



Roger Casement.

Casement in Germany

*A Guide to
The Roger Casement Papers
in Clare County Archives*

Róisín Berry
Clare County Archivist

Casement in Germany:
A Guide to The Roger Casement Papers in Clare County Archives

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LE CUIDIÚ AN CHOMHAIRLE OIBHREACHTA

Cover Image: Portrait of Roger Casement (CAS 1a)
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland



Portrait of Roger Casement seated (CAS 3c). Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Contents

Casement in Germany:	2
<i>A Guide to The Roger Casement Papers in Clare County Archives</i>	
<i>Róisín Berry, Clare County Archives, Clare County Council</i>	
Introduction	2
Casement's Early Life	4
The African Years	5
Humanitarian work in Africa and Brazil	6
Ireland and Germany	8
Planning a Rising	10
The Roger Casement Papers	12
The Casement-Blücher Correspondence:	
<i>Another Archival Clue in the Casement Puzzle?</i>	14
<i>Angus Mitchell, St. Lawrence University, New York</i>	
Catalogue	18
Further Reading	23
Footnotes	25

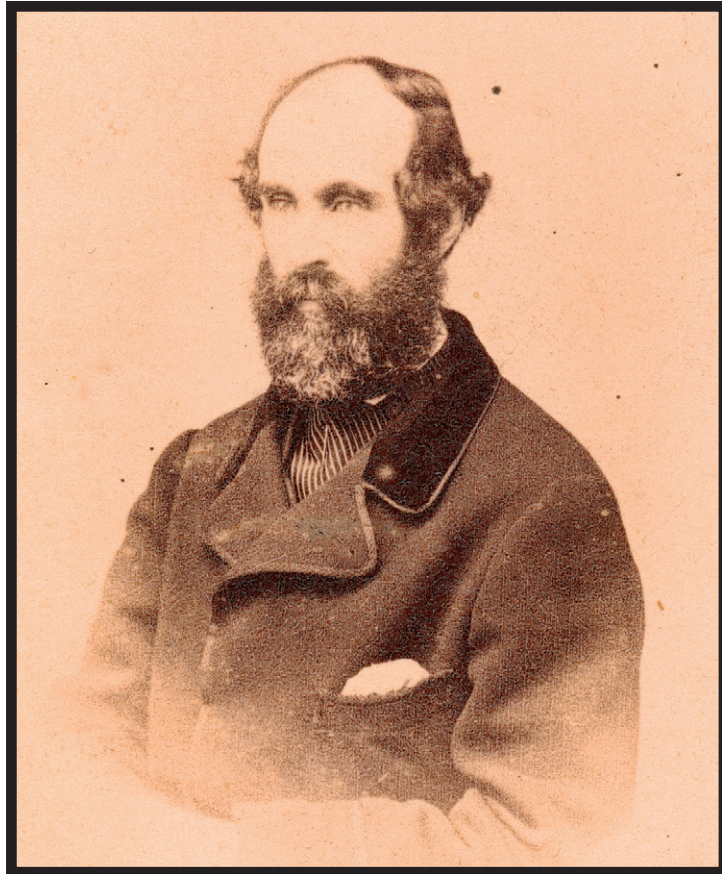


Introduction

A horde of personal papers relating to Irish nationalist, Roger Casement, was recently recovered in Clare County Council. The papers had originally been donated by Ignatius Houlihan, a solicitor based in Ennis, County Clare, in 1969. They remained in storage for over thirty years and their existence long forgotten, until their retrieval in October 2003. The papers were subsequently transferred to Clare County Archives where they are now open to the public.

Consisting of over fifty documents, this important collection provides historians with a greater understanding of Irish-German affairs leading up to the Easter Rising. In addition, it offers a unique insight into the mindset of Casement and the challenges that faced him during his time in Germany.

This guide has been published as part of the *Casement in Germany* exhibition.



Roger Casement, father of Roger Casement (CAS 4c). Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Casement's Early Life

Roger Casement was born in Dublin on 1 September 1864. He was the son of a Protestant father, also Roger Casement (1819–1877), and a Catholic mother, Anne Casement (née Jephson, 1834–1873). Casement's family on his father's side was landed gentry in County Antrim and had originally come from the Isle of Man. His mother's family was related to the Jephsons of Mallow Castle in County Cork, a prominent Protestant family.

The Casement family lived in the South Dublin suburb of Sandycove. Casement's mother passed away during childbirth in 1873 when he was just nine years old. His father died four years later, leaving behind four children, Roger (or 'Roddie'), his sister Agnes (b. 1856) and two brothers, Charles (b. 1861) and Thomas (b. 1863). His brothers emigrated to Australia at an early age while Casement and his sister were made wards in chancery, dependent on the kindness of relatives including their grand-uncle, John Casement in Magherintemple, County Antrim. Casement attended the Church of Ireland Diocesan School in Ballymena until 1880.¹

The African Years

On leaving school, Casement was employed as a clerk by the Elder Dempster Shipping Company in Liverpool (1881–1883). He experienced his first taste of Africa working as a purser on board an African trading vessel, the S.S. Bonny. Casement secured numerous positions in Africa during the 1880s. He worked in the service of the African International Association and its successor the Congo Free State (1884–1886), the Sanford Exploring Expedition (1886), and the Congo Railway Company (1888). He was also employed for a three-month period as a lay assistant at the British Baptist Mission Station of Wathen, before returning briefly to the Congo Railway (1890–1891). Casement was recruited by the British Foreign Office in 1892 to serve in the Oil Rivers Protectorate (modern day Nigeria), becoming Assistant Director-General of Customs at Old Calabar and subsequently General Survey Officer. For the next three years, he mapped territory previously unknown to Europeans.²

Casement's consular work commenced in 1895 and took him to Mozambique, Angola, the Congo Free State and Brazil. Arriving in Lorenzo Marques in 1895, Casement spent two years as H.M. Consul in Portuguese East Africa. He was transferred to St Paul de Loanda, Angola, in Portuguese West Africa in 1898 with additional responsibilities for British interests in the Congo and French Congo. Casement's duties included providing intelligence in relation to the movement of arms through the Congo to the French force in Sudan. With the outbreak of the Boer War between Britain and the Boers in late 1899, Casement was ordered back to Lorenzo Marques to monitor the movement of arms. He was awarded the Queen's South African medal for his involvement in an aborted commando operation, which attempted to disrupt the main railway line linking Lorenzo Marques and Pretoria. In 1900, Casement was transferred to Boma, seat of the administration of the Congo Free State, to set up a new consulate.³

*Man holding spear surrounded by onlookers, Putumayo Region of Peru / Colombia (CAS 18c).
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland*

Humanitarian Work in Africa and Brazil



In 1903, Casement was instructed by the Foreign Office to commence an investigation into allegations of atrocities being committed against the native African population of the Congo Free State under the colonial regime of Leopold II of Belgium. With the agreement of the United States and European powers, Leopold had established the Free State in the mid 1880s as a free trade zone and pledged to protect the interests of the indigenous population. However, stories of atrocities against the native Congolese became common including shocking accounts of floggings, mutilations and widespread killings. These events were linked to the rapid growth of the rubber industry and the subsequent shift in the Congo from the production of ivory to the exploitation of rubber to meet the demands of the world market.⁴ Casement outlined his findings confirming these allegations in a report published in February 1904. He was awarded the Companion of St Michael and St George the following year.

Casement was appointed H.M. Consul for São Paulo and Paraná (1906) based at Santos, Brazil. Later, he was then transferred to the port of Santa Maria do Belém do Pará at the mouth of the Amazon (1907). In 1908, Casement was promoted to Consul-General of Brazil and was based in Rio de Janeiro. Two years later, due to his extensive knowledge of the rubber industry, Casement was selected by the Foreign Office to carry out an investigation into allegations of atrocities being carried out by a British-owned rubber company against the native population in the Putumayo region bordering Peru, Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador. Casement spent ten weeks visiting rubber stations throughout the region and gathering evidence, some of which was even more disturbing than that revealed during the Congo investigation. Casement's report on Putumayo was published in 1912.⁵

Casement gained international respect for his reports exposing the atrocities inflicted on native workers in the Congo and the Amazon. His humanitarian work was rewarded in 1911 with a knighthood. Casement resigned from the Foreign Office in 1913 due to ill health and returned home to Ireland.

Ireland and Germany

With his arrival in Ireland, Casement turned his attention towards matters closer to home, renewing friendships with nationalists and considering the issue of Irish independence. A man of strong nationalist sympathies, Casement helped to form the Irish Volunteers in 1913. The following year, he travelled to New York to deliver lectures and collect funds for the new organisation. With the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, Casement sought to keep the Irish out of the war. In addition, he hoped to get Germany and the United States to provide arms for the Irish Volunteers in preparation for the fight for independence. By late September, Casement was in talks with the German military about the formation of an Irish Brigade made up of Irish prisoners of war held in German war camps. He left the United States in October and began his journey to Berlin. His mission was supported by \$3000 in gold provided by Clan na Gael.⁶



*Roger Casement with a group of people
outside a church on Tory Island (CAS 8b)
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland*

Steering clear of British warships, Casement travelled as 'James Landy' to Christiania, Norway. He reached Berlin on 31 October 1914. Casement was accompanied by Richard Meyer, a representative of the German Foreign Office, and Adler Christensen, a Norwegian sailor who was to become his servant and travelling companion. In his essay, *The Crime Against Europe*, Casement explains his reasons for going to Germany:

*'My object was a peaceful, not a belligerent one ... so far as possible to keep Ireland at peace and Irishmen out of the war was my intent by placing before my countrymen a clear and authoritative statement of German aims that might go far to meet the flood of misrepresentations being steadily poured over Ireland by the British government. I believed that if I could reach Germany and state these objects to the German Government, I could not fail to accomplish something of what I hoped to achieve. I hoped that the German Government might be induced to make clear its peaceful intentions towards Ireland and that the effect of such a pronouncement in Ireland itself might be powerful enough to keep Irishmen from volunteering for a war that had no claim upon their patriotism or their honour. With this aim chiefly in view, I came to Germany in November, 1914, and I succeeded in my purpose.'*⁷



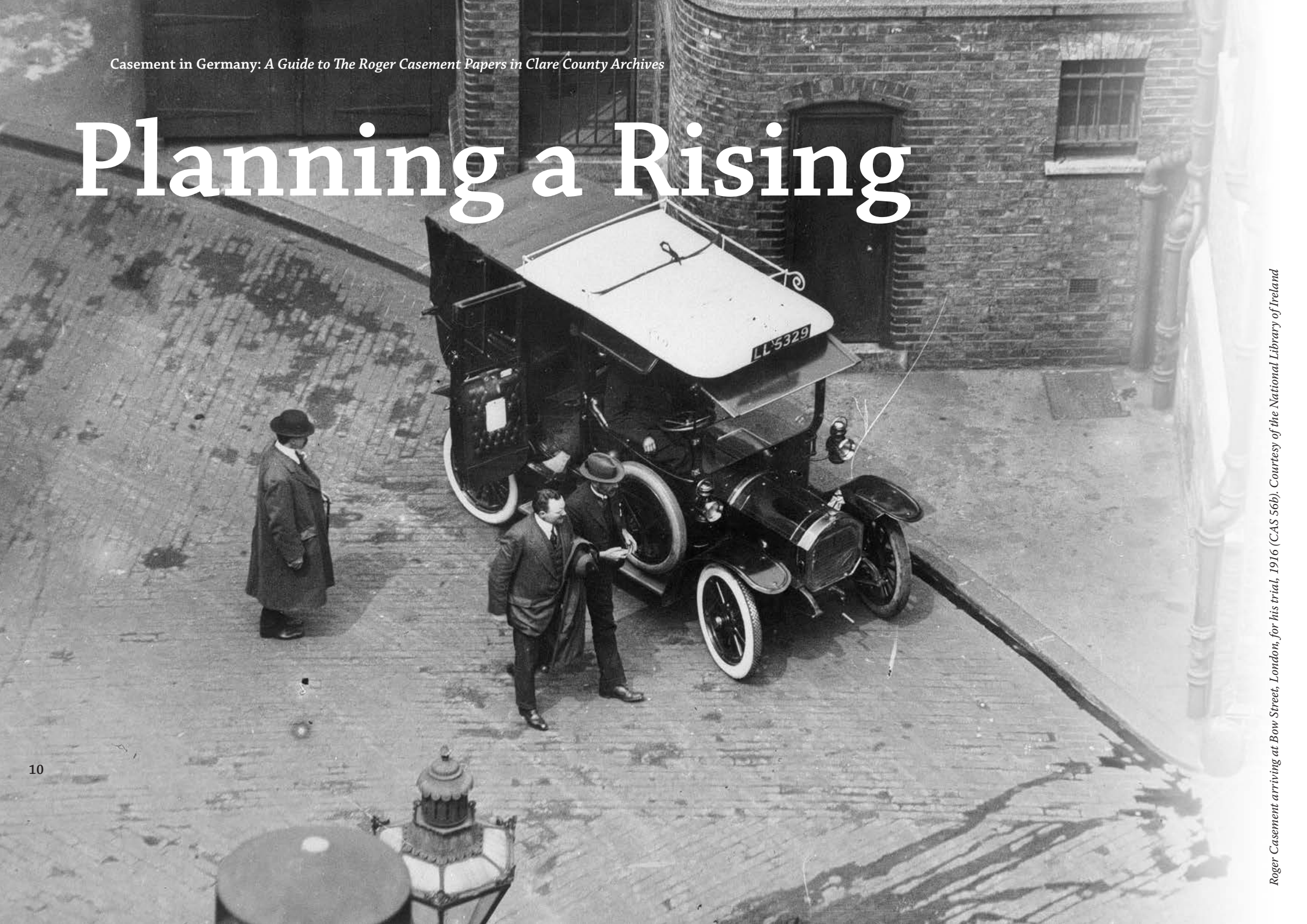
*Adler Christensen, Roger Casement's Norwegian servant (CAS 7a).
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland*

As Casement engaged in discussions with the German Foreign Office, he began to put his plans in place for an Irish Brigade, assembling Irishmen from different prison camps at Limburg, a special camp situated in the Lahn Valley. Casement recognised the need for priests to provide for the spiritual care of the prisoners, requesting an Irish priest if possible. Three priests were located, Father John Thomas Crotty, a Dominican, Father John Thomas Nicholson from Philadelphia, and Father Canice O'Gorman who came through Clan na Gael. It was Father Crotty who was to become an invaluable source of help and support. Casement began his call for volunteers from the Irish prisoners of war to join an Irish Brigade and fight for Irish independence. The results, however, were not positive and the response often hostile. Casement was also concerned with locating more suitable military officers. He even turned to the United States in his quest but only one man got through, Robert Monteith.

Relations between Casement and the Irish prisoners continued to deteriorate in 1915. His relationship with the German Foreign Office was also considerably cooler as efforts to build an Irish combat unit yielded little results. Casement concluded that the Germans had little interest in Ireland or her liberation.⁸ His feelings are reflected clearly in an entry in one of his German diaries where he states:

*'I do not know what to do. To stay in Berlin or in Germany, idle, inactive and with the huge disappointment of the Irish Brigade failure staring me in the face, and with no hope of further action by the German Government anent Ireland—is a policy of despair!'*⁹

Planning a Rising



Roger Casement arriving at Bow Street, London, for his trial, 1916 (C-AS 56b). Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Hospiz am Brandenburger Tor

Christliches Hotel 1. Ranges
zwischen Potsdamer Platz und dem Tiergarten

Fernsprecher: Amt Lützow, Nr. 1071

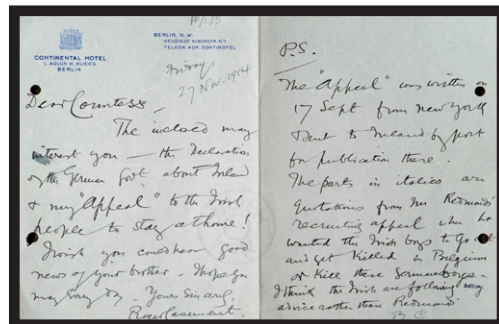
Telegramm-Adresse: Torhospiz

Berlin W 9, den
Budapester Straße 5

5 Nov 1915

By 1916, it was clear that the Germans were only willing to send a small consignment of arms to Ireland. This was a feeble gesture intended to keep their Irish-American friends happy and perhaps cause a military diversion. Only one ship, the Aud, would be sent to Tralee. It carried a cargo of 20,000 rifles captured from the enemy instead of the requested 100,000. Casement became increasingly anxious about the prospect of an armed rising without sufficient military cover. Greatly opposed to the plan, Casement now focused on how to reach Ireland and call off the rebellion before the rising scheduled to take place on Easter Sunday.

Casement eventually persuaded the Germans to allow him to travel to Ireland by submarine prior to the sailing of the Aud and the planned rising. The U-19 carrying Casement, Monteith and Irish Brigadier Daniel Bailey arrived at Tralee Bay on 21 April 1916.¹⁰ On reaching land at Banna Strand, County Kerry, Casement was captured and taken to London to be interrogated by British Intelligence. He was subsequently placed in the Tower of London. Casement was brought before Bow Street Magistrates Court (15 May) and tried for treason (26-9 June).¹¹

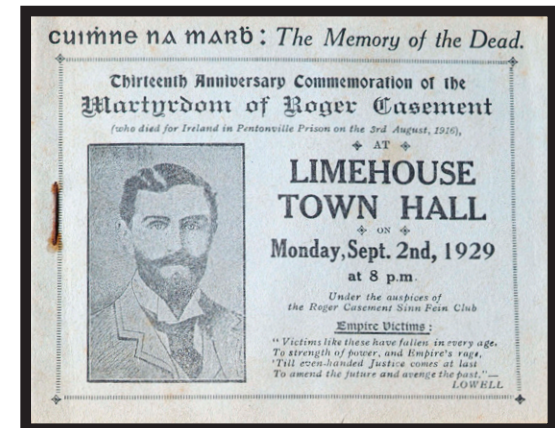
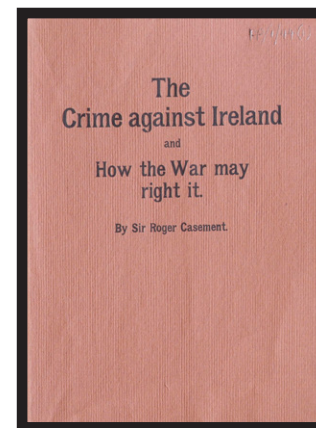


Planning a Rising
a copy of it - I have none here - Unhappily there are the usual

On the fourth day of his trial, Casement made a powerful speech from the dock in his own defence:

*'It was not I who landed in England, but the Crown that dragged me here, away from my own country, to which I had returned with a price upon my head; away from my own countrymen, whose loyalty is not in doubt, and safe from the judgment of my peers, whose judgment I do not shrink from. I admit no other judgment but theirs. I accept no verdict save at their hands.'*¹²

Casement was found guilty and a sentence of death was imposed. On 30 June, he was stripped of his knighthood. Despite an appeals process in the Court of Criminal Appeal at the Royal Courts of Justice (17-8 July), Casement was hanged in Pentonville Prison in London on 3 August 1916. His remains were returned to Ireland and re-interred in Glasnevin Cemetery after a state funeral on 1 March 1965.¹³



The Roger Casement Papers

Divided into three sections, the collection has been arranged according to document type. The documents are then arranged chronologically within each section. Section one addresses correspondence and receipts, and forms one of the most interesting parts of the collection. It consists largely of correspondence between Casement and Count Gebhard Blücher, a German friend from his days in Africa. Blücher was the great-great-grandson of Marshal Blücher, saviour of the British at Waterloo. He was also heir to a better title and considerable landholdings, including the ancestral seat at Krieblowitz in Silesia.¹⁴ His wife, Evelyn Stapleton-Bretherton, came from an old Lancashire family in England. The couple lived in England until the war when they had to return to Germany. Countess Blücher later published her memoir, *An English Wife in Berlin*, referring to meetings with Casement during more troubled times.¹⁵ Casement relied on Blücher for personal support and also for his political connections with many leading German diplomats.

The correspondence reveals Casement's feelings on the war, as he notes in a letter to Blücher:

"The only cheering thing is that the Irish are not enlisting. That is killed anyhow-& the 200,000 men they had expected from Ireland to cut the German throat will not come up to the knife."¹⁶

The collection also reflects Casement's passionate dislike of the British Ambassador to Norway, Mansfeldt Findlay. Casement was determined to reveal that Findlay had attempted to bribe his Norwegian companion, Christensen, to hand over Casement for the sum of £10,000. Casement states 'even with the evidence already in my possession ... I could make out a case against the Br[itish] Gov[ernmen]t that would gravely impair its moral prestige in English-speaking communities', referring to the British Government as a 'conspiracy of criminals'.¹⁷

A number of letters in the collection concern Father Crotty including letters between Casement and Count Georg von Wedel, Chief of the English Department in the German Foreign Office, Richard Meyer, also of the Foreign Office, and Countess Blücher. These documents refer to issues such as funding, securing a permit to visit prisoners, finding a place of worship, and the prospect of leaving Germany. Two letters from Father Crotty to Casement are also included in the collection. In addition, an extract from one of Crotty's letters copied in Casement's own hand is of particular interest, providing an insight into the relationship between the Dominican priest and the Irish prisoners of war. It states:

*'I should regret leaving the poor boys who assure me that Germany could do them any greater injury than to deprive them of my ministrations. They would live on bread and water and work night and day if I should be left with them to the end. The poor fellows cried like children when I announced to them the news of my recall.'*¹⁸

Perhaps one of the most intriguing documents in this body of material, however, is a letter from Casement to Countess Blücher, which addresses the subject of keeping a diary, particularly in light of the future debate surrounding the 'Black Diaries' and their authenticity.¹⁹

Section two of the collection focuses on printed material and includes Casement's pamphlet entitled *Ireland, Germany and Freedom of the Seas*, a leaflet advertising a lecture by Dr. George Chatterton-Hill, and two newspaper clippings. Section three contains other documents including one of Casement's essays 'A Pacific Blockade' published under the pseudonym 'Diplomaticus' in *The Continental Times* as 'War Depression—A Pacific Blockade' (13 December 1915). In addition, there is a typescript document on Casement, and a note containing the name and address of Count Blücher.

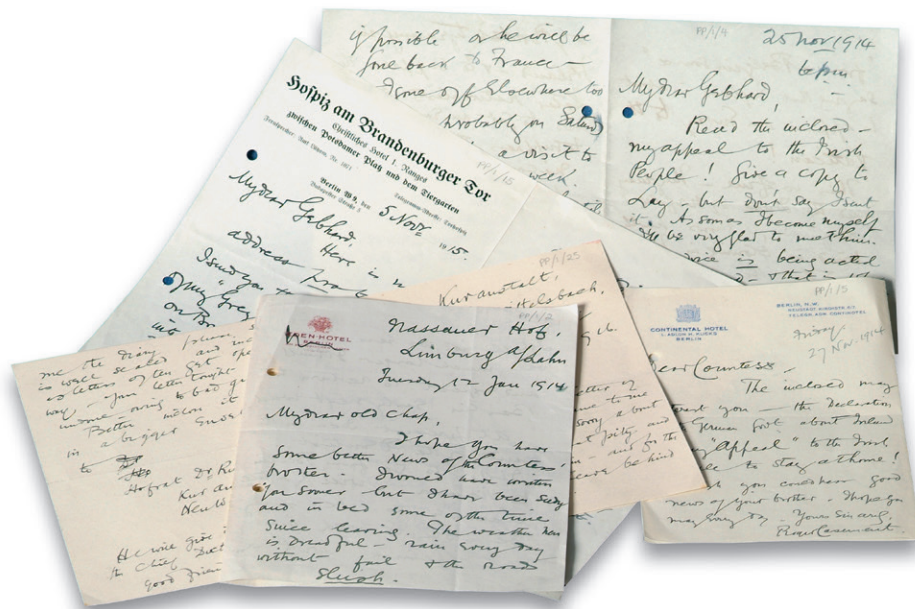
The Roger Casement Papers document one of the most exciting periods in Irish history, the period leading up to the 1916 Rising and Ireland's claim to political independence. The collection provides a glimpse of the Irish-German background to the Rising. The letters date from Casement's arrival in Germany in 1914 to the very month he leaves Germany in 1916 on the U-19 bound for Ireland. The documents address a range of different subjects including the enlisting of Irishmen in the First World War, the appointment of an envoy from England to the Vatican, the Findlay affair, the work of Father Crotty in German prison camps, writing articles for the press, keeping a diary, and the desire for peace. Casement's concern for the spiritual welfare of Irish prisoners of war in Germany is reflected very clearly in this part of the collection, as is his contempt for the British Government.

In addition, the collection documents moments of loneliness and paranoia, as Casement became increasingly isolated from both Irish nationalists and the German Foreign Office. His deteriorating health is also referred to. What comes across most strongly, however, is Casement's inextinguishable passion and drive for the cause of Irish independence reflected also in his writings from the period. Roger Casement continues to be one of Irish history's most enigmatic figures.

*'Alas, so much of the story dies with me—the old, old story—yet, in spite of all—the truth and right lives on in the hearts of the brave and lowly. It is better that I die thus—on the scaffold—It is a glorious death for Ireland's sake with Allen, Larkin and O'Brien, and Robert Emmet—and the men of '98 and William Orr—all for the same cause—all in the same way. Surely it is the most glorious cause in history.'*²⁰

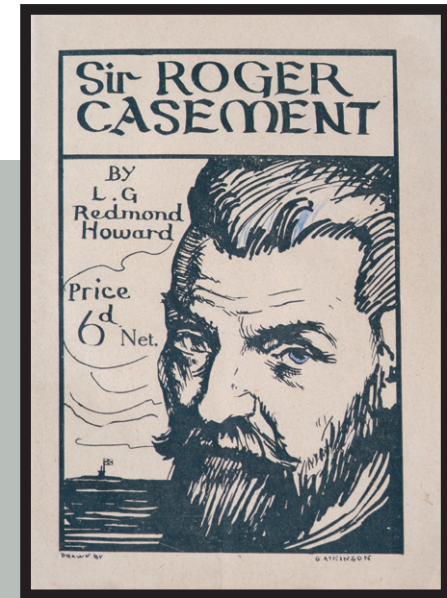
The Casement-Blücher Correspondence:

Another Archival Clue in the Casement Puzzle?



No other figure in Irish history has influenced our awareness of the archive or demanded us to question the written word quite as profoundly as Roger Casement (1864–1916). A trail of letters, journals, official correspondence, confidential reports, poems, articles, letters to the editor and pamphlets are scattered across the Atlantic world. If, one day hence, they are assembled and published they will bare testament to an epic and tragic life in pursuit of an unobtainable ‘truth’: twenty years in Africa (1884–1903), seven in South America (1906–1913), and a lifelong dedication to Ireland. Currently, the fragmented state of his archive makes the telling of his story as puzzling as a mystery novel, with a plot as intriguing as *The Da Vinci Code*. Because the endlessly disputed ‘Black Diaries’ remain at the heart of his official interpretation, some people like to proclaim that they recognise the inner motives of the man. But these documents, whether they are forged or genuine, have created a distorting mask that prevents any clear comprehension of Ireland’s most active internationalist. They are not the final layer in understanding Casement but rather the first layer in misunderstanding him. If the ‘great man’ school of history still holds, then Casement’s agency was vital to both the emergence of Ireland as a modern, independent state, and to a new departure in the Western discourse on human rights. His main contribution to Irish cultural nationalism was to define a vision for a new Ireland based upon an ethics of humanity. His unique experience of the colonial encounter disrupts the general perceptions of Ireland’s colonial status—and this is one reason why the trend since his execution on the 3 August 1916 has been to forget rather than remember all he stood for.

This process of forgetting is inextricably complicated by the interplay of myth, silence and secrecy. His evolution from loyal imperial consular officer, with close links to the Intelligence Division of the War Office, into an Irish revolutionary leader intent on overthrowing the empire that he had once served with distinction, has meant that much of his life’s work is hidden from view or unrecoverable. Both secret service men and revolutionaries tend to move through undisclosed, subterfuge, conspiratorial spaces, and share a common suspicion of the written record. Casement was an exception to the record in this respect and considered the written word as the most valuable weapon in the defence of ‘truth’. As both an official and rebel he had a healthy



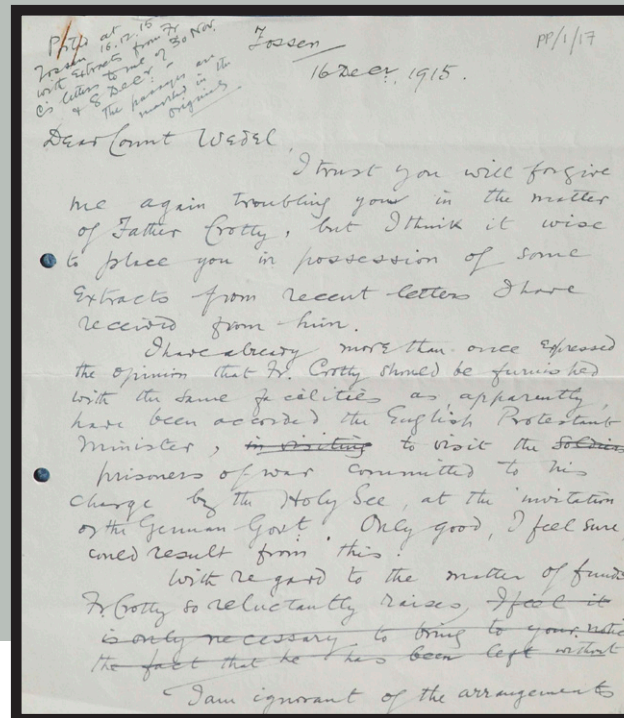
distrust of secrecy and specifically secret diplomacy, which he condemned as a major cause of the First World War. His crusade for a more open and democratic approach to foreign affairs could only be fought through the agency of other activists or behind the screen of anonymity. Similarly, his writings after 1913 deliberately sought to define and justify the independence of Ireland, and to the bitter end Casement never deviated from his desire to keep Ireland out of imperial conflicts because his close intellectual engagement with his German friends such as the Irish language scholar, Kuno Meyer and his mucker from African days, Count Blücher, persuaded him that Ireland had no reason to be the enemy of the German people.

Analysts of cultural nationalism in Ireland have observed its ‘tendency to subvert existing knowledge’ through a ‘rejection of existing classifications’. Empires are driven by a need to control people, territorial space and knowledge. Casement lived through an age when the very relationship between society and knowledge was starting to dramatically shift. Ultimately, his most damaging act against imperial systems was to leave a labyrinth of evidence that exposed the exploitative and destructive potential of empire on the world economy. In West Africa and the Amazon, he became a unique witness and chronicler to the blind and devastating potential of colonial rule driven by the demands of the market, in this case rubber. In 1898, following his appointment as Consul to Portuguese West Africa, he began to interrogate the dynamics of colonial government by analysing it from both above and below. The harnessing of his official position to build his exposé of imperial excess undermined the archive itself and subverted what Thomas Richards has called the ‘imagined form of a utopian state’. As a consequence his historical positioning has required very special attention because his relevance to the narrative of both formal and informal empire before the First World War is capable of being hugely disruptive, especially for those who write in defence of imperial history. Like many other statesmen of his age, such as Winston Churchill or James Bryce, he was profoundly conscious of the archive and its centrality in defining both history and national identity. What differentiates Casement from Churchill or Bryce was how he used history to subvert rather than enforce power by appealing to nationalist strains within the colonial empire.

The national archives in Dublin and London remain the repositories of his most extensive official correspondence. This vast interconnecting body of text, ranging between 1892 and 1916, was produced largely during his period as a British consular officer. Documents in his characteristically strong and flowing hand, once described by the historian R. B. McDowell, as resembling ‘forked lightning,’ begin in 1892, when he was serving as a customs officer in the Niger Coast Protectorate, the vast oil rich delta of south eastern Nigeria. Having mapped large regions of the interior districts around Old Calabar and helped in the foundation of British consular authority in Africa, he was promoted to consul and posted to Lorenzo Marques (Delagoa Bay) in Portuguese East Africa. He arrived at his new post a few months before the notorious Jameson raid, which set Britain on the inevitable road to war in South Africa. His rapid promotion to such a sensitive position when he was still only thirty years old is indicative of the high regard he was held within the revered corridors of Whitehall. Lorenzo Marques at that time was a hot bed of intrigue, espionage and gun-running, and it was there, in late 1895 or early 1896, that he first met Count Blücher (1865–1931). The historical significance of the Blücher family and their connection to the Duke of Wellington

and the battle of Waterloo, no doubt made an initial impression on Casement, who was always fond of the historical reference and the German nobleman became a positive influence in shaping Casement’s perception of Germany. Blücher also became an important source of information for Casement and he passed on significant news about German intentions in the area which Casement then reported to the Foreign Office. In a long letter written to his colleague, Henry Foley, he passed on sensitive information about German-Boer intentions and identified his source as Blücher, described as ‘a German but absolutely friendly to England’.²¹

Casement was promoted again in 1898. His new assignment, under direct orders from the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, was to divide the consular district of Portuguese West Africa,



and establish British consular jurisdiction in the emerging commercial district of the Belgian Congo, where massive amounts of rubber and other valuable natural resources were being widely extracted to meet a rising world demand. Over the next five years he sent a stream of memos and reports to Whitehall exposing the excesses and corrupt practices of Leopold's regime in the Congo and condemning the colonial encounter of Europeans in Central Africa as devastatingly destructive and rooted in methods of cruelty, terror, racial oppression and legal corruption. This long investigation culminated with his voyage into the Upper Congo in 1903 and the publication of his report in February 1904 exposing widespread colonial abuse in Central Africa. Feeling restricted by official silence surrounding his investigation and eager that the tragedy of Africa should become a public issue, Casement encouraged the young crusading journalist, E.D. Morel, to set up the Congo Reform Association (C.R.A.). Many friends and colleagues from African days were recruited into this humanitarian endeavor including Count Blücher, who became an active supporter of Congo reform and served for several years as joint treasurer of the C.R.A. along with the writer Arthur Conan Doyle. Casement also appears to have had free use of Blücher's house in Notting Hill whenever he was in London.

Except for a couple of letters from Blücher to Casement held in the National Library of Ireland, the Blücher-Casement connection remained largely speculative until the recent discovery of a horde of letters originally deposited in Clare County Council in 1969 but only recently transferred to Clare County Archives and given the national exposure they merit. To historians involved in Casement studies, the correspondence is a small jewel. Nearly fifty letters relate exclusively to the period between late 1913, when Casement was engaged in the founding of the Irish Volunteers, and April 1916, when Casement set out from Germany aboard a submarine to try to stop further bloodshed. Our knowledge of this period has in recent years been hugely extended through the scholarship of the German historian, Reinhard Doerries. His work has revealed the importance of Casement's alliances in German diplomatic circles after his arrival there in October 1914 and in particular with a number of high-ranking diplomatic officials such as Count George von Wedel, and the Baron von Nordenflycht. However, the story in Germany's official archives only goes so far, and this surviving body of personal correspondence reveals Casement in other ways.

Scrutiny of the Casement-Blücher letters enables a number of old biographical myths to be more critically examined and laid to rest. Many details are already known and

are repeated elsewhere in the Casement archive, for instance his revelations about the Findlay affair and the spiraling number of intrigues and conspiracies developing between the British authorities and the errant Irish consul. Casement confided to Blücher that he was well aware that he was treading the 'traitor's' path and that if he was captured his inevitable fate would be execution. However, he was prepared for this sacrifice in order to make a further strike for Irish independence. There is also lengthy and significant discussion about Casement's concerns for the religious requirements of Irish prisoners of war.

The most revealing aspect is material referring to the collaboration of Casement and Blücher over anti-Imperial propaganda and Blücher's direct financial support of Casement's writing where he attacked several high ranking British statesmen including the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey and James Bryce, author of the controversial 1915 report on Alleged German Atrocities. Casement's attacks were first published in *The Continental Times* at the end of 1915 but were later reprinted in *The Gaelic American*. Some pseudonyms used by Casement in his propaganda writings are also revealed.

Blücher remained an influential friend and collaborator during Casement's months in Germany and although biographical tradition has persistently tried to emphasise Casement's 'insanity' or, at least, his emotional 'instability' during this period (a view supported by the memoir of Blücher's English wife), this correspondence would suggest otherwise. Several letters from early 1916, intimate that if Casement was physically exhausted by his efforts in Germany his mind was still sound and his thinking on Ireland still clear. Evidence from these letters should persuade a new generation of historians that a combination of isolation, disillusionment and depression, largely resulting from his hatred of the war, was at the heart of his breakdown. His view that war was inimical to 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'civilisation' are forthrightly expressed in a letter to Blücher:

"The only thing I really want is peace—peace all round. I am sick to death of all the rest—the hopeless folly of the whole thing—the organised madness—the scientific insanity—called “war”—“victory”—“glory”—how vain and hopeless it is.”²²

In considering the collection of letters in their entirety, the comment that will doubtless attract most attention is a passing reference to keeping 'a diary,' written in a note to

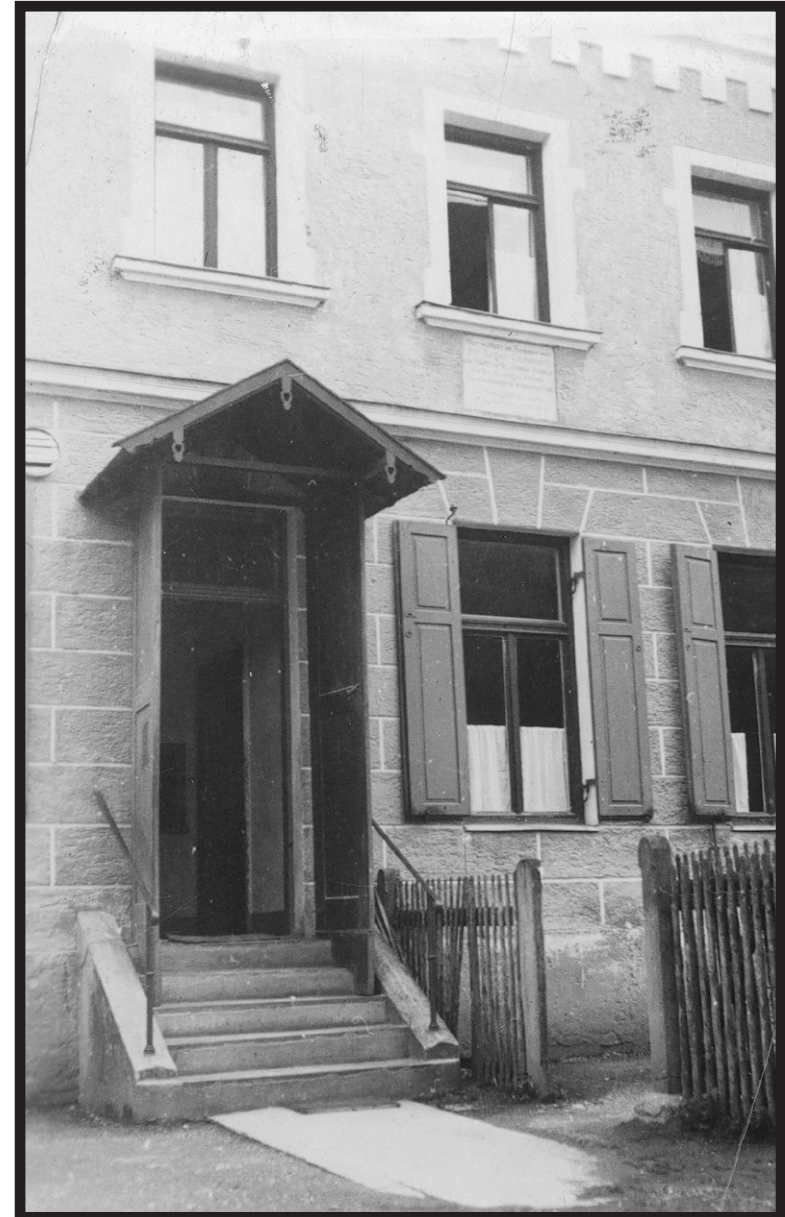
the Countess Blücher. Although the phrasing is ambiguous, it is one more significant reference to a facet of Casement's writing that he spoke and wrote openly about in both his official and private correspondence. Casement made no secret of the fact that, like many engaged men and women of his age, he kept extensive diaries, documenting in detail both private and public spheres of his life. The safety of his German diaries (now archived in the National Library of Ireland) were buried for several years in oiled silks in Germany before they were edited and published by Charles Curry in Munich in 1922.

*'You know the charm of a diary is its simplicity. Its reality and the sense of daily life it conveys to the reader depends not on style, but on truth and sincerity. It should tell of things ... I kept one for the first three months or so of my stay in this country, & then I gave it up because I became too personal! I found myself writing things best left unwritten—even unthought—& since I could not tell the truth, even to myself, I dropped the [fun]—a year ago!'*²³

Beyond what this comment suggests about Casement's own views on privacy and revelation, the word that sticks out most conspicuously in his writings about the war is 'truth', and like Mahatma Gandhi, the quest for truth was a constant and lifelong motivating force. The adage that the first casualty of every war is truth, was certainly the case on the outbreak of conflict in 1914, when the relationship of truth to power was renegotiated through the medium of mass propaganda, censorship and the implementation of the Defence of the Realm Act. If some historians might still ask the question how much do we really know about the colonial encounter in Africa, they might also ask what do we really know about the control of truth during the First World War?

The concerns expressed by Casement regarding his papers at the end of his life stress the importance of the written word and the durability of text in the defining of histories. Although there is plenty to suggest that significant parts of the Casement archive have, over the years, been lost or destroyed, the discovery of the Casement-Blücher letters confirms that history is not a fixed science capable of finite truths but rather a constantly evolving discourse that discovers new departures and alternative interpretations whenever new evidence is revealed.

Angus Mitchell
Canton, New York—Spring 2005



House in which Roger Casement lived at Riederau on the Ammersee, Bavaria (CAS 12c). Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Catalogue

I. Correspondence and receipts (1913-1916)

1. 14 November 1913

Letter to Count Gebhard Blücher on the subject of iron deposits.

3pp.

2. 12 January 1914

Letter from Casement, Nassauer Hof, Limburg, Af Lahn, to Count Blücher referring to the health of the Countess's brother, his own health, the weather, his plans to travel to Vienna, and affairs at home in Ireland. He states "The only cheering thing is that the Irish are not enlisting. That is killed any how-& the 200,000 men they expected from Ireland to cut the German throat will not come up to the knife. They admit too, I see, that it is due to the "seditious" propaganda of the extremists.'

4pp.

3. 23 November 1914

Letter from Count Botho von Wedel (cousin of Count Georg von Wedel of the German Foreign Office), Auswärtiges Amt to [Count Blücher] in German, stating that Casement is in the Continental Hotel under the name 'Mr. Hammond.'

2pp.

4. 25 November 1914

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher referring to his appeal to the Irish people noting 'My advice is being acted on in Ireland-& that is why they are prosecuting the patriotic papers.' Also refers to a telegram in the Italian paper *Corriere Della Sera* regarding the subject of appointing an envoy from England to the Vatican, stating "This is fine-they may send the Duke of Norfolk! Anyhow, it shows how the wind is blowing in Ireland and that they now (as in Parnell's time) want to get the Pope on the side of British tyranny in Ireland-& to suppress the later nationalists as they tried to get an earlier Pope to suppress the 1880-81 nationalists Do you know many influential Catholics at Rome? I shall need their help on [the] side of Ireland-and peace.'

4pp.

5. 27 November 1914

Letter from Casement, Continental Hotel, Berlin, to Countess Blücher referring to the enclosure of the declaration of the German government about Ireland, and Casement's appeal to the Irish to stay at home, stating 'the parts in italics are quotations from Mr Redmond's recruiting appeal when he wanted the Irish boys to go out and get killed in Belgium or kill [these] German boys. I think the Irish are following my advice rather than Redmond's.'

2pp.

6. 3 December 1914 (see no.7)

Letter from Casement, Frankfurt, to Count Blücher referring to the importance of public opinion, his feelings regarding Mansfeldt Findlay, British Ambassador in Norway, and states 'In fact, I go so far as to say that even with the evidence already in my possession, did I get no fresh, I could make out a case against the Br[itish] Gov[ernmen]t that would gravely impair its moral prestige in English-speaking communities, and entirely convince a great number of Irishmen in Ireland and pro-Irish & pro-German opinion in U.S.A.' Casement describes the British government as a 'conspiracy of criminals'. In addition, he refers to his 'faithful "ruffian" Adler Christensen.

5pp.

7. [3 December 1914] (see no.6)

Typescript copy of an extract from a letter to Count Blücher from Casement. Contains some handwritten amendments.

2pp.

8. 5 December 1914

Letter in German from Count Georg von Wedel, Chief of the English Department in German Foreign Office, to Count [Blücher], referring to Casement and an article in *The Spectator*.

2pp.

9. 14 December 1914

Typescript letter in German from [?], Hotel Esplanade, Budapesterstrasse 132, Berlin, to [Count Blücher], in German, regarding the organisation of a meeting and the Irish clergyman, [Father Crotty].

1p.

10. 4 January 1915

Typescript letter in German to Mr. Erzberger, leader of Catholic Centre Party in the Reichstag, referring to Father Crotty.

1p.

11. 19 January 1915

Letter from Casement, Limburg, to Count Blücher referring to hotel arrangements in Berlin, the weather, and developments in the war, stating "The French are getting it "in the neck." The Turks were fools (as I said at the outset) to go to the Caucasus. They should have simply held their frontier there'.

4pp.

12. 31 January 1915

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher regarding the inclusion of a letter in the Berlin press translated with 'a photo of F[indlay]'s "guarantee" and referring to the British parliament. He states 'If the Enemy has got any inkling of the step I am taking then they surely forestall me by a public pronouncement in Parliament declaring me a traitor ... I feel that the Enemy I am thus openly attacking is indeed the King of Beasts & has sharp claws—but I must go into the Lion's Den openly & boldly to make good my case'. Casement concludes 'They will possibly try ... to get the Norwegian Gov[ernmen]t to give me up to them on some [trumped] up charge, faked for the purpose—Anyhow adieu & may it be au revoir'.

4pp.

13. 2 February 1915

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher stating that he is lying low and requesting a typist.

2pp.

14. 29 [March] 1915

Letter from Casement, Berlin, to Count Blücher referring to his stay with the Baroness von Nordenflycht and arranging to meet.

3pp.

15. 5 November 1915

Letter from Casement, Christliches Hotel, Berlin, to Count Blücher, referring to his article printed with 'all of the usual printers' errors and omissions in the English text as published.'

2pp.

16. 9 December 1915

Receipt acknowledging the payment of two hundred marks to Casement by Count Blücher for four articles written at Blücher's request, and documenting the transfer of these funds to Father Crotty at the Missionhaus, Limburg, Af Lahn, 'to be expended as Father Crotty finds useful in his mission to the Irish soldiers in Germany'.

2pp.

17. 16 December 1915

Draft of letter from Casement, Fossen, Norway, to Count Georg von Wedel, Chief of the English Department in German Foreign Office, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, on the matter of Father Crotty. The draft includes extracts from recent letters received from the priest and refers to visiting prisoners of war and funding. Some lines are crossed out.

2pp.

18. 22 December 1915

Letter to Casement from Richard Meyer of the German Foreign Office, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, referring to the forwarding of letters by Casement for transmittance to America, and payment of expenses by the Foreign Office for any expenses incurred by Father Crotty in Limburg. In addition, the letter refers to problems in securing a permit for Crotty and acknowledges 'some difficulties from the military authorities.' Some lines are underlined in pencil.

4pp.

19. 23 December 1915

Letter from Father Crotty, Limburg, Af Lahn, Mission House, to Casement in Fossen, Norway, referring to various publications and press coverage of his mission in Germany with Irish prisoners of war. The letter also requests that Casement propose to Count von Wedel or the Kriegsministerium, that all Irish Catholic prisoners of war be brought to one camp, permission be granted for Crotty to visit his fellow countrymen in the various German camps, and a suitable place of worship be given.

4pp.

20. 2 January 1916

Letter from Casement, Hotel zum Goldenen Lowen, to Blücher requesting that he does not mention his name in the matter of Father Crotty, and referring to the priest's requests, stating 'The pretence set up is that F[at]he[r] Crotty is a "Redmondite"—but that is absolutely false'. In addition, the letter addresses other matters including the settling of bills, passing the time and travel plans.

8pp.

21. 4 January 1916

Letter from Casement to Blücher from Fossen in Norway repeating the request to keep his name out of the Father Crotty affair, confirming that the money issue has been settled and acknowledging the remaining matter of a permit for Crotty to visit his flock.

4pp.

22. 9 January 1916

Letter from Casement, Hotel zum Goldenen Lowen, to Countess Blücher referring to the enclosure of a letter from Father Crotty to be given to Count Blücher, stating 'I hope G[ebhard] will succeed in getting the matter settled in accordance with Father C[rotty]'s wishes and what is undoubtedly in the interest of Germany.'

3pp.

23. 13 January 1916

Letter from Casement, Hotel zum Goldenen Lowen, to Count Blücher, Berlin, stating that he has asked Father Crotty to call on the Count while in Berlin.

1p.

24. 26 January 1916

Letter from Casement, carer of Dr. Rudolf V. Hoesselin, Kuranstalt, Neuwittelsbach, München, to Blücher referring to his ill health and the publication of his articles in the German and French press. Casement opens the letter by stating 'I am forced to lie up for a long spell I fear owing to a complete breakdown-In my loneliness I think of still doing what I can to help.'

4pp.

25. 1 February 1916

Letter from Casement, Kuranstalt, Neuwittelsbach, München, to Countess Blücher, stating the following about Father Crotty, 'I am so sorry about Father Crotty-it is a great pity and I feel much for him-and for the poor men he will leave behind-now without a friend.' On the subject of keeping a diary he notes 'You know the charm of a diary is its simplicity. Its reality and the sense of daily life it conveys to the reader depends not on style, but on truth and sincerity. It should tell of things-but still more of the writer and his (or her) outlook on those things ... I kept one for the first three months or so of my stay in this country, & then I gave it up because I became too personal! I found myself writing things best left unwritten-even unthought-& since I could not tell the truth, even to myself, I dropped the [fun]-a year ago!'

4pp.

26. 1 February 1916

Letter from Casement, Kuranstalt, Neuwittelsbach, München, to Count Blücher, referring to an article he sent the Count and noting his poor health.

2pp.

27. 3 February 1916

Letter from Casement, Kuranstalt, Neuwittelsbach, München, to Count Blücher, referring to an article to be typed, the release of Dr. George Chatterton-Hill, and material requested by the Count.

2pp.

28. 4 February 1916

Extract from a letter by Father Crotty, Limburg, Af Lahn, copied in Casement's handwriting, referring to Crotty's return to Rome, his intention to request that the authorities reconsider their decision, travel arrangements, the response of Irish prisoners to the news and his concerns regarding safe access to other countries. On the matter of leaving Crotty notes that he has many enemies and states 'I must, however, say that I should regret leaving the poor boys who assure me that Germany could do them any greater injury than to deprive them of my ministrations. They would live on bread and water and work night and day if I should be left with them to the end. The poor fellows cried like children when I announced to them the news of my recall'. In addition, Crotty's fears about his movements after Germany are expressed 'You are aware of the feelings my coming here excited in the minds of the people in England, and ... you know of the letter which was published in the press concerning my mission to an enemies country and of the warning of the writer to the authorities to look upon my action as treasonable, and of regarding me as a traitor.'

2pp.

29. 7 February 1916

Typescript letter from Father Crotty, Missionshaus, Limburg, Af Lahn, to Countess [Blücher], reporting that he has secured a special hall as a place of worship for the Irish prisoners and that the government no longer requests his departure from Germany.

1p.

30. 9 February 1916

Letter from Casement, Munich, to Count Blücher, referring to his improving health, his feelings on the war, returning his typed material, and the question of a portrait by Fraulein Bercthold. On the subject of war, he states 'The only thing I really want is peace—peace all round. I am sick to death of all the rest—the hopeless folly of the whole thing—the organised madness—the scientific insanity—called “war”—“victory”—“glory”—how vain and hopeless it is.'

2pp.

31. 9 February 1916

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher, on the subject of Father Crotty and the question of his departure from Germany, stating 'In May last they (the military) were “down” on F[at]he[r] C[rotty] because he w[oul]d not be a recruiting sergeant for my Irish Brigade—He could not be. That w[oul]d have been a very wrongful thing for him to attempt & against his orders from the Pope. Then, because he would not do that, the military men said he was “no use” & they wanted to get him packed off.'

3pp.

32. 15 February 1916

Letter from Casement, Munich, to Count Blücher, referring to a trip to Berlin, stating 'I got a letter last night urging me strongly to go ... some alleged important business I can deal with it is said, only there.'

2pp.

33. 1 March 1916

Letter from Casement, Neuwittelsbach, München to Count Blücher, Wahlstatt, Hotel Esplanade, written in someone else's handwriting and marked with the word 'Dictated'. Refers to his health and helping the Count with his work.

2pp.

34. 12 March 1916

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher apologising for being unable to assist him in his good work since his return, referring to an article in The Times and his health.

2pp.

35. 4 April 1916

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher enclosing a receipt for fifty marks received by Casement from Blücher for the Irish Fund, received for an article written by request. Notes that he is travelling to Fossen in Norway with Father Crotty.

2 items

36. 8 April 1916

Letter from Father Crotty, Missionshaus, Limburg, Af Lahn, to Count Blücher, referring to the proposed arrival of English Catholic soldiers to the camp, Casement's health, Crotty's journey back to Limburg and the subject of the war. Crotty states 'Since my return I have heard that some few hundred English soldiers (all Catholics) are to come to this camp. Of course I shall look after them just as I do after my own countrymen although I came here for the Irish Prisoners only. A missionary has no choice of subjects.' Referring to the war, he says 'I sincerely trust we are near the end of this terrible war. We can hear the canon at Verdun—a distance of 250 kilometers. What a fearful slaughter must be taking place around the fortress!'

4pp.

37. n.d.

Letter from Casement, Eden Hotel, Berlin, to Count Blücher referring to meeting arrangements and his health.

4pp.

38. n.d.

Letter from Casement, Hospiz am Brandenburger, to Count Blücher, referring to calling to see him, having a wounded hand, an article in a Munich paper, and states 'Gaffney from Munich is here on his way to U.S.A. ... I hope he will be another nail in Wilson's coffin.'

3pp.

39. n.d.

Letter from Casement to Count Blücher referring to arrangements to meet and getting advice on his 'plan'.
3pp.

40. n.d.

Letter from Casement, Hotel Esplanade, Berlin, to Count Blücher, asking him to come to lunch, and referring to developments in Poland, stating "The news from Poland is excellent—and if the victory is as great as is believed then it should do much to bring this damnable war within sight of an end."
4pp.

41. n.d.

Letter from Casement, Continental Hotel, Berlin, to [Count Blücher] referring to an article in *The Daily Mail* on the declaration of the German Government. and states "This is good! The news appeared on the chief page of the issue—they must be in a fury. They followed it promptly by suspending my Irish papers—as a military measure. They did not prosecute—that would have raised a scandal & given further proof to the world".
7pp.

42. n.d.

Letter from M. referring to Frank and his companion.
3pp.

43. n.d.

Letter from M., Guildford, referring to the arrival of Frank stating 'he says he feels the whole country (Germany) is friendly to us'.
2pp.

II. Printed Material [1914–1916]

44. 1914

Printed pamphlet by Casement entitled *Ireland, Germany and Freedom of the Seas*.
2 items

45. 23 June 1916

Printed leaflet in German advertising a lecture by Dr. George Chatterton-Hill on Friday 30 June at Bernburger Strasse 22–23, entitled 'Irland und seine Bedeutung im Weltkreis'.
1p.

46. [October 1914]

Newspaper cutting entitled 'Sir Roger Casement's Visit To Berlin. "Offer" By Kaiser's Government'.
1p.

47. 2 August 1969

Newspaper cutting from *The Clare Champion* entitled 'Historic Casement Letters Presented to Library'.
1p.

III. Other Documents [1915–1916]

48. 27 November 1915

Typescript copy of an essay entitled 'A Pacific Blockade' by Casement referring to 'War Depression', and the issue of the neutrality of Greece. Paginated and contains a handwritten note which reads 'Sir Roger Casement 27/11/15.'
3pp.

49. 29 April 1916

Typescript document in German regarding Casement referring to his capture, outlining his career in the British Consulate in Central and South America between 1901 and 1913, his examination of the rubber industry and associated abuses, Mr. Morel of the Anti-Congo Society and the Union of Democratic Control, Casement's knighthood, the Putumayo Indians, Catholic Committee in England, Count Blücher, the non-conformist element in English religious life and the role of Dr. Harris, and the whereabouts of Count Blücher.
4pp.

50. n.d.

Note containing the name and address of Count Blücher.
1p

51. n.d.

Folder which contained the collection of letters with a handwritten note in German on the cover which reads 'Briefwechsel mit Roger Casement'.
1 item

Further Reading

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‘Casement and German Help’, in F. X. Martin, (ed.), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising.*

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Footnotes

- ¹ Ó Síocháin, S. & O'Sullivan, M. (eds.), *The Eyes of Another Race—Roger Casement's Congo Report and 1903 Diary*, 2003, pp. 7–8.
- ² Sawyer, R. (ed.), *Roger Casement's Diaries 1910. The Black and the White*, 1997, pp. 28–29.
- ³ *ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
- ⁴ Ó Síocháin, S. & O'Sullivan, M. (eds.), 2003, pp. 4–5.
- ⁵ Mitchell, A., *Casement*, 2003, p. 61.
- ⁶ *ibid.*, p. 97.
- ⁷ Mackey, H.O. (ed.), *The Crime Against Europe. The Writings & Poetry of Roger Casement*, 1958, p. 148.
- ⁸ Doerries, R.R., *Prelude to the Easter Rising—Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany*, 2000, pp. 11–12.
- ⁹ Curry, C.E. (foreword), *Diaries of Sir Roger Casement. His Mission to Germany and the Findlay Affair*, 1922, p. 162.
- ¹⁰ Doerries, R.R., pp. 17–24.
- ¹¹ Mitchell, A., p. 172.
- ¹² Mackey, H.O. (ed.), p. 152.
- ¹³ Mitchell, A., p. 172.
- ¹⁴ Curry, C.E. (foreword), p. 88.
- ¹⁵ Reid, B.L., *The Lives of Roger Casement*, 1976, pp. 236, 337. The memoir was entitled *An English Wife in Berlin. A Private Memoir of Events, Politics, and Daily Life in Germany Throughout the War and the Social Revolution of 1918*, 1920.
- ¹⁶ Clare County Archives, PP/1/2. Letter from Roger Casement to Count Blücher, 12 January 1914.
- ¹⁷ Clare County Archives, PP/1/6. Letter from Roger Casement to Count Blücher, 3 December 1914.
- ¹⁸ Clare County Archives, PP/1/28. Copy of letter from Father Crotty in Casement's own handwriting, 4 February 1916.
- ¹⁹ Clare County Archives, PP/1/25. Letter from Roger Casement to Countess Blücher, 1 February 1916.
- ²⁰ Mackey, H.O. (ed.), p. 226. Written by Casement and transcribed in the memoir of Father James McCarroll, prison chaplain at Pentonville Prison.
- ²¹ National Library of Ireland, MS. 27,453 (a), Roger Casement to Henry Foley, 3 April 1896.
- ²² Clare County Archives, PP/1/30. Roger Casement to Blücher, 9 February 1916.
- ²³ Clare County Archives, PP/1/25. Roger Casement to Countess Blücher, 1 February 1916.

Brandenburger Tor
5 Nov 1915
Gebhard
Here is 4
Frank

People! Just a copy
Lay - but don't say
it's as soon as I become myself
it'll be very flat to me that
I'm in being acted
- that is all

Nassauer Hof, 56.
Limburg a/dehn
Tuesday 12 Jan 1914
great old chop.
I hope you have
me here and of course
I'll be there too

CONTINENTAL HOTEL
L. ADLON H. KLICKS
BERLIN
Dear Countess
The
I hope you
will find me
at the
Hotel
Continental
in Berlin
on the
12th of
January
1914

'You know the charm of a diary is its simplicity. Its reality and the sense of daily life it conveys to the reader depends not on style, but on truth and sincerity. It should tell of things—but still more of the writer and his (or her) outlook on those things ... I kept one for the first three months or so of my stay in this country, & then I gave it up because I became too personal! I found myself writing things best left unwritten—even unthought—& since I could not tell the truth, even to myself, I dropped the [fun]—a year ago!