

Casement's Congo Diary, one of the so-called *Black Diaries*, was not a forgery

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1. CASEMENT'S TRIAL AND THE *BLACK DIARIES*

Sir Roger Casement (1864-1916), born in a suburb of Dublin, became British consul and made a well-known enquiry in 1903 about atrocities in King Leopold's Congo.¹ This report is a remarkable and exceptional document in the world of diplomacy for the quality and the response. In the long term this report led in 1908 to the annexation by Belgium of the Congo Free State, owned by King-Sovereign Leopold II. In 1905 Casement was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, the order of chivalry reserved for distinguished service within the Foreign Office. He had been in the British consular service in Africa for 9 years (1895-1904), and in South America from 1906-1913. In 1910 he investigated abuses in rubber collecting in the Peruvian Amazon Rubber Company where the Putumayo Indians lived.² He was honoured with a knighthood on June 20th 1911 for his Putumayo investigations in the Amazon. He retired from the Consular service in 1913 and committed himself to freedom for the Irish people.

Arriving in Germany on October 31st 1914, he had tried to persuade Irish war prisoners for helping the Irish Nationalists to get Independence for Ireland. He achieved virtually nothing during his 18-month stay in Germany. He came back to Ireland with two other Irishmen in the U-boat *U19* on April 14th 1916, some hours before the outbreak of the Easter Rising in Dublin.

¹ The report was published by the Foreign Office as a *Blue Book*. Africa, n° 1(1904 Cd. 1933). A complicated series of capital letters was used to replace names and places. In practice the effect was curiously reductive. The full report completed with a preface by J.L. Vellut and an introduction and 140 footnotes by Daniel Vangroenweghe was first published (Vellut et Vangroenweghe, 1985).

² Casement's report on the Putumayo was published as a Foreign Office *Blue Book* on July 13th 1912.

He wanted to prevent the Easter Rising (Reid, 1976, 380-381). He was taken prisoner by the British shortly after he landed in Ireland. On June 29th 1916 he was sentenced to death on a charge of high treason, and was hanged and buried in Pentonville Prison on August 3rd 1916. In February 1965 Prime Minister Harold Wilson agreed to give up the body to Ireland in answer to an appeal from Sean Lemass, Prime Minister in Dublin. At the Garrison Church of the Sacred Heart in Dublin his body lay in state for four days, visited by 165,000 people.

Casement left the so-called *Black Diaries*. These diaries and other material give evidence of the author's homosexual behaviour during at least nine years. In those Victorian and Edwardian days, homosexuality was considered as unnatural, degenerate, criminal and as a perversion. Remember Oscar Wilde. All his sexual partners were, with only one recorded identifiable exception (Christensen, his companion in Germany), of the lowest social class.

The question whether these diaries were forged by the British Intelligence Service is important for biographers of Casement's life because they were used by the British Government to prejudice the chances of a reprieve. Forged or not, it was an unorthodox and undecent act of the Government and High-ranking persons implicated in circulating copies of the diaries including the Attorney General F.E. Smith, the prosecutor in the trial. F.E. Smith offered to co-operate with Sergeant Sullivan, Casement's counsel, in producing the *Black Diaries* as evidence, on the understanding that both prosecution and defence would then jointly try to persuade the Court to agree to a verdict of guilty but insane. Smith must have known that Casement was not at all legally insane. Sullivan refused categorically. It is difficult to think of another reason than that Smith wanted to damage the image of Casement. These diaries had absolutely nothing to do with the trial.

The *Black Diaries*, as they were christened since Singleton-Gates' publication of two of the five in 1959, consist of five hard-back books of varying size, now kept in the Public Record Office in Kew (HO 161/ 1 to 5).³ The first item, known as the *Army Book* (HO 161/1) of 1902, contain, among other things, a short account of Casement's movements on July 20th and 21st when he was travelling in the Congo. It holds no obvious sexual references. The first diary with sexual entries is a small *Letts' Pocket Diary and Almanac* (HO 161/2), which I shall christen his *Congo Diary* (Singleton-Gates, Girodias, 1959), (February 14th 1903 to January 8th 1904) covering the

³ For the description of the *Black Diaries* we refer to Mitchell (1997, 25 ff).

months of Casement's investigations in the Congo with a few notes added at the beginning and end. This diary records sexual acts in London, the Congo, Madeira, the Canary Islands and Sierra Leone, mainly with native boys. The next diary is the *Dollard's 1910 Office Diary* (HO 161/3) (*Ibid.*, 1959). The diary coincides with Casement's first voyage to the Amazon at the end of July 1910 and continued to the end of the year. Sex or sexual fantasies occur in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Mar del Plata, London, Belfast, Dublin and, with most frequency, up the Amazon at Belem, Manaus, Iquitos and in the Putumayo. The 1911 *Letts' Desk Diary* (HO 161/4) has not yet been published. It is the most explicit and "pornographic" in its content, it follows on directly from the last entry on December 31st in the 1910 *Dollard's Diary* as Casement arrived in Paris for the New Year of 1911. The last Black Diary, known as the *Cash Ledger* (HO 161/5), is a record of daily accounts for 1910 and 1911. There is a White Diary or "the cleaned up version" of his 1910 Amazon voyage (23/9-6/12/1910) since it does not contain any sexual acts. It is christened by Mitchell (1997) as *The Putumayo Journal*.⁴

The Black Diaries were supposedly found in Casement's lodgings in London at the time of Casement's arrest in 1916, or perhaps earlier, during his stay in Germany. According to Sawyer (1984, 137), Captain Reginald "Blinker", Chief of Naval Intelligence, had heard of Casement's alleged proclivities twenty one months before the execution, and not long afterwards Hall discovered the whereabouts of the traitor's personal luggage. Rumours of his homosexuality were spread in 1910 in South America. These diaries were consequently used by British officials to deter potential campaigners for clemency that might save his life. They contain notes on the sexuality of Casement, if one admits the authenticity of these diaries. Transcripts and the torn out pages of the Congo Diary (dated January 1st to February 13th) and photographs of some pages were widely shown around – chiefly by Hall and Basil Thomson, chief of the Special Branch created at Scotland Yard at the beginning of the war for the detection of enemy spies – in the period leading up to Casement's execution. The Attorney-General Sir Frederick E. Smith was counsel for the Crown in the trial, and, as Attorney-General of England was a member of the Cabinet and was also involved in the circulating of the diaries. This remains a blemish on these persons, as the private diaries had nothing to do with the trial; they were also never produced in Court. F.E. Smith, Edward Carson and Captain Graig appealed to the long-cultivated pro-

⁴ National Library of Ireland. MS 13.087 (25). The reproduction of the "Scotland Yard" typewritten copy of Roger Casement's diary for the year 1910 was published by Singleton-Gates (1959) with the correction of the copyist's obvious errors.

English sentiments of the Province of Ulster against the advent of Home Rule in Ireland. Using Ulster irredentism as a springboard to personal power, they went so far as to threaten opposition to British law by force of arms, and thus paradoxically, prove their loyalty to the British Empire (or rather to the British Conservative Party) by armed rebellion and a call to German military assistance (Singleton-Gates, 1959, 19).

Moreover, F. E. Smith had been involved in the shipping of arms to the Ulster Volunteers and made great play of the fact that the gun-runners of Ulster had been seeking to oppose the rule of United Kingdom law whilst the Irish Volunteers were upholding an act of parliament. His argument stresses the paradox of Ulster's disloyalty and the Nationalists' loyalty within the context of the Home Rule Statute, an approach made all the more telling by the presence of F.E. Smith in the courtroom (Sawyer, 1984, 133).⁵ Moreover Smith refused, which he legally could do, an appeal to the House of Commons. This seemed neither neutral nor gentlemanly behaviour. Scotland Yard made typewritten copies of the Diaries which were shown to a lot of people.

Two powerful clergymen, former supporters of Casement's, were silenced by the diaries. Bishop Hensley Henson of Durham was shown a copy by the King (George V) himself, according to Dean Inge.⁶ Canon Henson, as he was then, who had preached a vigorous sermon in Westminster Abbey in the wake of Casement's Putumayo findings, was a warm supporter and admirer of Casement. Can it be – here we enter the realm of speculation – that Henson may have wished to plead for clemency on behalf of Casement, may have sought an audience with the Sovereign himself in order to do so, only to have his pleas blasted by terrible proof of his hero's moral degradation (MacColl, 1956, 280)? Dr. Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, was invited to read the pages. Feeling that it was improper to do so, he asked Rev. Harris to look at them and give his opinion. Harris had no suspicion of Casement's "perversion", but when he read the diaries he found suggestive episodes in Congo contexts that only he and Casement knew about (Reid, 1976, 418). He told the Archbishop that those parts of the diary at least must be genuine. Davidson then withdrew his signature, though Harris persevered

⁵. One can ask if in a Court on the Continent the presence of Smith in the trial does not create a shred of partiality and for that reason he should have been removed as prosecutor. In juridical language this is called: legal presumption of partiality.

⁶. Letter from Dean Inge of December 24th 1952 to Alfred Noyes, quoted in MacColl (1956, 280).

with his petition in other quarters.⁷ Clubmen and newspaper editors were shown the Diaries, great efforts were made to disarm public opinion in the two short weeks preceding the date set for the execution (Singleton-Gates, 1959, 29). No less than six petitions were raised urging the government to grant a reprieve. Lord Newton, British Ambassador to the United States received photographs of two pages of the diary by the Diplomatic Bag on July 28th.

Copies were also seen by John Redmond (the successor of Irish leader Charles Parnell), the American ambassador Sir Walter Page and Sir William Wiseman.⁸ A Cabinet memorandum dated July 15th, circulated at Cabinet on July 18th states that:

"Casement's diaries and his ledger entries, covering many pages of closely typed matter, show that he has for years been addicted to the grossest sodomitical practices. Of late years he seems to have completed the full circle of sexual degeneracy and from a pervert has become an invert – a 'woman' or pathic (sic) who derives his satisfaction from attracting men and inducing them to use him..."⁹

As Weale (2001, 254) suggests, although one can never know for sure, that even without the diaries Casement was to be hanged.¹⁰ Sentenced to death on June 29th 1916, two days later, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 60,000 soldiers, many of them Irish, were lost. The only serious public opinion problem which the Government faced in executing Casement was in the United States and in its attempt to counteract this, Asquith's Cabinet did indeed authorize the use of the diaries (*Ibid.*, 254).

2. CHRONOLOGY OF THE FORGERY CONTROVERSY¹¹

1922

Basil Thomson, the assistant commissioner of police who interrogated Casement in London after his capture in 1916, presented copies of two of the

⁷ Mentioned in Reid (1976, 418), reference to Denis Gwynn (1965, 71). Harris wrote Gwynn to tell this story after the publication of Gwynn's biography of Casement in 1930.

⁸ See letter HO 144/23453, referred to in Mitchell (1997, 18 note 4).

⁹ Cabinet Memorandum HO 144/1636/3 164/3A. Citation in Mitchell (1997, 18).

¹⁰ For a concise survey of the complicated story of the Forgery Controversy see Weale (2001, 246-267).

¹¹ This chronology is partly based on *Roger Casement in Irish and World History* (2000, 16-20).

diaries and – which is even more remarkable – a transcript of the interrogation at Scotland Yard to Peter Singleton-Gates, then a Fleet Street reporter. The name of Thomson is only known since 1995, with the release of Casement's files.

1922, February 6th

Michael Collins was shown the diaries at the House of Lords by Casement's prosecutor, F.E. Smith, Earl of Birkenhead. Collins refused to discuss the issues with anyone except Tom Casement. According to Brian Inglis, Michael Collins had seen the diaries at the time of the negotiations which led up to the Treaty of 1921. He had become convinced they were genuine – a verdict which discouraged the first Free State Government, and its successors, from making formal representations. For individual inquirers, the Home Office simply denied knowledge of the diaries' existence (Inglis, 1973, 394).

1925

An attempt to publish the diaries by Peter Singleton-Gates was prevented by the Home Secretary and Sir Ernley Blackwell.

1936

The forgery theory finally stated by an Irish-American, Dr. William J. Maloney, who never saw or read the diaries. His opinion was based on the recollection of Casement's friends.

1956

Publication of René MacColl's biography *Roger Casement. A New Judgment*.

His assumption: the diaries were genuine, but gave no evidence to support his view. MacColl in fact had been in possession of the required evidence, but had not been permitted to disclose it (*Ibid.*, 396).

1957

Publication of Alfred Noyes' *The Accusing Ghost or Justice for Casement*. He was convinced that Casement was the victim of a "dreadful plot". Noyes denounced Casement in the United States in 1917 on the basis of having read the typescripts, but by 1957 he had come to believe that he had been deceived as part of British propaganda measures. The diaries were genuine but the homosexual material had been interpolated into them by a forger working on behalf of Thomson, Hall and Smith.

1959, February

The Black Diaries. Published by Olympia Press, Paris, interwoven with a biography of Casement authored by Singleton-Gates and Girodias. Singleton presented 40 copies to various Members of Parliament. This publication was based on the typewritten copies of 1916. In the foreword Peter Singleton-Gates states that in May 1922 a person of some authority (we know since 1995 that it was Basil Thomson) in London presented him a heavy bundle of documents, with the comment that if ever he had time he might find in them the basis for a book of unusual interest. Of the mass of paper there was in part, typed copies of diaries: the Congo diary and the Putumayo diary, and a cash ledger. The typescripts were according to the informant, true copies of the diaries found in Sir Roger Casement's lodgings in Ebury Street some time before his arrest on Good Friday in 1916. (I consider this date as the most probable). These three diaries were the only ones found in the trunk in Casement's lodgings. The bundle also included an Army memo book containing sundry trivial and obscure entries. Other documents in the bundle were the *procès-verbal* of the interrogation of Roger Casement at New Scotland Yard on the morning of Easter Sunday and the two successive days by Basil Thomson and Captain Reginald Hall, statements taken from soldiers and others who had given evidence at the trial: lists of property found on the prisoner and buried in the sand at his landing place etc. (Singleton-Gates, 1959, 9-10).¹² When the Home Secretary became aware of the impending publication of the *Black Diaries* he explicitly forbade Singleton-Gates to publish the book. The transcript was placed under the Official Secrets Acts, so Singleton-Gates handed these pieces of the bundle back, but not the copies of the *Black Diaries*. Within a week of his last interview at the Home Office, he met Sir Wyndham Childs, successor to Sir Basil Thomson at Scotland Yard, who offered to let him see the original diaries which were found in Ebury Street. He was shown the Letts' Diary and the Dollard's diary. Singleton-Gates had prints of the handwriting of Casement, and was further armed with the typed copies of several erotic entries. He compared them and stated that there could be hardly any doubt that the diaries found in Casement's lodgings in Ebury Street were his true diaries, in his handwriting (*Ibid.*, 13).

1959, July, 23rd

RAB Butler ended the British government's silence on the diaries and admitted the existence of the Black Diaries.

¹² It would be interesting if Singleton-Gates made copies of the whole bundle and if they are still in existence.

1959, August, 10th

The British Government released the Black Diaries under severe restrictions and on condition that they would under no circumstances be copied.

1960

Article by Prof. Roger MacHugh in the *Threshold* stated that the diaries were forged.

1966

Dr. Herbert O. Mackey took up the argument of Noyes in *Roger Casement: the Truth and the Forged Diaries*. Dublin.

1972

Singleton-Gates solemnly testified that, not very long ago, in his presence and in the presence of a well-known witness, the ultra-violet ray machine was used. This was a highly unofficial exercise, but it established, without all doubt that the diaries were entirely in Casement's own hand. (See Sawyer, 1984, 140). An ultra-violet ray can detect if words were erased and/or overwritten.

1973

Brian Inglis: *Roger Casement*. Inglis was an Irishman and former editor of *The Spectator*. He had a brief and adamant argument against the forgery theory. No person would have gone to so much trouble to damn a traitor when one single diary would have been sufficed.

1976

Benjamin Reid. *The Lives of Roger Casement*.

1994, March

Release of the Diaries under the Open Government Initiative.

1995, October

The British Government released 180 Casement files.

1997, October

Copies of *Roger Casement's Diaries, the Black and the White* (editor: Roger Sawyer) and *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement* (editor: Angus Mitchell) on sale in Dublin bookshops.

The two books, analyzing conflicting diary material for 1910, reach opposite conclusions with respect to the authenticity of the Black Diaries. Mitchell believes that they were forged.

1999, January

MI5 kv files were released by the British Public Record Office. Casement had clearly been understood to be an "intelligence priority" from the start of the war. No single evidence or even suggestion had emerged which would indicate that the diaries were Government-directed forgeries. Of course no Government would care to leave "smoking-gun" evidence lying around in its archives (Weale, 2001, 251-252).

2002, March

Report of Dr Audrey Giles. 47 pp. Non published. Forensic examination of the *Black Diaries*.

3. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FORGERY CONTROVERSY

One can ask why the diaries were suppressed by the British Government for so long. Sawyer gives a partially plausible answer (Sawyer, 1984, 140). The reason was a private and humane agreement between Gertrude Bannister (a cousin of Casement, who married Parry), and Prime Minister Baldwin. Three weeks after Casement's death sentence she was dismissed after 17 years of teaching by the school where she worked because she had visited Casement in prison (Reid, 1976, 435). It was only when the problem with Northern Ireland was being resolved that the British Government, bit by bit, released the documents concerning the diaries and Casement.

That leads us to a first question. A big controversy about the diaries would not have arisen if the diaries themselves were not kept secret and still contradictory evidence, about the time and place(s) of their discovery is circulating. Inevitably this tends to suggest that the Government has something to hide. A previous British government had tried to exploit Pigot's forged letters to discredit and destroy Parnell who died in 1891. The last documents were released in 1999. Does the British Government, which denied for decades the existence of the Diaries, have any more documents? No clear answer has been given. Till now it is impossible to say with certainty when the diaries were found and moved by Scotland Yard from

Casement's lodging in 55, Ebury Street, Pimlico, London. Was it in 1914 or in 1916?

The earliest date that Scotland Yard could have taken or seen the diaries is late 1914 when Casement left for Germany, that is 19 months before the trial. If it is the case that they found them only when Casement was captured and taken to London in April 1916 then they were only in the hands of Scotland Yard for a few weeks before the Attorney-General Smith wanted to show them at the beginning of June to the defence in order to plea guilty but insane. The defence refused them, as they had nothing to do with the trial.

The whole question of the diaries is so complicated because of the political dimensions of the British-Irish question. For Britain, which misused the diaries to prevent a retrieve and with the will to damage Casement after his death and for Ireland, where some people cannot live with a hero for the Putumayo and Congolese people but a "flawed hero", a "patriot traitor" or a gay martyr.

A second question is why should Scotland Yard be so interested in 1914 in forging complete diaries and a cash ledger when no return of Casement to Britain (Ireland included) or a trial could have been foreseen? He would rather return to the United States. The most prudent and sufficient way would have been to forge one diary. Moreover when the diaries were used in a trial then in case of forgeries they would have been immediately exposed and denounced as such by Casement and his legal advisers. One mistake and the forgery failed.

A third question is: could the diaries be forged? If the diaries were found even in 1914, then the forger could have copied the diaries (one was sufficient and more realistic) – a good forger could have imitated Casement's handwriting quite well – and have inserted sexual passages.

He had first of all, and in the case of the Congo Diary to find an unused Letts' pocket diary from 1903 (and for the others a Dollard's 1910 Office diary etc.), not an easy thing to do.

For the believers of a complete forgery (by *complete*, I mean people who believe that the complete text of the diaries was forged), I shall prove that the Congo Diary could not be forged because the detailed information needed to forge them was not available to the Home Office, Foreign Office, Scotland Yard and in the publications at the disposal of a forger. Moreover, who knew what exact type of diary Casement was using in 1903 or in 1910? As I have seen and studied the Congo diary on two occasions (first on July 23rd 1982), how could a forger have imitated the patina a diary had from travelling, and being used and used again nearly every day?

As far as we know no one of Casement's intimate friends in 1903 and even until his death knew of his sexual proclivities. Why then put such passages in a forgery, especially in the 1903 Congo Diary? This seems unlikely. Moreover, what if Casement then could show the non forged diaries? So for me believers in a complete forgery there have no case, which I shall try to prove.

For the partial believers (by *partial* I mean people who believe that sexual passages were interpolated, either in a copied diary or in the genuine diary) I shall prove that for the Congo Diary a forger could not even have forged some sexual passages in that diary through lack of skill e.g. passages in Portuguese and in Congolese language and exact information. The forger could not have interpolated many of the sexual passages in the "genuine" diary, because there was no space available.

I cannot agree with the main argument which Angus Mitchell gives for the forgery of the *Black Diaries*, in particular for the 1911 *Letts' Desk Diary*, the most "pornographic" in its content, namely that Britain had a political motive (Mitchell, 1997, 50-52). What Casement found in the Amazon outdistanced the horror he had helped reveal in the Congo, and he became the singular witness to that horror. Although others explorers and travel writers had made fleeting revelations about cruelties that resulted from rubber extraction, it was Casement alone who produced the historical evidence defining the genocide. Once Casement eventually turned against the British empire, and the motivations behind his treason were analyzed, it was clear that the evidence he had collected during his Amazon investigations was as potentially subversive of the historical reputation of the empire as the man himself. The forging of the *Black Diaries*, therefore, had what might be termed an historical motive and was the means by which Casement's unofficial revelations were obscured, according to Mitchell. I myself have done social-anthropological and historical research in the area where Casement investigated in the Congo. I like Casement's research in the Congo and in South America. That he was a homosexual does not matter to me, but it is a pity that still today some people reject Casement because of his private life and some others for his ideas on an independent Ireland. In delicate nationalistic elements there are more grey zones than black and white ones. But I disagree with the moral statements of Mitchell, who did a fine job in publishing the White Amazon Journal of 1910:

"My attitude (Mitchell writes) to the Black Diaries also changed. There now seemed no need to publish them unless one wished to throw oil on the fire. They have poisoned the reputation of Casement and muddied the waters of South

American history. To publish them only serves to inspire more hatred and create more public confusion over a serious item. Perhaps least of all do they serve the gay community or merit a place in twentieth-century homosexual literature. There were manufactured in an age when acts of homosexuality were considered sexually degenerate" (Mitchell, 1997, 8-9).

Mitchell believes that the *Black Diaries* were forged.

4. THE CONGO DIARY WAS NOT FORGED

4.1. Summary of the arguments

My interest in the diaries began while writing a book on forced labour for rubber in Leopold's Congo.¹³ If one takes all the arguments together it remains almost impossible to deny that the Congo diary was a forgery. But in my opinion my fourth argument alone could be sufficient: the sexual passages in the diary could never have been forged. I leave in the middle the supposition that if one diary was forged, all were forged, but if one is proved not to be forged, then the others were not forged either.

The first argument is that at least three people examined the graphology and their conclusions are unanimous. A second argument is the textual analysis. The third argument is the X-ray proof, which indicates that no erasures took place and thus no overwritings or erased parts.

The fourth argument: if one believes that the complete diary was forged, it will be proven that the Home Office, the Foreign Office, Scotland Yard or whatever British organisation was unable to forge it because of lack of sources to forge at least more than fifty entries in that diary. If one believes that the diary was genuine except the sexual passages that Scotland Yard forged either by interpolating those passages in the genuine diary either by recopying the whole diary and interpolating forged sexual passages, in that case I state that some of these sexual passages could not be falsified due to the forgers lack of skill. A fifth argument is to be found in the manuscript (not yet used by anyone, as far as I known) of Lady Harris: *An autobiography of Sir John Harris*.¹⁴

¹³. Vangroenweghe (1985; 1986): this book was the first scientific work on Red Rubber published by a Belgian and based on archival documents in ten languages.

¹⁴. Lady Harris, *An Auto-biography of Sir John Harris* (50-52), M.S.S. Brit. Emp. S/353.

A final remark is that if the diaries were forged, the typewritten copies would have been much better, without at least 5 to 10 misspellings on each page, as well as other faults.

It is a pity that, as far as I know, no DNA tests were carried out on the diaries before there were released for examination.

All the arguments have to be taken as a whole.

4.2. First argument: graphology

According to Weale (2001, 251) on at least two occasions the diaries have been subjected to examination by handwriting and document specialists. Both Dr Wilson Harrison, of the South Wales Forensic Science laboratory in 1959, and Dr David Baxendale, who examines the diaries for the BBC in 1994, concluded that they were the work of one hand and have not been significantly altered, and that they are consistent with other examples of Casement's handwriting. If the conclusions of these exams were made public, I cannot find the scientific reports. Singleton-Gates saw the diaries in 1922 and with the manuscript letters of Casement to hand he examined the Congo and Putumayo diaries. He believed they were genuine. I myself on July 23rd 1982, and a second time later, examined the Congo diary. The black hard cover was labelled: Letts' Diary for 1903. Closed until 2004 (Safe Room). On an endpaper, a label was attached: This Letts' Dairy for 1903, formerly the property of Roger Casement, was forwarded to the Home Office by the Commissioner of Police on January 23rd 1925.¹⁵ At that moment I had read hundreds of letters by Casement to the Foreign Office, to Morel, to Harris and others. While examining the diary I had with me a copy of a letter of 16 pages by Casement to Grenfell written at Loanda October 22nd 1903.

I am not an expert in graphology, but my impression was that it was the same handwriting. This impression became certain when I read the content of this diary.

Angus Mitchell, believing in the forgery, in his edition of the Amazon Journal of Roger Casement in 1997 writes:

"When British Intelligence moved in on Casement at the end of 1914, among his confiscated papers they found genuine diaries and journals detailing his journeys into the Congo and Putumayo. Using this material they would have been able, without too much difficulty, to construct the Black Diaries with experiences, phraseology and impressions cannibalized from genuine writings. On the surface these documents appeared to be factually fool-proof and contained a host of

¹⁵ See correspondence in file 311.643/206 a. Ernley Blackwell.

references and indications to give the appearance of being actual documents. The forging of the handwriting was carried out with great skill, although since there is no evidence that the Black Diaries held in the PRO were described by anyone in 1916, it is probable that the forger had several years to perfect their look. Though the formation of letters and the style of the writing is often hard to distinguish from genuine material, it ultimately fails the test of authenticity by its total lack of fluency. All Casement's writings, whether notes, letters or journals, contain a fluency of script-as if Casement was working under enormous pressure and at great speed. The Black Diaries completely lack this. The words seem to shutter out onto the page – they are deliberate and contrived" (Mitchell, 1997).

I cannot agree with this very subjective interpretation. I saw nearly all of Casement's letters from this Congo period and his correspondence with Morel. Some have a fluency, others don't.

Graphology is in itself not conclusive: a highly competent forger might well be able to produce a convincing imitation of a handwriting. The style of the letters by Casement to the F.O. were often in contrast with the style and the tone when he wrote, he alone, his Congo Report.

The recent report and most scientific one is written by Dr Audrey Giles (embargoed till March 12th 2002). She is British and worked for thirteen years in the Questioned Documents Section of the Metropolitan Police Forensic Section Laboratory in London. Since 1989 she practises as an independent expert. *The Giles Document Laboratory* is accredited to the internationally recognized quality standards, BS EN ISO 9002: 1994. For her full conclusions see Giles (2002, 45-46). There is no evidence to support that these documents are wholesale simulations. The contentious entries are not added into genuine Diaries. I subscribe Giles' conclusions, but I can understand Sullivan's remark:

"Only forgery enthusiasts decry not only her nationality (she is British) but also her previous employment with the Metropolitan Police. It does seem odd that Professor McCormack could not have chosen someone of neutral nationality without such antecedents, thus denying forgery theorists such an obvious opportunity to cry foul" (Sullivan, 2002, 5-6).¹⁶

4.3. Second argument: textual analysis

More recently advocates of forgery theories have tended to lean towards techniques of textual analysis as indicators, if not proof, that the Black Diaries were produced by someone other than Casement (Weale, 2001, 251).

¹⁶ I thank Sullivan for sending me Giles' report.

Patterns, phrasing, key words and expressions have been analysed and apparently tend to contrast with Casement's other writings, thus suggesting that he may not have been the author at all. In my opinion this is a very weak argument. A private diary, to be kept secret, and where the author will keep certain events, eventually sexual events for his own memory, have of course another style, expression and phrasing than documents prepared for diplomatic use.¹⁷ If such a textual analysis is worked out on printed books to try to get the name of an anonymous author it could be of help. But applying textual analysis to compare intimate diaries, letters sent to the Foreign Office and letters to friends, never intended for publication, with published texts can only result in a weak and inconclusive result, as it is in these cases.

4.4. Third argument: X-rays

The X-ray test and electrostatic detection (to select palimpsest) and ultra-violet light did not reveal erasures and overwriting. See above under *Chronology 1972 and 2002*.

4.5. Fourth argument: a forger could not have had at his disposal the necessary material

If one believes that the diary was entirely forged then numerous examples can be put forward to state that a forger could not have at his disposal the facts described in the Diary. At least fifty entries give information which is not to be found in the Foreign Office, Home Office, Scotland Yard and in the published documents of that time *e.g.*: the West African Mail, the publications of the Congo Reform Association by E.D. Morel, and numerous pamphlets.

I give some examples where I found no other documents that a forger could have at his disposal. The text in italics is the text of the diary. The other text is my comment. Believers in the forged diaries have to give exact information where the forger could have looked for all these entries. Moreover for many of these entries I can correlate Casement's notes by documents in the Foreign Office's archives at Brussels and in Missionaries Papers in Great Britain's Archives.

¹⁷. Eoin Ó Máille and Michael Payne published their findings in *The Vindication of Roger Casement. Computer Analysis and Comparisons*. Privately printed, 1994. Mentioned in Mitchell (1997, 43 note 46).

First page

Name for Novel: 'The Far from Maddening Crowd', by R. McAsmunde.

Where could a forger have found the name *McAsmunde*? Casement believed that he was of Scandinavian origin.

February 18th

*Sent clothes 'two packages, hat box and trunk' to 55 Ebury Street, E. Peacock.
[...] Wrote G.B. to New York, Hartford Hotel, 309 Pearl Street, NY.*

The address of Casement's lodgings were known but not that he had sent these items that day.

G.B. was George Brown, one of Casement's sexual contacts. In the diary he speaks of Brown again:

March 21st

Letters at Consulate. 2 from George Brown with photo.

March 26th

Got letter from George.

March 27th

George wrote from New York-will send him £20 from S. Leone, cannot spare more.

March 30th

Wrote G.B. with £15 to go by 'Jebba' (a ship) to morrow.

Arthur Nightingale joins him at Loanda and they travel on together to Cabinda.

Casement arranges with Nightingale on April 11th to send £20 via Lisbon to New York for George Brown (Reid, 1976, 38).

April 11th

Gave him (Nightingale) cheque for £21.13/8. To send £20 to G. Brown from Lisbon by notes or postal order.

February 19th

[...] Wired H.W., (Herbert Ward), Bertie, (Francis Bertie), and Miss H. (Miss Hivel) to come dinner. Found card from Nisco at G. Central (Grand Central, London), all dined there, and met there before dinner. 'La Bohème' after. Home - saw Miss H. home. Back tired after walk. Last day in London.

Herbert Ward, an adventurer and sculptor and friend of Casement, who lived in Paris but was at that moment in London, Francis Bertie, had a career in the F.O. and became British Ambassador to Paris in 1905, and Miss H. (Miss Hivel, no biographer can give information on her, could it be a misspelling, a fault that Casement often makes with French names but not with English names, Dr. M.L. Hailes who wrote a *Kilolo English Vocabulary*. London,

1891?). Nisco was Italian and a judge at the Boma Court in Congo, he was a friend of Casement and in 1904 became a member of the Commission of Inquiry instituted by King Leopold II. Nisco spent his annual leave in London, Brussels and in Italy.

All these people, as far as I know were still alive in 1916. They could testify that they were not present at that dinner. How could a forger have known that Ward, who lived in Paris, was in London at that moment 11 or 13 years ago??

February 20th

Went Euston with Nina and Charlie, Bertie, Nisco, H.W., and Miss Hivel there to see me off by 12.15 train, Lime street, 4.50., went ED & Co and got tickets and good.... (illegible: berth?). Sent Charlie to theatre with porter. Went Auntie's. She Lizzie and (undecipherable) well. Back by Frederick St. at Sailor's Home, H. Abrahams from Demerara, 'Arthur' 11/6. Drove to Park. Home, supper and to bed. Paid all bills at 2 Aubrey Walk. Medium, but mu nua ami, monene, monene, beh! beh!.

Allusion to a sexual contact. The typewriter wrote: "Medium, butmu ami, monene". *Monene* is a Congolese word and means: big. It is unthinkable that a forger of even this interpolated text knew Congolese words, much less the meaning of them.

February 28th

In to Funchal at 7.30. Perestrello as in September 1897, on 'Scott' with photos. Grown tall, eyes beautiful, down on lip, curls.[...]. Out at 8 to Old Town. Same place as in Feb. 1885!!! 18 years ago, then to square.

March 7th

[...] Munito (? Illegible) frio, many times \$4,000. Tomorrow and Agostinho about 17 1/2, segunda feira.

How could the forger have had the idea to write "segunda feira" Portuguese for "monday"?

From March 2nd to March 14th

Casement, even the good bookkeeper, notes the money he lost or won in the Casino.

March 15th he writes:

Have left exactly \$ 17,000 at 5,610:£3.0/6 out of £29 a fortnight ago. Have spent £26 in 15 days.

How could a forger know about all that information?

March 16th

[...] Mrs Raglan Somerset gave me a Hymn book.

March 23rd

The text in Casement's bad Kikongo (language spoken in the Lower Congo) includes words with an erotic connotation, such as penis. *[...] X.mu mua ami. Malumi maudi matuvia brambit, yidikili. 25 note and 13 pesetas.*

Where could a forger find such language???

March 25th

[...] Dr. Otto advising going to bed and not leaving for Congo, in afternoon slightly better so decided to go. [...] In street and to Avenida. Juan mua mu ami diaka Nsono 18 p.20 years. Back to Olsens. Pepe, 17, bought cigarettes mucho buene, diaki diaka moko mavabela mu mami mucho mucho bueno fiba, fiba, p. 16.

March 31st

[...] Read Loti's 'Mon Frère Yves'.

At the end pages of this diary (not in the typewritten version of Singleton-Gates), is an extract of two pages from this book in French.

A forger could not have known this book and made a selection of what Casement had copied?

Pp. 137-138 (in the numbering in pencil of the pages by an archivist in the Congo Diary), two pages give excerpts of this book beginning with "Quand on appela...". It would be worthwhile to study the two pages to see what motives Casement could have had to transcribe these two pages.

April 1st

[...] Read 'Les Carnets du Roi', stupid exposition of a beast King.

April 3rd

Reading Henri de Regnier's 'Double Maitresse' – Pauvre M. De Galandot.

A forger could not have known the book and not used the term "pauvre" (poor) in describing a personage of a book that he had not read!

April 17th

[...] H.M.S. 'Odin' arr. Brought news of Sir Hector Macdonald's suicide in Paris! The reasons given are pitiably sad. The most distressing case this surely of its kind and one that may awake the national mind to saner methods of curing a terrible disease than by criminal legislation.

H. Macdonald, a Scotch soldier who had risen from Private to Major-General, fought in the Afghan war and was present at the disastrous battle of Mujuba Hill against the Boers in 1881 (Singleton-Gates, 1959, 121 note). He had been made Honorary Aide-de-camp to both Queen Victoria and King Edward VII (Reid, 1976, 38). Following exposure for homosexual practices in Ceylon Macdonald had been brought back to London, denounced, and ordered to return to Ceylon to undergo a court-martial. On the way back he took his own life in a hotel in Paris.

Why should a forger stress the reaction of Casement, not knowing that in 1903 he was a homosexual? Casement refers to Macdonald also on April 19th and 30th.

April 20th

[...] Reading Gertrude's present of the 'Reminiscences of an Irish R.M.'.

Gertrude Bannister was Casement's cousin, who later married an old friend of Casement's Sidney Parry. That book was a delightful account by Somerville and Ross of the disorderly courses of housekeeping, fox hunting, and rural justice among the Anglo-Irish squirearchy in Victorian southern Ireland. As Reid (1976, 41) writes, the letter of April 20th sent by Casement to Gertrude is kept in Dublin, NLI 13074 and is one of many opportunities to check the authenticity of Casement's diaries.

April 25th

Wrote by 'Zaire' following F.O. Africa 4 § 5. To Nina, Gee, Cowper, Galloway, H.W. 'Zaire' arr. At 2 p.m. five days before her time. [...]

Nina (always so-called) is Agnes, Casement's sister, Gee (Bannister) is the name given by Casement to his cousin Gertrude. Cowper was British Consul in Lisbon. Casement was offered this post after Cowper's retirement. How could the forger have known that the "Zaire boat" was 5 days in advance?

May 2nd

More letters by P'guese mail from Charlie, Tom and Blanche. All three affairs more and more complicated. B. (Blanche Balharry) had got my letter of 15 Jan. With £20 in. She sends two of Tom's letters to her, but in them he tells her little of what he tells me.

Charlie (Charles, who lived in Melbourne) and Tom (Thomas) are Casement's brothers. Blanche is Mrs. Tom. Casement was continually required to offer advice and support for his sister and his two brothers (Reid, 1976, 41).

Eventually Tom and Blanche divorced.

How could a forger know about Casement's family affairs? Others entries (May 11th) in the diary refer to these questions.

May 8th

[...] Learned of Ingmohl's death this morning very suddenly. Went funeral at 5 p.m.

At Boma, the residence of the Governor of Congo, Casement went to a funeral. No biographer can identify this person.

May 11th

[...] Called on Waleffe (a judge) and Madame Waleffe, also Horstmans (a judge). Went with Swerts (sic) (the judge Sweerts) down the hill. Madame S. very pleasant.

How could a forger know that these people were in Boma, especially both wives, as very few European women were in the Congo at that time?

May 23rd

[...] Left Vanadium with Sims (a medical doctor and missionary) to experiment with on cases in his hands.

July 14th

[...] *Auntie's birthday.*

Wee Auntie was the sister of Casement's mother. When Roger and Nina became orphans they lived with Auntie and uncle Edward Bannister. Why should a forger think of that birthday?

July 25th

[...] *Moto, the boy of Danielson, cut his foot against the pomp. D. (Danielson, a missionary and captain of the missionary steamer 'Henry Reed') goes and 'cuffs the luff' of one of the boys only adding to the trouble.*

Casement comments several times (July 28th: *another row between D. and Nimpokwa and the steering boy Ngolu*) on the rude treatment of natives by Danielson. This was not known to the forger.

July 27th

[...] *Leaving poor Bongandi behind to go back to Bo (=Bolobo) by 'Perci' (a steamer) [...] Left Luk. (Lukolela) at 7.30. (This information is not in his report to the F.O.). At this village met a French père and Louis Gambarana, C.F.C. at Irebu Français. (Turin Rue Consolato 6).*

Nowhere else did I see the information that he could have sent the sick Bongandi back to Bolobo, or the address of a French priest.

July 28th

[...] *6.10 close to Ikoko, Clark's (a missionary) night light shining.*

July 31st

[...] *Went over to Bikoro. [...] MM Wauters and Van Dale met us and showed the Station.*

A letter (Africa 29) from Casement to Lansdowne, Ikoko August 3rd 1903, gave no proper names. Moreover in this letter Casement says that he went to Bikoro the day before yesterday. According to the diary it was two days before yesterday. A forger could not have had that information.

August 2nd

[...] *At service some 220 people. Wrote a little. Gave 10 francs to Church.*

August 17th

[...] *Botolo and others paddling, past down old Ted's beach, ah! in Sept. 1887, what a change.*

Allusion to E.J.Glave who had met Casement on the Sanford expedition.

August 21st

[...] *Went in afternoon to W (the village of Walla).*

Neither Casement's Report nor his correspondence to the F.O. give any indication what time he went there.

September 1st

[...] *13 miles all.*

In the report he speaks of several miles.

Back different path, poor old woman died on way back, revolver with sentry of Lejeune. Terrible oppression of this poor people.

In the archives of the Belgian Foreign Office we read and translate into English: "It seems that Peeters, chief of the factory had given a bad revolver to this sentry (capita)".¹⁸

September 3rd

8.45 left Bongandanga. 4.45 arr. at wood camp. [...], slept on roof of cabin. Mr. and Mrs. Lower in cabin. Did not sleep there or anywhere, mosquitoes fearful. Not closed eyes.

Lower of the Congo Balolo Mission arrived in Congo in July 1897. His wife came in October 1902. How could a forger have known that Casement had given up his cabin on his hired boat to the missionary couple?

¹⁸. AE.348. Note de Stevens.

September 12th

[...] A steamer went down manned entirely by Manidocs at 11 or 12. Showing and saying 'Wapi mashua'.

This Congolese term means "Where is the boat going?". Cannot be forged by a forger.

September 13th

'Philippeville' sails Home oct. 2.

There kind of entries concerning departure and arrivals of boats are often in red ink on top of a page.

By the way, a forger had to think that it was very important for Casement to know the schedules of the steamers going to Europe for sending letters to the F.O. etc. The typewriter didn't understand the meaning of these many entries.

September 15th¹⁹

My motto in Ellery's birthday book at Ikau – when I wrote my name on 4th. Sept. For 1st.

(In the typewritten copy the name is wrongly typed Jeffery). A forger could not have known of this birthday and the motto was:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. 2. Tim. IV, 7.

September 16th

[...] Captain Shaw navigator.

A forger could not have known that Danielson was no longer the navigator.

September 18th

Dr. Villa called on me. Told him much of what I had seen up river.

¹⁹. This entry is at the end of the journal after the addresses and under January 8th.

Villa worked for the Italian government and also wrote a longhand report on the atrocities in Congo. (State Archive, Rome). I was the first to use it in my book on Leopold's Congo.

October 5th

[...] Got letter from Wright by her saying Governor very vexed at my going from Matadi. Hardwick changed £5 gold of mine to \$5,645=28,225.

But how the forger could have known that Wright did not want to see the governor and went directly to Matadi. But how he could know that Wright informed him that the Governor was vexed. How did the forger know that Casement had gold on him and that he changed it.

October 20th

Got letters from Congo by 'Sokoto' which was in at 10.30. Also some clothes from Boma. Also a letter from Ed.M. (Edmund Dene Morel) who says letter from Congo people for him should be put under cover, addressed to J.W. Richardson Esq., Stoke House, Revelstoke, South Devonshire.

As that information is not in the British archives or published. A forger could not invent this.

October 21th to November 4th

Many entries on Dörbritz, a German ambassador whom Casement met many times at Loanda. Casement's many dinners with him, the gift to Dörbritz by Casement of last Neapolitan pin as a keepsake (on November 2nd).

A lot of addresses at the end of the Diary are not to be found in documents at the disposal of the forger. So with the address of Emily Balharry, Eva Synonson (Shangai), H.W. Balharry, G. Blom.

4.6. Fifth argument: Testimony of John H. Harris of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society

Rev. John Harris and Lady Harris had been working for years in the Congo. He helped Casement and Morel on many occasions. He sent a petition to the F.O. on behalf of Casement's humanitarian colleagues the day after the July 18th Cabinet memorandum. I mention two of the six points as to why the

humanitarian lobby doubted the accusations of moral misconduct (Mitchell, 1997, 32-33).

1° At no other time either in Africa or South America have the enemies of Casement cast the shadow of suspicion upon his moral conduct, although in the Putumayo they did not hesitate to do so with reference to a British Officer.

2° If the allegations in the "diary" are in Casement's handwriting, clearly accusing himself of these practices and are not translated extracts from the documents of third parties, then it is submitted that they constitute proof of mental disease.

Within hours of presenting his petition Harris was called to the Home Office and on July 19th, in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he described that meeting, but referred to the diaries in the vaguest of terms.

"Sir Ernley Blackwell placed everything before me yesterday at the Home Office, and as a result, I must admit with the most painful reluctance that the Sir Roger Casement revealed in this evidence is a very different man from the one up to whom I have looked as an ideal character for over fifteen years. My distress of mind at this terrible revelation will I am sure be fully appreciated by your Grace. The only consolation is that there appeared to be no certain evidence that these abominable things were practised in the Congo – it may be that our presence checked them."²⁰

In an autobiography of Sir John Harris by Lady Harris²¹ (not yet used till today as far as I know), one reads:

"I had satisfied myself, as I was so firmly convinced, that the diary was not Roger Casement's handiwork. Alas, when it was put before me and I had examined certain parts, my confidence was shaken. Then I came upon two or three facts only known in Europe to Casement and myself, and then my hopes were scattered, for, I realized that the wretched thing (Harris is alluding to Casement's homosexuality) was genuine! The dreadful consequences of this conviction, coupled with the nature of the record, caused me such mental and physical distress that it was only by the exercise of sheer will power that I avoided reeling from the chair – how glad I was of a glass of water! I passed from the austerity of the Home Office to meet my friend H.W. Nevinson (a journalist and poet) who was waiting for me on the Embankment. Those who know Nevinson can best realize the value of his sympathy as I unburdened to him the dreadful truth. I knew now how terrible was Casement's secret. The diary was more than a record, it was the unfolding of a life which for years had been poisoned by disease, which must have made him happy to

²⁰ HO 144/1636/31 1643/3a, referred to in Mitchell (1997, 33-34).

²¹ MSS. Brit. Emp. S/353.

go from a world which during the last 20 years had sapped his vitality and had haunted him with ghastly spectres of cruel oppression, revolting diseases and such an inferno of fortune and murder of his fellow human beings that few men in history have been called upon the face – and in his case to expose!".

5. FINAL REMARKS

We believe that only disbelievers cannot accept the arguments put forward against the forgery of the *Black Diaries*. It is strange that all Casement's biographers have only touched the surface of his Congo and Amazon journeys. There are thousands of documents dealing with Casement's journey in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. No biographer had yet used these papers. Even the published scientific works in French by Jules Marchal and myself (based on literature and archival texts in ten languages) have not been used by biographers.²² For a final biography on Casement one needs to read not only English, but German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese and even some Congolese texts. Some documents in the Vatican *e.g.* on Casement are in Latin.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| AE | Affaires Étrangères |
| HO | Home Office, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken |
| MS | Manuscript |
| M.S.S. Brit. Emp. | Manuscripts British Empire |
| NLI | Dublin, National Library of Ireland |

²² See publications by Dr. Jules Marchal and Daniel Vangroenweghe from 1985 onwards.

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Casements Kongo dagboek, één van de zogenoemde *Black Diaries*, was geen vervalsing

DANIEL VANGROENWEGHE

SAMENVATTING

De Britse consul Roger Casement stelde in 1904 een rapport op over de misbruiken in het Kongo van Leopold II. Zijn *Congo Diary* uit 1903-1904 werd samen met drie andere dagboeken en een kasboek, samen *Black Diaries* geheten, in zijn verblijfplaats te Londen in beslag genomen. De Ier Casement, beschuldigd van hoogverraad, werd in 1916 ter dood veroordeeld en opgehangen. Die dagboeken getuigen van zijn homoseksuele praktijken, tenminste gedurende negen jaar, en werden door de Britse regering misbruikt om de kansen op gratie te beletten.

Eerst wordt een overzicht gegeven van de controverse over de echtheid van de dagboeken, controverse die tot op heden voortwoedt. Scotland Yard wordt beschuldigd die dagboeken vervalst te hebben of minstens homoseksuele passages te hebben ingelast. De Britse Regering werkte die controverse in de hand door het raadplegen van die dagboeken decennia lang te verbieden.

Vervolgens worden vijf argumenten besproken, die de vervalsingstheze weerleggen. De meeste volstaan op zich niet, maar samen genomen bewijzen ze de echtheid van het Kongolees dagboek.

1° De grafologie. Minstens drie onderzoeken komen tot de conclusie dat de dagboeken in het handschrift van Casement zijn. 2° De tekstanalyse die poogt na te gaan of uitdrukkingen en zinsbouw de vergelijking doorstaan met andere documenten van Casement. 3° X-stralen die aantonen dat er geen palimpsesten zijn. 4° Een mogelijke vervalser beschikte niet over de nodige gegevens om het Kongolees dagboek te vervalsen. Dit is het hoofdargument en is een originele bijdrage die ons inziens de echtheid van het dagboek definitief bewijst. Veertig passages worden aangehaald, inclusief homoseksuele passages, waarvoor geen informatie beschikbaar was in het Britse ministerie van Binnenlandse en Buitenlandse Zaken, in Scotland Yard enz. noch in publicaties. Van sommige van die veertig passages zijn wel bevestigingen gevonden in Archieven van Buitenlandse Zaken te Brussel en in privé papieren van zendelingen. Diegenen die volhouden dat ze toch vervalst zijn,

zullen moeten aantonen waar de Britse instanties die informatie wel konden gehaald hebben. 5° Het niet gepubliceerde getuigenis van de zendeling John H. Harris die Casement gekend heeft in Kongo en die het Kongolees dagboek in 1916 kon onderzoeken op vraag van de aartsbisschop.

De conclusie luidt dat het Kongolees dagboek van Casement volledig van zijn hand is, de seksuele passages inclusief.

Le journal congolais de Casement n'est pas une falsification

DANIEL VANGROENWEGHE

RÉSUMÉ

Le consul britannique Roger Casement a rédigé un rapport sur les abus au Congo de Léopold II. Son journal congolais de 1903-1904 ainsi que d'autres journaux ont été confisqués à son domicile de Londres. Accusé de haute trahison, l'auteur a été condamné à mort et pendu à Londres en 1916. Dans ces journaux, Casement fait état de pratiques homosexuelles pendant une période d'au moins 9 ans. Et le gouvernement britannique a pris prétexte de ce comportement pour empêcher le droit de grâce.

En guise d'introduction de l'article, est relatée la controverse qui n'est pas encore éteinte à propos de l'authenticité des journaux. Scotland Yard a été accusé d'avoir falsifié les journaux, ou au moins d'avoir intercalé de passages homosexuels. En interdisant pendant des décennies la consultation de ces journaux, le Gouvernement a alimenté cette controverse

Dans le corps de l'exposé, cinq arguments sont utilisés pour prouver l'authenticité du journal congolais, y compris celle des passages où il est question d'homosexualité.

1° Trois expertises graphologiques concluent que les journaux sont bien de la main de Casement. 2° L'analyse textuelle compare les mots et la construction des phrases avec d'autres écrits du même auteur. 3° Les rayons X ne révèlent pas de palimpsestes. 4° Un falsificateur éventuel ne disposait pas de données suffisantes pour fabriquer le journal congolais. Ceci est l'argument principal

et original qui à notre avis tranche la controverse. Quarante passages sont certainement authentiques: ni le Ministère britannique des Affaires Étrangères, ni le Ministère de l'Intérieur, ni Scotland Yard, ni des publications de l'époque ne disposaient de telles informations. De plus certains passages cités par l'auteur sont confirmés par les Archives du ministère des Affaires Étrangères à Bruxelles et par les archives privées de missionnaires anglais. De la sorte, il appartiendra à ceux qui continuent à croire à la falsification de citer les sources dans lesquelles les autorités britanniques ont trouvé ces informations. 5° Le témoignage non publié de John H. Harris qui a connu Casement pendant la période où il était au Congo. En 1916, cet homme a pu examiner le journal congolais à la demande de l'archevêque. En conclusion de cette démonstration, on peut affirmer que le journal congolais, y compris les passages homosexuels, est entièrement de la main de Casement.