

Where Casement Would Have Stood Today

Being the substance of an address delivered to the Roger Casement Sinn Fein Club on the 20th Anniversary of Casement's death

Jack White

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When Mr. Fowler was kind enough to invite me to give this address he described it as the Casement Commemoration panegyric.

I accepted with pride, because I knew Roger Casement, not perhaps intimately but with streaks of intimacy, when we travelled together and stayed in the same hotels during the formation and inspection of the first Irish volunteers or listened to Cathal O'Byrne's Antrim ballads in the house of F J Bigger at Belfast.

Yet it is not my intention to deliver a panegyric. I believe that no man alive or dead can be truth fully portrayed by a panegyric, which I take to mean a pæan of undiluted praise, and I have the strongest and deepest objection to the all too common Irish habit of breaking a man's heart by misunderstanding while he is alive and canonising him as soon as he is dead. I might almost say, because he is dead.

I think it is a finer tribute to Casement to treat him as what he was, a great and typically Irish human figure, an Irishman who took the leading part which he did take in the birth of the new Ireland because all through his life, he was being spiritually reborn as an Irishman himself from the physical womb, so to speak, of his English and Imperial connections.

That is why he felt so acutely the depth of the conflict between Britain and Ireland, because the conflict was not only outside him but inside himself. This is an aspect of Roger Casement's war-torn life, which I believe I understand because I share it. I too have been reborn not of the flesh but from the potent magic of the Irish spirit, nowhere stronger than on Ulster soil, from an Englishman, or an Ulster planter, into an Irishman, and I know that the rebirth entails no light pangs of labour. Casement describes this travail of soul in himself very movingly in a letter to Mrs. J. R. Green, dated 20th April 1906. He writes *"If things go as I wish I shall be back in Africa before long. It is a mistake for an Irishman to mix himself up with the English. He is bound to do one of two things-either to go to the wall if he remains Irish or to become an Englishman himself. You see I very nearly did become one once. At the Boer War time, I had been away from Ireland for years, out of touch with everything native to my heart and mind, trying hard to do my duty, and every fresh act of duty made me appreciably nearer the ideal of the Englishman. I had accepted Imperialism. British rule was to be accepted at all costs, because it was the best for everyone under the sun, and those who opposed that extension ought rightly to be 'smashed.'* I was on the high road

to being a regular Imperialist jingo-although at heart underneath all, and unsuspected almost by myself, I had remained an Irishman. Well, the war, [i.e., the Boer War] gave me qualms at the end-the concentration camps bigger ones-and finally, when up in those lonely Congo forests where I found Leopold” -he refers, of course, to King Leopold’s crimes against the black workers in the Congo rubber plantations- “I found also myself, the incorrigible Irishman.”

Now what does Roger Casement, up against the horrors of man’s inhumanity to man which he witnessed in the Belgian Congo, mean by finding himself an *“incorrigible Irishman.”*

Surely he means an incorrigible hater of tyranny, an incorrigible lover of freedom and human brotherhood, and that at any time or age means an incorrigible rebel translated into modern language and conditions, up against the inhuman and would-be international tyranny of Fascism, it is not far from meaning an incorrigible Socialist, for as freedom broadens down from precedent to precedent so do the enemies of freedom close their hellish ranks to deny and defeat it. Can there be any doubt where Roger Casement would have stood to-day in the great fight between tyranny and human freedom and equality in which he stood so manfully in his own day for the oppressed negroes of the Congo, and the freedom and dignity among the nations of his own oppressed and subjugated Ireland. The causes of oppressed nations and oppressed classes were then two causes, and Casement stood for them separately, as it were, in separate compartments. But another Irishman, James Connolly, saw their essential unity. *“The cause of oppressed nations and oppressed classes,”* said Connolly, *“is one and the same.”* Now in international Fascism, aggression against free nations, and oppression and exploitation of the working class have joined in one evil whole, for all to see. I ask you what would Roger Casement, who fought for the tortured and exploited Congo negroes, have thought of the crime against the independence of Abyssinna and the crushing by poison-gas of that gallant resistance of her badly-equipped people? What would Roger Casement have thought, and where would he have stood in the inevitable sequel, when the League of Nations failed to check, and ultimately condoned, this hideous crime, and international Fascism felt itself strong enough to make its insolent attack on the freely elected democratic government of Spain? Would he have stood on the side of Monarchist generals and cosmopolitan millionaires trying to stamp out freedom by the aid of infidel Moorish mercenaries? Or would he have stood with Connolly for the freedom of Spain, through the freedom and rise of status of its working class, as Connolly stood for the freedom of Ireland through the freedom of every Irish man and woman? There can be no doubt in any sane mind of the answer to that question, and it is fitting that we, met here as we are to honour Roger Casement’s memory, should pay him living honour by our living contribution by continuing the cause for which he lived and died, rather than here dead lip-service.

“In those lonely Congo forests where I found Leopold, I also found myself - the incorrigible Irishman.” But &endash; someone may ask &endash; are not many Englishmen and members of all nations lovers of freedom and fighters against tyranny? Undoubtedly they are, yet I think we have only to look at recent history, and to investigate a peculiar quality of Irish psychology at its best, to see that the Irish have some claim to supremacy as incorrigible rebels.

An Englishman may see tyranny and hate it, with his whole soul, but a certain discretion of mind remains in control of his soul and often limits his action against the tyranny within limits of prudence, not perhaps for any base motive of self-interest, or fear of the consequences to himself, so much as from unwillingness to put himself in the limelight and face the publicity inseparable from the exposure.

There is in the best type of Irishman-and Casement had it in supreme degree-a certain noble romanticism, a sense of the drama of the fight of good against evil, which supports him with a sense of the dramatic even if he stands single-handed against the world. The English with their truly wonderful team spirit and their fear of singularity or eccentricity, cannot understand it, and regard it as vanity, as in smaller types it undoubtedly is, and often vanity of a most disruptive and destructive nature. Perhaps there is no greater curse in Ireland than your 'half-smart man,' with more intelligence and individuality perhaps than the average team-disciplined English-man, but not enough to give him real vision. This quality then in smaller types makes them "too big to be used and too small to be useful," but in a man of Casement's calibre it lifts him above himself, and for a great cause makes him careless of himself and his own safety, while positively enjoying the highest expression of his own spiritual being. He becomes identified with his idea and enjoys something of the bliss of union with something greater than himself, which the Saints enjoy in time Beatific Vision. I shall have something to say later on about Casement's death-I was within 50 yards of him in the Pentonville Hospital when he was hanged-and the strong sense I got then that this sense of something greater, this ecstasy or standing outside himself, supported Casement in death. For the moment I want to stress this peculiar Irish quality of which I think he was an outstanding example, this sense of his own drama in taking his destined part in a great world-drama. I don't think the English ever understand it and we don't always understand it ourselves. In small men it may sink to love of the lime-light; but in great men I think it may rise to what Christ meant when he told us not to hide our light under a bushel but to set it on a candlestick. And even the gallows proved nothing but a noble candlestick for Roger Casement.

I am going to return again and again, as to what I believe is called the "leit motif" running through a musical theme, to those words of Casement's, "*In those lonely Congo forests where I found Leopold, I found also myself, the incorrigible Irishman,*" and I am going to do so with a purpose which you will see before I have finished, a purpose which will call upon you Irishmen gathered here to-night, you Irishmen whose lives and work are cast for the present in England, to honour Casement's memory in the most loyal and living way that is possible, namely, by continuing Casement's work.

What was it that Casement found in those Congo forests? To quote from the recent life of Casement written by Mr. Geoffrey Parmiter: "The volume of reports concerning the horrible conditions on the Congo was such, and public opinion in England was so inflamed that on 8th August, 1903, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, sent a circular despatch to the English representatives accredited to the Governments who were parties to the Act of Berlin, for communication to those Governments. This despatch stated that the attention of the Government had been repeatedly called to the conditions existing in the Independent State of the Congo, both as regards the ill treatment of natives and the existence of trade monopolies. A distinction was drawn between isolated acts of cruelty committed by individuals and a system of administration which involved systematic cruelty and oppression. It was pointed out that it had been proved in the local courts that many acts of cruelty had been committed, but in view of the conditions it was fair to assume that the actual number of cases of cruelty far exceeded the number of convictions obtained.

The reply of the Government of the Independent State of the Congo was couched in a tone of sarcastic impudence and its reference to the lack of adequate evidence in support of the charges made, left Lord Lansdowne in no doubt as to what he should do.

Roger Casement was already in the Congo before the receipt of the Belgian reply; he had been sent there by Lord Lansdowne to investigate conditions and report on them as soon as possible. I can only give short extracts indicating the appalling conditions which he found.

"While at Bohobo Casement heard that a large influx from the I..... district had taken place into the country behind G..... and thither he at once repaired, a distance of some 20 miles. He found that these people had fled from the white man and taken up their abode with their friends. 'They went on to declare,' writes Casement, 'when asked why they had fled, that they had endured such ill-treatment at the hands of the Government officials and the Government soldiers in their own country that life had become intolerable, and that nothing remained for them at home hut to be killed for failure to bring in a certain amount of rubber, or to die from starvation or exposure in their attempts to satisfy the demands made upon them. 'The statements made to me by these people were of such a nature that I could not believe them to be true. The fact remained, however, that they had certainly abandoned their homes and all that they possessed, had travelled a long distance, and now pre-ferred a species of mild servitude among the KÉÉ. to remaining in their own country!' He found these unfortunate refugees, industrious and peaceable folk, engaged in various trades. Casement, followed by his bull-dog, entered one of the blacksmith's sheds in which were working ten women, six men, and five lads and girls, and sat down, when five men came over to speak to him. He asked them why they had left their homes, and sitting there in that rude hut, carefully and patiently he took notes of their answers, repeatedly asking for certain parts to be gone over again. They all gave as a reason for leaving their homes that it was the rubber tax levied by the Government posts. They were referring to the system which was prevalent, whereby the natives were forced to bring in certain definite quantities of rubber a week. The rubber was not paid for, neither was the labour of collecting it, and if the natives failed to bring in their quota they were severely punished. No effort was made on the part of the authorities to conserve the rubber supply, with the consequence that the rubber gathering labours of the natives became increasingly more difficult and burdensome. When Casement asked them if they would like to return home, they said that they loved their country, but they dared not return home. At another group of houses, an old chief gave him further details of the iniquities practised by the white men, the Belgian administrators.

"He told Casement that the natives were sent out to get rubber, and, if they returned with an insufficient amount, a European officer would stand them in lines one behind the other and shoot them all with one bullet. This took place actually in the stations of the Europeans, and more often than not was done by white men. In all the stations round about, Casement gathered further evidence of the abominable conditions in which the natives were forced to live and work, and his soul must have revolted within him. But in the later part of his journey he came across things more unspeakable than anything of which hitherto he had knowledge. That his experiences during his Congo journey had a profound effect on him, we are well aware from his diaries and letters to his friends, but we can only vaguely guess what this effect must have been. Reading the cold print of Casement's report to-day is disturbing enough, but to have heard the oral testimony and to have seen the living evidence must have been a rare torture to one of Casement's temper and sensitiveness."

Casement writes in his report " a careful investi-gation of the conditions of native life confirmed the truth of the statements made to me that the great de-crease in the population, the dirty and ill-kept towns and the complete absence of goats, sheep or fowl-once very plentiful in this country-were to be attributed, above all else, to the continued effort made during many

years to compel the natives to work India rubber. Large bodies of native troops had formerly been quartered in the district, and the punitive measures undertaken to this end, had endured for a considerable period. During the course of these operations there had been much loss of life accompanied, I fear, by a somewhat general mutilation of the dead, as proof that the soldiers had done their duty. Elsewhere Casement quotes a statement by an officer of the Government service, that each time a corporal was sent out to get rubber, so many cartridges were given to him. He had to bring back all not used, and for every one used, he must bring back a right hand. If a cartridge was expended at an animal in hunting, a hand would be cut from a living man to make good the deficiency.

Such were the conditions which Casement found in the Belgian Congo. His report was published as a White Paper in 1904, and Casement leaped from obscurity to international fame.

Naturally enough the report was not favourably received at the Belgian Court, and a determined effort was made to discredit Casement, even the Irish-Americans joining in the attack. But the fury of these continuing onslaughts only increased Roger Casement's reputation and prestige. On 30th June 1905, he received the CMG. His report written in such moderate language is, with E. D. Morel's "Red Rubber," a classic indictment of the conditions in the Congo under the august rule of Leopold II, King of the Belgians. Out of the storm of protest which the publication of the report aroused, was born the Congo Reform Association. This association worked for nearly ten years to bring about a better state of affairs in the Congo basin.

I have sketched, by quotations selected from Mr. Parmiter's book, the part which Casement played in ex-posing perhaps the greatest scandal of the last half of the nineteenth century. At the time I had been through the South African War and, though I had experienced one or two outbursts of the "incorrigible Irishman," and made some feeble protests against having to ride up to a Boer farm and give the woman of the house 20 minutes to put a few sticks of furniture on a wagon before we set light to her house, I did not connect up all the crimes and cruel-ties of Capitalistic Imperialism in one evil whole, derived from one cause.

When I heard about the Congo atrocities, I remember being bewildered and surprised. Surely, I thought, the men responsible for such inhuman conduct must be exceptions, degenerated below the norm of the human species by too long a stay in a tropical climate or segregation from gentle humanising influences. Vast as the organised devastation of Kitchener had been in South Africa to starve the Boers into surrender, we had not killed or mutilated human beings except in fair fight; we had only slaughtered all the animals, burnt all the houses, and carried the women off to concentration camps, where we gave a specially low scale of rations to those whose husbands were still in the field against us, and where actually the number of women who died of disease was double the number of their men we killed in battle.

Occasionally I had stirred in my doped sleep and gone to sleep again; nor did the revelations of the Congo do more than make me congratulate myself with truly British Pharisaism that we, the British Army and Empire-exploiting class were not as other men were or even as these degenerate Belgians.

In passing, let me say I am still a little puzzled as to how the British as a race will come off in the great Day of Judgement of the people and the rulers of the people that has obviously begun. I think it is true that both as regards humanity and justice the British in their dealings with subject peoples do maintain a code of decency within limits, which may mitigate the judgement that is coining to them and all the rulers of the earth. But I think it is equally true that the British ruling class combine with a certain code of justice and decency, a cunning in compromise and

a hellish skill in ruling by dividing subject nations and classes against themselves, which have now reached their limits and, having been their strength, will now be their undoing.

They of all people have reduced "Divide et impera", "Divide and rule," to a fine art. In their dealings with subject nations, the partition of Ireland is the outstanding instance of their method. They planted their henchmen in Ulster and supported their own privileged class in organising those henchmen in the Ulster volunteers to resist not only the will of the Irish people but the law constitutionally enacted by the British Parliament. Let us never forget that it was in indignant resistance to that Fascist Revolt—the first outcrop of naked Fascism in the world, organised by a privileged class and supported mutinously by the officer class at the Curragh, that Roger Casement first came prominently to the front in Irish politics. The rulers of Britain hanged him, while they honoured Edward Carson. Lord Birkenhead, née Galloper Smith, helped to hound Casement to his death. Well as Padraic Colum wrote:

They shall die to dust
Where you have died to fire,
Roger Casement.

Nor, I believe shall we have long to wait to see the feet of clay, on which all the Empires stand precariously today, crumble into dust. Perhaps for the British Empire the partition of Ireland may prove the pit into which it will fall. Already we hear rumours of Defence Pacts with the South, and newspapers, close in the councils of the Government and the General Staff, hint broadly at the necessity share in that work, in the raising and drilling of the Citizen Army—Ireland alone in Western Europe repudiated as a reborn nation the mechanical slaughter of the last great war and saved herself from conscription. The fitting climax would be for Ireland to become united in united resistance to inclusion in the next great war, not for her to achieve a spurious unity for the convenience of the strategic needs of the Empire. Casement had a favourite parable, expressing the relations of Ireland and the Empire concerning a little fish called a Diodon, which is occasionally swallowed alive and whole by a shark. And the Diodon has been known to gnaw its way through the shark's belly, emerging alive and unhurt, but leaving the shark dead. The implication of that parable is plain, if we are to be continuous with Casement's estimate of the relations of Ireland with the Empire. Our job is to gnaw through the shark, to make no terms with British Imperialism, not to gain our unity and a deceptive pretence of freedom by lying down quietly in-side the shark's belly.

I have spoken of the skill of the British ruling class in ruling subject nations by division. I have given the partition of Ireland as the supreme illustration.

Now let me say a word about their similar skill in dividing subject classes. The names of MacDonald and Thomas, coaxed, flattered or indirectly bought to betray their class, immediately suggest themselves. And the recent fate of Thomas suggests that the betrayal of his own class as a prelude to being the agent of the ruling class in the economic war on Ireland was a double though inter-connected crime which brought its own nemesis in disgrace and exposure. I have been struck by other instances of a nemesis which seems to pursue the enemies of Ireland and strike, with a strange fitness of punishment to crime, at those who slander Ireland's champions.

Thus it was Basil Thompson who circulated filthy stories about Casement before and during his trial. And it was Basil Thompson, who met his own downfall for alleged sexual improprieties committed in Hyde Park. To say the least of it, to be the instrument of the British ruling class in persecution of Ireland or Ireland's champions seems unlucky.

We must now pursue our enquiry. As I said at the beginning this is not a panegyric of Casement; it is an analysis. It seeks to be more than an analysis. It seeks to be a synthesis of those qualities and affiliations which Casement showed in his time, carried forward to show us where Casement would stand if he were alive today, so that though his body has smouldered away in quicklime in the yard of the Pentonville hanging shed, we may honour his memory by co-operating with his continuing spirit. The spirit of the dead continues; in their own personal survival I hope and am inclined to believe, but without doubt in their influence on the lives of the living. Their influence can be for good or evil. If they are canonised and blindly worshipped, if it is regarded as heresy or blasphemy to add a jot or a tittle to their lives, they become mummified and petrified in their own past and a positive obstruction to the continuance of their own work in a growing, changing future.

I am not of the faith of the majority of this audience, yet I think most of you will agree with me that, if the deep truths of religion are to be preserved to-day, what is needed above all is a religion, which, while standing firm as a rock on the eternal verities, realises that the outer firm of those eternal verities changes with the evolution of society. The fact of aristocracy may be an eternal verity, but that aristocracy cannot be dependent on birth, wealth and privilege, and any church which identifies itself with the aristocracy of wealth and privilege must inevitably betray its mission to lead the people into social forms which are a fuller expression of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Casement was an aristocrat of the spirit; in appearance he was kingly and he had a courtesy of manner to high or low which was truly royal. Yet his was the kind of aristocracy that led to the gallows as the kingly spirit of Christ led Him to the gallows.

We hear stories of the "reds," as Lord Rothermere calls them, in Spain, firing at statues or images of Christ. I do not know if such stories are true, though I do know that many of the stories of the Rothermere press have been proved on investigation to be shameless and deliberate lies. But even if this sad thing has happened, which is the greater blasphemy? To fire at a stone or marble statue of Christ or to bring thousands of Mahommedan mercenaries to butcher living men, alleged to be made in God's image, because they defend their own freely elected democratic government?

Life never stands still and if we embalm the dead in the ceremonies of their own time alone, we rob not only ourselves but them of their influence, which, to live and grow, must obey the first law of life, adaptation to changing environment.

Therefore let us remember and understand the wise and penetrating words of Connolly, "The true disciple is he who goes beyond his master," and link them up with the words of a greater than Connolly, which have the same essential meaning, "for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life."

I think what Casement found, and what every man of any experience finds, who faces life with his eyes honestly open, is that Capitalism, though it may worship God in the letter-in the forms and ceremonial observances of religion -in the spirit worships Mammon and for the motive of profit will commit the most frightful, almost incredible crimes, against God and man.

That is what Casement found in the Congo. May we not assume that it was his reaction from these crimes committed for material profit, and his realisation that the same motive of profit underlay the South African and all Imperialist wars, that made Casement realise himself as "an incorrigible Irishman." Even Mr. Parmiter, who has written a very fine and sympathetic life of him finds him somewhat too incorrigible for his taste.

"It was this championship of the oppressed," writes Mr. Parmiter, "coupled with a devoted love for his native land, Ireland, that was his guiding star all through his life but he suffered from the inherent weakness and warped judgement of the fanatic."

How familiar one becomes with that note of patronising regret, applied by those who make a nice compromise between God and Mammon to those whose natures are so "fanatical" that they realise it is not possible to serve both. I, myself, have one criticism and only one to make of Casement. He loved his native land better than he loved humanity. Though he recognised the international bearings of Ireland's problem, he recognised it in terms of the balance of Imperial Power and not in terms of the rise of International Socialism to destroy all oppressive Empires. He sought to obtain a guarantee of Ireland's independence by offsetting the German against the British Empire. I knew what was in his mind before the declaration of the Great War from his articles and personal talks with him.

Casement wished to serve Ireland, not the Kaiser, but if I am to present my admiration of the man with sincerity, I must not withhold the criticism which I think is justified in the light of the past, the present and the future. Casement did not see the interdependence of Ireland's national freedom with the freedom of the International Working Class. He might have said with Connolly: "We serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland," but he did not see that the inner division of competitive anarchy and class subjection, which constitutes the heart of capitalism, must first be reproduced on a world scale, before any country can be free in the freedom of the whole of its people. He did not see that there can be no peace under capitalism.

He did not live to see, nor in his failure to analyse the essence of capitalism did he foresee, the horrid phenomenon of Fascism, trying to maintain the profits of Capitalism by crimes and cruelties as black as those which he exposed in the Congo, but extending over Europe, Asia and Africa. But there can be no shadow of doubt where Casement, who stood, though in separate compartments, for the freedom of oppressed nations and oppressed classes, would have stood against the Fascism that seeks the permanent enslavement of both.

Is it too much to say today that a knowledge of Marxian philosophy, sufficient to give spiritual anchorage in the swelling world chaos and to see the destiny and mission of the working class in emerging from that chaos, is necessary to keep any sensitive and imaginative person from despair?

Mr. L. S. Woolf, a Liberal publicist, writes in his introduction to "The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War":-

"During the war of 1914 to 1918 Europe took a big step on the road back to barbarism; in the years 1923 to 1933 it has taken another and even bigger step. What we are now witnessing and living through is a rebellion of all that is savage in us, of all the savages in our midst, against civilisation. The war was the first stage in this decline and fall of Western Civilisation, and the shock which that war gave to the whole of our society offered an opportunity to the barbarians to carry their work of destruction a stage further. We are at present in the middle of this second stage. The barbarians are already in the ascendancy; they have broken through the frontiers of civilisation and they are now destroying it from within."

In the above quotation Mr. Woolf tacitly identifies civilisation with capitalism; and having failed to grasp that capitalism was always inherently barbarous, is reduced to despair by the increasing violence and barbarism accompanying its decay, and the efforts of Fascism to maintain its decaying and outworn existence.

He sees with horror the war waged by Fascism on all liberty and all culture; but he fails to see the new forces that are arising in the midst of the breakdown, and gaining new strength in the battle to solve the problems which the existing ruling class has failed to solve, and carry forward human culture to new heights.

Casement's social analysis did not take Marx into account, but his fidelity to Ireland earned him the glorious bodily death of a martyr, not the death of the soul which so many of the liberal bourgeoisie suffer today in the downfall of all their hopes and ideals, which in their divorce from the new forces of the working class seem to them to be dead beyond hope of resurrection. I think Ireland gives that reward to her faithful sons- a goal to live for, and a death continuous with the purpose of their life. Such a death is robbed of terror. The night before Casement's execution, I was transferred from Swansea Prison to Pentonville, put in the hospital which is within fifty yards of the hanging shed and graciously permitted to exercise in the hospital garden which extended to within ten yards of Casement's new-made grave. The purpose of the authorities was obvious, but failed entirely of its object. There was a poor wretch, due to be hanged at Swansea for kicking his wife to death, within a day or two of my transfer to Pentonville, and I was dreading his execution with a sick horror beyond description. It is a terrible thing to be snatched out of life lived with no purpose and forfeited for some surrender to brute passion.

But I felt no horror at Casement's passing. I felt his death was as purposeful as his life, and perhaps more powerful than his life for the achievement of his purpose. And here I am, twenty years later, helping, I hope, to achieve that purpose by doing what I can to interpret the spirit of the man whose bodily remains lie in Pentonville yard. I believe the British Government refused permission for their transfer to Ireland. Luckily they cannot yet refuse permission for the spreading of Casement's spirit in England. They have not yet reached that stage in the Fascist destruction of culture.

It is our task to see that they never do reach it; and here I believe the Irish in England, the Irish in Britain, have a vital part to play. Let us be the incorrigible Irishmen that Casement realised himself to be. But to play our part we must organise and make our weight felt on concrete issues.

I believe we should act quickly. If we delay too long Fascism will be upon us in England, as it is already upon us in Northern, and to some extent, in Southern Ireland, robbing us of freedom of speech and freedom to organise. Have you read the report of the N.C.C.L. of the Civil Authorities Special Powers Act in Northern Ireland? Such a pseudo-legal instrument, giving elected Ministers power to depute their authority to the military or police without appeal or redress, is pure Fascism, and the recent Sedition Act in England is the thin end of the wedge of the same thing.

We must resist the approach of Fascism before it is too late. We must resist it as Irishmen, and as men, who are proud of being Irishmen, because we believe Ireland, in fighting for her own freedom, is fighting for the freedom of humanity.

I venture to give you six points on which I believe we can find a basis of unity between all sections of true Irish Republicans, and also a basis of unity with the forces of freedom and progress in Britain. Here are the six points I suggest :-

- (1) For a United Independent Irish Republic.
- (2) For the withdrawal of the British troops from all Ireland, and against the inclusion of Ireland in the war plans and preparations of the National Government.

(3) For the immediate cessation of the economic war on Ireland, and the abolition of the claim to annuities.

(4) For the repeal by the British Parliament of the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Acts which abrogate all constitutional and civil liberty in Northern Ireland; and the withdrawal by the Irish Free State Government of the Constitution Amendment (Public Safety) Act, the use of which has been recently revived, and for an amnesty of all persons imprisoned in Ireland under the operation of these Acts.

(5) To protest against the disenfranchisement of the minority in Northern Ireland through the Government's gerrymandering of the constituencies, and to demand the restoration of the former constituencies and of Proportional Representation.

(6) For the surmounting of sectarian barriers by the initiation of a joint campaign with the Trades Union Movement for the organisation in British Unions of the Irish Workers in Britain, and by co-operation with British movements against Fascism and War.

If you agree with them I suggest that at some future date you call a joint meeting, with other Irish Republican organisations in London, to endorse or amend them. And that if we can achieve unity amongst ourselves, we extend it to co-operation with all the forces, whether in Ireland or in this country, that are fighting the advance of Fascism and the drive to inevitable war.

That, in my opinion, is the highest tribute we could pay to the memory of Roger Casement, who died for his country, and to the last was hounded down by the dark forces he had exposed in Africa.

Let us make the light shining from the candlestick of the Pentonville gallows shine wider and brighter, and link its rays not only with those of Connolly, of Fintan Lalor, Mitchell, Davis, and Pearce, but also with those of every fighter for freedom past or present.

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Jack White
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Being the substance of an address delivered to the Roger Casement Sinn Fein Club on the 20th
Anniversary of Casement's death
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