

Six Letters (1940-1942)

Written by George Plant (1904-1942)

Preserved in Military Archives, Dublin

communicated by W. J. Mc Cormack

Close readers of Irish poetry may recall a reference to George Plant as 'quick fighter and a Protestant'. But Austin Clarke (1896-1974) is little remembered these days.¹ An extensive account of Plant's life and execution (5 March 1942) appeared in the first issue of The Tipperary Historical Journal (1986).² Since then, however, further discussion of this intriguing figure has been slight despite the growth of an academic industry based on subversion in Ireland after the foundation of the Free State. Republican commemoration - for example, the pamphlet published to mark their fiftieth anniversary of Plant's execution - scrupulously avoids any mention of the charge, murder of a fellow-republican at the behest of the republican leadership. The publication of six letters in Military Archives may stimulate a re-consideration of Plant's career, personality and fate.



George Plant

The texts are reproduced below with as little editorial intrusion as is consistent with clarity. It should be noted that, the letter to Frank Aiken excepted, the texts used are copies typed by prison officials. A number of typing errors or misreadings are obvious. To take an obvious example, the copyist gives Plant's sister's married name as Griffiths, where Griffin is correct.³

1

[To Frank Aiken, TD]

Polerone,
Mooncoin,
Co. Waterford
3 - 6 - 40
To Mr Frank Aiken

Sir

In recent press and radio announcements the serious position we may find ourselves in has been stressed. If this is the case I wish to take my part, in the belief that five years I. R. A. Experience[,] ten years constructional engineering and a few hundred hours flying may be of some use in event of any attempt to put us under protection[.] Can you find room in an anti-tank or machine gun battalion for the duration of the emergency?

Naturally I do not want a private's rank as I know from observation and experience that I am reasonably useful in charge of green troops who will not give their best under orthodox military discipline.

Yours faithfully

George Plant

2

Dublin

22 [19]42

[To Mr. J. Plant, 3? Moorehouse Rd., London, W. 2. England]

Hello Jim,

How's tricks? Got your letter O. K. Also £1 enclosed. Thanks for same as due to the stress of war I find that Mr. Churchill and I are in agreement that heavy smoking is the first essential to victory and even if you don't win at least you've had your smoke. I expect you have been getting the Irish papers and following up the serial. It runs into some thousands of words, with very few facts, if any, however its a change from the war news or is views the more correct word[?] I am enclosing a letter to M[idge]. Glad to know you are all making out O. K. Are you and Elsie in reserved occupations? I guess the food problem is not up to your idea of what is proper rations. Wonder how and when the Yanks are going to start performing. It is possible that there may be some moves here as a result of their expanding programme. Well I sign off for the present. Tell Elsie and Ger. I said hello. You will be surprised to hear Mary came along with some cash and suggestions. Only cash accepted. George.


3

Dublin

2 February [19]42

Dear Midge,

As you know this letter will be read by a number of people you will have to accept as said a number of the things you are entitled to expect, and rely on your memory to fill in the rest of it. I was delighted to get your letter as it is only recently I have been able to find out the real facts concerning a lot of people and things, and it has been worrying me quite a lot recently, that you and I had let a nice little wall of silence spring up for the past three years and it was doing [n]either of us very much justice when we did not full [recte pull] it down properly. Things can be seen very clearly at times, more often its easier just not to look. However I had a good look recently, and there was only one person in the world who really mattered, or ever will. The other people are finished and will not cause any more trouble as I now know the things that matter, tho its not the best time in the world for to take advantage of them, I expect you have been following this legal cases in the papers. Well its finish will probably been the Military Court, and the chances before that are in about the same proportion to a snowball in hell however, I'm not worried about that part of it as sometimes when the steel and other things would not go right a few years ago, I'd have been delighted to have them. I don't want you to do any worrying about it either, as I'm sure


 Polerone S.R.S
 mooncoin
 60 Waterford
 3 - 6 - 40

To Mr Frank Aiken
 Sir

In recent press and radio announcements "the serious position we may find ourselves in has been stressed. If this is the case I wish to take my part," in the belief that five years P. R. & experience, ten years constructional engineering and a few hundred hours flying may be of some use in event of any attempt to put us under protection can you find room in an anti tank or machine gun battalion for the duration of the emergency?

Naturally I do not want a private's rank as I know from observation and experience that I am reasonably useful in charge of green troops who will not give their best under orthodox military discipline.

Yours faithfully
 George Plant

you know off [recte of] old that I always wanted to see the thing thru [sic]. I guess you have a lonely time but you've always been on your own and I expect you are sometimes glad of it. Well Midge I'll say Cheerio for the present[j] would write a lot more if the circumstances were more congenial. I could not see you last year as it would have meant isolation for me if I did, write as soon as can as I have been wanting a letter from you for a long time; how are the family?

Bye for the present.

Yours always,

George,

x x x x x x x

4

UNDATED

[To: Mr. H. Plant, St. Johnstown, Fethard, Co. Tipp.]

Arbour Hill,
Internment Bks.
Dublin.
Saturday.

Hello Hayden,

Thanks very much for sending along that Solicitor chap a few days ago. Believe me it was very much appreciated. And I think a lot of your loyalty in doing so. However I had already got Lehane, S. Hogan plus S. MacBride, B. L. This however does not make me any less thankful for you part in sending along M. Kennedy. I did not mean to have any legal representation and would have avoided it if the decision rested with myself alone. I suppose there is no use in telling Mother not to worry about me, as she will probably do so anyhow, as mothers are like that. However do the best you can to stop her doing so. I dont suppose you understand or sympathise with those problems but they are mine and I dont want any of you to lose any sleep over them.

Cheerio, Best luck.

George.

5

UNDATED

[to: Mrs. M. Griffin, Castlemacadam House, Avoca, Co. Wicklow.]

Arbour Hill
Internment Bks.,
Dublin.

My dear Mary,

Thanks for your visit, present and letters, also for your interest on my behalf. Tho I can't agree with it I believe your intentions are the best. However as we are a bit in the oil and water state, our ideas don't mix very well. I would much prefer you all to take no notice, or at least as little as you possibly can of those problems. And let me do the worrying over them as I do not find it any great hardship to do so.

I was talking to S. McBride a couple of times since. He will let you know anything that is necessary and is the best man in those times, as he knows the whole trick a the loop game



Reinterment of George Plant 1948

of the system, which takes a bit of understanding [.] I'm in great form and my only annoyance is that some of my friends think that this is a personal problem and no one is concerned only myself. It is much greater than that and I cannot go into details by letter, some time later on I'll tell you all about it. I've not got very much to write about as you know more than I do. Keep your heart up and let things run along and you'll find that twenty years from now you will be worrying just as much, because your young son is running round with some dame you don't like.

Cheerio,
George.

6

UNDATED

[To Sister M. Laurence, Presentation Convent, Rosslare, Co. Wexford.]

Arbour Hill
Internment Bks.
Dublin.

My. Dear Sister Laurence,

Thanks for your many letters and good wishes to me. I certainly appreciate them and I am sure your chosen life has not been made any happier by me. As you know, I regret that very much. But you wrote a very gloomy letter and I was of course disappointed that you should only see the black side of things. I dont suppose you quite understand our outlook on matters of this kind. But be certain that as far as I am concerned I am in the best of spirits and not a bit worried how things go. Now please don't worry about the Spiritual side of things as there is no need to. I'm not going to go into an intimate discussion here as this has to go thru [sic] too many hands. But I'm sure there are enough people in Ireland who know the rights and wrongs of those things to put matters right where they matter most. The hope you will not be annoyed [sic] at this tone of letter is very earnest. But it is impossible at the moment to write otherwise. Kindest regards to all the family. And dont worry about yours sincerely,

George.

P. S. On re reading your letter I've realised how much worrying you are doing on my behalf. I wish you would not do so tho I appreciate your wishes for my welfare very much. And I want you to know I'm not afraid of very much in this world and afraid of nothing in the next.

G.

References

¹Austin Clarke, *Selected Poems* (ed. W. J. Mc Cormack). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992. pp. 71-72.

²See Michael Moroney, 'George Plant and the Rule of Law - the Devereux Affair 1940-1942' *Tipperary Historical Journal* No 1 (1988) pp. 1-2

³I am grateful to Mrs Patricia Porter (Wicklow) and Mr Geoffrey Griffin, Limerick for their consent to the publication of these letters by their kinsman, and for information about Plant's family background. Grateful acknowledgment is due to Commandant Victor Lang, keeper of the Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, for photocopies of the material reproduced here.