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CONFIDENTIAL

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RECORDS

THE CASE OF ROGER CASEMENT.

I CIRCULATE for the information of my colleagues the following Home Office memorandum with regard to the letter addressed to Sir Edward Grey by Miss Eva Gore-Booth, a sister of the Countess Markevitz.

H. S.

July 21, 1916.

Similar letters have been addressed by Miss Gore-Booth to the Prime Minister, Lord Bryce, Lord Emmott, and the Home Secretary, in which the same point is made that Casement came to Ireland on a desperate, self-sacrificing errand to stop the Sinn Fein rising. If this were the fact, why was the "Aud," with 20,000 rifles, machine guns, and ammunition, in close attendance upon him? What use was to be made of the code dropped by Casement containing such expressions as "We have our positions at" "Railway communications have been stopped," "Our men are at" "Further ammunition is needed," "Further rifles are needed," "How many rifles will you send us?" "How much ammunition will you send us?" "Will send plan about landing of" &c.? Why did Casement bring a large green flag with him?

It is impossible to say exactly what was passing in his mind and what he thought from time to time of the prospects of his adventure. He refused to go into the witness-box and be cross-examined on these points, but by his own admissions at New Scotland Yard, which were made after he had been cautioned, and so might fairly have been used in cross-examination, it is clear that he had from time to time urged the Germans to send a much larger force of men and more guns and ammunition with him to Ireland, and that they refused. There was the difficulty of transport and discharge of large cargoes of arms. He says that he then insisted on going alone without his Irish Brigade.

It is probably true that Casement knew when he landed, or shortly afterwards, that the "game was up," but it is impossible to believe that he came to Ireland for the purpose of stopping the rising. He looked on the rising as hopeless when the plans in connection with his landing and reception and the landing and distribution of the "Aud's" cargo had miscarried; but, if all had gone well, there can be little doubt that Casement would have taken an active part in the rising, notwithstanding that he had sense enough to know that, while it might serve the Germans' purpose to some extent, it must inevitably end in dismal failure.

The idea of saying that he had come with the intention and for the purpose of stopping the rising appears to have occurred to Casement only after his capture. It is at any rate entirely inconsistent with the proved facts.

I append an extract of Casement's examination at New Scotland Yard.

E. B.

July 21, 1916.

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Extracts from Casement's Examination at New Scotland Yard.

Q. Do you know how many men she had?

A. No.

Q. Do you know she had a cargo of pit-props?

A. No. I knew nothing about her cargo, except that she had rifles, machine-guns, &c. I wanted more, many more rifles, cartridges, &c., and I was told that was all could be sent.

Q. The numbers do not affect anybody. Will you give them?

A. Does it matter since the ship's gone? I am very sorry for the people. There were 20,000 rifles.

Q. Machine-guns?

A. Not a large number. Quite insufficient to have any effect.

Q. Do you not know the charterer?

A. No. The proposal came upon me as a thunderclap. I came out of bed without the doctor's advice and came from Munich, and they put it to me that I should go. Of course there could be no question. It arose in this way—my friends wished me to stay in Germany, and when I came to that part of the letter written by a friend of mine in which he was asking for this help, the official letter said of course Sir Roger Casement should stay in Germany. I said under no circumstances could I stay. If there is going to be fighting in Ireland I must go; and the officer in charge of the business, a high official, said you cannot stay. Mr. Monteith begged me to go, and I said you have nothing to do with it. Then we discussed merely details as to whether a large armament could not be sent, and these military officials said "No," it is impossible to send more at that time at any rate, and certain essential parts of what my friends were asking for were not being sent.

Q. Hand grenades, I suppose?

A. No. Only human beings. If you are desirous of knowing, I said I have been here for a year and a-half and begged you again and again to send rifles to Ireland, and you refused always. Now you spring it at my head at the eleventh hour, when I have long given it up, of hoping to arm my countrymen. At last you have come with this offer of belated help, and it synchronises with what I can only regard as a hopeless rising in Ireland, where my countrymen will be shot down. Obviously I think it is cowardly, dastardly, and I go alone. They wanted me to take all my Irish boys. Those young men—

Q. About fifty?

A. More than fifty. We had a terrible fight, and I won the day. I said I won't do it. I shall not have it said that I handed these men over to the hangman.

Q. What was their reason for sending you without many arms?

A. Legitimate; for the first place it would have to be a very big ship, and they knew there would be difficulties in landing and that a larger consignment could not be got out in good time. It would be a very hurried discharge. . . .

Sir R. C. . . . On the 16th March I came from Munich from the hospital. On the 7th March Monteith came to me from Berlin telling me that they proposed to land arms in Ireland, and I wrote him that if arms are to be sent, first, make sure that you can establish communication with the people in Ireland, otherwise it is murderous. I propose to go to Ireland myself and take one or two men myself, and send one man back. I then wrote a telegram from the hospital urging the necessity of sending a submarine with me, as I am the only person who can speak authoritatively. I never dreamed of the rising then. The rising would take place on the 23rd April, whether arms came or not. They wanted artillery, &c., and they told us that this could not be given us, and they would not give us any officers. They said they would give us so many

rifles and machine guns, and you can take your Irish Brigade. I said "No; that will be murder." I said I would go myself. They said, you must take some used to machine guns, as this is a military necessity. We had a long conversation, and I said I leave it to you, with your military knowledge. I said that the danger would not lie from the shore but from the sea, and our machine guns will not be any good against a warship. If my friends can organise a rising on the 23rd April I'll go myself and I landed in Ireland and knew the thing to be hopeless. The General Staff told me that the Irish Brigade were not under my orders. I said, you can make them go if you like, but you will see that they won't go, and, in the end, they gave in. If you want this thing to succeed and think that gunners are vitally necessary, I do not think they are necessary. They said, not at all. It will be a success and you will be able to dictate terms to the British Government.

Mr. Basil Thomson states that neither he nor anyone present on any occasion made use of such an expression as "It is a festering sore, it is much better that it should come to a head."

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