

## Eugene Media Sensation, continued from page 1

What the Times has thoroughly failed to accomplish, as have the other media outlets, is to offer any definition, let alone accurate depiction, of the theories of anarchism. The theatrical extremes present in the infamous Eugene camp are apparently utterly enticing to a media who hardly cares to acknowledge that the mutant strain of anarchism these anarchists tout is a relatively recent development. The brassy statement that anarchists' heralded a "muted applause" to the events of September 11th is fraudulent to an infinite degree: any anarchist lauding such a horrendous act is immediately in the minority. In the weeks following the 11th, an anarchist affinity to those outraged by the attacks, though careful to escape the temper of blind patriotism, had been unremittingly expressed in print. Two major examples include the Florida-based anarchist quarterly *Onward*, which condemned the attacks as both "indefensible," and "certainly careless in the brutality they inflicted;" and Cindy Milstein, a prominent anarchist at the Institute for Social Ecology college in Vermont, produced a lengthy essay furthering the assertion that "September 11 will always be a day to condemn."

A third example can be found in Noam Chomsky, perhaps the most well known anarchist in the world, who described the terrorist attacks as "a horrendous atrocity, probably the most devastating instant human toll of any crime in history, outside of war."

To label Chomsky as the most well known anarchist, however, may mislead one to the assumption that he receives the furthest media exposure. Though the New York Times has labeled him as "arguably the most important intellectual alive," and according to the Chicago Tribune, he is "the most cited living author," Chomsky is inexplicably not the one the media runs to when in need of anarchist opinion.

What mainstream media demands is not only sensation, but also concision, meaning short quotable "sound bites," often void of content. In light of Chomsky's tendency towards in-depth rational explanations and long informational tracts, he fails on both demands. The Eugene anarchists' undercooked philosophies, on the other hand, cater instantly to the fussy appetite of the media.

As often as "anarchists" are mentioned in major media, an elaboration on the term is incredibly overdue. Going on the Times article alone, the only rational conclusion, it would seem, is that "breaking windows and starting fires" wholly comprises the "anarchist play book." In fact, any definition of anarchism is completely and unequivocally absent from the article.

So as long as this trend of exclusion persists, a sad myth will continue to be perpetuated: that anarchism is simply a nihilist's wish for disorder and chaos. However, as Alexander Berkman wrote at the beginning of the 20th century, "Anarchism is the very opposite of all that." Berkman himself adhered to the most accurate definition of anarchism available: that which is found in it's history, theory, and revolutionary practice.

Applying these criteria, anarchism has always been, first and foremost, the conviction that authority, hierarchy and domination require the utmost justification, and that more often than not, this standard is not met. This does not end with the political sphere, but also extends to that of the economic, and personal arenas of life. In order to nurture such an inquisitive tendency in society, and avoid the negatives constraints of domination, anarchism aims to develop a more participatory and interactive elaboration of democracy built upon mutual aid and free association. Anarchism promises utopia no more than any other serious insight: rather it proposes a more inclusive, decentralized social structure, where the tendency to dominate can be marginalized.

Such a model, in fact, is available for study. In 1936, amidst the Spanish Civil War, an estimated 5 million anarchists successfully established a bonafide grassroots democracy, not only collectivizing the political structure, but urban and rural means of production, police patrols, public services such as the phone system, and so on. A noteworthy account of this period is available in George Orwell's memoir of the war, *Homage to Catalonia*, including a discourse on the revolution's untimely demise. This was an ending not due to the weakness of the revolution's devices, but as a result of the strong opposition posed not only by Franco's Fascist forces, but also the Republican government and Soviet-directed Communist party.

Eugene anarchists owe little if any to the Spanish anarchists. Murray Bookchin, a scholar of the Spanish Revolution, co-founder of the Institute of Social Ecology, and perhaps Eugene's most vehement anarchist critic, observes that "this anarchism celebrates the notion of liberty from rather than a fleshed-out concept of freedom for." The Eugene style of anarchism seemingly denounces organization itself in exchange for a "liberal ideology that focuses overwhelmingly on the abstract individual, supports personal autonomy, and advances a negative rather than a substantive concept of liberty."



Spanish anarchist, circa 1936

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