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**Memorandum of the Ambassador in Great Britain (Page) of a conversation with the British Prime Minister (Asquith), August 1, 1916**

[Extract]

[Received August (17?), 1916.]

On August 1, I lunched with Mr. Asquith. One does not usually bring away much from his conversations, and he did not say much to-day worth recording. But he showed a very eager interest in the presidential campaign, and he confessed that he felt some anxiety about the anti-British feeling in the United States. This led him to tell me that he could not in good conscience interfere with Casement’s execution, in spite of the shoals of telegrams that he was receiving from the United States. This man, said he, visited Irish prisoners in German camps and tried to seduce them to take up arms against Great Britain—their own country. When they refused, the Germans removed them to the worst places in their Empire and, as a result, some of them died. Then Casement came to Ireland in a German man-of-war (a submarine) accompanied by a ship loaded with guns. He spoke also of the unmentionable Casement diary, which shows a degree of perversion and depravity without parallel in modern times. “In all good conscience to my country and to my responsibilities I cannot interfere.” He hoped that thoughtful opinion in the United States would see this whole matter in a fair and just way.

I asked him about the anti-American feeling in Great Britain. He said: “Do not let that unduly disturb you. At bottom we understand you. At bottom the two peoples surely understand one another and have unbreakable bonds of sympathy. No serious breach is conceivable.” He went on quite earnestly: “Mr. Page, after any policy or plan is thought out on its merits my next thought always is now it may affect our relations with the United States. That is always a fundamental consideration.”

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I ventured to say that if he would keep our relations smooth on the surface, I’d guarantee their stability at the bottom. It’s the surface that rolls high at times, and the danger is there. Keep the surface smooth and the bottom will take care of itself.

Then he asked about Mexico, as he usually has when I have talked with him. I gave him as good a report as I could, reminding him of the great change in the attitude of all Latin-America caused by the President’s patient policy with Mexico. When he said, “Mexico is a bad problem,” I couldn’t resist the impulse to reply: “When Mexico troubles you, think of—Ireland. As there are persons in England who concern themselves with Mexico, so there are persons in the United States who concern themselves about Ireland. Ireland and Mexico have each given trouble for two centuries. Yet these people talk about them as if they could remove all trouble in a month.”

“Quite true,” he said, and smiled himself into silence.

**Elizabeth Jaeger article extract**

While we cannot say whether Senator Lodge saw or knew about the “black diaries,” there is evidence that other key figures did. Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to Britain, was one of them. On 1 August, Prime Minister Asquith informed Page that the cabinet had no intention of reprieving Casement. In the course of their conversation he inquired whether Page had heard about the diaries. Page admitted not only to having seen them but also to having copies of the diaries in his possession. Hearing this, Asquith was elated and responded, “Excellent, and you need not be particular about keeping it to yourself.”[61](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/%22%20%5Cl%20%22f61%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) One could speculate that his having seen the “black diaries” was perhaps the reason why Page advised the U.S. State Department in regard to Casement that “official representations would not be received [by Britain] in a kindly way.”[62](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/%22%20%5Cl%20%22f62%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[61.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/%22%20%5Cl%20%22f61-text%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) Reid, *Lives of Roger Casement*, 445. Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *Black Diaries*, 29.

[62.](http://uk-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/%22%20%5Cl%20%22f62-text%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) “Delay Casement Plea,” *Washington Post*, 23 July 1916, A4.

Walter Page, the US ambassador to London, warned Secretary of State Lansing to steer clear of the case because of the “unspeakably filthy character” of the diaries. Walter Hines Page to Robert Lansing, July 3, 1916, quoted by Mackey, *Roger Casement*, pp. 27-28.