

**TASK 1a: Read the short biography by Frank A. Biletz on Roger Casement's life. Highlight important aspects. Also read the additional information given in the squares.**

**Sir Roger Casement (1915)**



Image 1. Photo of Roger Casement (Mitchell 6)

**CASEMENT, SIR ROGER** (1864-1916). Diplomat, humanitarian, and Irish nationalist. Casement was born in Dublin, the son of a British Army officer of Protestant background in Ulster and a Catholic mother from Co. Cork.

After the deaths of both parents, Protestant relatives in Co. Antrim [today part of Northern Ireland] raised him.

In 1883, Casement traveled to the Congo and spent most of

**British colonial service**

England began to build an empire in the 16th century by putting many countries around the world under their rule. On the map you see the British Empire as it was towards the late 19th century. Roger Casement worked in these colonies for Britain.



Image 2. British Empire around 1900 (Women in World History)

the next 20 years in West Africa and Central Africa working for various commercial<sup>1</sup> interests, and, in 1892, he joined the **British colonial service**. In 1903, he wrote a report on the Congo that exposed atrocities<sup>2</sup> on **rubber plantations**<sup>3</sup>.

In 1908, Casement became **consul general** in Rio de Janeiro, and his report on the brutal exploitation<sup>4</sup> of **Putumayo** Indians working on rubber plantations in Peru was issued in 1911.

He was knighted<sup>5</sup> for his humanitarian efforts in 1911. He retired from the consular service in 1913.

**Putumayo's rubber exploitation**

Putumayo is "a region of the Amazon rainforest" where many rubber trees grow (Burroughs 124). These trees were of interest for the Western world because they provided "crucial raw material that kept cars and machines going" (Farje). This is why companies exploited the region's rubber supply. To produce the most rubber, indigenous people were enslaved under cruel conditions to do the hard work.



Image 3. Slavery in Putumayo (Death in the Devil's Paradise)

<sup>1</sup> geschäftlich

<sup>2</sup> Gräueltat

<sup>3</sup> Kautschukplantage

<sup>4</sup> Ausbeutung

<sup>5</sup> jdmn. zum Ritter schlagen

Meanwhile, Casement had become involved in the Irish language movement and nationalist politics, joining the **Gaelic League** in 1903 and the **Irish Volunteers** in 1913. He published an open letter in 1914, condemning British government policies in Ireland.

When World War I began, he went to Germany in an unsuccessful attempt to form an Irish brigade<sup>6</sup> from among Irish prisoners of war to fight the British Empire, and he also sought arms for an Irish rebellion.

Upon Casement's return to Ireland on a German submarine in April 1916, just before the **Easter Rising**, the **Royal Irish Constabulary**<sup>7</sup> captured him near Tralee, in Co. Kerry.

During his subsequent trial, British officials privately spread insinuations<sup>8</sup> about Casement's homosexuality on the basis of the so-called "Black Diaries," which had purportedly<sup>9</sup> been discovered among his possessions, to circumvent<sup>10</sup> efforts to gain him leniency<sup>11</sup>.

Just before he was hanged on 3 August 1916, he converted to Catholicism.

Casement's reported homosexuality made him a problematic national martyr in the socially conservative Irish Free State. Debates continue over the authenticity of the diaries, although the scholarly consensus now accepts them.

In 1965, after a protracted campaign, the British and Irish governments agreed to repatriate<sup>12</sup> Casement's remains, and they were interred in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, after a state funeral.

---

<sup>6</sup> Trupp/Gruppe

<sup>7</sup> Polizei

<sup>8</sup> Anspielung/Unterstellung

<sup>9</sup> angeblich

<sup>10</sup> verhindern

<sup>11</sup> Nachsicht

<sup>12</sup> jmdn. in die Heimat zurückbringen

### Irish history

In 1800 "Ireland [...] merged with Great Britain to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain" (Easter Rising). From then on, Ireland was governed by Britain. "During the 19th century, groups of Irish nationalists opposed this arrangement in varying degrees" (Easter Rising). Two such groups are the following:

"**The Gaelic League** was founded in 1893 with the aim of restoring the Irish language" (Gaelic League). This helped establish a sense of an Irish identity in people.

"**The Irish Volunteers** was a military organization established in 1913 by Irish nationalists" (Irish Volunteers).

One climax of this opposition to British rule over Ireland was the **Easter Rising**. On Easter Monday of 1916 "a group of Irish nationalists proclaimed the establishment of the Irish Republic" and they "staged rebellion against the British government in Ireland" (Easter Rising).



Image 4. Easter Rising (Irish Volunteers)

## Bibliography

- “Black and White World Map with Countries.” *Printablee*, 19 Nov. 2021, [www.printablee.com/post\\_black-and-white-world-map-printable\\_396505/](http://www.printablee.com/post_black-and-white-world-map-printable_396505/).
- Burroughs, Robert M. *Travel Writing and Atrocities: Eyewitness Accounts of Colonialism in the Congo, Angola, and the Putumayo*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Currivan, Lorraine. “Map of Counties of Ireland.” *ResearchGate*, 19 Nov. 2021, [www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-counties-of-Ireland\\_fig7\\_256483530](http://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-counties-of-Ireland_fig7_256483530).
- “Death in the Devil’s Paradise.” *Survival*, 19 Nov. 2021, [www.survivalinternational.org/articles/3282-rubber-boom](http://www.survivalinternational.org/articles/3282-rubber-boom).
- “Easter Rising.” *History*, 19 Nov. 2021, [www.history.com/topics/british-history/easter-rising](http://www.history.com/topics/british-history/easter-rising).
- Farje, Javier. “The Putumayo Atrocities.” *Latin America Bureau*, 19 Nov. 2021, [lab.org.uk/the-putumayo-atrocities/](http://lab.org.uk/the-putumayo-atrocities/).
- “History of the Irish Volunteers.” *Irish Volunteers*, 19 Nov. 2021, [irishvolunteers.org/pages/history-of-the-irish-volunteers/](http://irishvolunteers.org/pages/history-of-the-irish-volunteers/).
- Mitchell, Angus. “A Strange Chapter of Irish History: Sir Roger Casement, Germany and the 1916 Rising.” *Field Day Review*, 2012, pp. 4-21.
- “The Gaelic League.” *Ask About Ireland*, 19 Nov 2021, [www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/looking-at-places/meath/fr.-eugene-ogrowney/the-gaelic-league/](http://www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/looking-at-places/meath/fr.-eugene-ogrowney/the-gaelic-league/).
- “Women in World History.” *Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media*, 19 Nov. 2021, [chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson8/lesson8.php?s=0#](http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson8/lesson8.php?s=0#).

**TASK 1b: Map Casement's travels and milestones on a world map. Make sure to include the most important dates and places and what Casement did in those places. The squares provide you with space to write down the most important information.**

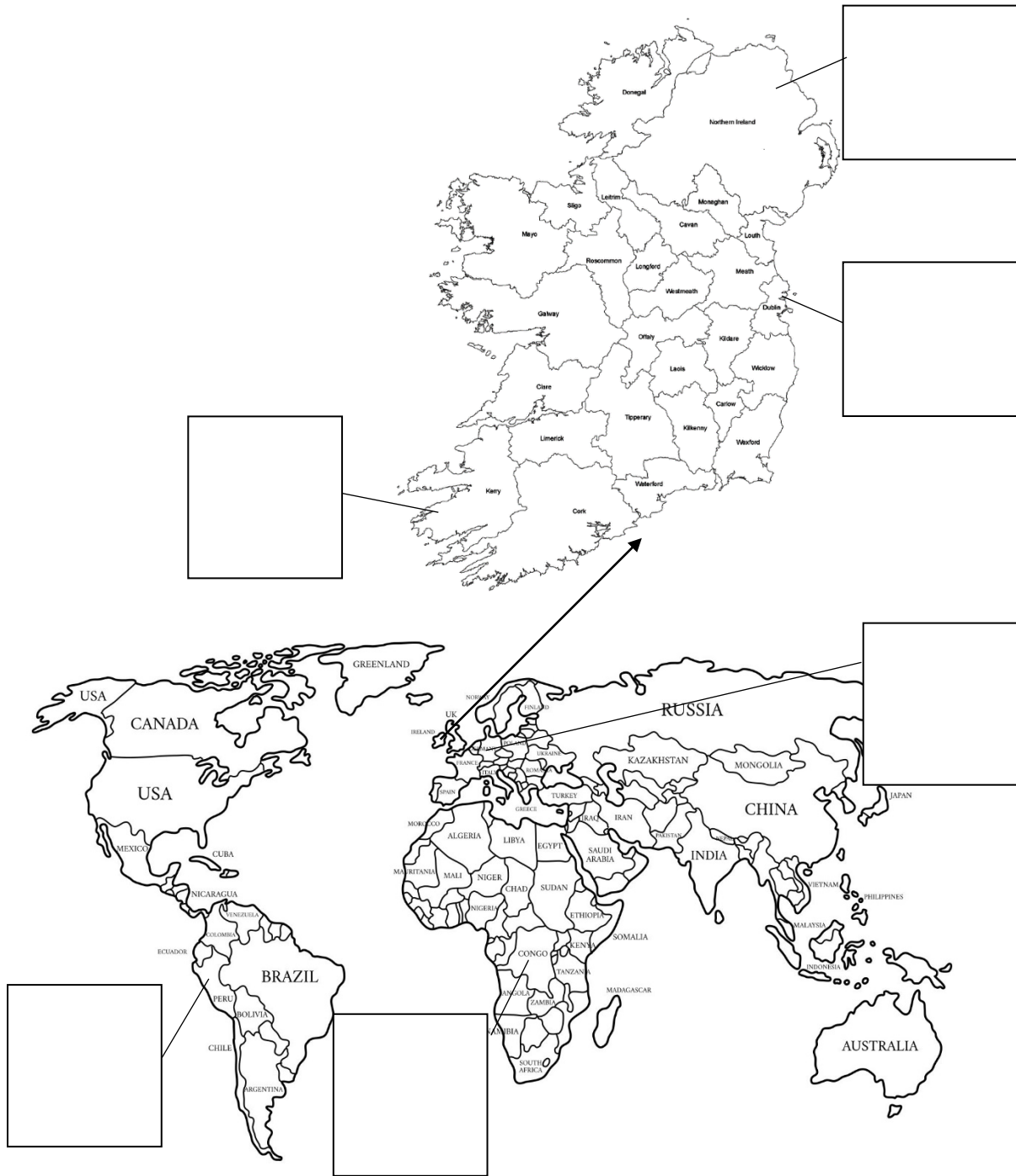


Image 5. Top map: Irish Map with Counties (Currivan)

Image 6. Bottom map: World Map (Black and White)