

CAB/37/153/13

CIRCULATED TO THE CABINET.

Private Telegram to Sir C. Spring Rice (Washington)
Foreign Office, August 2nd. 1916. 4.0.p.m.

You should tell Lodge that I much appreciate his friendly message about Casement and the considerations he urges have been carefully weighed by His Majesty's Government.

The Government however feel that there is no ground except that of political expediency on which Casement can be reprieved and it would not be consistent with justice or tolerable to public opinion here to reprieve him on this ground.

The Irish rising began by the shooting of unarmed soldiers and policemen at sight and the greatest indignation is felt respecting those responsible for it. Casement is clearly proved to have done all in his power to instigate the rising with German aid: there is the clearest evidence that his object was absolutely hostile to this country and the ex post facto statement that he tried to stop the rising was not raised at the trial and is demonstrably untrue. His whole action in the matter was more peculiarly hostile and malevolent than that of any of the leaders extreme though some of these were in Ireland.

Irish soldiers, prisoners in Germany, who resisted Casement's solicitations to disloyalty were subjected

to

to rigorous treatment by the Germans, some of them have since been exchanged as invalids and have died in this country regarding Casement as their murderer.

There is nothing either in his public action or his private character that can be pleaded in extenuation of his action and in favour of mitigation of the sentence.

Such material as might have been alleged to point to insanity, including extracts from his diary, was at the disposal of his Counsel, who never raised this plea on his behalf and Casement's demeanour and proceedings throughout the trial gave no ground for suggesting insanity and indeed were sufficient to disprove it.

Under these circumstances a decision to reprieve Casement would be intensely resented by public opinion, both civil and military; the Government would be most strongly attacked for it and would have on grounds of fact and justice, no defence.

I should be sorry for Lodge to think that the interest he has shown in the matter has been treated in anything but the most friendly and considerate spirit by us and I shall be glad therefore if you will give him this explanation of why it has not been possible for the Government to yield to the many appeals made to them.

You may of course speak in the same sense to others who are friendly and who wish to know the facts.