**Casement "worries" 50 years later**

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FIFTY years after his death in 1916, sensitivities about Sir Roger Casement were still prevalent in Ireland and Germany. Britain's new Labour government had returned his remains to Ireland and he was buried at Glasnevin Cemetery following a State funeral through Dublin.

Casement, awarded a knighthood for his work in exposing colonial abuses in the Belgian Congo (Zaire), had been captured by security forces at Banna Strand, Co Kerry, in April 1916, when trying to land arms from Germany for the Easter Rising. He was tried in London, found guilty and hanged for treason at Pentonville prison in September 1916. His body was covered in quicklime and buried in the prison grounds.

The German government was anxious to hand over papers relating to Casement to the Irish government but feared publicity which might suggest he was an instrument of German war policy.

In Dublin, concern continued about Casement's "character". This followed the prosecution's production during Casement's trial of "the black diaries" which allegedly detailed his homosexual observations/activities. It was generally believed in Ireland at the time that the diaries had been "manufactured" to ensure Casement's conviction and death.

On March 3rd, 1966, in the lead up to the 50th anniversary commemorations of the Rising here, a German official, Baron von Houwald, approached the Irish Ambassador in Bonn, Mr Eamon Kennedy, with an offer to hand over the documents. There were 500 pages of files, 115 of which were letters from Casement, with 16 volumes of reports from German embassies in Washington and London, and the German military attache in New York.

The US documents consisted mainly of reports on the activities of the Irish Republican Brotherhood from 1885 to 1920, including "inter office minutes on what line the German government should take in exploiting the Irish situation", as Mr Kennedy described them in a letter to the Department of External Affairs in Dublin. Some 30 of the files involved "`Korrespondenzstuck' of a military nature".

Mr Kennedy said the German government "was prepared to hand over a complete set of photostats" but he thought it was "not very keen on having published any of the documents which might be interpreted as portraying Casement as an instrument of German government policy in war time".

Mr Kennedy said: "None of these documents contains any references, expressed or implied, to Roger Casement's character." Later in the same letter, he wrote: "In general, they attest to the sincerity of Roger Casement's motives and the nobility of his character."

But he added: "It is quite clear that the German Foreign Office have not given us all the relevant correspondence relating to Roger Casement and the Irish situation, particularly those connected with policy."

It was arranged the documents would be transferred to the National Library in Dublin, where it was agreed "no publicity need be given to the presentation". Library director Dr R.J. Hayes, agreed to this but told the Department in a letter of March 16th, 1966, he could not agree to any restriction "which implies favour to any given point of view".