

Re-visiting Uncle Ted

A look at *Technological Slavery*:
The collected writings of Theodore J. Kaczynski
a.k.a. "The Unabomber"

AUGUST 14, 1983: "The fifth of August I began a hike to the east. I got to my hidden camp that I have in a gulch beyond what I call "Diagonal Gulch." I stayed there through the following day, August 6. I felt the peace of the forest there. But there are few huckleberries there, and though there are deer, there is very little small game. Furthermore, it had been a long time since I had seen the beautiful and isolated plateau where the various branches of Trout Creek originate. So I decided to take off for that area on the 7th of August. A little after crossing the roads in the neighborhood of Crater Mountain I began to hear chain saws; the sound seemed to be coming from the upper reaches of Rooster Bill Creek. I assumed they were cutting trees; I didn't like it but I thought I would be able to avoid such things when I got onto the plateau. Walking across the hillsides on my way there, I saw down below me a new road that had not been there previously, and that appeared to cross one of the ridges that close in Stemple Creek. This made me feel a little sick. Nevertheless, I went on to the plateau. What I found there broke my heart. The plateau was criss-crossed with new roads, broad and well-made for roads of that kind. The plateau is ruined forever. The only thing that could save it now would be the collapse of the technological society. I couldn't bear it. That was the best and most beautiful and isolated place around here and I have wonderful memories of it.

One road passed within a couple of hundred feet of a lovely spot where I camped for a long time a few years ago and passed many happy hours. Full of grief and rage I went back and camped by South Fork Humbug Creek.

The next day I started for my home cabin. My route took me past a beautiful spot, a favorite place of mine where there was a spring of pure water that could safely be drunk without boiling. I stopped and said a kind of prayer to the spirit of the spring. It was a prayer in which I swore that I would take revenge for what was being done to the forest.

"[...] and then I returned home as quickly as I could because I have something to do!"

BY PANAGIOTIS EVANGELOS NASIOS TSOLKAS

Many of us grew up with a wild-ass grandpa or grumpy uncle. Whether they were preaching conspiracy theories, needling us to invest in gold or embarrassing us in front of our friends by gleefully threatening to get revenge on the techno-industrial empire, they usually made quite an impression. Ted Kaczynski might just be that relative to those of us in the radical ecological movement. Over the past few decades, some have cringed at his sight and others have cheered, but we've all had to ask ourselves, is he really related to us?!

Did he subscribe to the Earth First! Journal? Didn't I see him eating at the Food Not Bombs picnic once? Was he at the Rendezvous? (or did he get kicked out?)

While the speculations could take on mythical proportions, the only evidence to surface suggested an obscure relation at best—despite some persistent attempts to connect him to an organized movement. For example, in April '96, *Tampa Tribune* columnist Cal Thomas reported, "Kaczynski went to an Earth First! meeting at the University of Montana where a hit list of enemies of the environment was distributed." Thomas, a former publicist for Jerry Falwell, conflated both allegations: the meeting was actually a Native Forest Network conference and the list came from *Live Wild or Die*, not the *Earth First! Journal* (although when FBI agents raided Kaczynski's Montana cabin, they claimed to find copies of both).

According to the Center for Consumer Freedom's famous Earth First!-bashing website, WWW.ACTIVISTCASH.COM,

the FBI said *Earth First! Journal* was one of Kaczynski's favorite periodicals. As annoying as these industry fronts tend to be, their sources are occasionally solid. In this case, a 1998 court transcript stated that a letter titled "Suggestion for Earth First!ers from FC" (said to be the Unabomber's pseudonym) was found in Kaczynski's cabin, which read in part: "As for the Mosser bombing, our attention was called to Burston-Marsteller [sic] by an article that appeared in the *Earth First! Litha* [sic]." The transcript also states "the cabin searchers also found a copy of a letter to a radical environmental group known as Earth First!, and that letter began: "This is a message from FC. The F.B.I. calls us Unabom. We are the people who recently assassinated the president of the California Forestry Association."

In the Beltane '96 issue of the *Journal*, co-editor Leslie Hemstreet authored a thorough rebuttal to media accusations following Ted's bust, primarily by distancing the movement from him to the greatest extent possible (including inaccuracies). The editorial collective went as far as filing the first stages of a lawsuit against the FBI, which was mostly fruitless. With the *Journal* bearing the brunt of the pressure, the angle taken by the Eugene collective at the time is understandable. The anxiety, fear and confusion show most clearly when Hemstreet asserts that "to even identify the Unabomber as environmentally motivated is stretching it. Of his 26 victims, only two had any environmental connection." [see *A Few FC Targets*]

Little else ever appeared about Uncle Ted in the *Journal*—no analysis of targets, no critique of the manifesto—but plenty of whispers, rants and arguments could be heard

around our campfires. In June '99, a former *Journal* editor, Theresa Kintz, attempted to break the silence by conducting the first interview with Ted Kaczynski; however, at that year's Round River Rendezvous in Colorado the movement rejected the idea of running it. Instead *Anarchy: a Journal of Desire Armed* and the UK edition of *Green Anarchist* published it jointly. Neither of which was, for better or worse, constrained by public process or movement accountability.

In response to Kintz's question about his influences, Kaczynski responded: "I read Edward Abbey in mid-eighties and that was one of the things that gave me the idea that, 'yeah, there are other people out there that have the same attitudes that I do.' I read *The Monkeywrench Gang*, I think it was. But what first motivated me wasn't anything I read. I just got mad seeing the machines ripping up the woods and so forth..."

To reflect on three decades of the ecological resistance movement while ignoring the dialogue about industrial civilization that Ted's endeavors sparked would be negligent. For the most part, however, Earth First! has shied away from any open discussion about Kaczynski. At what point can we move on past that?

Feral House Publishers offered a guiding step in their opening note to the readers of *Technological Slavery* by reminding us that even technophiles like Bill Joy, founder of Sun Microsystems, have been able to express their regard for Ted's writing:

"Like many of my colleagues, I felt that I could easily have been the Unabomber's next target. He is clearly a Luddite, but simply saying this does not dismiss his argument... As difficult as it is for me to acknowledge, I saw some merit in the reasoning in [Kaczynski's writing]."

About the book

Technological Slavery opens with an author's note from Ted: "I expect it to be advertised and promoted in ways that I will find offensive. Moreover, I do not like the new title..." (Editions Xenia published a first edition in French in 2008 as *The Road to Revolution*, as well as a limited release of 400 copies in English). Ted again expresses his deep dissatisfaction with the book in the first line of his forward.

In case you don't get the picture, Uncle Ted is bitter. Despite the author's discouragement, I kept reading. And I'm glad I did. In fact, *Technological Slavery* took me back to age 17 and my telemarketing cubicle job, where I read his words for the first time. A dozen years later, it still evoked much of the same intellectual stimulation (only now I was staring at a computer in the *EF! Journal* office).

Speaking of *EF!*, only four pages into his book *EF!* makes its

first appearance. According to Ted, "Whenever a movement of resistance begins to emerge, these leftists (or whatever you choose to call them) come swarming to it like flies to honey until they outnumber the original members, take it over, and turn it into just another leftist faction, thereby emasculating it. The history of Earth First! provides an elegant example of this process." He reiterates this idea throughout the book in various letters to correspondents.

Uncle Ted obviously preferred the overly-masculine, right-wing patriarchal days of Earth First!. Even if the reality is that his preferred faction couldn't hold its own in the Earth First! movement and much of it has since gone status quo, obsessing over pro-border policy and population, does that mean we should dismiss everything he has to say? I don't think so. In my opinion, it's far past time we take a deeper look for ourselves.

**IF THE UNABOMBER PREVAILS
AND WE RETURN TO WILD NATURE...**



CAN I STILL HAVE MY CARPHONE?

Industrial Society's Future

In his famous treatise to the developed world, "Industrial Society and Its Future" (ISAIF), originally published in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* in exchange for an end to the bombing, there were some thoughtful, basic tips on strategy:

"The line of conflict should be drawn between the mass of the people and the power holding elite of industrial society... For example, it would be bad strategy for the revolutionaries to condemn Americans for their habits of consumption. Instead the average American should be portrayed as a victim of the advertising and marketing industry, which has suckered him into buying a lot of junk that he doesn't need and that is a very poor compensation for his lost freedom. Either approach is consistent with the facts... As a matter of strategy one should generally avoid blaming the public."

"One should think twice before encouraging any other social conflict than that between the power holding elite (which wields technology) and the general public (over which technology exerts its power)... [which] may actually encourage technologization, because each side in such a conflict wants to use technological power to gain advantages over its adversary. This is clearly seen in rivalries between nations. It also appears in ethnic conflicts within nations," (from paragraphs 190 and 191).

Uncle Ted must have had doubts about the efficacy of some of his strategies (like 204 and 205 where he encourages revolutionaries to have as many babies as possible!), because he then says in 206: "If experience indicates that some of the recommendations made in the foregoing paragraphs are not going to give good results, then those recommendations should be discarded."

A Critique of Anarcho-Primitivism

The book's next essay, "The Truth About Primitive Life", is in agreement with what Ted sees as the philosophical position of the green anarchist tendency, but focuses on a deep challenge to what he sees as the tamed, mythical version of anthropology it bases itself on, concluding "you can't build an effective revolutionary movement out of soft-headed dreamers, lazies, and charlatans. You have to have tough-minded, realistic, practical people, and people of that kind don't need the anarcho-primitivists' mushy utopian myth." And he backs up his position with a whopping 313 footnotes to his anthropology research.



The System's Neatest Trick and Hit Where It Hurts

In this short essay, Uncle Ted points out what "the System" is, and how it turns rebellion to its own advantage. He observes that "commentators like Rush Limbaugh help the process by ranting against activists: Seeing that they have made someone angry fosters the activists' illusion that they are rebelling."

He warns that university intellectuals also play an important role in carrying out the system's trick: "Though they like to fancy themselves independent thinkers, the intellectuals are (allowing for individual exceptions) the most oversocialized. The most conformist, the tamest and most domesticated. The most pampered, dependent, and spineless group in America today."

Kaczynski's grudge with Universities might have something to do with throwing away his youth by going to Harvard at 16, not to mention the CIA-sponsored MKULTRA studies he endured there in which he was subjected to extremely stressful and prolonged psychological attack, strapped into a chair and connected to electrodes that monitored physiological reactions, while facing bright lights and a two-way mirror... Just saying.

Uncle T also waxes briefly on the topic of veganism, vivisection and animal rights: "...opposition to mistreatment of animals may be useful to the System: Because a vegan diet is more efficient in terms of resource-utilization than a carnivorous one is, veganism, if widely adopted, will help to ease the burden placed on the Earth's limited resources by the growth of the human population. But activists' insistence on ending the use of animals in scientific experiments is squarely in conflict with the system's needs, since for the foreseeable future there is not likely to be any workable substitute for living animals as research subjects."

In "Hit Where it Hurts" (originally published in *Green Anarchy*, 2002), he continues on a similar theme, responding to a letter from an animal liberationist in Denmark:

"I agree that keeping wild animals in cages is intolerable, and that putting an end to such practices is a noble cause. But there are many other noble causes, such as preventing traffic accidents, providing shelter for the

homeless, recycling, or helping old people cross the street. Yet no one is foolish enough to mistake these for revolutionary activities, or to imagine that they do anything to weaken the system."

Only half that original article made it into the Feral House book (at Ted's request). The article in its entirety can be found in *Green Anarchy* or – gasp! online. It is interesting for his identification of the vital organs of the "System" for revolu-

tionary targeting, "...but only [for] legal forms of protest and resistance," of course.

Excerpts from letters

Although the book's republished letters and essays are repetitive, some excerpts lend themselves to interesting dialogue and insight about Ted's life and the choices he made.

From his letter to MK (a Turkish anarchist), October 2003: "Because I found modern life absolutely unacceptable, I grew increasingly hopeless until, at the age of 24, I arrived at a kind of crisis: I felt so miserable that I didn't care whether I lived or died. But when I reached that point, a sudden change took place: I realized that if I didn't care whether I lived or died, then I didn't need to fear the consequences of anything I might do. Therefore I could do anything I wanted. I was free! That was the great turning-point in my life because it was then that I acquired courage, which has remained with me ever since. It was at that time, too, that I became certain that I would soon go to live in the wild, no matter what the consequences. I spent two years teaching at the University of California in order to save some money, then I resigned my position and went to look for a place to live in the forest."

"Whatever philosophical or moral rationalizations people may invent to explain their belief that violence is wrong, the real reason for that belief is that they have unconsciously absorbed the system's propaganda." ... "Green anarchist, anarcho-primitivists, and so forth (the 'GA Movement') have fallen under such heavy influence from the left that their rebellion against civilization has to a great extent been neutralized. Instead of rebelling against the values of civilization, they have adopted many civilized values themselves and have constructed an imaginary picture of primitive societies that embodies these civilized values." ... "I don't mean that there is anything wrong with gender equality, kindness to animals,

tolerance of homosexuality, or the like. But these values have no relevance to the effort to eliminate technological civilization. They are not revolutionary values. An effective revolutionary movement will have to adopt instead the hard values of primitive societies, such as skill, self-discipline, honesty, physical and mental stamina, intolerance of externally-imposed restraints, capacity to endure physical pain, and, above all, courage.”

In another excerpt, from FC to Scientific American, 1995, Ted had this to say: “The engineers who initiated the industrial revolution can be forgiven for not having anticipated its negative consequences. But the harm caused by technological progress is by this time sufficiently apparent so that to continue to promote it is grossly irresponsible.”

The (Coming) Road to Revolution

These two essays, “The Coming Revolution” and “The Road to Revolution”, have the same premise. The former was originally written in Spanish (no publication date or location is provided). It opens with a quote from Albert Einstein: “Our entire much-praised technological progress, and civilization generally, could be compared to an ax in the hand of a pathological criminal.”

Kaczynski makes the case that a “great revolution is brewing”, likening it to revolutionary social changes in centuries past. “The values linked with so-called progress—that is, with immoderate economic and technological growth—were those that in challenging the values of the old regimes created the tensions that led to the French and Russian Revolutions. The values linked with ‘progress’ have now become the values of another dominating regime: the technoindustrial system that rules the world today.”

Disappointingly, the second version of the essay opens with a quote from Mao Tsetung. Yes, Ted, the revolution is not a dinner party. We know. Maybe not a vegan pot luck either. But where does that leave us—those who feel affinity with much of Ted’s convictions but who engage in the Earth First! movement because of its decentralization, non-hierarchical structure and rejection of a narrow strategy? I know what Ted would say, but by the end of the book, I was ready to know what the rest of y’all think.

Why now?

The final chapter explains the reason for the timing of the book’s publication. Ted runs through several pages of legalese explaining his efforts as a jailhouse attorney to defend his rights to maintain control of his writing under First Amendment protections and, essentially, losing. The rest of his property was sold with the money going towards restitution of injured recipients of his bombs. Now his papers may also go to auction.

In 2000, his enemies’ quest for profit took a strange path. The SF Weekly reported that Gellen, who lost his left arm as a result of one of Kaczynski’s mail bombs, took Kaczynski to court in an effort to repossess his property and offer it for sale to the highest bidder. “There were interested parties who were willing to pay more than \$1 million dollars for the property,” claims Julian Hill, lawyer for timber industry executive and Unabomber victim, Dick Gellen, “and instead it was sold for only \$7,500. That \$1 million should have gone to the families of his victims.”

The property was sold to Joy Richards, with whom Ted maintained correspondence for ten years. She told the Sacramento Bee that she hoped to eventually live on the property, build a residence and to preserve it. “His ideas are what really matter, and I thought his ideas were brilliant.”

She passed away in 2006. His book is dedicated to her memory, with love.

When Kintz asked him in 1999 if he was afraid of losing his mind in prison, Kaczynski replied:

“No, what worries me is that I might in a sense adapt to this environment and come to be comfortable here and not resent it anymore. And I am afraid that as the years go by that I may forget, I may begin to lose my memories of the mountains and the woods and that’s what really worries me, that I might lose those memories, and lose that sense of contact with wild nature in general. But I am not afraid they are going to break my spirit.”



Ted is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Letters can be sent to: Ted Kaczynski #04475-046, US Pen-Admin Max Facility, P.O. Box 8500, Florence, CO 81226.

TOP TEN REASONS TO VOTE UNABOMBER, Your presidential write-in choice for '96, by Lydia Eccles: “If the Unabomber put a hairline crack in the myth of progress, we should apply a wedge now—the Unabomber’s fifteen seconds are just about up. But an election lasts a year. An anti-technological rallying point only came into being because of the criminal chase. There’s not going to be another opportunity... HE’S GOT THE CREDENTIALS. The Unabomber’s use of violence should not disqualify him from consideration. His willingness and ability to effectively use violence to achieve strategic political goals merely demonstrate the essential qualifications to be president.” —FROM UNAPAC’S WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN TO ELECT UNABOMBER FOR PRESIDENT

Don't blame me!
I voted for the **UNABOMBER**

A Few FC Targets

In all, 16 bombs—which injured 23 people and killed three—were attributed to Kaczynski. All but the first few contained the initials “FC”, which Ted later asserted stood for “Freedom Club.”

Timber Industry

In April, 1995, a bomb killed Gilbert Murray, president of the timber industry lobbying group California Forestry Association. Murray was described as a “Wise Use Leader” by Ron Arnold’s Center for Defense of Free Enterprise.

Corporate Public Relations

In 1994, Burson-Marsteller (BM) executive Thomas J. Mosser was killed by a mail bomb sent to his North Caldwell, New Jersey home. In a letter to the New York Times FC stated that the company “helped Exxon clean up its public image after the Exxon Valdez incident” and, more importantly, because “its business is the development of techniques for manipulating people’s attitudes.”

BM is one of the largest public relations agencies in the world. It is now a unit of Young & Rubicam, owned by WPP Group. The firm has 58 wholly-owned and 45 affiliated offices in 59 countries across six continents.

BM works with global producers and marketers of petroleum products in training their employees how to respond to crises and working on key communications of specific crisis situations such as oil spills and serious accidents. Among those served by BM are Shell, Exxon Mobil, Conoco, Chevron, BP and Gulf.

BM represented Union Carbide, jointly responsible for the Bhopal disaster in 1984 that killed some 2,000 people. After the Three Mile Island accident of 1979 became the most significant accident in the history of US commercial nuclear power generation, BM conducted public relations work for the plant’s manufacturers, Babcock & Wilcox.

The Indonesian government paid BM millions to help improve the country’s human rights and environmental image, following the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor. They campaigned against human rights organizations at the behest of the last Argentine military dictatorship and conducted a PR campaign in the Czech Republic on behalf of TVX Gold, which threatened the Sumava Mountains.

In 1991 BM began a PR campaign for Dow-Corning to handle the growing public health controversy over silicone breast implants.

Most recently, BM represented Blackwater USA following a 2007 incident in which Blackwater employees killed 17 Iraqi civilians.

Computers, Robotics,

In May of 1982 Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee received an FC bomb, injuring university secretary Janet Smith. Vanderbilt’s Institute for Space and Defense Electronics housed in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, is the largest such academic facility in the world.

In 1985, a California computer store owner was killed by a bomb placed in the parking lot of his store. A similar attack against a computer store occurred in Salt Lake City, Utah 1987.

Electrical Engineering

Diogenes J. Angelakos who served for four decades as a professor at the Berkeley campus, had his labs attacked by bombs twice, in 1982 and 1985. Angelakos served as director of the Electronics Research Laboratory at Berkeley from 1964 to 1985 and was widely credited with building one of the university’s largest research laboratories. He was recognized as one of the world’s foremost experts on scattering of electromagnetic waves, as well as on the design of wireless antennas. One injured him, the other, a Berkeley graduate student.

In 1993, David Hillel Gelernter, a neoconservative professor of computer science at Yale University, was critically injured. He helped found the company Mirror Worlds Technologies based on his book *Mirror Worlds: or the Day Software Puts the Universe in a Shoebox...How It Will Happen and What It Will Mean*, 1992. Among his other published books are *Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion*, 2007; *Machine Beauty: Elegance and the Heart of Technology*, 1998; *The Muse in*



the Machine: Computerizing the Poetry of Human Thought, 1994.

Geneticists

June 1993, geneticist Charles Epstein from University of California, San Francisco was injured by a bomb. Gelernter’s brother, a behavioral geneticist, received a “You are next” call. Geneticist Philip Sharp at Massachusetts Institute of Technology also received a threatening letter two years later. Kaczynski wrote a letter to the New York Times claiming that FC was responsible for the attacks and threats.

Behavioral Sciences

James V. McConnell was also a target of FC. In 1985, he was injured along with his research assistant Nicklaus Suino by a bomb, disguised as a manuscript, sent to his house in Ann Arbor, Michigan. McConnell was a biologist and animal psychologist known for his research on planarians. His paper “Memory transfer through cannibalism in planarians” , published in the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*, reported that when planarians conditioned to respond to a stimulus were ground up and fed to other planarians, the recipients learned to respond to the stimulus faster than a control group did. His findings were eventually completely discredited. He also believed that memory was chemically based and that in the future humanity would be programmed by drugs, commenting that he would rather be “a programmer than a programee.”