

CAB/37/152/29

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CONFIDENTIAL.

MISCELLANEOUS  
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RECORDS

THE CASE OF ROGER CASEMENT.

I circulate the following for the information of my colleagues.

H. S.

July 31, 1916.

FOUR days after his trial and conviction Casement handed to the prison Governor a portfolio containing a large quantity of documents which he asked might be delivered to his solicitor, or failing that, that they should be burnt unread. The documents were examined in the ordinary course, as all documents are before they are passed out from prison, and it was found that Casement was attempting, through his solicitor, to convey certain documents to other persons contrary to the regulations, and contrary to the express undertaking given by his solicitor in this respect. In a paper addressed to his solicitor while he was awaiting trial, he asked him to communicate surreptitiously with the German Government, which, if acted upon, would clearly have been a breach of the undertaking upon which a solicitor is allowed to communicate with his client. Another batch of documents were addressed to a friend of the prisoner's, and, of course, the solicitor is not allowed to pass out messages of this kind. The documents were, therefore, retained, and the solicitor was informed of the fact, and was told that any documents which the prisoner might wish to send to him, or notes taken by him, must be shown to the Governor in order that he might satisfy himself that they were made for the purpose of the prisoner's appeal, and not for communication to the press or to persons outside the prison. Mr. Gavan Duffy did not ask for the return of the portfolio of documents detained, and they would not have been returned to him if he had. In the paper addressed to his friend, Mrs. J. R. Green, Casement had worked out a comparison between himself and Wolfe Tone. He says:—

"I am 52. I was past 50 when I went to Germany with a constitution greatly impaired by long spells of tropical sickness and exposure. Tone was only 32 when he left Ireland for America, and only 33 when he left France for Ireland. My God! had I been only 33 again when I left Wilhelmshaven for Kerry! The rebellion would have been a different thing—the steamer, the code, and myself would assuredly have never fallen into the hands of the English, and it is certain that this day I write, the 28th May, instead of being a prisoner here in Brixton Gaol awaiting my trial for High Treason, I should have been either dead in fight or else helping to hold a very substantial part of Ireland against an *English invasion*."

Further, comparing Wolfe Tone and himself, he says:—

"1. I was not in the pay or service of Germany. Tone was in the pay and service of France.

"2. I was not ordered by any German General to recruit the Irish prisoners. It was I suggested the whole scheme.

"3. I tempted no man with drink, and I asked no Englishman to forsake his allegiance.

"4. My recruits were *not* to attack England or enter the German Army or Fleet, but solely to fight for Ireland, save in one particular contingency provided for in the agreement with the German Government (*viz.*, possibly help to 'expel the British from Egypt')."

[913]

Among his papers was also a highly pro-German and anti-English pamphlet entitled "Ireland, Germany, and the freedom of the Seas," which was published in America on the 1st September, 1914. In the introduction the following passage occurs:—

"Let every Irish heart, let every Irish hand, let every Irish purse be with Germany."

The copy is covered with notes in Casement's handwriting, conclusively proving that he was the author. In a note which accompanied the pamphlet he says that 2,000 copies were reprinted in Germany in 1915 for distribution among the Irish soldiers at Linburg.

E. B.

July 7, 1916.