**JEFFREY DUDGEON** **LETTER TO IRISH POLITICAL REVIEW ON PAUL HYDE’S ‘PHILADELPHIA EXERCISE’ ARTICLE ON ADLER OF JANUARY 2020**

[Published in February 2020 IPR alongside more Paul Hyde argumentation this time contesting Professor Joseph Bigger’s statement in 1937 saying he had burned some diaries -responded to by Paul Hyde in the March 2020 edition.]

Paul Hyde, in November’s IPR, asserted I was undeserving of mention in his book as my “highly idiosyncratic approach excludes critical engagement”. He has, none the less, decided in January’s edition, at length, to deal with an issue I alone have drawn attention to, although without naming me. It relates to Casement’s Norwegian companion, Adler Christensen, in May 1916, going to the British Consulate in Philadelphia and offering to be a witness at Casement’s trial. The proposal is first mentioned in a cable sent to the F.O. on 10 May 1916: “Acting Consul General Philadelphia has received offer from a man named Christensen to give evidence against Casement and if necessary to proceed to England.” (TNA FO 95/776).This was Adler’s second such betrayal at a British mission. The first in October 1914 was to inform about Casement and his arrival in Norway en route to Berlin.

In his article, ‘Philadelphia Experience’, Hyde tries to deal with the revelation in Scotland Yard’s interview report that Casement had met Adler previously, something I discovered from Casement’s own archive (NLI 17,023). This was contrary to his other statements that they had first met by chance on New York’s Broadway in July 1914.

In Philadelphia, Adler confirmed the earlier meeting to Chief Inspector Ward, saying, “I visited Montevideo and whilst there in a Hotel a man followed me into the lavatory, I walked into the bar and he followed me out and we had some drinks together. I learned his name was Casement and that he was visiting the German Minister Baron Nordenfletch (sic) I deserted my ship and remained in Montevideo for a month and during that time I frequently saw Casement and he visited me at his [my] rooms”.

Hyde says he “is unable to propose a credible motive which explains why Christensen might relate a self-incriminating and false story of a scandalous nature to three strangers”. There is however abundant evidence that what Adler did was for revenge and money, even if his mind was changeable.

He accepts the police interview took place but majors on the large number of typos and mistakes in the thirteen pages of the Scotland Yard report and the intended Adler statement. Paul effectively says they are fictional but offers no clue as to why they were “entirely invented” or the journey to Philadelphia made at all. In fact, the police had gone to see if Adler might give useful evidence at the imminent trial. In the event, nothing came of it, partly as he changed his mind and backed out (again).

As it was plain that the previous meeting of the pair was also of a sexual nature, Paul’s defence technique is full frontal attack on errors in the police documents. It is worth repeating that he accepts some TNA items without question yet requires an ‘authenticity guarantee’ for others he disputes. So what criteria allow some documents to go unassailed? What would convince him by way of evidence of any fact or event? Is there any document, by his logic, that cannot be called into question? This is impossibilist historiography. Historians are not defence lawyers.

The Scotland Yard officers in Philadelphia did see Adler two times [only once, second time he just saw Consul Ford]. But he returned without any of the promised documents, remarking that “he had been led on to say a great deal more than he intended.” He explained that he had wanted “to get even with Devoy.” The two had come to blows over Devoy’s attempt to stop him associating with a German lady. He had also “remonstrated with him as to his gambling habits” which is an interesting new angle on Adler’s vices. His motive, as he said himself, was revenge on Devoy not Casement.

Adler asked for fifteen dollars a week for his wife if he was absent in London giving evidence and a down payment of 700 dollars. The Yard report commented that he was “an unscrupulous person” who was in fear of the American police. Frank Hall of MI5, on reading Ward’s report, noted on 30 June: “I doubt he is really of much use [the last two words Hyde could not decipher]. His personal quarrel with Devoy, if properly handled, might be turned to good account”. Adler’s story that, “owing to Devoy trying to control my personal affairs we had a quarrel” is confirmed by other material on his relentless perfidy being exposed yet, remarkably, he survived unscathed.

Devoy wrote to Casement on 19 December 1915 (NLI 13073/44):

“You may think we have nothing definite against him. Unfortunately, the proof is conclusive and overwhelming that he has been swindling us and recklessly and foolishly lying. The reason is a woman whom he brought over with him when he returned here the first time and who is now in a hospital across the river with a new born baby. All his pleas to me for money for his wife – which were in all cases generously responded to – were to keep up the dual establishment. She is the daughter of an official of a Berlin bank.

“The first proof we got was when he went to Joe [McGarrity]. Early one morning, broken from want of sleep, with a story that he had been robbed of $4.50, a watch and a diamond pen, in a subway train and asked Joe. to lend him the money so that he could pay the passage of three men, for which I had given him $300, as well as $100 for himself. But two nights before he had told me a story which would leave him only $280. Joe. insisted he must tell me and he (Joe.) came on and did so. The robbery story was too ridiculous for me to believe and Joe. did not believe it either, but when Olsen came to me I did not say an angry word and gave him $300 again but told him it placed me in a very bad fix. Then I found he had gone to the man who had given him work and asked $100 to pay for his wife’s confinement in a hospital”.

Later, in a letter dated 20 July 1916, to Lawrence de Lacey, and copied to London by the US authorities, Devoy wrote of how Adler’s betrayal had been prevented: “Christensen was going over from here to testify against him – and incidentally to give away all our secrets that he had got from Roger – but we kept him here”.

So his Philadelphia treachery had become known to Devoy. Perhaps Adler told him of it to extract money in a Christiania-style triple cross. He was, as Devoy added, “One of the worst crooks I ever met and…in the pay of the English all along….He, Casement was warned of that from Ireland and the first thing he did was to tell the fellow himself.”

Hyde makes much of police spelling and inconsistencies. He forgets that Casement’s spelling of foreign names was frequently variable and often incorrect while Adler’s letters were not in educated English, as when he wrote on 23 January 1915 about the diplomat Findlay: “I told him to go and fuck himself…I bet you nobody ever talked to him as I did. He was right pale in the face.”

Police were recruited and, surprisingly still are, from the working class, and are undereducated, much like barristers’ clerks in London today. Their writing style is often ponderous even if the content is extensive. They learn on the job but are rarely imaginative. This is exemplified by the failure to locate Casement’s possessions in London despite considerable effort, especially around his financial transactions. His luggage was scattered but in plain sight if leads had been followed up. The diaries only surfaced when an Ebury Street landlord, who was known to have cashed cheques for Casement, suddenly arrived with the diaries at Scotland Yard – after the arrest and interrogation.

Standard police procedure is or was to write down the evidentially useful facts they want any witness to sign up to. In this case, the words were plainly not written on the page or dictated by Adler. The statement is anyway entitled ‘Copy’ and thus not signed by C.I. Ward. Paul Hyde lists fourteen errors in the police papers and, correctly, three examples of historians’ “false” statements, actually mistakes or elision of the documentary evidence about Adler and Casement’s ‘unnatural relations’. He is a little unfair in that Christensen’s age is indeed given as 36 but later, correctly, as 26; Devoy is spelt De Voy throughout but this is hand corrected by an MI5 reader; while the spelling of the name Brogan is not always wrong and the typist changes it (TNA KV 2-9-3). Paul himself makes one such error in his use of the American spelling of jewelry for jewellery.

Now Adler’s statements were frequently garbled and with facts mixed up. I accept his locating that first meeting in Montevideo and its date were wrong, a meeting Hyde (speculatively) reckons Casement had “forgotten”. It was most likely in Rio de Janeiro where Baron von Nordenflycht was also Consul and 1909. Adler was eventually to die in a French jail in 1935 after a very rackety life.

Adler’s remarks did contain a large number of memories and details that were new to C.I. Ward, such as Plunkett being “a man with scars round his neck” and Monteith’s journey to Norway, as well as about Casement in Germany much of which MI5 had ascertained by 1916. It was interesting to learn from Paul’s research that Ward was killed in a Zeppelin raid while the SS Cameronia on which he travelled to America was later that year sunk in the Mediterranean.

Hyde insists, “My writing approach consists of “original syntactic mechanics, shifting registers, demotic verve, predicative and attributive nervousness – all of which persuades me I am lost in a grammatical earthquake zone a semantic black hole.” I could go on – as he does, regarding my investigative approach toward a statement by Casement’s solicitor, George Gavan Duffy, which he avers “owes something to magic realism, something to solipsism and something to paranormal powers. The statement is hermetically sealed against verification by logical enquiry. It rests upon mind-reading, second sight and telepathy – psychic gifts which enable Mr Dudgeon to confuse belief with knowledge.”

The Gavan Duffy reference concerns the disappearance of many Casement documents to which I drew attention in my 3rd edition of the Black Diaries. To explain, Duffy provided the Bureau of Military History with a speech (WS 381) he had made in 1950 on Casement in Germany and his reasons for attempting to stop the Easter Rising. In it he mentioned tangentially, “I had in fact received the year before, from a friend of his, three cases of his papers which the friend thought it unwise to retain and he wanted to dispose of them. I remember spending an arduous week-end with Art O’Brien, whom I called in, going through these documents to see what might be utterly seditious in them.”

As I wrote, “The concerned friend is most likely to have been Dick Morten, given that the inspection probably occurred in London where both Duffy and O’Brien lived. Morten had earlier been a custodian of Casement papers at his house, ‘The Savoy’… It is unlikely there was anything seditious in the three cases, given the material predated the outbreak of war so it must have been the mixed in sexual material that was so concerning. We know Casement was worried about his papers as he expressed concerns about those left with F.J. Bigger. Indeed he had written in 1914 asking that they be hidden (or buried)\* and been assured they were.”

The absence of letters to Casement from a number of his key correspondents confirms that a significant portion disappeared. That group, for whom there are mounds in archives written by Casement, includes Gertrude Bannister, F.J. Bigger, Alice Stopford Green, Bulmer Hobson, and Dick Morten. There is, in contrast, next to nothing from them to Casement, pre-1913. Gavan Duffy did not explain what happened to the three cases of papers after the pair’s inspection. One has to deduce they were destroyed in their entirety.

Such suppositions are what historians make when sifting documentary evidence, allied with reasonable presumptions, in this case based on the fact that Casement retained an enormous number of incoming letters yet nothing from these five of his closest friends. That is not unreasonable speculation, second sight or magic realism. If every conceivable option was addressed, biographies would become impossibly long and turgid.

\*Casement wrote on 26 March 1916 (NLI 17021), “These and many more letters & papers dealing with my past are in the custody of Francis Joseph Bigger, Ardrigh, Antrim Road, Belfast, a Solicitor. He was a close friend of mine & a nationalist – but now doubtless has been swept off his feet.

However I am sure he would not give up my papers to the Govt. – & he buried them – or hid them I know, for I wrote to him from N. York before I sailed for Germany asking him to do this & got a reply that it had been done. So little had I “worked” against England or meditated treason that I have left all my other things at the mercy of the Govt.”

[This last sentence confirms my view that there was nothing seditious in Casement’s papers if what he wrote is to be believed.]