for Casement* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), 95. Forty years earlier, in the summer of 1916, Noyes was working in the News Department of the British Foreign Office when he was briefly shown typewritten transcripts of the “black diaries” and concluded that they must be authentic. Soon thereafter he published in a Philadelphia newspaper a damning indictment of Casement: “I cannot print his own written confessions about himself, for they are filthy beyond all description. But I have seen and read them, and they touch the lowest depths that human degradation has ever touched. Page after page of his diary would be an insult to a pig’s trough to let the foul record touch it” (*Philadelphia Ledger*, 31 Aug. 1916, quoted in Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 460–61). Noyes later had a profound change of mind, and his 1957 book was in part an effort to make amends.

[9.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f9-text" \t "_blank) Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries*, 511.

[10.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f10-text" \t "_blank) Geoffrey de C. Parmiter, “The Casement Diaries,” *Quarterly Review* 298:624 (1960), 221–32 (quotation on 222).

[11.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f11-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[12.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f12-text" \t "_blank) Inglis, *Roger Casement*, 358.

[13.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f13-text" \t "_blank) Ibid. In this quoted passage Inglis did claim that the acceptance of the “truth” of the diaries by H.W. Massingham, British editor of the *Nation*, “entirely killed [in the words of Charlotte Shaw any English sympathy there might have been for Casement.”

[14.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f14-text" \t "_blank) B.L. Reid, *The Lives of Roger Casement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 382.

[15.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f15-text" \t "_blank) Ibid., 416.

[16.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f16-text" \t "_blank) In 1997 two clashing works were published in which historians Angus Mitchell and Roger Sawyer took opposite sides in the forgery debate. Initially, Mitchell supported the claim that the “black diaries” were indeed written by Casement. But his comparison of the “black diaries” with the “white diaries” convinced him that this was not the case. In *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement,* Mitchell stoutly denied that Casement could have been the author of the contested diaries. Referring to the “white diaries,” he observed: “The Putumayo journal, fragmentary diary entries, and F.O. dispatches are all written in Casement’s clear and succinct English prose and show his grasp of the language. Throughout he is lucid, emotional, direct, structured, and thoughtful” (42). Mitchell then argued: “The Black Diaries, by contrast, have been written to mystify, befuddle, confuse, and conceal. More often than not they are utterly misleading in their meaning. . . . The language is charged with innuendo and exaggeration” (43). In reaching his quite different conclusion, Roger Sawyer also compared diary entries. In his *Roger Casement’s Diaries, 1910: The Black and The White*, Sawyer adamantly declared that the diaries could not have been forged. In support of this view he stated: “On three occasions in the Black Diary the author seems to be alluding to the White Diary (4, 21, 29 October), and on the blotter facing 6–8 October he actually quotes from it. Moreover, various times have been added to the Black Diaries as if to enable the author of the White Diary to refresh his memory about the exact sequence of events. It is also noticeable that the high density entries of the Black Diaries coincide with the weeks covered by the White Diaries, while elsewhere entries are often comparatively thin. Either these links establish a certain interdependence of the two documents or they suggest that an astonishingly incompetent forger was employed” (3).

[17.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f17-text" \t "_blank) Angus Mitchell, “Casement’s Black Diaries: Closed Books Reopened,” *History Ireland* 5:3 (1997), 41. See also idem, “The Casement ‘Black Diaries’ Debate: The Story So Far,” ibid., 9:2 (2001), 42–45.

[18.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f18-text" \t "_blank) Mitchell, *Casement,* 149. While Casement’s sexuality, as depicted in the “black diaries,” has been pushed to the forefront of discussions about him, the declaration that he has been “expunged from the official narrative of Africa, the Amazon, and Ireland” is no longer true. See Ó Síocháin and O’Sullivan, *Eyes of Another Race*, and Goodman, *Devil and Mr. Casement*, for his work in Africa and the Amazon.

[19.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f19-text" \t "_blank) Brian Lewis, “The Queer Life and Afterlife of Roger Casement,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14:4 (2005), 367.

[20.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f20-text" \t "_blank) There is one possible and potentially significant exception to this generalization. B.L. Reid suggested that John Devoy, the key leader of the pivotal Irish-American revolutionary organization, the Clan na Gael, might have known about Casement’s “vulnerability” to accusations of homosexuality arising from these diaries or other sources, and that such knowledge might explain why the Clan “remained so quiet under the Casement slanders” (*Lives of Roger Casement*, 460). What is certainly remarkable is that Devoy’s *Gaelic American* newspaper contained no mention of Casement between his trial and his execution. The paper was initially critical of Casement’s decision to leave Germany for Ireland just before the Rising (“a needless risk” for someone “not a military man”), and it took no part in the clemency campaign. The paper waited until more than a week after Casement’s execution to blast English brutality and to confirm his place in the pantheon of Irish martyrs, “to be cherished for all time by the Irish race.” See “Ireland in Arms Fighting for Freedom,” *Gaelic American*, 29 April 1916, 1; “Sir Roger Casement Goes Bravely to His Death,” ibid., 12 Aug. 1916, 1.

[21.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f21-text" \t "_blank) “May Save Roger,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 July 1916, 11; “Hears Casement Is Saved,” *New York Times*, 21 July 1916. There was disagreement within the British Foreign Office as to how the “black diaries” should be handled. Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, insisted in a telegram of 30 July 1916 to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador in Washington: “I think it much better that you should make no use whatever of Casement’s diary. Page [the American ambassador has I believe taken a photographic copy with him supplied by Home Office & it is obviously advisable that information with regard to it should come from him & not from British embassy. In fact I had given instructions that F.O. was not to make use of this diary” (quoted in Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement,* 422–23). But additional evidence cited by Reid shows that some others in the Foreign Office had acted against Casement without Grey’s knowledge weeks before 30 July (ibid., 410–12, 420–22).

[22.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f22-text" \t "_blank) “Casement’s Death Set for August 3,” *New York Times*, 26 July 1916. Nevinson eventually reached a firm judgment about the highly negative effects of the widespread exposure of the “black diaries” in Britain. According to Admiral Sir William James, “Mr. Nevinson (the war correspondent) did not exaggerate when he said that the exposure of the diary turned the scales against Casement.” See Sir William James, *The Eyes of the Navy* (London: Methuen and Co., 1955), quoted in Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries*, 29.

[23.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f23-text" \t "_blank) “Sink German Ship off Irish Coast, Catch Casement,” *New York Times*, 25 April 1916, 1.

[24.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f24-text" \t "_blank) Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 156, 183; idem, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 46, 66.

[25.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f25-text" \t "_blank) Doyle’s petition focused on Casement’s ill health and stressed the need to avoid infuriating tempers already hostile in both the United States and Ireland. Other notable authors such as Chesterton, Bennett, and Galsworthy signed the petition, along with such liberal journalists as C.P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, Clement Shorter of the *Sphere*, and H.W. Massingham of the *Nation* (Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 415).

[26.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f26-text" \t "_blank) “Sink German Ship off Irish Coast, Catch Casement,” *New York Times*, 25 April 1916, 1.

[27.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f27-text" \t "_blank) “Sir Roger Casement May Escape with His Life, as Being of Unsound Mind,” *Washington Post*, 26 April 1916, 2.

[28.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f28-text" \t "_blank) Reid*, Lives of Roger Casement*, 389–90.

[29.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f29-text" \t "_blank) Ibid., 360.

[30.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f30-text" \t "_blank) “Irish Societies Call Sir Roger Patriot; Has Followed Example of Washington in Seeking Freedom,” *Washington Post*, 26 April 1916, 2.

[31.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f31-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[32.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f32-text" \t "_blank) The Rising commenced on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, three days after Casement’s arrest.

[33.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f33-text" \t "_blank) “Ireland’s Sudden Revolt,” *New York Times*, 30 April 1916.

[34.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f34-text" \t "_blank) Anger erupted in the United States following the execution in Dublin of fifteen of the leaders of the Easter Rising. Spring-Rice, an Irishman who did not want to see Casement hanged, channeled this anger in another attempt to save Casement. In a dispatch from Washington to the British Foreign Office on 30 May, he wrote: “Situation caused here by the Irish executions is serious as the whole weight of Irish party is thrown against us during elections. Irish vote is thus anti-British. . . . General feeling is that while executions in hot blood can be excused, it is wiser to show clemency [i.e., to Casement when danger is well over. Condemnation [of Casement and subsequent commutation of death penalty is what would be expected here” (quoted in Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 390).

[35.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f35-text" \t "_blank) “Denounces British for Executing Irish,” *New York Times*, 11 June 1916, 12.

[36.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f36-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[37.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f37-text" \t "_blank) “The Casement Trial,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 July 1916, 6.

[38.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f38-text" \t "_blank) “Poor, Mad Casement,” ibid., 20 July 1916, 6.

[39.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f39-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[40.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f40-text" \t "_blank) “Irish Advice Here Say Revolt Has Spread,” *New York Times*, 26 April 1916, 2; “Irish Societies Call Sir Roger Patriot; Has Followed Example of Washington in Seeking Freedom,” *Washington Post*, 26 April 1916, 2.

[41.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f41-text" \t "_blank) “Casement Is Defended,” *Washington Post*, 26 July 1916, 2; “Casement Pleas in Senate,” *New York Times*, 26 July 1916.

[42.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f42-text" \t "_blank) While many historians have asserted that the smear campaign was vigorously promoted in the weeks following Casement’s sentencing, John Campbell took this claim one step further. According to Campbell, the British government accelerated its smear campaign after Casement’s trial: “The campaign to blacken Casement’s character by the calculated distribution of his diaries, already begun by the police and the intelligence authorities before the trial, was stepped up.” See John Campbell, “‘Give a Dog a Bad Name’: The Curious Case of F.E. Smith and the ‘Black Diaries’ of Roger Casement,” *History Today* 34 (1984), 14–19.

[43.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f43-text" \t "_blank) What is known concerning British circulation of the “black diaries” (according to a letter of 3 June 1916 from Mary Boyle Reilly to George Gavan Duffy) is that “about a month ago a group of important American journalists were called to Whitehall and there shown letters and a diary of Sir Roger Casement’s which proved him to be a moral offender unworthy of public sympathy” (quoted in Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement,* 382). We also know from Reid, among others, that Ben S. Allen of the London bureau of the Associated Press was offered use of the diaries on several occasions at the regular Wednesday briefings of American correspondents in London (ibid., 382–83). Lastly, on or about 29 June 1916 someone in the British Foreign Office sent a telegram to Captain Guy Gaunt, naval attaché of the British embassy in New York City, which said that a “photographic facsimile and transcript of Casement’s diary” had just been posted to Gaunt. The instructions to Gaunt were as follows: “In the meantime could you arrange to get editors of newspapers and influential Catholic and Irish circles informed indirectly that facts have transpired which throw an appalling light on Casement’s past life, and which when known will make it quite impossible for any self respecting person to champion his cause” (quoted ibid., 411).

[44.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f44-text" \t "_blank) “Says Expected Happened,” *New York Times*, 30 June 1916.

[45.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f45-text" \t "_blank) “Ask Wilson to Save Casement,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 1 July 1916, 16; “Wilson Urged to Aid Casement,” *Hartford Courant*, 1 July 1916, 2.

[46.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f46-text" \t "_blank) On 4 July Spring-Rice wired this message to the Foreign Office: “Secretary of State [Lansing told me yesterday that letters [to the White House in behalf of Casement would be examined and if found to express views of persons of prominence, their names, etc., would be communicated to you quite unofficially by United States ambassador” (quoted in Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 419).

[47.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f47-text" \t "_blank) Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* [7 Aug.–19 Nov. 1916*,* ed. Arthur S. Link, 69 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 38:255.

[48.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f48-text" \t "_blank) Ibid. [9 May–7 Aug. 1916, 37:106.

[49.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f49-text" \t "_blank) Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 196–97.

[50.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f50-text" \t "_blank) “To Report for Casement,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1916.

[51.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f51-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[52.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f52-text" \t "_blank) “A.O.H. Sends Warning to British Government,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 21 July 1916, 1.

[53.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f53-text" \t "_blank) “Petition for Sir Roger,” *Washington Post*, 1 July 1916, 3.

[54.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f54-text" \t "_blank) “New Move in Senate to Save Casement’s Life; Stone Blocks Immediate Action in the Case,” *New York Times*, 23 July 1916.

[55.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f55-text" \t "_blank) Ruth Warner Towne, *Senator William J. Stone and the Politics of Compromise* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1979), 233.

[56.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f56-text" \t "_blank) “Casement Pleas in Senate,” *New York Times*, 26 July 1916.

[57.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f57-text" \t "_blank) “Senate Tries to Save Casement,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 30 July 1916, 1.

[58.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f58-text" \t "_blank) According to Reid, the Pittman resolution arrived very late and lacked the desired strength. The terms chosen—“hope” for clemency and unspecified “prisoners”—did not exert enough impact and failed to mention Casement by name. “What mattered more fundamentally,” Reid believed, “was the tepid character of the resolution and the fact that it came with no personal support from President Wilson, whose own voice was the one British officials were waiting to hear” (*Lives of Roger Casement,* 441).

[59.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f59-text" \t "_blank) “Senate Tries to Save Casement,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 30 July 1916, 1.

[60.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f60-text" \t "_blank) Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries*, 29.

[61.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f61-text" \t "_blank) Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 445. See also Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries*, 29.

[62.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f62-text" \t "_blank) “Delay Casement Plea,” *Washington Post*, 23 July 1916, A4.

[63.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f63-text" \t "_blank) Wilson, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 37:353.

[64.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f64-text" \t "_blank) Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 419.

[65.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f65-text" \t "_blank) Noyes, *Accusing Ghost*, 95.

[66.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f66-text" \t "_blank) The most recent books on Casement do not concern themselves with the U.S. government’s perceptions of Casement. The works *Roger Casement* by Jeffrey Dudgeon, *Roger Casement in Death, or Haunting the Free State* by W.J. McCormack, *Casement* by Angus Mitchell, and *Roger Casement* by Séamas Ó Síocháin focus on Casement’s diaries, his trial, and/or his humanitarian work without exploring U.S. involvement.

[67.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f67-text" \t "_blank) “Casement’s Appeal Refused by Britain,” *New York Times*, 25 July 1916.

[68.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f68-text" \t "_blank) “Casement Hanged in English Jail,” *Hartford Courant*, 4 Aug. 1916, 18. Sir Author Conan Doyle submitted a petition in Casement’s behalf carrying many prominent names (see fn. 25 above). While George Bernard Shaw declined to sign it, fearing that his name might prove detrimental by discouraging others from signing, he personally contacted Prime Minister Asquith and published a “brilliant long letter” in which he advised England not to hang Casement: “In Ireland he will be regarded as a national hero if he is executed, and quite possibly as a spy if he is not. . . . But Ireland has enough heroes and martyrs already, and if England has not by this time had enough of manufacturing them in fits of temper, experience is thrown away on her” (quoted in Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement,* 416).

[69.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f69-text" \t "_blank) “Casement Dies Today,” *Washington Post*, 3 Aug. 1916, 1.

[70.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f70-text" \t "_blank) “Plea to Peers Denied,” ibid., 25 July 1916, 2.

[71.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f71-text" \t "_blank) “Casement to Die for High Treason,” *New York Times*, 30 June 1916.

[72.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f72-text" \t "_blank) “Sir Roger Casement,” *Washington Post*, 3 Aug. 1916, 4; “Hanging Casement,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 Aug. 1916, 6; “The Bleeding of Tender Hearts,” *Hartford Courant*, 13 Aug. 1916, 8; “Miss Connelly Tells Stirring Story of Irish Rebellion,” *Boston Globe*, 19 Aug. 1916; “Defends the Irish Here,” *New York Times*, 26 Aug. 1916. While most articles written after Casement’s death hailed him as a martyr, a few were critical of his behavior and supported Britain’s decision to hang him, such as the *New York Times* editorial “Roger Casement’s Mind,” *New York Times*, 16 Aug. 1916.

[73.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f73-text" \t "_blank) “Sir Roger Casement,” *Washington Post*, 3 Aug. 1916, 4.

[74.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f74-text" \t "_blank) “Both Sides Guilty,” ibid., 4 Aug. 1916, 4.

[75.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f75-text" \t "_blank) Letter to Editor, *New York Times*, 9 Aug. 1916.

[76.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f76-text" \t "_blank) “The Bleeding of Tender Hearts,” *Hartford Courant*, 13 Aug. 1916, 8.

[77.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f77-text" \t "_blank) B.L. Reid, *The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 232.

[78.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f78-text" \t "_blank) Ibid., 187–89, 229–39.

[79.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f79-text" \t "_blank) “Roger Casement, Martyr: Some Notes for a Chapter of History by a Friend Whose Guest He Was When the War Broke Out,” *New York Times Magazine*, 13 Aug. 1916. This article “was reprinted in full” in the *Boston Herald* and the *Philadelphia Ledger* (Reid, *Man from New York*, 238).

[80.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f80-text" \t "_blank) “Roger Casement, Martyr,” *New York Times Magazine*, 13 Aug. 1916.

[81.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f81-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[82.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f82-text" \t "_blank) “Miss Connelly Tells Stirring Story of Irish Rebellion,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 19 Aug. 1916.

[83.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f83-text" \t "_blank) Ibid.

[84.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f84-text" \t "_blank) “Defenders of the Irish Here,” *New York Times*, 26 Aug. 1916.

[85.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f85-text" \t "_blank) Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries,* 32, 34.

[86.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f86-text" \t "_blank) Nicholas Edsall, *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society in the Modern Western World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 144.

[87.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f87-text" \t "_blank) In the late nineteenth century the presence of “fairies” in the Bowery district of New York City indicated that homosexuals were tolerated but not accepted. In the early twentieth century the most openly homosexual men were part of the working-class world whose principal components in this metropolis consisted of Italian and Irish immigrants or their descendents as well as African-Americans. See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 10, 58.

[88.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f88-text" \t "_blank) Until 2002 or so, more attention was paid to his sexuality, including the controversy over whether or not the “black diaries” are genuine. Since then, scholars have shifted much more of their attention to Casement’s exposure of the atrocities committed in both the Congo and the Amazon. Perhaps this shift can be attributed in part to the widening acceptance of homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle. For Casement’s humanitarian efforts, see especially Ó Síocháin and O’Sullivan’s *The Eyes of Another Race* and Goodman’s *The Devil and Mr. Casement*.

[89.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/" \l "f89-text" \t "_blank) Colm Tóibín, “A Whale of a Time,” *London Review of Books*, 19 Oct. 1997, quoted in Lewis, “Queer Life,” 380.

[Jaeger’s article is quite convincing so far as it goes. She says in reference 66, “The most recent books on Casement do not concern themselves with the U.S. government’s perceptions of Casement. The works *Roger Casement* by Jeffrey Dudgeon, *Roger Casement in Death, or Haunting the Free State* by W.J. McCormack, *Casement* by Angus Mitchell, and *Roger Casement* by Séamas Ó Síocháin focus on Casement’s diaries, his trial, and/or his humanitarian work without exploring U.S. involvement.” However I don’t think she read my mentions of the diaries and the US and Woodrow Wilson (as below):

Extract from Dudgeon book - “But the intention was brutally clear, especially in the U.S. as a secret telegram to the naval attaché in Washington, Captain Guy Gaunt, indicates: “Photographic facsimile & transcript of Casement's diary, of which you have, no doubt, already heard is being sent to America by today's mail. Person receiving it will communicate with you when it arrives. In the meantime could you arrange to get Editors of Newspapers and influential Catholic and Irish circles informed indirectly that facts have transpired which throw an appalling light on Casement's past life, and which when known will make it quite impossible for any self respecting person to champion his cause. Diary which is a daily record of amazing unnatural vice is quite unpublishable and is the worst thing which has ever come into the hands of persons with the widest experience of cases of this sort.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Walter Page, the US ambassador in London, had early on been informed of the diaries and he was keen to advise Washington to have nothing to do with Casement “even indirectly”, as he was of an “unspeakably filthy character.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

The Irish-American lawyer John Quinn, a friend and defender of Casement, although no supporter of his activities in Germany, was shown some photographic entries from the diaries at the British embassy in Washington. Writing to London on 22 August 1916, asking “for more Casement diary,” Captain Gaunt spoke revealingly of the meeting: “Quinn who wrote the violent article in the *Times* I have played with for a week or two, and from being violently against us and swearing the whole thing was a forgery, got up by the British Government to vilify a dead man, he is bang round on the other side. I purposely played up to the Irish love of effect, got him in the centre of a room with two or three people and then pointed out that the question of authenticity rested entirely with one Quinn.” After inspecting the copies “sticking his left hand about the third button of his waistcoat and pointing the right at the floor above (or heaven, depending on the range) he said ‘I declare this to be the handwriting of the late Roger Casement!’

“All the foregoing you will think feeble but the point was that I got him then to write to that blackguard Kuno Meyer, his lifelong friend, “advising him.” That tore it. He has written to Quinn telling him what he really thinks of him: ‘Will denounce him on every platform in USA’. You never read such a letter. Quinn also stirred up Dan Cohalan and there is the loveliest three-cornered fight on, all cussing one another and all making it personal and entirely forgetting the original cause of the row. I have dropped out of it, not that I ever appeared really, but it is going to complicate the Irish question in the USA from the villains’ side of it.”[[3]](#endnote-3) Quinn went quiet on the subject but not before threatening his contact and the ambassador should the facsimiles be further distributed, adding “his private life had nothing to do with his public acts.” He later advised Gavan Duffy “the handwriting looked like” Casement’s.[[4]](#endnote-4) Others who were shown them in Washington included the singer Count John MacCormack. The embassy, given Quinn’s influence in the State Department, was well pleased with his silence about Casement’s execution and of course with the dissension the diaries had sown in Irish ranks.

The ambassador, Sir Cecil Spring Rice, disobeyed the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey’s express command not to show the diaries around any further, despite his initial efforts to adduce American concerns as good reason for a reprieve. Sir Cecil, with his Irish background, had a certain sympathy for, and connection to Home Rule. He also penned the patriotic anthem *I Vow to Thee my Country*, yet notably contributed to the Irish language college in Co. Clare, on whose management board his cousin Mary Spring Rice sat.

The ambassador’s sympathies were known and noted in the Foreign Office, and quite probably his reports of potential American difficulties were more easily discounted as a result. On 14 May 1916, Sir Cecil was to be found soft-soaping a senior American friend of Ireland, Bourke Cockran (a former Congressman and relative of Winston Churchill and Shane Leslie [actually his mother’s lover]), in a remarkably non-judgmental letter: “It seems that Casement has for years been abnormal sexually. But this might only make his case more difficult to deal with as it does not prove insanity. But if there is evidence that he is altogether abnormal mentally I think it should be supplied. I shall be ready to forward any evidence.”[[5]](#endnote-5) This was written with a view to an insanity plea at the trial which was never a runner and only indicates that Spring Rice’s sympathy for Casement’s predicament was taking precedence over his professional judgment. Regardless of his good intentions, he was to be featured pejoratively alongside Alfred Noyes in Yeats’s poem *Roger Casement* – “For Spring-Rice had to whisper it, Being their Ambassador.”

Once sentence was executed the ambassador was not averse to capitalising further on the political value of the diaries. On 15 August 1916 he met the Apostolic Delegate in Washington. Advising caution, he told Archbishop Bonzano that Casement was “no model for the faith.”[[6]](#endnote-6) But there were other tensions in the family as a cousin, the Hon. Thomas Spring Rice (1886-1934) later the 3rd Lord Monteagle of Brandon, was a third secretary in his Washington embassy. In a letter home to his father (the 2nd Baron) on 18 July 1916, Thomas wrote (at odds with cousin Cecil’s approach) “I do wish the fate of that cur Casement were settled. I wonder if the wretched widow still holds to him. It really gave me quite a turn to hear Mary was staying with her! I happen to know for a fact a few things about Casement which make one positively sick. He is unfit for the company of anybody but Germans.”[[7]](#endnote-7)

Presumably his gunrunner sister was living with the historian and widow Alice Stopford Green. In 1924, Mary Spring Rice, who died at the early age of forty-four, was to have her coffin carried by local Republicans into the family church at Foynes, Co. Limerick as a mark of appreciation for her part in the *Asgard* affair, the hugely significant 1914 arms importation into Ireland pioneered by Casement. Withdrawn from Washington, Sir Cecil Spring Rice died in early 1918 lacking the customary honours, only to be succeeded by Lord Reading.]

…On 6 January 1915, Richard Meyer, Casement’s long-suffering Foreign Ministry interpreter recorded: “The Admiralty Staff requests to instigate Irish in America, through intercession of Sir Roger Casement, to far-reaching sabotage in the United States and Canada.”[[8]](#endnote-8) Meyer was a Jew personally turned down for citizenship by Hitler in 1936; interestingly German-American Jews were another group targeted by Berlin in 1914. Taking the matter further, the Wilhelmstrasse Foreign Ministry advised von Papen on 26 January of people “indicated by Sir Roger Casement” from whom the names of “persons suitable for carrying on sabotage in the United States and Canada” could be obtained.”[[9]](#endnote-9) The first of the three names was that of Joseph McGarrity. The deciphered message concluded by advising “In the United States sabotage can be carried out on every kind of factory for supplying munitions of war. Railway embankments and bridges must not be touched. Embassy must in no circumstances be compromised.”[[10]](#endnote-10) This message may have also become Casement’s death warrant, perhaps being of greater significance than the Black Diaries in President Wilson’s failure to respond to pleas from Capitol Hill concerning a reprieve.

“It would be inexcusable to touch this,” Woodrow Wilson told his Irish secretary in July, adding “It would involve serious international embarrassment.”[[11]](#endnote-11) His coolness on the matter was put down by many to his Ulster Presbyterian origins. But he would also have been well aware of intelligence that put Casement and the German embassy at the centre of a web of intrigue opposed to his country’s best interest. For the next twenty years the process of trying to obtain reparations from Berlin through the Mixed Claims Commission for the damage caused by sabotage, not least in the July 1916 Black Tom railway freight yard explosion in New York, would keep lawyers busy and the issue militating against rapprochement between the two nations. In that sense, Casement’s overblown, indeed careless, pro‑Germanism was to have unforeseen effects on German‑American relations for a generation – through to another war.]

1. PRO FO 395/43 of 29 June 1916 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Inglis p. 358 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Scotland Yard MEPO 2/10664 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. NLI 17603 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. NLI 17601/13 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. PRO CO 904/194/46 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. PRONI Monteagle Papers B/7 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Doerries p. 75 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *Documents Relative to the Sinn Fein Movement* p. 8 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. *Documents Relative to the Sinn Fein Movement* p. 8 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Inglis p. 357 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)