

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 381.....

Witness

The Hon. George Gaven Duffy,
81 Bushy Park Road,
Terenure, Dublin.

Identity

Irish Envoy in Italy and France 1920-1921;
Signatory of the Anglo-Irish Treaty 6/12/1921.

Subject

- (a) Copy of "Lecture on Sir Roger Casement".
- (b) Covering letter from Hon. George G. Duffy.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.515

Form BSM 2

MATERIAL COLLECTED BY BUREAU REGARDING ROGER CASEMENT.

- A. Personal Statements of Evidence.
 - B. Contemporary Documents.
 - C. Press Cuttings made during the
lifetime of the Bureau.
 - D. Notes on files relating to persons
who have not given evidence.
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Material Collected by Bureau regarding Roger Casement.

A. PERSONAL STATEMENTS OF EVIDENCE.

- W. S. 4 - Diarmaid Lynch - Distribution in 1915 of a pamphlet containing the texts of a series of articles written anonymously by Roger Casement some years earlier and published in The Gaelic American, New York, and later in Irish Freedom.
- W. S. 85 - Bulmer Hobson - Roger Casement, 1904-1914.
- W. S. 86 - Bulmer Hobson - Comment on R. Monteith's "Casement's Last Adventure".
- { W. S. 117 - Maurice Moriarty - Landing of Casement, Monteith & Bailey
and annex to W.S. 117. Banna, Co. Kerry, 1916.
- W. S. 123 - William Mullins - S. S. "Aud" and Roger Casement.
- W. S. 126 - Jack McGaley - Arrest of Casement and Bailey, Holy Week, 1916.
- W. S. 168 - Joseph Melinn - Landing of Casement and Monteith, Easter, 1916.
- W. S. 381 - G. Gavan Duffy - Copy of "Lecture on Roger Casement" in 1950.
- W. S. 537 - Michael McDunphy - Note on the painting of The Trial of Roger Casement, 1916, by Sir John Lavery.
- W. S. 551 - Very Rev. T. Canon
Duggan - The Casement Brigade in Germany.
- { W. S. 558 - Rev. Fr. J.M. Cronin - His recollections of Casement's
and annex to W.S. 558. last days in Pentonville Prison, including his reconciliation with the Catholic Church.
- W. S. 1365 - Bulmer Hobson - His memories of Roger Casement.

B. CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS.

C.D. 173 - Dr. Herbert Mackey - Passages from the manuscript written by Roger Casement in the condemned cell at Pentonville Prison.

C.D. 1 - Photostat copy of letter dated 1/6/14 from Roger Casement to Colonel Warburton re training of the Belfast Corps of the Irish Volunteers.

C.D. 45 - George Gavan Duffy - Casement Documents:

(a) Correspondence and manuscript:

Mrs. J.R. Green: - Writings before Execution;

Gaffney: - Casement in Germany;

MacNeill: - The Unionist Machine.

(b) Correspondence re Irish Volunteers.

(c) Counsel's papers in the trial of Roger Casement, 1916.

C. PRESS CUTTINGS MADE DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE BUREAU.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 38F

W.S. 381

Lecture on Sir Roger Casement given by the Hon. George Gavan Duffy to London-Irish Gaels, at 14 Parnell Square, Dublin, on 16th April, 1950.

Roger Casement was born on 1st September, 1864, at Sandycove on Dublin Bay. His mother died when he was very young and most of his youth was spent with an uncle at Ballycastle in County Antrim. He was not yet fifty-two when he was executed at Pentonville Prison on 3rd August, 1916.

Roger was of a dark and rather Spanish type of countenance, handsome, very tall, a man of most distinguished appearance. The retainer of one of his old friends in the North wrote to him in prison: "My tall, dark, beautiful gentleman, my heart is broke since I heard they had taken you", and that description of the old servant just fits the man. He was a man of the highest integrity, and of the highest courage. He was a man of exceptional personal charm, a beautiful character, one of the most generous I have ever known, specially interested in the poor and the oppressed. He was, for instance, keenly enthusiastic about bringing relief to Gorumba during times of great distress and starvation. He was impetuous and determined. As to his judgment, opinions will naturally differ. He had travelled widely and could be a fascinating talker. He had, of course, made history by his Congo and Putomayo revelations. His interest in Irish affairs had waned when the Parnell split occurred, but it was keenly revived by the Boer War, when he was in South Africa.

He left the British Consular Service finally in June, 1913. As it happened, the Volunteers were started in the

on my return from him, and our last interview will ever

identity of those names is ^{fairly} probably well known to-day, I think the best course is to repeat to you just what Sir Roger himself gave out, either in summary form, or, where the matter is of special importance, in his own words. There is, of course, not a word in his statement, nor was there a word at the trial, to suggest any difference with John Devoy, who, as is ^{now} well known, was no admirer of his. To his own story I shall add only two or three details about the trial itself, which may be of interest as not being general public property.

In 1916 I was a London solicitor. As His Excellency here (Mr. Nunan) could tell you, quite a number of Irish boys had the misfortune to have me as their solicitor at the time of conscription, with the result that my able defence secured them two years' hard. I was spending Easter in 1916 with my family in a remote part of Tírconnaill when the wildest rumours reached us of strange events in Dublin, of which the occupation of Dublin Castle by the German Army was only one tit-bit.

The news of Roger Casement's arrest in Kerry on Good Friday, April 21st, had been suppressed; then a paper during the week following Easter announced it officially. I knew that Roger might have difficulty in finding a solicitor in London to defend him in the English atmosphere of the day, so, having known him earlier in County Antrim and in London, I went back to London. I had, in fact, received the year before, from a friend of his, three cases of his papers which the friend thought it unwise to retain and ^{he} wanted to dispose of them. I remember spending an arduous week-end with Art O'Brien, whom I called in, going through these documents to see what might be utterly seditious in them. I went ^{back} to London ^{and} on 1st May, 1916, I applied in writing to see him

as his solicitor. I got no reply until 8th May, when permission to see him in the Tower was given to me verbally, and on 9th and 11th May I had two very long interviews with him at the Tower of London.

I may say that I had great difficulty in finding leading counsel to defend him, and eventually I resorted to the Four Courts in Dublin to obtain a competent man, unafraid of English opinion; and although that man differed in every conceivable way from Sir Roger's attitude on Irish affairs, and from my own, he was an Irishman who understood his client's outlook perfectly, and it is due to him to say that he served his client brilliantly and loyally to the end. F.E. Smith and three other eminent counsel appeared for the prosecution, but in my judgment, Sergeant Sullivan, who was an able and expert lawyer and quite fearless, dominated the proceedings. Although he was one of the three Irish Sergeants-at-Law, that is the leaders of the Irish Bar, he had never taken silk in England, where he was only a member of the Junior Bar and a stranger in the English Court. In a crowded court he had, with his mass of papers, a very cramped seat in the second row of the Junior Bar; the front seat on his side, reserved for the Senior Bar, was empty. It did not seem to occur to them to invite him to take a seat in the empty King's Counsel bench, where he would have had plenty of room.

On my first visit to Sir Roger in the Tower I did not meet him in a reception room, but was taken straight to his cell, a dreadful gloomy place on ground level, where two warders were guarding him. Scotland Yard knew that he had ^{not} sent for me, and, I suppose, they were suspicious and arranged for me to confront him in the cell, in order to observe what would happen. I ^{have} heard, but cannot vouch ^{for it,} that he had sent for a solicitor in London, who refused to appear

necessarily abbreviated. I shall act merely as his chronicler, with only an occasional interpolation where something needs to be explained.

Here is Sir Roger's own story. In June, 1914, he went to the United States. His purpose was to get arms and money for the Volunteers. He did not anticipate an early outbreak of war. In August, 1914, after the outbreak of war, he published in America "Ireland, Germany and the Freedom of the Seas", preaching open rebellion. To him, the Home Rule Bill, passed by the royal assent on September 14th, 1914, was "a promissory note payable after death", a measure designed to secure Irish recruits for the British Army, while they would get nothing in return. He looked upon the war as an English attack on Germany, made for the purpose of destroying the German fleet and German trade, ^{through} ~~the~~ fighting to be done by the French, the Russians and the Irish. He was determined that Ireland must remain neutral in the struggle.

In October, 1914, he went to Germany against the advice of the Clan na Gael and of various friends in the States, and afterwards he always took sole responsibility for his visit to Germany. He went to Germany for the express purpose of trying to keep Ireland out of the war. He hoped to stop recruiting in Ireland for the British Army, by getting from Germany a declaration that she had no intention of injuring Ireland if she won, and desired for the Irish people only national freedom and national prosperity. What finally decided him to go was an article in a Liverpool daily paper, which expressed the hope that King George would go to Ireland to open the Irish Parliament, and then foreshadowed the enlistment of 300,000 Irishmen, when the English could stay at home and develop their trade. That

the Treaty very important, as involving our recognition by a

great power, thus putting us internationally on the map.

In December, 1914, and January, 1915, Sir Roger visited the camp at Limburg several times to broach his plan to the men, and his efforts were continued by certain other persons during the ensuing months.

By March, 1915, Sir Roger thought that the war was going so badly for Germany that she was unlikely to be able to furnish us with any military aid. In April, 1915, a messenger from Ireland reached him, who urged him to renewed efforts to form the Brigade and who went on to Limburg to help him in that scheme. In May, 1915, Casement went again to Limburg to renew his own efforts.

By this time the Brigade numbered 52, later increased to 55 men, only a small proportion of the prisoners-of-war. For many, the soldiers' oath had proved the stumbling block, and, though Sir Roger does not say so himself, these men had probably never heard of him at home, and were wary of the man who was a stranger to them and was making a very strange proposal.

The Brigade men were now moved to another camp at Zossen, and put into uniform with special quarters, where they would be free from molestation by the unfriendly elements.

The German Government refused to publish the Treaty unless an Irish Brigade were recruited of at least 200 men. By this time, May, 1915, it was perfectly clear to all concerned that the attempt to form an Irish Brigade was a failure, and Sir Roger's main hope of the Brigade now was to be able to use its existence to help to secure a hearing after the peace. In June, 1915, Casement told the messenger from Dublin to tell Headquarters that he did not think it possible

