

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SURPRISED ANARCHISTS

SIR,— Since its not often that one reads about anarchists in the *Cork Examiner*, we were a little disappointed with the news story you recently carried concerning the British anarchist newspaper, *Blackflag*, and the Papal visit to Holland. Once again we felt, it was the 'image' of anarchists as being violent and against everything that was being highlighted. For the sake of fairness then, we hope you will allow us the space briefly to put our case.

Anarchists are those socialists who are also against authoritarian relations in society. Because we stand against the notion that "one must do as one is told, without question", an anarchist society would

have the greatest degree of individual and social freedom possible. By implication also we stand for an economic system where workers would not have bosses or employers but would themselves own industry and the wealth it produces.

The capitalist system we live in now puts profits before all else. Workers are made redundant most often not because there is no work for them, but because it increases the profit margins for individual employers to cut the

workforce as much as possible. Because of this 'profit before people' basis to capitalism thousands go hungry and even die (in countries like the Sudan and Ethiopia) while food remains in warehouses and is even destroyed to keep up market prices.

To the extent that religion defends this state of affairs by encouraging the poor to accept "their lot in society", then we oppose it. We believe that the working class must demand change and an end to the inequality and injustice

that is all around. But unlike other "socialists" we place no faith in "elected representatives" doing this for the working class. Rather we look to workers themselves to take the lead, to represent themselves.

The ideas of anarchism have had a venerable history in the world. From Petrograd in 1917 to Barcelona in 1936 we have stood for freedom and equality — the emancipation of Labour. That emancipation has yet to be realised. It does not exist in Russia or

China or even in Cuba. Rather, workers in these countries have as little control over the way things are run and how wealth is distributed as they have in Ireland.

We have only been able to give a necessary brief account of what anarchism stands for here, but for anyone interested we have produced a pamphlet called "Anarchism and Ireland", which we will gladly send to anyone who sends us £1.00 to cover cost and postage.

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24 Sullivan's Quay,
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Oppression's fire

SIR. — Kevin Doyle in his letter (*Examiner*, June 28), endeavouring to excuse the existence of anarchists in our political life opens with the remarkable statement that "it is not often we read about anarchists in the *Cork Examiner*."

Of course we read about them, and this form of terrorism almost every day of the week, in fact the frequent acts of violent terrorism are evidence of a very sick society which, to a large extent, can be attributed to the anarchist mentality.

Mr Doyle like many other misguided dreamers, writes about ending inequality and injustice by the promotion of the

dangerous theory that national and international government administration in the hands of the workers themselves would and could bring about an end to all form of injustice.

One needs but to examine the records of countries subjected to the so-called "liberation" process countries like Russia, power to the workers; Hungary and Poland, to name but a few, to note the fate of the unfortunate workers who fall for this type of propaganda. It was in all cases, from the political frying pan into the fire of oppression.

He further states that "we place no faith in elected representatives, the

workers will represent themselves."

That's the kernel of the anarchist scene. The history of anarchism shows clearly that elections, as we know them, are unknown — democracy dies in the name of democracy. This is the very form of "freedom" that we all wish to avoid, the fruitlessness of attempting to create order out of the confusion of anarchy.

Regarding Mr Doyle's reference to the success of this policy in Barcelona in 1936, the noted writer, George Orwell, who participated in this struggle, tells us that he was disappointed with the experiment and realised that had

Franco not been victorious the communists, socialists and the anarchists would have to fight all over again among themselves to decide who would rule Spain — as an active fighter on the spot, he certainly wrote with authority.

It is an historical fact that those parties fought severely among themselves without the remotest chance of unity, and this was to a degree, a contributing factor in Franco's victory.

Your correspondent comments on the ideal position where "workers would have no bosses" when the anarchists get to power. One can without difficulty see where the confusion would arise in such an utterly infantile situation: a pie-in-the-sky development where possibly an industrial concern with

say, 750 workers would run smoothly and successfully "without bosses." May the good Lord protect us from such an experience.

I'd like to close with a very simple query to Kevin Doyle, would he be good enough to tell us where there is a country now being governed totally by anarchists where the workers are running the country "without bosses" and that equality and justice reigns supreme?

We already know of several countries where such promises were made to the workers but the success and the promised freedom is now further away than ever.

Over to you, Mr Doyle,
M J DOOLAN,
Cork.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cork Examiner, Tuesday, August 27, 1985

Capitalism, Fascism and Communism — by an Anarchist

Sir, Mr. Doolan, in his letter to the *Examiner* of July 18, concludes with a "simple query." He asks: "Where is there a country now being governed totally by anarchists, where the workers are running the country without bosses and that equality and justice reign supreme?"

Let me, in turn, ask him an even simpler question. Can Mr. Doolan name any capitalist country that doesn't have large-scale poverty, that doesn't have unemployment and that doesn't have a homeless problem? I'm sure he can't.

The south currently has a recognised poverty level of one million people. Unemployment stands at 17%, and is getting worse, but more indicative . . . 3,000 people are homeless in the south while thousands of building workers are forced to sign on the dole for "lack of work." Even the U.S.A. — that "success" story of capitalism — admits by its own federal statistics to having 30 million on the poverty line. Where, pray tell, is the justice and equality of that?

But the situation is even worse. Despite the fact that there is more wealth in the

world today, to feed *everyone*, twice or three times over for their lifetime (U.N. figures), a record number of people (in the order of millions) will die this year of starvation. Why? Mr. Doolan offers no answers.

The Workers Solidarity Movement does not hesitate to lay the blame with capitalism. Precisely because the wealth of the world is owned by a few and, more to the point, because the means for producing wealth is owned by a minority who have no other interest than in making themselves richer, millions go hungry and die. Such a system, which Mr. Doolan upholds, is an abomination.

Mr. Doolan holds the spectre of Russia and the Eastern Bloc up to haunt us. His point is obvious; he seeks to deny the possibility of any change for the better in the direction of socialism. He hopes, thereby, to debunk the notion that workers could change society and manage it in their own interests. After all, since Russia has failed to live up to its promises, isn't the idea of socialism itself a dead end?

The myth that Russia and the Eastern Bloc coun-

tries are socialist is a powerful one. But it is no more than that — a myth. The state capitalism of the East is in no way preferable to the "private" capitalism of the West. It is just as bad.

Anarchists lay the blame for the defeat of the 1917 Revolution in Russia with the Bolshevik government which systematically suppressed the factory committees and "soviets," the very basis of the new socialist society there.

As has been ably demonstrated by Solidarity in Poland, workers in the East can and will fight their "communist" bosses. But Mr. Doolan may be disappointed to know that at its height Solidarity never called for a return to his much-lauded Western capitalism but for "socialism to be put into practice by workers themselves." That more than sums up what anarchists have to say on Eastern Europe.

Mr. Doolan engages in more waffle when he comments in his letter, on the Spanish Revolution of 1936 and what George Orwell has to say about it. He does, to an extent, make one valid point — Orwell wrote with authority on the civil

war and revolution.

His book, *Homage to Catalonia*, is well worth a read. But let's be clear about one thing: Orwell was *not* disappointed in what he saw in Spain. In fact, he pays tribute to the anarchists as being the backbone of the revolution and the resistance to Franco. He states, in page 8 and 9 of the above book, that Barcelona — which was under the control of the anarchists at the time — "was something startling and overwhelming. It was the first time I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. He goes on to state that "he recognised it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for."

So it seems then that Mr. Doolan is deliberately misrepresenting Orwell to justify *his* opinions on the events in Spain. He also seems to have forgotten that the anarchist movement in Spain had a membership of close to one million workers at the outbreak of the Civil War in '36. They were organised in the anarchist union, the CNT.

Clearly, as Mr. Doolan would like us to believe, these one million "mis-

guided dreamers."

"Misguided" because they questioned the wealth and power of a small, corrupt minority ably supported by an equally corrupt Catholic Church and, no doubt, "dreamers," because they could quite easily foresee a society where the wealth they produced would be equally distributed.

To be sure also, the anarchists fought bitterly against the Spanish Communist Party whom Orwell pinpointed as the "fascists" of the Republican zone.

Mr. Doolan attempts to link the anarchist tradition to terrorism. What does he mean? Is he talking about the Shi'ites and the Sikhs, or is he talking about Reagan and Thatcher.

It is Reagan who recently pushed through a \$33 million support package for the Contras in Nicaragua. The Contras, as it is well known, are a paramilitary army set up specifically to overthrow the popularly-elected Sandinista government by force of arms. Their methods have been to murder and terrorise Nicaraguan peasants and workers.

Or does Mr. Doolan mean Thatcher who callously

ordered the sinking of the *Belgrano* with the loss of 800 lives and who instituted the "shoot to kill" policy in the North. If it is Reagan and Thatcher that Mr. Doolan is reading about every day then let me assure him that, as a matter of hygiene, we would have nothing to do with them.

Secondly, Mr. Doolan accuses the anarchists of supporting the end of "elections as we know them." Certainly he is right to the extent that we think that the "democracy" that exists at present is a farce. What does it amount to? The opportunity every four years (roughly) to pick between political parties that all support capitalism, though with different amounts of window dressing. Even the Workers Party goes no further than calling for nationalisation and a more equitable tax system.

That is not socialism. But Mr. Doolan is wrong if he thinks we are against democracy. On the contrary we are for it, but in a much more extensive form than at present. We have no control over the politicians we elect. They do whatever they want once elected —

"broken promises" are the order of the day. In an anarchist society, workers would elect their own delegates to carry out their wishes. Moreover these would be accountable and they would get no more "wages" than workers themselves. Quite a contrast to now!

Mr. Doolan has no faith in the ability of the working class to run society "without bosses." The contrary is our belief. Such an anarchist society, based on socialism and freedom, would give everyone, irrespective of colour, sex or background, an opportunity to have a decent life free from want and misery.

Let Mr. Doolan invoke whoever he wants to protect himself against this eventually but we respectfully suggest that a trip to Ballinspittle is in order.

After all, commonsense has been turned on its head there.

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● This correspondence is
now closed — Letters
Editor